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Cover
Wendy Kindred, detail of drawing, conté crayon and gesso, 42"x16', 1994, "What Is It Exactly That You Do For Him?"

EDITOR'S NOTE

As we approach our fiftieth anniversary in the year 2000, we have been examining and reaffirming our mission, planning anthologies of our poems and reviews, completing a fifty-year index on line, working to expand our circulation and readership, and looking forward to celebrating locally and nationally. As part of this millennial activity we have initiated a redesign of the magazine, by Mark Baldwin. With the new format ready to go, we saw no need to wait till 2000 to present it. So, as we begin volume 49, here it is.

You may have noticed that the magazine has a new address. No, we haven't moved. We still pick up the mail at our rural box overlooking Frenchman's Bay. But the box now says **24 Berry Cove Road, Lamoine, ME 04605**.

Please note also our new web address, and do check it out from time to time: **www.bpj.org**.

FREDERICK SMOCK

Frontiers

Little cabins in
a semicircle
off highway exit 14-B,
single pioneer units

of the Tuck-a-hoe motor inn,
to let by the week.
O refugees,
what do you flee,

what tragedies great
or small? What exigencies?
You who exit here
to begin

some other life
vast as the prairie
beyond those
tiny kitchen sinks.

TINA KELLEY

Hagop Sandaldjian's Microminiatures

I love the mere existence of the word patience,
a complex idea in a small word, two syllables
for the ability to wait and work calmly through adversity.

A complex idea in a small world, in the eye
of a needle, a sculpture made of dust motes,
painted with a sharpened human hair: Mister

Sandaldjian's tiny self portrait: his bald head rolling
down one of his hairs, suspended across the girders
of the needle his wife used to support them while he worked,

hunched over his microscope, building nine birds on one hair
of his 3-month old grandson, building the Pope holding a cross
two blood cells thick, adding color in the stillness between pulses.

Late at night, with less static, less dust, less vibration from traffic,
he'd work for 14 months on one. Miniaturists should wear silk,
refrain from speaking over their work. Breath kills. He crawled around

his table for weeks looking for the "supremely graceful ballerina
he refused to reattempt," lost in a typhoon sneeze. It is a curse
to be big. Think of a cat's bell and how hard it is to wear one.

I try to see what's inside the pupil of my eye, close up, closer,
and see only my own night. But Mr. Sandaldjian sees, and sculpts.
Invite me, sir, to the eighty-third chamber of your nautilus shell.

It is glorious to be little, like the shadow of a bird crossing the sun,
the brittle last wafer of soap, the morning's crescent moon,
the match's first sharp instant, its small smell bright as mustard.

J.W. MARSHALL

Not Sleeping There

The whole world grew lonely at once
when nurse said it's time and turned the light off.
I lay there like weight in a balance
equal at least to the bedside machinery.

Everything's knitting they'd told me—
walking's not out of the question—
while mother predictable in her visitor's chair
knit a grand staircase in gray.

The nurse as she left drew the candle-wax curtains
closing the purse she thought I would sleep in
but I lay awake and studied my ghost.

When I was much younger I broke a toy truck
because I was angry and loved it.
                                                            I have lost
both halves.
                      We are inseparably parted.

J.W. MARSHALL

Sadness Therapy

On the second floor
the doors had plaques attached
to indicate the duties of their rooms.

Physical Therapy
Occupational Therapy
Chaplain and others.

Behind the Sadness Therapy door
a reproduction of Picasso's Guernica
took up most all of one wall.

And there were shelves
muddled with paper and stubby pencils
gray clay in glass jars

fringe and beads for macrame
and wood and paints and nails and glue.
Sit at that table my counselor told me

and focus on the horse's throat.
I want you to make me a model
of what you think it has to say.

I could not move.
That happens he said.
I'll take you back to your room now.

The t.v. in my room that night
played a talk show with the horse as guest.
The audience let go some laughter

while the hacked animal
tried to reassemble
in the yellow chair beside a potted palm.

I guess, the host said,
you knew Picasso extremely well.
I turned the channel

to a sports show
where they ran a clip of the horse
crumpled over a ten-foot putt

certain to rim it
and face the derision.
I switched then to the public station

where a panel discussed Picasso's Guernica.
The author of The Definitive History
of Bombing Civilians tisked and said

the deathtoll certainly doesn't warrant
the size of the canvas.
He said why then imagine Hiroshima.

The critic of the use of pigment
said I figure this more
as something for plastic. I'd rather be

walking among the jagged relics
than having to stand so far away.
The last panelist was The One True God

who said I'm simply perplexed
by such sympathetic treatment of
what was after all a box of beasts

that fell apart. Don't they all?
I turned the t.v. off.
There was no more need.

I'm ready to go home
I told the doctors on their morning rounds.
Have you made a model of the horse's voice?

Look at me
I said
knowing the answer.

CANDICE STOVER

Another True Story

1

A man walks out the door waving
and comes home dead. "Goodbye,"
he waves. He kisses wife and daughter.
"See you in a week." The door closes
behind him. He flies away in the sky.
Safely he lands at a Baltic dot on the map
with the ashes of his mother to honor
her last request: "May I rest beside
my mother in the earth of our homeland."
Briefly he leaves her beside his bed
in a swept room overlooking a bit of river
historical and lustrous in the distance.

Shall we walk with him down the avenue,
past three cats napping in sunlight?
Shall we pause while he stops at a corner
where the vendor of flowers has waited
for every spring since she was nine?
Shall we watch him make a gesture
of the living? Hand, pocket. Pocket,
coins. Coins, hand. Mimosa for the grave.

2

Fast-forward to the cemetery: its thin
sunlight, a human huddle of black,
the particularity of a bird whose song
he's never heard crying over the ceremony
in his mother's tongue.

Who knows what revolves in his heart?

3

Two days later, after clasping hands
with cousins and uncles, after wandering streets
the feet of his mother knew as a girl, the man
falls face-first into his open suitcase.
Outside this quiet room where his heart has stopped
(its flowerpot, its windowsill), a man he might have
been prunes vineyards for another season.
A bumblebee drones and buzzes in plain curtains
a breeze barely stirs. You know the necessity →

of what happens next. Someone must find him.
Someone must call the men in well-cut jackets
to lift the body of their brother in dialect. Someone
must call his wife, across the gaps and static
of a trans-Atlantic telephone call, to reach her
on a sunny morning lit by lilacs near the harbor.

A body is such a fact to contend with.
The authorities' questions, the forms.

And then, his daughter.

4
Fifteen years old. When the telephone rings,
she is upstairs eating the chocolate-chip cookie
that will change her life. She is not even thinking
of her father as she goes to the landing and looks
down to the shock of her mother's streaming face.
What on earth is she saying?

The story begins.

无 题

被雾打湿
念头像被寒流
抖落的鸟群
你必忍受年龄
守望田野
倾听伟大音乐中
迂回的小径

而你是否会被
演奏所忽略
荒芜呵

不，简单
而并不多余
那赞美
那天空与大地
在水面之吻

BEI DAO

Untitled

drenched in the fog
ideas like a flock of birds
shaken off by a cold current
you have to endure your age
keeping watch over the field
listening to intricate paths
in splendid music

perhaps you'd be ignored
by the orchestra
O desolation

No, simple
but not excessive
eulogy
the kiss on the water's surface
between sky and earth

开 锁

我梦见我在喝酒
杯子是空的

有人在公园读报
谁说服他到老到天边
吞下光芒？
灯笼在死者的夜校
变成清凉的茶

当记忆斜坡通向
夜空，人们泪水浑浊
说谎—在关键词义
滑向刽子手一边

滑向我：空房子

一扇窗户打开
像高音C穿透沉默
大地与罗盘转动
对着密码—
破晓！

BEI DAO
Unlock

I dream I am drinking wine
the glass is empty

someone's reading the newspaper in a park
who persuaded him into old age, to the sky's edge
swallowing lights?
a lantern becomes cold tea
at the night school for the dead

when the slope of memory led up toward
the night sky, people with clouded tears
lied—slipped to the executioner's side
at the crux of meaning

slipped to me: an empty house

a window opens
like a high C cutting through silence
the earth and the compass, turning
line up for the code—
daybreak!

变 形

我背对窗外田野
保持着生活的重心
而五月的疑问
如暴力影片的观众
被烈酒照亮

除了五点钟的蜜
早上的情人正老去
他们合为一体
哦乡愁大海上的
指南针

写作与桌子
有敌意的对角线
星期五在冒烟
有人沿着梯子爬出
观众的视野

BEI DAO

Transfiguration

I face the field in the window backward
maintaining the gravity of life
queries of May
as if the violent movie's audience
lit up by liquor

except for the honey at five o'clock
the morning lovers are getting old
they have joined as one
O the compass needle
over the sea of homesickness

there are diagonals of hostility
between the writing and the desk
Friday is smoking
someone climbs along a ladder
out of view of the audience

转椅

我走出房间
象八音盒里的阴影
太阳的马臀摇晃
在正午站稳

转椅空空
从写作漏斗中
有人被白纸过滤:
一张褶皱的脸
险恶的词

关于忍受自由
关于借光

心，好像用于照明
更多的盲人
往返于昼夜间

BEI DAO

Swivel Chair

I walk out of the room
like a shadow out of the music box
the sun's haunch wobbles
comes to its feet at noon

the swivel chair
is empty
in the funnel of writing
someone is filtered through paper:
a wrinkled face
some vicious words

about enduring freedom
about borrowing light

heart, as if for illuminating
more of the blind
shuffling between day and night

寂静与战栗

—给 *B. Breytenbach*

你画下你自己
诞生—光线升起
翻动纸夜

你释放的疯狂
是铸造寂静的真理
骄傲如内伤闪烁
使话语暗淡

在秘密的战栗中
那些私立学校
穿制服的天使们
变成鱼，质问大海

风阅读车辙
向疼痛以外的蓝丝绸
致敬

BEI DAO

Quiet and Tremble

for B. Breytenbach

you are drawing yourself
being born—light's rising
turning the paper-night

madness that you released
is quiet cast by truth
pride shines as if internal wounds
darken all the words

in secret trembling
those angels in uniforms
of a private school
become fish, querying sea

a wind reads ruts
saluting the blue silk beyond
pain

JENNY DESAI

The Widow Bride

They show me how to be
  his wife; his mother
and her sister trail
  the grown-up silks,
the jewels. It's Washington

outside the window. Deep
  July. The heat hangs
in bright folds, it has no need
  of us. We glow in it.
We shine. Today I am

their work: they wrap
  the thin cloth all the way
from India; below my waist
  the white pleats, white
across my shoulder.

Pinned. To make the pleats
  more fluid, to preserve
the lines—and this is not mine:
  how their mother wore
the almost-lace of this weave,

widowed young; the heft
  of its unsentimental
shape and if I wear it now
  I am the palest copy,
I must get the details wrong

and go on wrong. She lives,
  too frail to translate here
and I fill out the sari, I relash
  the petticoat to this space
underneath the rib—

the floating one, internal,
  which can still be trained
to hold up what is freely
  given, all that white of it
in someone else's hands.

JENNY DESAI

Like Coriander Seed, Like Honey

That summer, bodies offered up
from ice floes, from the almost flesh
a bog becomes when it is fed
by others. Worshipped like the one

scar: air and earth. The bones
we grew, protruding of their own will.
Water, air. We lived on them,
bromeliad and supplicant.

That summer you could read
the stomach contents. *Skin: taut.*
*Skin: chemical—exposed—*the brown
of ipecac in bottles she kept

swathed in scarves, the throat
silk. She would disappear too,
come back sacrificial, gleaming
when I read to her. The earth,

I said, the earth gave up
small loaves then. Manna.
Someone feeding us. Look.
Showing us the way to go on.

JIM QUINN

Her Road Song

He's driving, we're fighting, I forget
what about: his drinking, his druggy
son, my possessiveness, my envy, my tone
of voice with his wife, his condescending
shit head manner, my drinking, his wife
who's never going to be his ex-wife, his
driving, my criticizing, I never or is it
he never bothers to fill the tank, check
the oil, we get madder, madder, madder,
we know how to make each other.

He starts honking the horn, like always,
drowning me out, himself out, drowning out
anything we say or think, I'm, "La, La,
La!" singing, like I always do, no song,
no tune, no words first, then words, words,
        "Oh I'm just so hap-pee!
        Riding along with my sweet hon-eee!"
Slapping the roof of the car, slap, slap,
in time to the honks, singing loud as I can.
Slap, slap, like a gun, like bullets hitting,
like punches."Hap-pee! Hon-ee! Riding along!"
Anybody who saw, if they did, I guess must've
thought probably, "Only one car? What a tiny wedding!"

ROBERT JOE STOUT

From the Diary of Diana Abney, Welch Camp, Nevada, 1863

Three weeks into winter she wrote simply

Here we cannot stay

Twenty-two days later she explained

So cold inside the house
we sleep inside the mine

And on November 29

I hitch the horses
Leave the boys with brother
Drive the rig to town

Town being shacks around the Golden Finger
And Adelphi mines eighteen miles away, where Brady Andes
Ran a store, whorehouse, stable and saloon.

Pickle smell. Tobacco spit.
Drunken Irish stumbling
Off to sleep with horses.
Never change their clothes.

Saw herself in Andes' mirror—skin
So chapped the curves along her cheeks
Had cracked and blistered. Her lips' slabs
Of frozen bacon couldn't force a smile.

Fought over crackers. Beans.
Tried to trade me flour
filled with worms. Said he worried,
my being woman, driving back alone.
I said I worried being here.
I'd take my chance with wolves.

ROBERT JOE STOUT

Welch Camp, Nevada, 1864: Diana Abbey Meets the Man She Eventually Will Marry

The boys, used to rattlers, wolves, explosions
In the mine, scampered back to hide
Behind their mother's skirt. Feet apart, hands
Braced against her hips, she watched the awkward bundle
Waddle towards her through the dust.
Tarantula with keister arms, the poles
That held them dipping as it grunted
Towards her, a boy within the straining face
Peeking out as if to ask: *The street?*
Is it safe? To play in? She laughed,
Then cupped her hands across her mouth.
"Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean!" But he grinned,
I am what I am his shrug seemed to confirm
There beneath poles and a pack on his back
That was twice his size, lumped
With kettles and coats and brushes and books.
"Would you like some water?" she approached,
Then stiffened, seeing her image in her eyes:

> *Hard gray woman twice 35*
> *Ugly with anger so thick*
> *It hardens her skin*
> *And crusts her eyes*

"Ah-h-h!" While the boys ran to serve him,
His burnt lips proffered a grateful smile.
"That a beautiful woman should be so kind!"
His accent thick with *zs*'s and *zh*'s,
Syllables placed like alphabet blocks
One-by-one, each tenuous, teetering, about to fall.
Instead, she fell. "Oh God!" she felt her life there
Crack, her hard, ugly man-hating shell,
The dirt and the pain, the enduring
It all. Coughing up spasms of animal loss,
She dropped to her knees and yowled.

> *Wolves in my chest.*
> *The screams of their prey.*
> *Unable to stop. The boys afraid.*

But not him. Not the Jew. Eyes filled
With tears, he slumped down beside her,
Voice seeking a wail to cadence her cries,
Hurt as deep as the earth itself. "Oh God!"
She whispered and reached for shoulders
As strong as horses' hams. "Oh God!" again
As she forced a smile. "Perhaps," he began
A new little tower of children's blocks,
"You buy kerchief? Or perfume?"

ROBERT JOE STOUT

Diana Abney, Welch Camp, Nevada, 1864, the Morning After the Miners Tried To Burn the Jew

Dreamed of Wales. Gypsy
Carts. The Rhondda fair.
Penny tarts. Parasols.
Flowers in my hair.

Little knockings hammered at the fringes
Of the dream. She twisted, half-awake
To warped wood walls, mining dust,
Then clenched her fists to get it back
—Young voices pelting their spring rain
Across the songs of mountain birds.
Awoke, alone inside the square bare room,
And heard birds sing: her youngest son
Laughing like the child he had a right to be.

No childhood here. No toys.
No kites. No climbing trees.
Father gone. And me?
Each day more of me dies.

She paused beside the kitchen door.
Their guest, the Jew, sat on his pack,
A puppet in one hand. "Fire! Fire!"
The puppet squeaked and flailed his clothes
—As the Jew had done the night before
When the drunks from the tavern
Had torched him. "Again! Again!"
James, the boy, clapped but the Jew,
Seeing her, hid his hand in his lap.

Boy-man. Trembling lips.
Impish light in his eyes.
Smile like a mouse
Trying to hide.

"Playink," he whispered, "za boy und I,
We no harm meant. . ." As he lifted
His hand, the puppet tucked its head
To its chest, quivered, giggled, peeked
At her with a squirming, embarrassed dance.

I laughed. James covered
his face. His eyes opened wide.
Like seeing a flying mule
so surprised. James! My cry
deep inside. I can laugh!
Did you think I can't?

The Jew watched, blinking; the puppet
Clapped its flopping hands. "You're. . ." *funny*
She touched the expression his face had arranged,
Then altered. "I hate this place!
They could have killed you, don't you care?"
The puppet shrugged. "Zey could of, zey di'n't."
It seemed to bow. "To laugh is za only vealth
I know"—the Jew's voice now, his head tucked
Away as the puppet looked up,
Then wiggled forward to catch
And caress her callused, quivering hand.

ELIZABETH TIBBETTS

A Nurse Reads *A Book of Luminous Things*

She picks it up in stray moments,
one poem while the water boils,
but on duty, the book stays in her bag,
hidden and reassuring as her working heart.

At the moment the towel dispenser
enrages her as it emits one inadequate
square of rough paper—seconds she doesn't
have—there are pills to give,

catheters and dressings to change,
and Mabel is sitting in her doorway crying
forever, "I'm so afraid, where am I?"
because the line from her mind to her throat

is broken, and touch, hot coffee,
a shawl and Xanax haven't helped.
Outside the open windows, evening
is lavender light and the scent of lilacs.

Summer rises from earth's body,
the air ripe and shimmering.
Inside, the call bells ring, a sound
that pierces like a needle along a hem.

"Jesus," the nurse says quietly, unable
to imagine past 11:15 when she'll leave.
Up the hallway comes Joe in his wheelchair,
his feet walking as he wheels, lost inside

Alzheimer's, incessantly moving.
He pauses at the desk,
holds up a calendar for her, and says,
clearly, loudly, "June!"

and smiles so fully she can see the letters
click into place in his brain,
where the word is opening a road
lined with trees bent beneath the weight

of purple blossoms, and he is driving slowly,
the radio on, and his true love,
who's a very young woman, sits neatly
beside him when anything is possible.

PHILIP BOOTH

Reach Road: *In Medias Res*

A roadside field, shielded
on three sides by woods.
Last fall a small meadow.
Now March, in noon sun,
a small snowfield, bright
as a high arctic summer.
Deep in glanced light,
old stonewalls tumble
through conifers, back
in woodlots without
a leaf left, far from
October's gold leaves
that blind a man, or tug
him toward May's first
green to replay Eden.

Driving Reach Road along
a stillness of snow,
the old Mailman on
his Rural Mail Route
keeps his weather-eye
out for views newly
deep. Bared hardwoods'
barred shadows, raw
woodsroads leading
to last winter's slash.
The still frozen marsh.
A slumped barn. Steeped
in new light, the North
bank of a West-running
brook gets high sun to
melt it. Roots expose:
a family graveyard, iron-
fenced, is alight amid
a caucus of crows.

Given his fifty-
week six-day-job,
after thirty years
of learning by

teaching, small wonder
that through tri-focals,
the Mailman both watches
the road and searches
for meaning, reading
the equinoctial woods.
Yet keeping going
he routinely stops,
starts, stops, drives left-
footed, thoughtlessly
steers with his left hand
to let himself lean
his right hand out
the righthand window to
put today's mail into
the right rural box.

■

Whatever the weather,
or hours lost to sleep,
he every day, for sake
of his soul, lifts down
a book from his highest
bookshelf: Emerson's
Journals, Rachel Carson,
Carruth or Jeffers;
Roethke, Eudora Welty,
Frost; Hawking's *Brief
History*, and *Endgame*.
He believes, without
prayer, in an ongoing
universe: Reach Road
not least, as the Sun
—systematically
solo as an old
Mailman—appears to
see to it that Earth,
both spinning and
tilting, continually
keeps its appointed
Grand Rounds. Consoled
as he is by orbits

→

and constellations,
he keeps at heart
the burdensome time
between Thanksgiving
and Christmas: long days
or short light. Nights
weighing the more as
they measure the years
since his single sister's
slow December death.

Come September, there
still are evenings
when he keeps driving
into the dark on
automatic pilot.
Yet given today,
given sun to space,
he lifts his whole life
toward high June, the hemi-
sphere's season of lives
returning to wildwoods,
salt tides: the roadside
Edenic with daisies,
buttercups, clover.
High Season, too, for
Bostonian generations:
migrating again to
inherit white-clapboard
houses, shingle cottages,
tennis courts, sailboats,
island picnics, informal
gardens brilliant as
Northwest-wind days.

Homing his Jeep Wagoneer
through its March rounds in
equinoctial light, he
eases toward early supper,
reclaiming the sense

an old summer poet
once told him: something
like *Life consists of*
propositions about
its very self. Washing
dishes, he happily
figures that, save for
the leaves, an evening
next September will
closely mirror today's
slants of light. So
self-informed, stepping
outside to relieve
himself, he checks for
first stars and planets.
He quiets. Yet even
before he sinks into
bed, he starts dreaming
June's dreamy teen-age
daughters, swarming
every high noon around
their familiar Rural
Route boxes. Gigglingly
waiting for boy-mail
(postmarked the like of
Concord, Lincoln, Milton,
Brookline or Chestnut Hill),
they dance barefoot, their
body language already
encoding their laughter.
Mailman ever, barely
asleep, he smiles to
himself the smiles
the girls give him when
he delivers. Moonstruck
already, now that Earth
spins him to snore, he
finds himself wishing,
on every star, returns
from his first kissings.

Three-hundred-and-sixty-
some days a year, he
wakes in the dark. Well
before sun-up, he feels
his heart stretching,
embracing pure morning.
Today he begins by
returning the *what-cheer*
what-cheer whistle of
a lone cardinal. Then
he opens to whatever
page of his bedside
Walden. After break-fast,
ritual ablutions, he
checks the barometer,
steps down into the barn,
and sidles up to his
faithful Jeep, as if
this was Horsepower Farm.
Routinely, he swipes
his left sleeve over
three capital words on
the driver's ridged door:
TIME'S WINGÈD CHARIOT,
the motto he painted on
his first truck, and all
after. Which marvel
reminds him about
the Mexican poet
who said *Light is time*
thinking about itself.
Timely, ever, he starts
his new chariot up
over Sedgwick Ridge
toward the Blue Hill P.O.;
where, before seven, he
must sort the mail-load
he's bound to deliver
all along old Reach Road.

Shifting gears again
up the barren ridge,
navigating toward
the small mountain
that gave name to
the town, he misses
last week's splendid
Snowy Owl, likely
flown to its summer
tundra. Thinking time
and place in his own
life, he recollects
that Thoreau, three
half-centuries ago,
thought he might be
a mail-carrier in Peru.

Driven down Blue Hill's
Tenney Hill, Peru aside,
he finds time to stop in
at Partridge Drugs for
his herbal tea, sitting
with coffee drinkers
at Maine's longest Soda
and Snack Bar, the usual
gossip going full tilt.

Five minutes more. Drives
two hundred feet, stops
at the clapboard front
of the P.O., backs down
to the loading platform.
Before he climbs up
the six granite steps
to start sorting, he
stretches from neck down,
his feet at the edge of
Blue Hill's inner harbor,
sun shimmering against

the ebb of the tide.
Cleaning his glasses,
he tries to figure
how, on such mornings,
he has, over nineteen
years, been his own man.
Signed on for one more,
weathers and tides not
withstanding. He asks
himself *How can*
one love,
love life without
the pondering. Confused,
he starts up the stairs,
gets his left-foot half-
up on step five, which
twists him backward as
gravity tugs him down to
hard ground, lying there
next to his Jeep. They
say Thayer Hatch got to
him first, yelled back
to the mailroom to go
for help. Aside from
putting a big coat
over him, there wasn't
much help. Not until
the town ambulance came.

▪

Came it did, red lights
flashing, two on-call
EMT's, a volunteer
driving. All calm as
could be, once they found
the scene safe. Took his
pulse and his airway,
started IV, though his
bleeding was superficial.
Let his eyes answer
their questions. Played
safe with a collar,

→

strapped him onto
a longboard and lifted
him into the litter.
Transported him in
supine position, back up
to Partridge Drugs; hooked
a quick left, and two
quick rights, into
the Ambulance Entrance
at the town hospital.

Once they'd rolled him
inside, under familiar
cover, interns, nurses
in the ER took over.
Checked him inside and
out, his head full of
stars, altogether
too woozy to figure.
Long after noon he
finds he's flat out in
bed, a young LPN
checking the slow IV,
her hand soothing his
forehead and neck. When
the fine new doctor
came back from her day-
conference Downeast,
he hears without memory
that the CAT-scan was
clear, that his buttocks
saved all bones but his
left big toe. She said
what probably happened
was a Syncopic Episode,
likely an irregular heart-
beat; *i.e.* a blackout.
Told him he'd be home
in a day or two. Exit
this wonder; old Mailman
drifts off, heart beating

to Roethke's iambics:
I wake to sleep and
take my waking slow.
Beyond midnight, as
a new nurse shows up,
he says it again,
and sleepily adds
to her, and himself,
I learn by going
where I have to go.
When she leaves, he
mumbles his nightly
Augustinian prayer:
Night shall release
its splendor that
morning shall appear.

▒

Appear it did, through
the Northeast window,
his curtain open wide,
thanks to the recent
night nurse. With tri-
focals busted, no
need for a bedside
Walden. Yet his eyes
sufficiently clear to
see Old Sol pretend
to climb up over
a far horizon. Thus
does a Mailman get
to play the Thoreau
he knows by heart: *Only*
that day dawns to which
we are awake. There
is more day to dawn.
The sun is but
a morning star.

▪

Gospel well taken,
he means to seize
the day: first scanning
across the inner
harbor to Sea Side
Cemetery; then over
gravestones, he lifts
his eyes up unto
Blue Hill Mountain:
a bedrock mound, long
anchored under the
Laurentide ice-sheet.
Marvelling, he re-
members Geology I:
the ice, some fourteen-
thousand years back,
began to melt and
recede, the salt sea
following inland;
whales, seals, into Maine
bays. Land, in another
three thousand years, re-
bounding: Paleoindians
migrating from West and
South, camping below
the edge of the glacier,
their spearpoints ready
for mammoth and caribou,
searching grasslands under
the honking of snow geese.
Merged out of chaos
through hospital glass,
he wonders clearly
how creatures began
to approach, or re-
proach, who we have
seemed to become.

JAMES BERTOLINO

A Picnic Scene

Lift the wine while history
fogs you in. There's Dolores,
wearing her First Communion whites, undies
in pink—just thirteen months
before the accident. And young Joans—
why does Joans appear? Trying to warn her
with his hands?

Red blossoms, their sensual recesses;
the black dog with spotted tongue; a sequence
of striped worms perforating the landscape.
And hovering above, something feathered
casts an omen over the scene.

Arranged there, on muted cloth,
is the usual yellow china, and ripe fruit
which, catching the low sunlight, serves as center
for a gathering whose friendly postures
prove there are no masks.

Behind it all foliage is busy
practicing its fractal variations, sometimes
hiding, sometimes revealing
the splendid, unsheathed
talons.

JAMES PATRICK MCPHERSON

Body Bag

Here's one
who listened
to his father.

Here's one
who listened
to his coach.

Here's one
who listened
to his sergeant.

Who told him,
Find out who
you are.

Who told him,
Show us what
you're made of.

Who told him,
Get it all
together.

Read his tag,
That's who
he is.

Count his parts,
That's what he's
made of.

Zip him up,
He's all together,
Send him home.

RAY CLARK DICKSON

The Engagement

O, War, promise me
            your promiscuity
won't happen
when we're engaged,
lolling in some poppy field
in the serenity
of silence;
borrowing Napoleon's
military cot (much too short
for the fury of our
dalliances); think of all
those historical dates
we've had, mazurkas, foxtrots,
Lambeth Walks—
remember, dear, one more
infidelity
and I'll leave you—
you'll miss my bodycount,
the feeling of triumph
with my cold lips on yours.

RAY CLARK DICKSON

The Concert

There are no metaphors
to simplify
the emotions
I feel
the young woman
says to the Sexton
as she sits naked
in the church nave
playing the carillon.
I adore your nest, he says,
where the birds
of flesh
sing freely.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

MARION K. STOCKING

Anthologies: War and Peace

David Lehman, as general editor of ***The Best American Poetry*** series, has earned the gratitude of a decade of poets and readers of poetry. His wide-ranging selection of annual editors has created a steadily growing audience for what is an invaluable selection from the poems published in the year. I look forward to reviewing each volume as it appears. Now we have ***The Best of the Best: 1988-1997***, selected from the first ten volumes by Professor Canon himself, **Harold Bloom** (New York: Scribner Poetry [Simon & Schuster], 1998, 384 pp., $15. paper, 0-684-84779-5). In reviewing these anthologies, I cannot avoid evaluating editorial judgment, and here I cannot overlook Bloom's "Introduction," which astonishes me. He opens by asserting that two "great poets" remain today—predictably Ashbery and Ammons—but that culturally we are at the hot gates: "the multiculturalists, the hordes of camp-followers afflicted by the French diseases, the mock-feminists, the commissars, the gender-and-power freaks, the hosts of new historicists and old materialists—all stand below us" at this new Thermopylae, and he warns that they "will surge up and we may be overcome; our universities are already travesties." Whew! He then explains that in one of the decade's volumes he found nothing worth including and proceeds to employ the eleven pages of his introductory text to excoriate everything that omitted volume represents to him. The dangerous editor, whom he never mentions by name, is Adrienne Rich.

Now *The Best of the Best* is bound to be widely-read. I have noticed tall stacks of it in a local mass-market bookstore. It is being promoted for class adoptions. Bloom, conscious of establishing a canon of sorts, might have used his introduction to help new readers appreciate the greatness he admires in Ashbery and Ammons, represented here by six poems. But no. He proceeds to rain invective (unsupported by a word of evidence) on "the Culture of Complaint," the "hucksters—academic, journalistic, pseudo-artistic—I've named 'the School of Resentment,' a rabblement of lemmings leaping off the cliffs into the waters of oblivion." Bloom is justly proud of having helped "restore to the canon" Blake and Shelley, but resents their having to share space with the likes of Felicia Hemans. As for journalists (dirty word!): "*The New York Times* essentially is now a countercultural newspaper." Authentic American poetry, he insists, "is necessarily difficult; it is our elitist art." He praises Shakespeare and quotes Emerson at great length. (Proofreading has never been one of Bloom's strong points. In one of his quotations here from Emerson's "The Poet" I sadly tally ten textual errors, not surprising, I suppose, from the scholar who allowed Cythna

to appear as Cynthia throughout his in other ways very illuminating study of Shelley.)

For the conclusion of his introduction, Bloom strangely chooses to quote a passage in which Emerson exalts writers like Cornelius Agrippa and "any other who introduces questionable facts into his cosmogony, as angels, devils, magic, astrology, palmistry, mesmerism, and so on," as evidence of "departure from routine," a sort of liberating "madness." This praise for "departure from routine" apparently does not extend to the new poets Rich has introduced, but it does seem to throw open the gates not only to the excesses of adolescent Romanticism (of which *Frankenstein* was a wholesome critique) and to Ouiji boards, but to the whole New Age apparatus. While not ignoring the functions of angels in Milton and Rilke, of the supernatural in Coleridge and Hughes, of the craving for metaphysical machinery in Eliot and Yeats, I still object to the presence of such "questionable facts" as a primary criterion for an authentic poem. And I do not see the poems here as exemplifying this liberating "madness"—certainly not the poems by Ammons and Ashbery.

It is the social and especially the political climate of our day that Bloom most bitterly resents. Of Emily Dickinson he says: "like Whitman she did not have to confront ideological persuasions either irrelevant or inimical to aesthetic ambitions." Indeed? He introduces his one extended quotation of a poem in his introduction with the rhetorical flourish, "How do you politicise this?" *This* is from Tennyson's juvenilia: the last two stanzas of "Mariana," she of the "moated grange." He disregards the poet's indentations and misquotes both refrains, but Bloom's point is clear. This bit of Victorian sentimentality is praiseworthy because it defies a political reading. Remember how the final refrain goes (in Tennyson's text):

> Then said she, 'I am very dreary,
> He will not come,' she said;
> She wept, 'I am aweary, aweary,
> O God, that I were dead!'

Now remember that Mariana, in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, is the rejected betrothed of the ironically named puritan hypocrite Angelo. It is the saintly Isabella, after whom Angelo lusts, who, when she learns that Angelo has broken his nuptial oath, responds that Mariana might as well be dead. It is Isabella, in this profoundly political play, who confronts Angelo with "O, it is excellent/ To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous/ To use it like

a giant." And a little later: "Women? Help heaven! men their creation mar/ In profiting by them." Is Isabella conceivably the headmistress of the School of Resentment? It is hard to imagine that Bloom, self-confessed Bardolator, did not know the source of Tennyson's subject. It is hard to imagine that he does not understand the play as political, not only in its treatment of the act of governance but in the broader sense of dealing with all relationships of power. It is even harder, for me, to imagine this attack on political content in poetry from the author of strong books on—of all people—Blake, Shelley, and Yeats.

How then are we to comprehend the violence and irrationality of Bloom's tirade? I can only conclude that our amiable Brontosaurus, as he refers to himself, feels that he and the culture he has expounded and defended throughout a long and honorable career are so profoundly threatened by the work selected by Rich (including, incidentally, poems by Jane Kenyon, Stanley Kunitz, James Merrill, and W.S. Merwin) that he must abandon his Spartan position of defense and hurl himself madly at the Persian hordes. Were he really to visualize them "leaping off the cliffs into the waters of oblivion" he would hardly respond so intemperately.

I'd like to say to Harold Bloom, as one who has long derived profit and delight from his earlier work: Go back and reread the passage from that Whitman you quote in your "Introduction"—that Whitman, not of "self" or "soul," but the Whitman who "apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,/ Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary," who contemplates (rather self-consciously) "what will come next,/ Both in and out of the game, and watching and wondering at it." Not a Spartan stance, perhaps, but an open and dispassionate one. Perhaps you may read further in your "sacred Emerson" and (still in "The Poet") find: "Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boats and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for meters." I would wish for him to see that one art does not supersede another—Shelley does not supersede Blake, nor Yeats Shelley; that various forms and inspirations are not competing for a pass; that (back to Emerson) "all language is vehicular and transitive, and is good, as ferries and horses are, for conveyance, not as farms and houses are, for homestead." The poet who "unlocks our chains and admits us to a new

scene" may help even the most confirmed Bardolator not to fear the radical diversity, the multidirectional wealth of the poetry of our time.

I have given so much space to Bloom's Introduction both because it caused me such disappointment and distress and because I realize how widely these extraordinary ejaculations are being disseminated. As for the poems he has chosen, there are many predictable choices—multiple poems from Ammons, Ashbery, Hollander, Merrill, and Strand; fine individual poems from stalwarts like Kinnell, Walcott, Bishop, Merwin, Carson, and Jorie Graham. A few—very few—surprises, like Molly Peacock's "Have You Ever Faked an Orgasm?" The usual biographical notes and poets' comments follow, and David Lehman has added excerpts from the various editors' introductions, with his own appealing headnotes.

And immediately we have ***The Best American Poetry 1998***, edited by **David Lehman** and, this time, **John Hollander** (New York: Scribner Poetry [Simon & Schuster], 1998, 332 pp., $14. paper, 0-684-81450-1, $30. hardbound, 0-684-81453-6). Hollander is impressed with the kinds of variety he discovered: the range of figurativeness in the lyric persona—the qualities of fiction in first-person poetry. Hollander is a master of prosody, and he knows well that "all poetry is 'formal,'" acknowledging the art of the various modes of "free" verse as well as the traditional accentual-syllabics. Like Bloom, he assumes that "a travesty of poetry can occur when the immediate interests of any institutionalized moral, political, or sentimental agenda make their unrelenting claims of poetry's fictiveness." But he does say "can occur."

When I turn to his collection, I have several immediate impressions: a certain homogeneity (five or more poems each from *The New Republic*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Yale Review*, plus eight from *The New Yorker*); a generous inclusion of long poems (eleven poems of five pages or more, including thirty-two pages for Frank Bidart's "The Second Hour of the Night"); a leaning toward poetic sequences (including Karl Kirchwey's ingeniously versified "Roman Hours" and Edward Hirsch's "The Lectures on Love," with its seven engaging "lectures" by Baudelaire, Heine, the Marquis de Sade, Margaret Fuller, Leopardi, Emerson, and Colette); a good deal of light verse, or what passes for light verse in this age (a stand-up

comedy routine by Denise Duhamel, chatty monologues by Irving Feldman and Richard Howard, and an erotic romp, "The Bed," by C. K. Williams); a good many tightly constructed lyrics (several, by Donald Justice, Daryl Hine, and Allen Grossman, posing intellectual puzzles and depending for their solution on the clues provided in the endnotes); much conventional and nonce formality of prosody, with blank verse, rhymed couplets, terza rima, sonnets (rhymed and unrhymed), and two sestinas, including Agha Shahid Ali's magical "The Floating Post Office."

Hollander includes some strong political poems, while maintaining that the closer poetry gets "to the exposition of contemporary specifics, the more deliberately and effectively comic it had better be." That kind of statement always prompts me to consider examples: "The Masque of Anarchy"? "Sonnet: England in 1819"? "September 1913"? Of the four explicitly political poems here, only one, Anthony Hecht's ill-natured "*Rara Avis in Terris*," attempts a comic stance, and it is a sad failure. If one knows nothing about birds, one should avoid employing their stereotypes as the spinal metaphor of a poem. Strained rhymes and weary language ("groves of academe," "dead white European males") lead to a bathetic conclusion in which the "deathless leafage" of the olive branch carried by Noah's dove is "emblematic of/ A quarter-century of faultless love." (Noah's dove was required to carry only a *leaf* of olive, without the political and personal impedimenta.)

Some of the strongest and most rewarding poems in this collection are those that defy easy categories. I especially recommend, for a wild variety of reasons, J. D. McClatchy's "Descartes's Dream," Heather McHugh's "Past All Understanding," W. S. Merwin's "The Chinese Mountain Fox," and Derek Walcott's "Signs."

I am grateful for the wealth of long poems Hollander has chosen, though his judgment strikes me as astonishingly uneven. I am especially grateful for the braided voices of Frank Bidart's "The Second Hour of the Night." Thirty-two pages, and not a syllable too long. In his note Bidart tells us (though we shouldn't need to be told) that the poem is a journey "through a psychic landscape, a territory or set of issues that is part of our psyche." In this poem the territory is "Eros, the erotic. . . a series of linked erotic landscapes." The structure is a "realistic" narrative, followed by a "mythic" landscape, and moving to a dreamscape. This poem begins with two voices alternating: one beginning with the Shakespearean echo "*On such a night*" and moving into a slow dream-

like passage of subterranean procession. This segues into a four-page account of the Shakespearean actress who was the wife of Berlioz. A bridge passage carries us to the story of Myrrha, which occupies the major portion of the poem.

Ovid's account of Myrrha, as recorded in the song of Orpheus, has been recently translated by David Slavitt and by Ted Hughes. (In Alfieri's theatrical version it reduced Byron to sobbing convulsions.) The story of Myrrha's uncontrollable passion for her father Cinyras, of her guilty consummation and her metamorphosis into an aromatic tree (producing myrrh) still has power to move in Bidart's richly imaginative telling. As narrative voices weave in and out (suggesting how effective a performance might be) the poem resists excerpting, since its various strands are cumulative in their emotional force. But here is a sample, from the metamorphosis passage, to illustrate the flexibility of the prosody and the ways in which the poet deepens the narrative with psychological detail.

> *You are gods. Release me, somehow, from both*
> *life and death.*
>
> The gods granted her request. From her toes roots
>
> sprout; the dirt rises to cover her
> feet; her legs of which she never had been
> ashamed grow thick and hard; bark like disease
> covers, becomes her skin; with terror she
> sees that she must
> submit, lose her body to an alien
> body not chosen, as the source of ecstasy is
> not chosen—

Part III is a dream sonata in four parts, linking back to the introduction and moving beyond myth and history to the realm of poetry, fertile "*like those extinguished stars whose fires still give us light.*" From the myths of Myrrha and of Orpheus, from the passions of Berlioz and his doomed wife, from his own dreamlike imagination, Bidart has fused a complex vision of tragic passion. The poem is a wonder.

Altogether, *Best American Poetry 1998* is somewhat narrower and more uneven than some, but nevertheless a mine with some splendid jewels. The longer I studied it, the better I liked it.

In the opposite corner of the poetry ring from heavyweight Bloom (and I really loathe having to use that metaphor) is the heavyweight ***Poems for the Millennium: The University of California Book of Modern & Postmodern Poetry***, Vol. II, ***From Postwar to Millennium***, edited by **Jerome Rothenberg** and **Pierre Joris** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998, 902 pp., $65. cloth, 0-520-20863-3, $24.95 paper, 0-520-20864-1). The antagonistic bell sounds with the epigraph to the introduction: Aimé Césaire's "*Put up with me. I won't put up with you!*" The editors anticipate their audience in the first paragraph with the word *aporia* (though I hasten to add that the deconstructive jargon is not otherwise intrusive.) Rothenberg and Joris do define a poetry of opposition, an opposition to other modes of poetry, justified as a stance against the political, cultural, and environmental horrors of the century, or, in the case of the "Language" poets, against the "bardic, personalist impulses of the 60s." The resurgence of non-traditional poetry at mid-century, especially in America, was "a part of a much greater global whole" and was "not so much post*modern*—as it would come to be called—as it was post-bomb and post-holocaust." Fair enough. Nonetheless, the editors quote Pierre Guyotat as maintaining that "the very origin of the whole system of literature has to be attacked." We do indeed seem here to be at a sort of literary Thermopylae. *Pace* Harold Bloom, I believe one must study and respect this vast, multi-headed movement, and this generous volume makes it splendidly accessible. The introduction is comprehensive and explicit. Anyone concerned with contemporary literature should be familiar with it. The overall organization, with a Prelude and Postlude, divides into two super-chapters: "Continuities" (with selections from such as Stein, Stevens, Joyce, Pound, Williams, Breton, and Neruda) and "The Art of the Manifesto" (with Celan, Olson, Cage, Baraka, Parra, Bernstein, and others). Following each of these superchapters is an extensive "Gallery" of examples. The first Gallery includes mini-anthologies of the Vienna Group (Artmann, Jandl, *et al.*), the Tammuzi Poets (e.g. Adonis), "Cobra," concrete poetry, and some "Beat" poets. The second Gallery offers introductions to some oral poets, postwar Japanese poetry, "Neo-avanguardia," some "Language" poets, the Chinese "misty" poets (Bei Dao, Duo Duo, Gu Cheng, *et al.*), and a group, including Duchamp and Mac Low, titled "Toward a Cyberpoetics."

Throughout the volume are extraordinarily crisp and helpful commentaries by the editors, providing historical continuities and explanations. Rothenberg and Joris acknowledge that, unlike their first volume, this is compiled from inside the movement. Some may find this personal

involvement a limitation, but I have been dazzled by the wealth of their knowledge of these radically diverse writers and performers and am profoundly grateful for the breadth and depth of their editing. The uneasiness of confrontation that I felt at the beginning soon gave way to a rejoicing in the richness and variety of the feast. And the scholar in me welcomes this, along with Volume I, as a major reference work for our century.

A new Norton anthology is always news, and the latest is monumental: ***World Poetry: An Anthology of Verse from Antiquity to Our Time***, edited by **Katherine Washburn** and **John S. Major**, with **Clifton Fadiman** as General Editor (New York: Norton and The Book of the Month Club, 1998, 1338 pp., $45. hardbound, 0-393-04130-1). My first impression was good: the book lies open easily; the type is readable; the design is graceful. The contents range widely, both chronologically and globally, from the "Courtship of Inanna and Dumazi" (c. 2000 B.C.) to contemporaries David Curzon and Armand Schwerner, whose poems link back to the ancient literatures of the eastern Mediterranean. This is evidence of thoughtful editing. My second impression was a little uneasy: so many excerpts; no information about individual works, beyond general period introductions; so many curious choices (three poems by Clare to one short one for Byron, who gave his name to a major Euro-American movement; Bishop represented only by, of all things, "Casabianca"; Lowell only by "The Dead in Europe"; Larkin by two colorless little lyrics). But I became more supportive when I read the introductions. I appreciate that this is the first collection of global scope since Mark Van Doren's anthology in 1928. I admire the combination of chronology and geography in the organization; it works excellently. I understand the principle of including no one born since World War II, though it eliminates the important movement of "misty" poets in China. I welcome the choice of translations by recent translators, many of them fine poets too young to have their own poems included, though surely, surely Merwin should have been here in his own right. The result is translation in graceful contemporary language. I applaud the decision to include the metaphrase (or crib) and the paraphrase (Dryden's "translation with latitude"), and to exclude the "imitation," the "version," and the "adaptation." Altogether this is a valuable work, well made and modestly priced, in which the most literate reader will make many discoveries, including the cross-cultural strands that this organization illuminates.

For a completely different anthology, for a more general audience, I recommend ***Poet's Choice: Poems for Everyday Life***, selected and introduced by **Robert Hass** (Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco, 1998, 224 pp., $23. hardbound, 0-88001-566-7). As U.S. Poet Laureate, Hass worked diligently to make poetry more accessible to the general public. One of his projects was a nationally-syndicated newspaper column in which he would present a weekly poem with an informal commentary, hoping to "give us back what we are losing—a shared, literate public culture." There are two years of columns here, arranged by season. All the poems had appeared in books, three out of four recently published. It is the introduction to new books that makes this collection extraordinary. Here are Burns and Basho along with Bidart and Boland. This is of course journalism. The style of the comments is breezy but never glib. Hass really knows and loves his poets. Of Bidart he says, "he's interested in the human condition in its most extreme and intense," and "he uses typography to tell readers how to read his poems. He's the only poet I know who tries in this way to work not just with rhythm, which all poets do, but with the pitch of the voice. He uses italics for a kind of whispering intensity and capital letters for emphasis and the slight rise in tone that usually accompanies it in speech." Nicely said, and helpful for the Bidart poem "Guilty of Dust" that most of us would find difficult on first reading. The contrast is significant between Hass's mission of carrying strong poetry to a wider readership and Bloom's narrow elitism.

One more collection to delight both the sophisticated reader and anyone interested in the creative process: ***Introspections: American Poets on One of Their Own Poems***, edited by **Robert Pack** and **Jay Parini** (Hanover, N.H.: Middlebury College Press/ University Press of New England, 1997, 336 pp., $45. cloth, 0-87451-772-9, $19.95 paper, 0-87451-773-7). Fifty-five poets selected one of their own poems to discuss, and though the choices are all mainstream poems by well-published poets, there is an astonishing range in their approaches to their own work. David Baker in "Critical Disobedience: Nine Ways of Looking at a Poem" talks around and about his profoundly moving "Still-Hildreth Sanatorium, 1936" so as to comment on the function of criticism and the errors of deconstructive, biographical, and explicatory approaches, and to provide enough factual data about the poem so that the reader can appreciate the essential relationship between "true" experience and the work of art. "The poet's purpose," Baker says, "is to establish, represent, and articulate mystery. The critic's job is to analyse and interpret such

mysteries." He explains why he wants this poem "to be a real experience rather than a true account." Carole Simmons Oles, in "Merely Dead, Not Absent," describes the process by which a poem emerges from layer after layer of research—"Her Story, My Daughter Beatrice"—moving back through the sculptor Harriet Hosmer and through Shelley to the "not absent" Beatrice Cenci. Alice Fulton uses the word *descant* for the graceful relationship of commentary to poem. Ideally the poem is memorable without the descant but is enriched by it, as in the contributions of Carl Dennis, Rita Dove, Nancy Willard, and Clara Yu. The most delicious of these is the long poem "The Oriental Rug" and its supporting essay, "Falling into the Rug," by Peter Balakian. I'd buy the book for this one entry, which transforms a real rug, a boy's sensuous and imaginative relationship to it, and the harsh history of the Armenian Genocide, through a rich aesthetic and clearly articulated poetic, into a complex work of art. Poem and essay together illustrate and illuminate the life of the imagination.

Most of the essays provide access to the diversity of form the creative process can take today. I'd except editor Pack's eight-page academic lecture on environmental literature, with no direct reference to the composition of his right-minded but long-winded poem "The Trees Will Die." Actually, I ought to welcome it as a change from the passionate self-absorption of most of the other essays. This volume amply illustrates John Hollander's observation of the many arts that poets employ to disguise, expand, and transform their personal experience. For some of these poets, the deep function of the creative act appears to be therapy. As in the Hollander anthology, several poems would be incomprehensible without the accompanying essay-narratives. Some of the essays, indeed, stand alone without their poems: *e.g.*, Stanley Plumly's enthralling disquisition on insomnia and Ellen Bryant Voigt's explanation of how she came to write her powerful *Kyrie* on the influenza epidemic of 1918.

A very few poets take a broad philosophical approach to the significance of the creative act. In "Speaking for the Speechless Kid" (about his poem "Hot 5th of July"), Philip Booth traces the evolution from pastoral to political in his own writing career. "Given the world we have made and come to," he says, "I feel more than ever that poetry must speak for, as well as to, humankind, kindred as we are, whether or not we know who hears or reads us." Here is the balance that I'd

like to think this century has achieved in its mature poetry—where the political informs the esthetic, creating fresh forms and new imperatives, with the magnanimity we require if we are to survive—as human beings and as a civilization.