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Cover: Sunrise in sea smoke, Mount Desert Island, winter solstice, -18°F.  
Photograph by Mark Baldwin.

The Editors  
of  
**THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL**  
are proud to announce  
the winner of the second  
**CHAD WALSH POETRY PRIZE**  
of \$3,000  
to  
**Albert Goldbarth**  
for his poem  
**The Two Domains: in several voices**  
in the Spring 1994 issue



This prize, awarded annually,  
is the gift of  
the friends and family  
of the poet  
Chad Walsh,  
co-founder, in 1950, of this magazine.

## REFERENCE DESK WOMAN

I love you from Navajo to Opium from Photograph  
to Pumpkin, even your mid-stops in Pinstripes and Pistons.

I love  
the grey hair looping in your bifocals. I love you from Skin

to Sumac and I'll scratch  
your itches from Birmingham to Burlington and back.  
I love you from Heart to India and I'll smooth

your pages of Hexagons, Horseflies, Highroads  
and Hydrofoils. O darling sweet honey when you knot  
your hair while thumbing from Egypt to Falsetto,

let me be the Epiphany your fingers trace. Let me be  
your Equator, your Etching, the Epicenter of your Earthquakes.  
Sweet one, you spend so long staring in Falstaff

to Franco. Is it Fedora, Florida, or Feldspar that takes you  
when you could take the pen from your teeth and smile? Please  
don't

shelve me as just another Sumatra to Trampoline man.

Smile when I come to your desk. Let me loop  
your hair. Show me what you keep in your indexes and we'll  
work

our way from Trance to Venial Sin.

## ON THE EVE OF THE MILLENNIUM

I put out my only clean pair of socks, not caring  
 If they match. Although, of course, they do. I drape  
 Tomorrow's plain-colored uniform over the designer  
 Jeans my wife, in Central Park, at the height of her powers  
 Of indiscretion, emptied me out of  
 And flung, puncturing them, into the recently deflowered

Nether-branches of a hawthorn, out of the range  
 Of mortal ears, noses, and naked eyes, but well within  
 Striking distance of the expertly trained Audubon  
 Society binoculars that day in unfortunate abundance,  
 Making history making love to, and a spectacle  
 Of, me. That was before we heard that time was to be subject

To strict regulations. Now I watch television for hours  
 On end, and often two or three shows at once.

*When something empties, it empties into something.*

I open my rented curtains and let lightlessness  
 Seek, in the glossy surfaces, like a first-time burglar,  
 Restitution, and easier ways out. Herman,

The superintendent from Lisbon, has given notice and gone  
 To live with his son and daughter-in-law in Jersey. He left me  
 His non-power tools, the usual ones, plus a dismantled  
 Toaster, which can be made to work again, he said like he was  
 Some psychic healer trying to convince a man  
 Who's had his knees crushed to bone meal: "Don't operate . . .

. . . Concentrate." Right now, I'm shutting out  
 The world, and thinking about toast. My socks are sopping  
 Wet and I washed them last week. I take the Russian  
 Vodka I bought in West German East Germany out of the  
 freezer

And pour myself some. Suddenly, I am free; or at least  
 To imagine, which I do. I dive beneath a breaking

Wave as clear as this vodka, and come up among splashing  
 Girls, as drunk as I am, but on something purer. Ten years  
 From today, if you believe statistics, seven percent  
 Will be dead from skin cancer, or some other kind of cancer,  
 As there are always enough new strains to keep up  
 With progress and kill the Joneses. The wind crams

Like soccer match hooligans through the gap in the window  
 Jamb, which the super no doubt booby-trapped  
 His last weekend here, when he was fuming Portuguese smoke  
 Signals all over the place, landlord-directed epithets  
 And the like. *When something empties into something,*  
*The memory of something remains.* My socks, like flabby

Sanddabs — to whose existence in this condition I can attest,  
 But about which I cannot expound, the fish fry in question  
 Happening to belong to a particularly humorless mafia family  
 In Queens — discover the muscle of the radiator's grill.  
 It is, in truth, a hit-or-miss proposition, as the steam heat,  
 Much like my missing Mrs., either sets fires or

Puts them out. More often than not, however, I and my socks  
 Freeze on, while my wife, whose gyroscopic breasts blind  
 People might, with two open palms and a little encouragement,  
 Use to see, as it were, a perfect sunrise and sunset,  
 Or, of course, vice versa, continues to refract the Côte d'Azur  
 Sun with abandon and nothing on, immune to skin cancer

And every other kind of cancer. Her tan, in fact, I hear,  
 Has been making unfair demands on her already insufficient  
 Powers of humility. WOMAN DIVORCES MAN TO MARRY SELF.  
 Don't laugh. *The memory of something has its own weight,*  
*And can itself be emptied.* At this very moment, if you  
 Believe statistics, a student, to make a point he could never

Make at his university, is setting himself on fire.  
 If he survives, he will no longer be welcome at the café  
 Where he came up with the idea. The newly unsightly  
 Do not, frankly, in a milieu so attuned to the eye, boost  
 Business. I think about visiting the poor  
 Student at whatever state-run hospital they take him to,

But the irony of the state he was protesting against  
Now committed, if only by law, to the freedom-lover's speedy  
Recovery would probably kill him before I got there,  
Or could even figure out how to send flowers to a country  
Struggling with democracy. Ten years from today  
Jesus Christ will take the place of Greta Garbo,

If only by default, as she will, God granting, be left  
Alone, at last and for good, thanks to skin cancer,  
Or some other kind of cancer, and He will be hounded outside  
His apartment by the formerly faithless who all of a sudden  
Want to be his best friend. Look for wienie wagon and knish  
Concessions, not to mention a lifesize likeness of Himself

On the cross next to John the Baptist, whose head, so  
Tourists can put in their own and have their picture taken  
With the Lord, is missing. *When something empties,*  
*It empties into something.* Every year at this time,  
Whether or not I'm at a party, I empty the refuse of my life  
Into a huge plastic bag. I turn to the person next to me

Or I turn to the darkness. And it is then I discover  
I am no longer holding the huge plastic bag, but am inside  
All over again. This will happen ten more times.  
If I survive, I expect my wife and the superintendent  
To make an appearance on my brownstone stoop,  
The latter with fixing my toaster his number one priority

And my wife with an infant in her arms, which she holds out to  
me.

(31 December 1989)

Rex Wilder

**Two Poems****LOCKERBIE**

I have never understood  
how Zeno's famous paradox could twist  
through anybody's mind  
without damaging  
a few brain cells, scorching them with sparks from that brilliant  
absurdity of never-ending travel. When the airplane had spun  
halfway down from eight miles up, it still, naturally,  
had half of the original eight  
miles left to go,  
a four-mile cushion of clear air and of reasonable safety as long  
as it stayed in the sky, and, continuing to obey  
that law of demi-  
proportionality, it could spin its passengers halfway down the  
sky  
again, a precise half of those four cushioning  
miles, which would leave, as always, another  
half of the distance  
safely remaining, so now there would be two miles of  
springtime air below  
each passenger's pressing  
feet, an altitude  
then to be divided into equal segments by tumbled gyro  
compass and hazy straightedge  
horizon, though, to tell the truth, the controls had lost all  
function. Zeno  
was, at that next moment,  
one full mile from harm (philosophers die old) and he easily  
fell halfway yet again,

teaching that no matter how far you travel  
from that last bed,  
you can always split  
the difference  
and find yourself a chunk of time useful for thinking and  
falling, but

by then even Zeno was only a half  
mile above the town's scrubby trees, the village where  
faces  
had already started to look  
up. From a quarter mile above  
the streets you could glance down and see one arm  
pointing

at you, see mouths crying  
"O," see faces, mouths and eyes defining well-constructed  
geometric circles,  
see town turning as the plane spun, radius and  
diameter shown to all of us. see the whole great wheel  
of the universe and the irrational

number shaped by the wingtips,  
and you could surely feel the discipline of centrifugal  
force that kept the passengers securely clenched to  
cushions whose upholstery  
springs popped upward through the plastic seats, heads  
pulled back so  
hard that mouths

dragged open, eyes  
watching black shadows in the sunlight that flashed into  
alternate  
windows of the broken cabin, as round they went,  
drawing geometry  
in the sky, pinned, held fast by that spinning gravitation,  
clutched  
by the simple physics that shoved

their magazines and underseat  
baggage against the sides of the airplane and filled  
flickering space with dust. They heard the loudspeaker  
    sizzling, saw  
the perfect circles of their coffee cups, felt  
time disturbed

by granite hills, space wrenched  
by roof tiles, and they believed  
Zeno's elegant demonstration that never will we get  
to that last point of our travels  
(nor fly into the sun,)

not even when the town's sheep meadow, upside down,  
    spins  
over us. For still there will be time  
for a wind of treetops, weeds between the trees, and a  
    space of white rocks.

## OSIRIS IN ARIZONA

The god, the newspapers told us, the god lay helpless  
in darkness while the world became hotter  
and the directors of our irrigation district reported  
that the aquifer was running low.

Diesel exhaust shook the air where drills  
mounted on trucks dug  
the city wells deeper. The Salt River failed  
above the first high dam. In the fields  
where cotton grew last year, mesquite  
sprouted, bushes with poison  
at the tips of their roots.

And the god, the god below lay on his left side without  
moving, without dreaming,  
the mighty sleeper poisoned.

The irrigation water  
trickled slow and thick to our fields,  
our fathers' fields, with dead fish,  
dead fish lying as dead fish lie, dull in the  
scummed water, staring upward with one eye flattened.

Our neighbors came in the darkness  
and broke down the berms  
and stole water from our fields.  
We hired shotgun watchmen to protect  
the hours of our night.

The god,  
the dead god lay on his left side,  
knowing that the grain  
had twisted and failed, poisoned in darkness. His sisters  
called to him.

What good is the song of people gone  
four thousand years?  
What good is the prayer to a god  
of ancient Egypt,  
the superstition of people dead four thousand years?

Salts leach upward, corrupting the soil  
in our own valley. Our trees begin to fail.  
They curl in the yellow leaf; the new leaves  
fall in early Spring, whirling  
as they fall through the days of Lent,  
ticking when they strike dry branches.

Each year, his sisters  
sang to the god, the dead  
god, telling him the river  
had failed. The congregation  
of Egypt sang for eight days,  
the great dark song  
to the god descended into death.

Each year, the god, the dead  
god, heard, called  
out, his voice feeble,  
called out for  
help. He struggled into the light,  
balancing the upper world  
with justice and sweet waters.

This month the elegant sidewinder  
hunts through the clotted dirt and the mesquite  
of last year's cotton fields. Dust  
blooms up behind automobiles on the interstate.

Charles Muñoz

## THINGS (for an Indian) TO DO IN NEW YORK (City)

## 1.

Walk down the Avenue of the Americas  
even though it's actually Sixth Avenue  
and I mean, walk right down the middle  
of the Avenue of the Americas

and tell all of the cab drivers I love them  
or walk down the middle of Wyckoff Street  
in Brooklyn at three in the morning  
waving my arms like a crazy man

because some New Yorker once told me  
it will scare all of those muggers away  
but I think it means those muggers  
will just end up mugging an Indian

acting like a crazy man  
but maybe I can make them laugh  
and they'll leave me enough money  
for another cannoli, cannoli, cannoli

or convince myself that I look more  
like a mugger than one who is to be mugged  
because I have dark skin, long hair  
and those dark-skinned, long-haired muggers  
will all nod their heads at me

whenever I walk by, brother to brother  
but wait, everybody is a mugger  
and that white man in his wool suit  
just lifted my wallet  
and disappeared down the Avenue

of the Americas, which, as we all know  
by now, is actually Sixth Avenue  
and lucky me, he took my throw down  
wallet, which only held a twenty  
and a sepia photograph of Mister X.

**2.**

Read Ted Berrigan's sonnets  
and wonder how we are all alike  
but still have absolutely nothing  
in common. I stop bearded men  
and beautiful women in the streets  
and they're all poets. Everybody  
is bearded and beautiful. Everybody  
is a poet. I roll a drunk over  
in a doorway and he quotes  
Robert Frost. My God, he's home-  
less and formalist. How much money  
should I drop into his tin cup?

**3.**

The whole world does not belong  
in any one place, but here we are  
all of us gathered in Times Square  
with our guns drawn and teeth bared.  
I want to find somebody to kill  
because of their skin color. No.  
I want to kill a bus full of children  
because of their parents' religion  
and I want to build a hate machine  
in the middle of Times Square  
and call it a piano. I want  
to start a circus in Manhattan  
and call it a church. I want to hail  
a mounted policeman and call him God.

## 4.

What time is it? I stop  
a passer-by in this cruel city  
and ask her. It's 12:02 p.m.

she tells me and keeps  
walking. She actually gave me  
the correct time. Oh, the kindness

and I stop watch wearer  
after watch wearer, asking  
for time and they all give it to me.

I could live here  
forever. No, that's not true  
at all. I'm lying

because it's nearly 1:34 p.m.  
and I have only an hour  
before I travel back home.

## 5.

There is nothing as sad as a bad guitar player  
in the hotel room next door at some insane hour  
moving his clumsy fingers from chord to chord  
until you think, in those long pauses between  
a B minor and F, that he must be an Indian  
adopted as a young child by a white family, and now  
confused and desperate, has come to New York City  
to become a rock star, but hocks his guitar  
eventually for a bus ticket back home  
to his white parents, who love him so much  
that they don't say a word about his new braids  
and they all travel to a powwow together  
slightly embarrassed to find their feet tapping  
along in an imperfect rhythm with the drums.

**6.**

I was looking for a happy ending  
but found a refrigerator

abandoned on East Fifth Street  
instead. In New York City

an entire family will soon live  
in that refrigerator.

I know this  
because it happens

on my reservation, too.

**7.**

Think how my entire world used to be white  
but this is New York City and everybody is brown  
but this is America, too, and everybody is still  
white, but then again, I know America is not white  
exactly, but it is white inexactly, without  
color, wanting this or that blood to stain its hands.

**8.**

There's too much to do  
on some of these days  
so I don't even leave  
the Brooklyn brownstone

and I'm frightened  
because I'm an Indian  
who knows the difference  
between Monet and Manet

so I just watch TV  
because I am an American  
and the walk to the subway  
can break all of my hearts.

9.

**world cup soccer on television**

About soccer riots in Europe:  
there would be riots in American stadiums  
during our particular games  
if the people who had reason to riot  
could pay the price for admission.

10.

But, America, I think how  
your men will always find  
a more effective way to kill.

No Indian would have ever invented  
an automatic bow and arrow  
but I love you still

in the way that I have been taught  
to love you:  
with fear.

11.

So how is it possible  
that I could fall in love  
with every waitress  
and waiter in Manhattan?

Stop. I'm not in love  
with any of them.  
It must be the food  
although they are all gorgeous  
and horrible at their jobs  
so when they drop  
the plates and cups  
it does sound like music.

**12.**

Then I think to thank all of you  
for Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman  
for the automobile and Orson Welles  
for the fluoride in drinking water.

**13.**

Suddenly, there's another Indian on the subway  
sitting right beside me, surprise, there's an Indian  
on the subway, F Train from Brooklyn  
to Manhattan, on a Monday afternoon, surprise  
there is another Indian, I mean, another American  
Indian sitting on the subway seat next to me  
really, in the seat right beside me, our legs touch  
and I am convinced that she's Indian, Native  
American, Aboriginal, beneath her clothes  
she's Indian in her clothes, her clothes are Indian  
because she's wearing them, there's an Indian  
on the F Train all the way from Brooklyn  
to Manhattan and she loves me, she loves  
me, she loves me, of course, she's my wife.

Sherman Alexie

## I COULD BE A POET

*A poem for people who know  
how poems are supposed to be read*

I think I could be a poet  
because  
I  
never  
learned  
how to breathe (✂)  
I can think of incongruous images  
like a Marxist with a trust fund (✂)  
A Porsche pulling a U-Haul (✂)  
A lobsterman in espadrilles sipping a cappuccino (✂)  
his pinky pointing toward the rosy-fingered dawn (✂)  
I can say the same line twice and make it mean something  
else (✂)  
I can say the same line twice and make it mean something  
else (✂)  
I have studied the poets who sing-song out their lines  
For no other reason than that's how it's done (✂)  
In love with the sound of their own voices  
Ending each line going up (✂)  
Every single line going up (✂)  
As they read, and read, and . . . read (✂)  
See, declarative sentences that in prose would go down,(✂)  
In modern poetry seem to go up (✂)  
As if it adds some hidden meaning.  
I know what I'm talking about and you should too (✂)

When it comes to making references  
to obscure works of literature that you should have read  
I am as bold as Chapati on the peak of Mt. Gaia  
slaying the three-headed Wetzelscottle.

And I have known anger too!  
 And I'm not afraid to let it show.  
 I'm not afraid to use that one requisite swear word  
 that shows I'm *fucking* serious  
 if not dangerous.  
 I'm not afraid to

SHOUT!  
 WITH INTENSITY!  
 AND LONG DRAMATIC  
 PAUSES FRAUGHT WITH ANGST!

Still you can hear the lines go up (↗)  
 And the words, the vocabulary words —  
 Glaconian, distemic, Koa-tahkah-nahbey —  
 Thrown in to remind you  
 "I am a writer! Eat my Verbal dust!"  
 My G.R.E. dust.

And then the end  
 Spoken softly, hauntingly tender,  
 Though not devoid of irony,  
 Ending abruptly as if there is more . . .

Taylor Mali

Note: (↗) This symbol indicates a rise in vocal pitch such as can be heard at the end of a question. This interrogative phenomenon is also prevalent among Ivy League graduates who are afraid of being thought of as elitist snobs: "Where did I do my Under-graduate work? Oh, um. I went to . . . Harvard (↗)." .

**Three Poems****THE APTITUDE TEST**

*Which activity would you prefer?*

- a. Sitting with a sick friend.*
- b. Climbing a mountain.*
- c. Reading a book.*
- d. Reading a book about mountains to a sick friend.*

— Educational Testing Service, from memory

Now that you're settled in the arm  
of this desk, do you incline  
to watch the pine in all weathers,  
the distracting sun on sequins of snowmelt, or do you  
seek inside weather  
a central shape of tree?

Perhaps instead you wonder  
why snow sticks to grass before sidewalks, why lawns  
then seem like sheets tucked in, borders  
neat as the imagined orderly world.

Where do you stand on birdseed,  
tons sold every year,  
the junco hungry in the yard?

Do you like winter?

Speaking of carpentry, are you for  
hammers or nails?

If you had one hour left,  
would you fix the screen door handle,  
read your favorite psalm,  
kiss your love goodbye,  
eat at last the habanero,  
hottest pepper on earth?

Suppose someone offered you,  
in the middle of life,  
a tray of cucumber slices,  
a doily of cunningly cut canapes,  
then a third hand brought  
rich chocolates, each one in a gilt-foil cup —  
quick, what calls,  
the shine, the sweet, the strange third hand,  
or beautiful cucumber's palest green?

Do you like spring?

Quick, what was your first thought when you were born?

STOP

## AS I SET OUT

Today I toss a wish in my Perhaps Bag  
before setting out,  
and I put cheese and bread together,  
seal them in my plastic sandwich box,  
then tumble these  
together with the wish  
inside the dark Perhaps Bag.

Today I pat my shoes to fit my feet,  
place shoe and foot together on the step,  
bread and cheese and wish banging my hip  
through the bag's soft cloth as I set out.

Today I slip my eye in place under my glasses,  
then stand back, allowing eye through glass  
to light on blooming Double File Viburnum,  
a tree whose name I have just learned;  
so name and eye and glasses bob above  
the foot and shoe, while in between  
the wish and sandwich bounce,  
Perhaps Bag at my hip as I set out.

Today as I set out, I add the bird  
leaving the birch,  
whose crossing to the roof seems such hard work,  
suspension using every ounce of wing.  
I add the white bar and black head  
of another bird, small, but weighing  
enough to twitch bright arcs of dew from highest hemlock  
branches.

Today I'd planned to pack the fewest necessary things.  
I'd eat the sandwich, I'd remove the shoes,  
but keep the eye, for looking later where the day had gone,  
how it started with a wish, how the wish and sandwich  
rubbed  
together in the swaying dark Perhaps Bag.

But I added birds and trees with names,  
and I collected on my way small garden jobs to tuck  
somewhere,  
and hoped to manage this as simply  
as I had tucked the eye snug to its eye-spot,  
as I had fit the foot, extending in its shoe:  
trim the sorrel, weed the stones,  
clear tall clutter from clean lines of iris bed —  
though in bare dirt, a new small clutter grows.

Today when I came home, I opened the bag that had  
flapped  
beside me all day, shook crumbs  
from the sandwich box, and washed it, leaned it up to  
dry.

As I walked by the open bag, not looking  
down, I saw with sight like muffled hearing,  
sight like the sound of a roundness pressing the air —  
I saw the farthest corner darkest,  
saw the shape of something without corners,

where I had tossed it when I started,  
beside me all day,  
between eye and shoe,  
small as a burn  
in a purse, and swaying  
through soft cloth as I set out.

### SPRING VASE

Bleeding-heart forget-me-not the world  
 vase-water a pond the kind concocted  
 in a jar for home or science class but this one  
 irreproducibly tangled so lush with cut stem  
 no one could have made it all I did was fill a cup  
 all I did want flowers by me where a spider  
 now continues one leg another intent  
 who knows if to him the world seems the same green  
 or stuffier consider Dutch bouquet painters  
 introducing insects for verisimilitude  
 surfaces whose lightest white of brushstroke equals crystal  
 outside in his spider-life he travelled up and down  
 now in by accident spider-life and all  
 what enters what leaves won't stay even  
 the screen door open shut clattering and now  
 in the waterdrops tense on the petals now in the drops that  
 shake  
 from the petals more lives  
 than I see bleeding-heart forget-me-not  
 came in the door what went out  
 to find them I think of names  
 for the world shall it be  
 Spring Vase shall it be O Unimaginably Slender Line  
 O Sea-Green But Leafing  
 O Unicellular Flutter Bacteria O  
 Slipper-Shaped Paramecium (each spider-leg  
 a host of drops his invisible eyes  
 like drops while hearts  
 like baby pocket-watches

pend from green) the screen door swings  
I want to forget myself and plants bring me  
nearer endless though inches  
deep this water in ceramic handwork  
glazed and fired I can't forget  
myself in what my own hands filled  
can't drop in what my own steps lifted through  
the door a spring wind bangs today listen  
the call from wind to stem  
forget and not forget bleed and not to bleed  
swing in a row that is not a row  
arching line neither arch nor line  
O Splash of Pond and Muddy Drop O Continual  
Imbalance O All  
my banging in and out bearing worlds  
I can't see swinging  
to empty just color and line then back  
to trace twining cause and effect  
so locate  
me there between root and bloom  
somewhere on a stem  
my foot just coming in going out the door  
*forget forget forget forget*  
cancels or enhances  
whatever I am a clear blue  
ages pink the petals forget  
whatever I am a stem dips  
arching pink and white whatever I am  
that banging

**Two Poems****DELIRIUM**

I popped up thick-necked and surveillant  
as one of those phallus-turrets on the Maginot Line.  
Something had happened. The old man had fallen  
dead into his plowman's harness, a mess  
of reins and traces, hip straps and bellybands.

In Latin, *lira* was the furrow. If you went off the >  
you were literally delirious. Seeing him shimmy  
told me, "Keep it on the plumb —  
you'll be a slacker soon enough."

**BUFFALO CREEK**

When the bubble of gob split like a bulb  
and the head of the hollow broke its water  
one hundred and twenty-five went under  
the flood, into the mouth of the whale.  
They spun and snagged and died and left  
a silverado of washed-up dinner buckets.

Roger Williams

## HARLEY

In the Bandi area of northwest Liberia this is the best known legend, a story that I collected several times. I paraphrase the interlinear translation in Barnabas Saji Ndebe's collection, *Tales from Bandiland*. It's so literal that it preserves the word order of Bandi, where prepositions are postpositions: they follow their nouns.

When once war was going badly the Bandi for, them and tribes other between, they did not know what they should do. They meet together, they go the diviner to, they ask him what they must do, the war them not overcome. The diviner in-looks, says, "This do, the war you not overcome: You must native born one sacrifice, shoot with arrows seven, breath in him, bury."

When they came from the diviner, they cried it the land's people to. Man one he was there, called Harley.

Incidentally, I am surprised that Ndebe puts an "r" in "Harley." The Bandis cannot pronounce "r." The "r" in their mouth makes the vowel longer or more back. Thus, the Holy Fathers pronounced the formulaic greeting as *I huwubun wiangor le*, making *wiangor* rhyme with "cellar door," as if to say, "You can't pronounce your own greeting, but we can." (The Anglicized form reminds me of motorcycles.)

*Hale*, his Bandi name, may pun on *sale*, which gets mutated to *bale*, meaning "medicine" or "magic."

He himself gives the country for, that they kill him. But he told them they must his relatives all free foreigners' labor from. They none of them will not porter work do. The people of the land agree. Then Harley he himself gave, the country for. He remained sitting. They his grave dig town the middle of. They place him the grave before.

He must have sat composed at the edge of his open grave awaiting the seven arrows, in a trance. I imagine a drumming and chanting. Wailing of a group of women. The dignitaries of the clan took aim, pulling back their bows. The arrows flew. The grunt and the moan of Harley. He was lowered into the grave, he was set on the floor of the grave, they shoveled the earth around his knees, his chest, over his mouth. The top of his head was covered.

He howled from underground, seven days and nights, the legend says, sobbing, groaning, earning the victorious silence of the ultimate perfection of the medicine, a going forth of power, the invincible consensus: never again can we be pressed to porter a foreigner's burden. We will drive them out, and wear Harley like an amulet, dust of his grave, dust of his mere story, like a weapon.

We may look the Holy Fathers in the eye and say, "You have your Jesus. We, too, we have been nursed, fed by the sweat of our mother and father, rocked, loved, sung to, laughed with, and died for. You are not addressing anyone here who has not been died for."

I was thinking of trekking to Halipo, Harley's town, the center of the power of the tribe. They say that magic dwells in his mound. No amulet against it can be bought or found. It gives one pause to just hike over there like a tourist. It might know how to use the energy of my boldness, wariness and disbelief against me. I declined to go.

Harley is an ancestor, and in this country one has to have great respect for the ancestors. This is a country in which a woman before she throws slops out the window from a wash basin or from cooking, says *Akabaï*: "Excuse me." The term is plural: "You all excuse me."

It's to warn the ancestors who stay close to her house, and eavesdrop at her windows, hovering in the air, to judge her conversation, whether it is still worthy, for purity of conversation is sweeter than the rice and chicken she sets out for them on the well scraped grave under the mango tree.

They are not my ancestors, but I know the way ancestors are the world over. As they listen they must get hit with our slops and offal. By habit she warns hers by going, You all excuse me, (splash), as I warn mine: You all (splash) excuse me.

John Millstone

## POTTAWATOMIE CREEK

When I woke to the cold hand  
 on my shoulder, I thought God had come  
 to take me for swiping  
 Isaiah's peppermints.  
 A bushy-bearded man grunts,  
 Outside.

Quick now, son,  
 Father whispers. Oil lamp  
 makes the walls shiver like grass.  
 T' others had hands on heads.  
 Isaiah pulled on his boots.  
 No need for that,  
 Man says.

Then we're all in the dark.  
 It was May, time for summer work.  
 Man starts talking.  
 His voice is beautiful,  
 like the Preacher's in Mobile.  
 Points his rifle, says,

Lord,  
 forgive these Southerners  
 strayed so very far from your Word.  
 It is like a sickness come upon them  
 and they cannot now be cured.

Two of these  
 is only boys, Father says.  
 And they will grow to men,  
 says he.

Uncle rushed forward  
 then fell to the sod.  
 Father held my hand.  
 My friend, we also antislavery.  
 It was a lie, he cursed for slaves  
 walking behind the plow.

His hand

*stanza continued*

slips from mine.

The man who works for us began to run  
then isn't running. Isaiah knelt  
crying. Please, mister. I hate Kansas,  
my brother and me both do.

Sword slashes

again and I was left alone. Boy,  
he says, not talking to me  
looking toward Orion's belt,  
I will enter history.

And you, he murmurs, his voice  
is water,

you will be forgotten.

David Starkey

**WOLSEY'S HOLE**

Somewhere on a stream in Vermont, a cold  
Bright stream bellying black over boulders  
And ruffling cowlicks of foam, a live slick  
Stream, a lithe quick stream like a rope thrown down,  
Is a hollow carved by an eddy into the sheer  
Granite under a fall — a wetwalled pocket,  
Stone womb that for sixty years my cousins have known  
As Wolsey's Hole — because my father, sixty summers ago,  
Slipped into it swimming and couldn't get out, I was told  
Last summer by a cousin's cousin. Oh, when I heard,  
How there rose from some hole in my heart a magnificent  
    bellow,  
Cold and afraid and delighted! I heard the laughter  
From faces rimming the hollow, I saw the knotted  
Rope let down, and my father hauled out glowing  
In his baggy trunks, freckled and shaking, red hair aflame  
In sunlight. And I thought: Can I learn  
To think of death not as infinite contraction,  
Curtains closed over midnight, but as curtains drawn back  
To let in the moon and the stars, the whole horizon,  
To let in the dead and the living — a rope thrown down  
To haul me from the hole of my heart, all dripping and shining?

Charles W. Pratt

## Two Poems

## WAKE

and pretend it is just summer,  
the end of May, the honeysuckle full open  
on the back fence, the bees travelling  
between trumpets. Notice these shadows,  
the green dapple up in the branches,  
as you come down in your cotton dress  
covered with the blue flowers.  
Say hello to Celia and Liz for me,  
put their pinks in water, set  
the vase at the front window.  
Lie down here on the sofa  
and go cold. Let's do it over and over.

## CAVES

I would not make you enter  
the caves, the cleft face  
where saplings hang by knotted  
hair-roots. I would not ever take you  
in through the dark passages  
with their cold greeting of fingers  
to where the lit white pools,  
the basins pitted with slow water  
still hollow their matrix of footprints.  
I would not take you in  
to where our own breathing  
pushes us both towards daylight,  
your screams slaked in lime, the fat  
droplets welling to completion.  
I would leave you to wait patiently  
in the circle of grey air above me,  
as I still went down to visit,  
following the roped causeway,  
the stars looping back through darkness  
to where you still are, sitting  
in summer grass, grateful  
you are not asked to go with me.

Susan Wicks

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

*The Red Azalea: Chinese Poetry since the Cultural Revolution*, ed. Edward Morin; trans. Fang Dai, Dennis Ding, Edward Morin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1990, xxix + 235 pp., \$35 cloth, \$14.95 paper)

*A Splintered Mirror: Chinese Poetry from the Democracy Movement*, trans. Donald Finkel (San Francisco: North Point, 1991, xvi + 101 pp., \$25 cloth, \$10.95 paper)

*Women of the Red Plain: An Anthology of Contemporary Chinese Women's Poetry*, trans. Julia C. Lin (Beijing: Chinese Literature Press, 1992; New York: Penguin, 1992, 162 pp., \$10 paper)

*Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry*, ed. & trans. Michelle Yeh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, lv + 245 pp., \$35 cloth, \$14.95 paper)

*Out of the Howling Storm: The New Chinese Poetry*, ed. Tony Barnstone (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England for the Wesleyan University Press, 1993, xxii + 155 pp., \$30 cloth, \$14.95 paper)

Recent books have widely increased the availability in the United States of contemporary Chinese literature, especially poetry. As a complement to more frequent publication in literary magazines and volumes by individual authors such as Bei Dao, Duo Duo, and Gu Cheng, the five anthologies listed above provide both a socio-political context and a substantial sampling of poets and poems.

Interest in the extraordinary poets who emerged in China following the collapse of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 has been growing for a decade: witness early translations in *Renditions* (Hong Kong), Perry Link's *Stubborn Weeds* (1983), "China Today" in *Nimrod* (1986), the *Beijing/New York* exchange of 1987, and the *BPJ's Smoking People* (1988/9). But it took increased access by Western translators to Chinese texts and the political tension/explosion of early 1989 to produce an audience and market for the volumes listed above. After five years it seems appropriate to evaluate what is available.

*The Red Azalea* features a long introduction by Leo Lee, who provides the average reader with a superb sketch of the culture from which modern and contemporary Chinese poetry emerged. The anthology aims at a comprehensive and diverse selection of poets from several generations. This breadth is valuable for English-speaking scholars unaware of recent Chinese literary history, but it results in very uneven poetry, ranging from rich creations by major poets such as Shu Ting to doggerel by government-endorsed versifiers.

A horsetail pine begs the wind  
To give him back his true shape.  
The wind keeps on mocking him,  
So he gets angrier  
But still can't stop shaking.

— Shu Ting, from “Montages in Twilight”

We've always been ordinary persons  
Like the two smallest stars  
On the horizon . . .  
Yet we also have the pride of common people  
Who willingly offer up our rendezvous  
For the sake of our motherland.

— Li Qi, “Spring Night”

The translations themselves are generally accurate, though often undistinguished as poetry in English. One positive aspect of *The Red Azalea* is the inclusion of at least some of the Chinese texts, which are absent in the other collections under consideration.

*A Splintered Mirror* is the first American anthology of *meng long* (misty or hazy) poets, including Bei Dao, Shu Ting, Duo Duo, Jiang He, Yang Lian, Mang Ke, Gu Cheng—the movement which began in the late 1970's and transformed Chinese poetry. Donald Finkel has the knack of creating terse American poems from the Chinese:

Above the snow line  
after the avalanches,  
something is quietly  
healing on the cliff.

Below the snow line  
 meltwater streams  
 through the lush marsh grass.

— Bei Dao, "Snow Line"

The translations sometimes suffer, however, from being too careless and more casual than the originals. Nevertheless, the book remains useful for its generous selection of *meng long* poems, for a preface which crisply demonstrates how seemingly innocuous poetry can be intensely political, and for its role in stimulating the Academy of American Poets to sponsor in the spring of 1992 a symposium, also called "A Splintered Mirror," which gathered *meng long* poets from all over the world.

Like Finkel's and Morin's volumes, *Women of the Red Plain* has a political slant, though here the angle is gender politics rather than national. The idea is a good one: Chinese women poets are generally underrepresented both in and out of the People's Republic. Like *The Red Azalea*, however, the book suffers from its inclusive quality. In one sense this is not Julia Lin's responsibility, since the volume was first published in Beijing as a government-authorized Panda Book. The selection, for example, from Shu Ting, China's most distinguished woman poet, is much more conservative than it might be. And although the text includes two important poets of the younger generation, Zhi Yongming and Tang Yaping, the selections themselves angle towards gender awareness without grappling with feminist issues acutely present in the PRC such as the contrast between official equity and actual oppression, between Mao's philandering and his "Women hold up half the sky." An important younger poet like Zhang Zhen is not represented in this volume; her powerful poem "Abortion" would amplify the discussion of gender issues. As a translator Julia Lin provides versions which seem fresh and smooth, though occasionally reflecting the simplistic quality of much official verse.

Michelle Yeh's *Anthology* is by far the most ambitious in this group. Starting with Hu Shi, the first Chinese free verse poet, and concluding with three poets born in the 1960's, the book includes sixty-six poets and more than three hundred poems, three times the number in any of the other volumes. As an editor Michelle Yeh distinguishes herself through her selection of

poets/poems—which is well-informed and representative, although unfortunately the most important *meng long* poet, Bei Dao, is absent due to copyright conflicts. As a translator she excels in both accuracy and accessibility/transformation. Her long introductory essay goes even further than Leo Lee's in laying out the necessary sociocultural background for the Western reader. Witness her translation of and commentary on a section of Wang Xiaolong's ironic "Taxis Always Come at Moments of Despair":

only when we got there did I remember  
the tie in my pocket  
I put it around my neck like a belt  
no, I'm not committing suicide

In contrast to Menglong poets, who often project a vision of the ideal world or the desire to retrieve a perfect world (nature, childhood), the poets of the Newborn Generation tend to accept human limitations, even make fun of them, and to be resigned to an imperfect world.

By including both mainland and Taiwanese poets and by arranging the poets in chronological order, the volume establishes an interesting correlation between the poetries on opposite sides of the Taiwan straits. If future editions manage to include Bei Dao, as well as stay current with recent poetry, the *Anthology* may remain for many years a standard source for anyone interested in the historical development of twentieth-century Chinese poetry.

*Out of the Howling Storm* is unique in this group in that Tony Barnstone has collected translations from various sources, though he and his primary collaborator Newton Liu have done perhaps half. The introduction is theory-laden, and perhaps consequently both more scattered and more provocative than the literary historical approach adopted by Leo Lee and Michelle Yeh. Here he quotes and discusses Mang Ke's "Ape Herd," as translated by Nicholas Jose and Wu Baohe:

in the cavities of empty heads  
the spider spins at leisure  
and one healthy chap  
drowns in his own piss

We see at last that the genesis that Mang Ke is describing is a genesis of death, a creation myth in which the world, created from incest and violence, becomes a wasteland, a “dead expanse of land” populated by human monsters who echo the domestic violence of the gods on a national level.

Overall, the quality of the translations varies considerably. A comparison, for example, of two Tang Yaping’s poems in both *The Red Azalea* and *Out of the Howling Storm* reveals a Barnstone/Liu translation that is more interesting, perhaps, but less smooth and accurate than the version by Edward Morin and his collaborators.

There can be little doubt the interest in Chinese writing created and reflected by these volumes stems partially from political concerns; their appearance so soon after the events of 1989 provides ready evidence, as do the subtitles, the poets, and the poems selected. This is particularly fascinating in that many of the poets themselves might wish to divorce politics and literature. Bei Dao, for example, clearly states, “I am a dissident, but I am not a dissident poet.” Perhaps it is time for an anthology which, without denying the political dimension, has as its goal simply a selection of the best poems of the past fifteen years.

One final note: For those wishing a very different experience of recent Chinese literature, the volume *Under Sky Under Ground*, ed. Henry Y H Zhao & John Cayley (London: WellswEEP, 1994) provides a selection of prose and poetry in translation but chosen by the Chinese artists themselves from the most significant Chinese literary journal of our time, *Jintian* (*Today*), founded by Mang Ke and Bei Dao in 1978, revived in exile in 1990. Though the quality is uneven, the chance to see

very recent work by major writers as well as numerous poets included in none of the other volumes provides both an extension and correction to them, and a sense that this is a literature which remains very much alive.

John Rosenwald and Yanbing Chen

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

*The Best American Poetry 1994*, A. R. Ammons, editor; David Lehman, series editor (New York: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1994), xii + 278 pp., \$13. paper.

As the editor of the seventh volume in this invaluable series, Ammons gets to make two statements about the poetry of our day. First, he has an introduction to write, defining his vision of what Poetry can do. Then he gets to provide examples from his reading in American literary periodicals for one year (1993). Each poet selected also gets two chances: first, the testimony of the poem itself, then a statement about that poem in an appendix. The canon-mongers will read this volume one way: seventy-five poets, fewer than half of whom have appeared in previous editions. Poets reading it will plunge in, riding the surge of familiar tides but also feeling the lift of strange new swells. Readers eager to learn how to read the poetry of their day will find glorious diversity, along with the friendly assistance of the prose commentaries. Teachers will want all this for their students. Literary historians will know they have their fingers on the pulses of the nineties. Ammons is as a guide both adventuresome and trustworthy.

And Ammons lets us know where he stands. "Language is the medium that carries the inscription, but what is inscribed in poetry is action, not language." There now! He accepts the Aristotelian concept of imitation, and like Aristotle is moral in a profound sense: poetry for him reveals through language "what we would have our behavior imitate or strive for." It produces a sense of "renewed vitality," and provides "access to a knowledge of the meaning of behavior in our time." Perhaps this sounds austere; it's anything but. The significance of *action* shows in the powerful energy of the poems Ammons selects. They sing and

dance, wrestle and wrench, laugh, lament, copulate and dream and dive. There are some cryptic poems in this collection, some shallow and some turgid ones, but none that are limp or lazy.

So what is the poetry of the nineties like? As Ammons sees it, remarkably diverse. There are some predictable categories: post-modernism for example. Michelle T. Clinton's "Tantrum Girl Responds to Death" tells a story "without the linear, ideological, and consequently manipulative aspects of traditional fiction." The eleven stanzas look like prose, but the prose is cadenced, and the lineation is marked: "she didn't know me/ i winked at her/ i dragged her into my masturbatory fantasies/ i tried to lift my skirt & wave the vanilla scent i use to lure butch gay girls/ sex and death is dancing." I don't see how this narrative is less ideological or this form less manipulative than conventional fiction, but I do recognize how for the poet the freedom from formal and verbal and subject-matter taboos has been liberating. It was a bit of a shock to discover how conventionally "moral" was the end: "don't wanna this shit sticking to me/ don't wanna pay for arrogance in the death of some beloved/ death could come around and kick me in the ass good/" Here the post-modern stance breaks down, and the old timeless cause-and-effect determinism snaps its whip.

Another category of poems is, unsurprisingly, the elegy – from Amy Clampitt's anticipatory elegy for "A Catalpa Tree on West Twelfth Street," through Janet Sylvester's grieving for a lover dead of AIDS in her almost-sonnet sequence "Modern Times," to one of the truly major poems of the year, Donald Hall's "Another Elegy" in memory of the composite modern poet "William Trout." With so much of the age-old natural and cultural life of our planet disappearing while we stand by in impotent grief, the elegy is an appropriate mode. And as most of these elegies illustrate, we are grieving for ourselves as much as for the departed, sometimes as candidly as in Sylvester's "Without you, who remembers me?" But the finest elegies, like Hall's, face the reality of the human condition bravely and unblinkingly, accept the implications, celebrate the joys and creations of the passed life, and try to answer Chaucer's question: "what thing may this signifye?"

Very rare among these poems is any treatment of the great political, scientific, and cultural revolutions of our age – very rare

any sense that the poem's moment has any past or future. Dick Allen's "A Short History of the Vietnam War Years" is perhaps the most significant of these exceptional few. Begun as a parody of surrealism, the poem apparently took on a life of its own and became the vehicle of a dreamy collage of allusions and associations. Allen explains, "The Surrealism I began with an intent of mocking became deadly serious and paradoxically realistic." I find his poem accurate and moving:

Mai Lai fell half-asleep  
Under the full-thrust moon. On bruised hands and knees,  
Tet advanced along the shadowed railroad ties  
And the deltas awoke and flooded Washington.

Instead of outer breadth and depth, many of these poems seek for an inner depth. I say *seek* because I have the impression that the poet is using the process of composition as a means of exploration of the mysteries of the psyche. The danger is solipsism, but it is through such pioneering that the poet, as Freud discovered, "hat es immer bekannt" (has known it all already). So we can share the process here through poems of free association, dreamscapes, intense self-observation, and often the relentless worrying of the sexual moment with language. Consider Jeffery McDaniel's "Following Her to Sleep," with its wicked lines, "I pay an elderly man to sit in a booth/ and keep track of what crosses my mind." And Alan Shapiro's poignant Orpheus story in reverse, "The Letter." And Sharon Olds' lyric narrative of transcendent love, "The Knowing." And James Cummins's explicitly sexual but curiously abstract "Sestina."

Flipping through the book, I had a visual impression that there was little or no free verse in it. Most of the poems are arranged in what look like stanzas. Even lineated prose is made to appear formal. The poets' commentaries frequently discuss the fun they have had with the form. Cummins turned to the sestina "to contain and form prose rhythms." Henry Weinfield's "Song for the In-Itself and For-Itself" has fourteen of its fifty-six lines rhyming *self*, and he brags that "it was through the necessity of rhyming that the poem generated many of its details." I enjoy the buoyancy of the resulting lyric, though I confess I wince when I come to "the views of every other elf." One could profitably use this volume as a text in a prosody

class, not just for the examples of dramatic blank verse (Tom Disch), parodic elegiac hexameters (Hall), sonnet sequences (Mark Jarman's "Unholy Sonnets"), shapely melodic lyrics (John Hollander, Ramola Dharmaraj), but for a broad spectrum of contemporary prosodies. Especially interesting among these are the techniques of the cinema, such as fast cuts, montages, and surreal sequences. Tom Andrews makes the most entertaining use of these devices in his "Cinema Vérité." Here is the death of Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

*The camera pans a gorgeous snow-filled landscape: rolling hills, large black trees, a frozen river. The snow falls and falls. The camera stops to find Tennyson, in an armchair, in the middle of a snowy field.*

Tennyson:

It's snowing. The snow is like . . . the snow is like  
crushed aspirin,  
like bits of paper . . . no, it's like gauze bandages,  
clean teeth, shoelaces, headlights . . . no,  
I'm getting too old for this, it's like a huge T-shirt  
that's been chewed on by a dog,  
it's like semen, confetti, chalk, sea shells, woodsmoke,  
ash, soap, trillium, solitude,  
daydreaming . . . Oh hell,  
you can see for yourself! That's what I hate about film!

*He dies.*

Here are many of the elements that recur throughout this anthology: a wacky humor, an indulgence in incoherent catalogues, an irreverence toward sacred cows, an inventiveness in form and content, a relish for demotic language, a shattering of syntax, a non-linear treatment of time and space, and above all a gusto for the process of composition in new forms.

Up to here my review has been largely descriptive. It is now time for some evaluation. My examples will suggest that I do not find the poems in this volume equally successful. Several, even by some of our best-known senior poets, seem to me slight and even vapid. Several others would be totally obscure were it not for the poet's explanatory notes. But the proportion of so-so poems seems to me lower in this volume than in its predecessors. And none strikes me as downright feeble.

I have yet to mention some of the strongest poems here. Three of them, though radically different in their subjects and voices, illuminate aspects of a sick society. One is Tom Disch's extraordinary "The Cardinal Detoxes: A Play in One Act." Here is a sixteen-page blank verse drama, with more than four pages of the poet's comment on the play and its fate in the puritan theater. It takes Browning one step beyond the dramatic monologue – only the Cardinal speaks, but he is attended by a monk, a functionary of the order of the Most Holy Blood. The drama is powerful. Disch has mastered the almost extinct art of dramatic blank verse. It might be a fragment of Jacobean gothic, were it not so horrifyingly contemporary. And it is devastatingly anti-clerical. It would have been easy and discreet for the editors quietly to exclude it; they deserve our respectful gratitude for acknowledging its power as a poem.

Another very fine poem in the anatomy of our disordered time is Denise Duhamel's "Bulimia," a case history that on first reading seems merely that. Only on second and third reading did I see the artistry in the composition: the neat enjambment, the visceral rhythms of the varying line-lengths, the delicacy of the balancing of the sexual and the alimentary. And more than that, the tone: the compassion for the compulsion. Ammons wants a poem to help the reader understand behavior. This one is itself a significant action and also compels insight into the action.

Third is James Merrill's "Family Week at Oracle Ranch," an ironic counterpoint to the Disch and Duhamel poems – twelve chapters, in abca stanzas, leading the reader gently through a momentarily successful detox regimen. It is from tesserae like these that we may be able to construct a corner of the mosaic of our social malaise. But it will be only a corner, since none of the poems in this book takes a global look at the sources of our political and economic and social and individual distresses. These are American poems, and America comes off, in some of them, as not only profoundly disordered but psychologically insular.

Not all the strong poems are pathologies. I'll just mention four that are for me pure joy. W. S. Merwin's "One of the Lives" is explicitly autobiographical in cataloguing the fortuitous events

that have brought him to where he is. The poem is sensuous, swinging in long rhythmic units to its limpid conclusion. And every reader will be able to translate Merwin's instances into his or her own – and thus universal – story.

And I would praise Roald Hoffman's "Deceptively Like a Solid," reprinted from *Glass Technology*, with its exuberant celebration of the lore and language of glass. It's a delight to read, and it's wonderfully refreshing to savor a true poem in which the ego of the poet is not the overt or even covert subject of the action.

When it first appeared in *The New Yorker* I spent many days, literally days, working with Jorie Graham's "In the Hotel." I can only testify that they were days well spent, resulting in my profound respect for the integrity of her endeavor to record, more thoughtfully and sensitively than anyone has done before, the response of the body and the active intelligence to a period of wakefulness in a strange place.

Finally, in complete contrast to Graham's inward intensity: Kenneth Koch's "One Train May Hide Another" ("*sign on a railroad crossing in Kenya*"). Here are the opening lines:

In a poem, one line may hide another line,  
 As at a crossing, one train may hide another train.  
 That is, if you are waiting to cross  
 The tracks, wait to do it for one moment at  
 Least after the first train is gone. And so when you read  
 Wait until you have read the next line –  
 Then it is safe to go on reading.

The poem could have stopped there, but Koch's fertile imagination elaborates with two more pages of examples, the literal constantly somersaulting into metaphor. I had thought of tricky enjambment as a fairly recent device, but Kate Barnes calls my attention to Spenser's

Unhappy verse, the witness of my unhappy state,  
 Make thyself flutt'ring wings of thy fast flying  
 Thought, and fly forth unto my love . . .

Even better than any of Koch's examples is the opening of Duhamel's "Bulimia":

A kiss has nothing to do with sex,  
she thinks. Not really. That engulfing, that trying to take  
all of another in for nourishment . . .

On the level of the trains Koch's advice is fine. And it's apt and amusing at the first level of metaphor – poetic enjambment. It works very nicely, too, at a second level of poetic reading, to slow the reader down, to encourage closer attention to each line before moving on, though in rushing through a poem one is more apt to suffer from misses than from hits. As the cornucopia of Koch's other readings spills down the pages, wit and wisdom dance together – as they do throughout this really excellent anthology.

M. K. S.