

# THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 2 - Number 3

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THE GUEST EDITOR POLICY

For the second time in its relatively short existence, the **Journal** has a Guest Editor. This time it is John Holmes, the author of **The Double Root**, **Address to the Living**, and most recently, **The Symbols**. Mr. Holmes is associate professor of English at Tufts College, where he teaches twentieth century poetry and advanced writing. He directs the Tufts Writers Workshop and is vice-president of the New England Poetry Club and regional vice-president for New England of the Poetry Society of America.

The duty of a Guest Editor is to select the contents of an entire issue. The current number, therefore, is a reflection of the taste of one of America's leading poets. We feel that the Guest Editor policy serves an important three-fold purpose.

In the first place, it allows for an occasional and vitalizing shift in the editorial outlook of the magazine. Though the often-stated policy of the **Journal** is to favor no particular school or technique of poetry, to publish the best available in all fields, a certain unity — a monotony if you will — is bound to arise from the unavoidable prejudices of the regular editors. No matter how hard we strive for objectivity, personal preferences are bound to color our judgments. The Guest Editor relieves this situation at least temporarily.

In the second place, it enables the magazine to tap a source of poetry not often available for inclusion in its pages—the college classroom and writing seminar. Both

## 2

the current Guest Editor and the previous one (May Sarton, now an Associate Editor) teach and were able to include the work of some of their most promising students in their selections. Many of these young people, while not finished poets by any means, still deserve the encouragement of publication. Their presence here and we hope, in future issues is an important service of the Guest Editor.

But perhaps more important than either of these, however, is the third aspect of this policy: the fact that it is designed as a safeguard against stagnation. It is woefully easy for a little magazine to fall into the comfortable rut of middle-of-the-road modernism. The editors come to know their subscribers. Consciously or not, they strive to please them so the magazine can stay alive. It's a human enough gesture, but none the less dangerous. Every precaution must be taken to guard against it. When editors stagnate, their magazines do. When the magazines retrench, all of poetry suffers.

The **Journal** strives to cast as wide a net as possible. This is a good policy, we feel, but it can backfire. Catholicity can become characterlessness. The individual point of view of a Guest Editor, even for only an occasional issue, tends to reshape and sharpen the point of view of the entire magazine. For this reason we shall try to select our future Guest Editors from as widely varied aesthetic backgrounds as possible. The transfusion of new blood must be a continuing process. If it is not, the publication will soon become moribund.

R. H. G.

**NOTICE:** "A Man's Work" is from a forthcoming collection of poems by Archibald MacLeish to be published by Houghton Mifflin Co.

**ARS POETICA**

To see, to say "I have seen"—that is not yet  
to be believed. To see, to make visible  
and to say no more than "see"—that  
is the eye fathomlessly itself and free  
where freedom is a skill and his belief  
what everyman must wear like his own flesh.

Here is the moon through scuds: a mouth of light  
wiped by the wind, soiled in the motion of wiping.  
Is the wind a dirty hand on such a night?  
The wind moves west from the tide drawing  
the backs of a thousand hands across the sun  
before it draws the backs of a thousand more.

To feel, to say "I have felt"—that is to be  
fathomlessly the wind across the moon  
by its own rule, and not to be believed  
or disbelieved, but simply come upon  
as, opening in the thousand-handed light,  
the eye—shaped like its tears, shaped like its shining—  
sways like the spore of a mould on its long nerve.

**John Ciardi**

# 4

## THE PRIVATE FACE IS SCREAMING

(at any writer's conference)

Providing the expected stylized answers  
And gladly running daily routine races,  
So dazzling, so exposed, our public faces  
Wear masks extreme as those of Chinese dancers.  
The mask of poetry: heroic attitude—  
And under it a child, uncertain, rude;  
The mask of dogma: holy certitude—  
And under it the quickened naked doubt.  
Behind our masks we play the questions out.  
We suffer childish rages, sweat and weep,  
And hate ourselves before we go to sleep.

Look at these public faces, gentle eyes,  
And turn away before such crude disguise.  
Oh, we would shut our eyes too if we could  
And run away, though masked, to private places.  
For all we wish now is to ask a pardon  
For all the public words and public graces  
And on our knees to weed a private garden.

May Sarton

**FUGUE**

Behind the granite church  
the sky has taken on  
the quality of stone,  
its weight, its triple tone  
from grey to purple hue;  
the pigeons dip and wheel,  
purple, slate-grey, and blue.

Purple, slate-blue, and grey,  
the shadows blend and shift,  
the shadows load and darken  
the late December day—  
darken and fade and lift,  
resume and fade—a chord  
that swells and dies away,

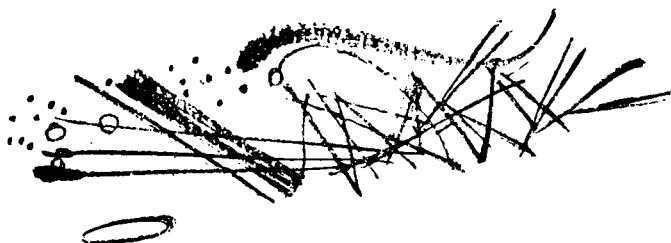
that dies away and swells,  
against whose dominant  
the birds in spiral flight  
go up across the stone,  
up like the sound of bells,  
then, like the overtones,  
drift downward past the stone.

# 6

Pigeons and cloud and church  
resolve their medley toward  
both counterpoint and chord—  
the sullen troubled slow  
clouds, moved against their will,  
the church, a silent **No**  
to motion, and the birds'  
nervous arpeggio.

Perceive, O innocent,  
here in this triad plain  
(dead calm, and flying storm,  
and motion grave and slow)  
the ancient argument  
of bone and blood and brain,  
whose tones, tho they remain  
antiphonal, afford  
both counterpoint and chord.

**Constance Carrier**



### FOR A NATURALIST DEAD AT SEA

We'll not deplore you, though we know what's gone  
 The sea in no laborious swell can haul  
 Back on our beaches; such a freight as yours  
 Will never deck our tideline. Out of love  
 You gathered learning, and your human kin  
 If loved no more than conches, than the race  
 Of crayfish or the childish porpoises,  
 Were yet well loved by you. We mourn to hear  
 Of bridegrooms gathered nightward by the gales,  
 Of boon companions chug-a-lugging brine,  
 Lost to the red interior, the benign  
 Circle of beer-lit faces. You, our friend,  
 Were still the friend of all that crept or swam:  
 We cannot think you lonely where you end.

Why should we call you shoreward? You will speak  
 With the drowned captain drifting by the shoal  
 On which his ship was broken; you will hear  
 The lonely scuffle of the hermit crab  
 Seeking an empty tenement. The trail  
 Of nets and anchors off the human coast  
 Will not detain you, nor the squeak of rudders  
 Far overhead. Oh, you will loaf and drowse  
 By fans of seaweed nodding in the stir  
 Of ocean currents. You will drink the cream  
 Of the great wetnurse whale, and hear from her  
 The lullabies that make leviathan dream.

**Adrienne Rich**



**THE MOTHER**

Bowed down she turned but, halfway up the stairs,  
Broke over—fingers, gray head, on the banister.  
She cried out: "Everyone I met today  
Had someone to take care of them but me.  
Everyone wishing me a Merry Christmas,  
Then I come home to this dark and empty house.  
Aren't you two children grown enough by now  
To know what it's been to bring you up alone,  
Earn every cent it took? And you don't give  
A damn to be with me on Christmas Eve."  
And we stood frightened there, seeing her cry  
For the first time; deserted, shamed to be  
Shamed by having not known what we did,  
And seared by shame and pity then we cried  
For the first time since we were children, and  
She hurried down to us and put her hands  
On both our shoulders and said "Oh, my dear boys!  
What did I do wrong to hurt you so!"

**Winfield Townley Scott**

## SIMPLES OF THE MOON

I

Who defames walks in Bronx Park?  
Spiked railings and the closure  
of stone walls, white, crum-  
bling like an old skull,  
cannot long suppress the will

of a seed. Lightnings  
never forget their lineage  
as grass goes, most Mardi Gras,  
through the dullest dump. As you,  
Albert Ryder, slipping out

(at least the caul of the wide-  
eyed moon between you and the scar  
called city a glacier craved,  
its rifts the signs once sighed,  
blue Mondays caught as a woman

bent to her feverish child;  
the torment in its cry turned  
all to stone. Still you listened  
among mortalities: murmurings  
of moonlit bodies, thighed

# 10

## II

for thrashing not a little  
of love's wheat. The field went  
on as under stone the toad  
that lived some thousand years.  
The giant eye, looking out,

twy-vision in itself,  
you heard abysmal music, warm,  
massive: ballad's offspring,  
terrible in their joy. For you,  
at last, chance seemed

choice; that season  
round the ballad like something  
sung and something danced,  
a climate only lovers chance,  
proceeds moonlit-seemly) as you,

Albert Ryder, slipping out now  
between newspapers, a dried cod-  
head, a bread, partly decomposed  
mice snug in their traps,  
a lopsided pot simmering all day.

## III

These you, loving, lived by  
are apt as any inchworm's perch  
to revolve in the air;  
so the windows in your workshop,  
shaggy-browed two casements  
that commanded an old garden  
engaged by great green-and-moon-

laden trees, constantly shadowing  
 you. There you waited till things  
 entered, the wind, the wind,

the wind, that you could see  
 as someone came to see you.  
 Demeanors of the mind they were,  
 less than the faun scaring  
 the graces, unseen wanderings

like faun and flavor  
 of a violin, yet instinct  
 with a valor, innocent of failure,  
 taking any air as able to endure  
 a passion equal to all hope,

#### IV

as a vacant lot suffices  
 the moon, unfolding a scene,  
 leaves and simples culled from  
 favorite nooks; crows, alight  
 on wilted evergreen, act

Black Mass, the devil's flock,  
 paper and sticks in huddled fire  
 flaring liquid eyes, mouths  
 loose and dominions of the dark,  
 as you, wind-mounted, mass

princely countries coming  
 in, spices, forgotten portions.  
 The rankness of the earth springs  
 fresh. The fountain in the park,  
 not long remarking wall-eyed

# 12

faces, builds the edifice  
of song: moon-limned, the grain  
as of girls throngs the wood.  
In this ground and in this seed  
who shall tell the bones,

V

the stirring scenes and deeds,  
still restless, packed.  
Have we not thought our ears  
would break with the cries  
unfathomed in the blood?

There ballad's lunar broad  
dance out for you, ever  
a native in the Bronx or West  
15th St., the true ways of man.  
Yet in the nebulous cold fire,

the moon no golden mean,  
only a thin step, crafty stip-  
pling moonlight, between you  
and the world, what figures  
tread that spectral grass;

what lightnings coil  
behind your mist as ships are  
launched from some dim shore?  
What happens to your visions  
before the earth-set sun?

T. Weiss

**BACK FROM BATTLE**

Where is his city, what if it holds  
 His near blood and the bone mold?  
 Folk and friends presume to feed  
 Him keepsakes and acquit his needs.

Not all his need! abstracted homesick  
 Here and hunting the exotic  
 Intimate, he has a greed  
 For that vicinity and kin  
 Will cure the obstinate chagrin  
 Of trifling in a house not his  
 In time that never was nor is.

The syllables they overhear  
 Solicit rest and then dismiss  
 His people at the lost frontier.  
 Come home from exile but not home  
 There he stands and stands to square  
 Dimensions on a listing zone  
 And clutch the wit's uneasy

Captive from some when and where,  
 A rambler in their dazzling gloom  
 Through absent landscape persons rooms—  
 Haunts of his other soul's amnesia.

**Sonia Raiziss**

# 14

## MY HAND'S BLIND EYES

The eyes that quicken in man's hands  
See only what his travel brings  
Within the sphere in which he stands;  
Only those visitable things  
Which moment-making time commands  
To assume and, through man's life, to hold,  
A form which fingers may enfold.

The eyes that ride beneath man's brow  
Can better touch's sight and reach  
Stars that burned out long years ago,  
Interpret little marks that teach  
Music no shape alone could show,  
Catch far presentments, tricks of shade  
To tell the mind how thoughts are made.

How should it be, then, that at night,  
When light is gone from all but mind,  
Vision, prophetically bright,  
To which the eyes that see are blind,  
Streams inward, a sure second sight,  
From groping hands, those reckoners  
Of man's position in night's universe.

Raymond Holden

## AFTERNOON IN A MUSEUM: A ROSE

A golden girl, dark with sun in her Summer dress,  
 Walks airily above the frozen marble floor, while  
 In her hand she holds a vendor's rose, borne  
 Frailly among these bronze and plaster faces,  
 These Tahitian girls and oriental prophets.  
 Absolved of ignorance, magnificently displaced, she  
 Indulges in parabasis, and thinks: my rose its odor.  
 O smoothly through a lacquered case the darling bust  
 Of Nero's cousin smiles.

The cool blue sense of touch  
 Flares on the massive fall of tapestry (swiftly  
 Like a creature, submarine and ancient, scooting  
 From the slime of its primeval sloth: pale gold  
 In the green of an afternoon sea)

—a fear, cried out

Through the half smile of amazement—and then her  
 sculptured  
 Eyes greet Homer's in a doryman's shaded face.  
 Behold now!

El Greco's saints and sinners, cold  
 In their stern reproach of all who pass undefiled;  
 Or this late Minoan vase from Cnossus; or this chill  
 Madonna with a harlot's smile; or Rembrandt's Golden  
 Helmet; or Vermeer's intricate silence. Behold now!  
 The tombs of the dead and the works of the immortal.

The tireless sea-birds praise her shadows in the sun,  
 And cry their shrill cacaphony to the sea. Only herself  
 Repeated and alone, flashed across a nervous sky, escapes  
 El Greco's limpid hands and Brueghel's lust; O contem-  
 plates  
 Death: the red shape of a rose in a blind girl's hand.

**Robert Collen**



# 16

## A MAN'S WORK

An apple-tree, a cedar and an oak  
Grow by the stone house in the rocky field  
Where I write poems when my hand's in luck.  
The cedar I put in: the rest are wild—

Wind dropped them. Apples strew the autumn ground  
With black, sweet-smelling pips. The oak strews air  
Summers with shadow, winters with harsh sound.  
The cedar's silent with its fruit to bear.

**Archibald MacLeish**

## POEM

I was a carrier of fate  
And though I went,  
Suggesting freedom,  
Forming song

I was a carrier of fate  
All along.  
I blamed my birth  
On inevitable song.

**Richard Eberhart**

### MOTION AS GRACE

It was a motion across a blue room,  
 A deviate way, a pause, a turn of the hand,  
 And turn of the head's patrician elegance,  
 Indicated a royal afternoon.

To lie stubborn, toes up, renowned  
 Among the shucks and stones of time,  
 Eventual, formally breathless,  
 Makes comic the gentle afternoon.

I saw Ilaria del Carretto  
 Once, in her marble rightness and primness,  
 Whose sculptor refreshed my sense  
 Of a soft Italian afternoon.

No, do not move, for you shall not.  
 Let the mind with time abide alone.  
 But turn your delicate head this way,  
 But move, and gracious is this afternoon.

So shall the ecstasy of sense  
 Receive a subtle strength; so find  
 An amiable charm; and so our love  
 Shall be and take the soul of motion.

Richard Eberhart

## ANOTHER SANDPAINTING

Three of us by new-lit lamps sat far  
From firelight of the brushwood hogans where  
Old chanters kneel and—each with supple hand  
Sifting his colors—sanctify bright sand  
To mighty images; and still we bore  
Their drawings on our knees. And we said, "Choose."  
You chose the thunder-figures, those strong creatures  
Who stand above, below, and west and east.  
Our drawings keep awhile. But theirs are swept  
After the nine nights' singing, no line left  
Of all that square and curve. It has seemed best  
After the songs, the prayers, the solemn healing,  
No sign remain. Only the bare-swept sand  
Where once the thunders walked and strength had been.

You chose the thunder-figures. They live well  
Since that one evening, stately up our wall,  
Dusted, attended, watched. But they will go  
To someone's sweepings surely. Few can know,  
Ten years or fifty, there were three to bear  
Such weathering prints more fragile than our knees  
And here say, "Choose." And where we then repose  
None finds by shape or curve. From nine nights' singing,  
Instructed chanters, rising, sweep the sand,  
Erase all images, the floor rubbed clean.  
Instructed chanters know the power is where  
It always was and never can remove,  
Being within the borders and the thunders,  
Living beyond, within, and born of love.

Jeremy Ingalls

## LETTER TO A STUDENT POET

The hens type footmarks in the yard  
 Whose paragraphs I bend to read  
 In the even dust beside the shed.

The roosters, who shook headlines on  
 The copper morning, also print  
 Their noonday feet in lettered dust—  
 Like doodling potentates in booths  
 Of daylight, scratching after-notes  
 Of wisdom on discarded forms.

Learn birds themselves, their slavery  
 To the insoluble blue air,  
 Who call their question marks in songs,  
 Who (hooked, suspended from the sun)  
 Swing in an unknown way across  
 The domes and coasts of history.

The wide directions words can take  
 Are secret as migration, are  
 Unclipped as augury; they bend  
 In with the swinging of the sun.

Marshall Schacht



# 20

## FAFNIR

This ornament can square himself away  
In whorls of sinew neat as flemished line  
And pile in bracelets an India-rubber spine  
That with a spasm can undo the day

It took nine months to lace into a man.  
This limbless lizard or this wingless bird  
That was in the Garden such a fatal third  
Is now in the great declension Saurian

A small irregular noun that we construe  
According to whim to be more happy than  
The croc, less real than dragons, an also-ran  
In the race of fauna toward success and you.

He rises, dubious as a question-mark,  
From the Hindu basket on a Bombay square  
And does a hipless hula in the air  
To show how frivolous menace is when the dark

Child we are breathes music through a reed.  
Old Fafnir waits upon our harmony  
To grow small as a garter and set us free.  
To know our coil is mortal. That is what we need.

A. G. Burr



# 22

Let be, let it be,

(Commander)

don't push or feel the need  
to push, to interpose

intentions

on this pointed space

But, remembering,

if you are somewhat dear to memory,  
that the eye looks back in this vein's camera,  
its vision a rush of blood,

a beating, a beating .

back. . . .

While this man

never tampers,

tempers

only the conscience of the living heart,  
contains, as any peninsula,

geography

rounded by the sea,

an island not isolate,

a direction

never unrelated to its base.

Cid Corman

**DIGGING FOR CHINA**

"Far enough down is China," somebody said.  
"Dig deep enough and you might see the sky  
As clear as at the bottom of a well.  
Except it would be real—a different sky.  
Then you could burrow down until you came  
To China! Oh, it's nothing like New Jersey.  
There's people, trees, and houses, and all that,  
But much much different. Nothing looks the same."

I went and got the trowel out of the shed  
And sweated like a coolie all that morning,  
Digging a hole beside the lilac-bush,  
Down on my hands and knees. It was a sort  
Of praying, I suspect. I watched my hand  
Dig deep and darker, and I tried and tried  
To dream a place where nothing was the same.  
The trowel never did break through to blue.

Before the dream could weary of itself  
My eyes were tired of looking into darkness,



# 24

My sunbaked head of hanging down a hole.  
I stood up in a place I had forgotten,  
Blinking and staggering while the earth went round  
And showed me silver barns, the fields dozing  
In palls of brightness, patens growing and gone  
In the tides of leaves, and the whole sky China blue.  
Until I got my balance back again  
All that I saw was China, China, China.

Richard Wilbur

## APOLOGY

A word sticks in the wind's throat;  
A wind-launch drifts in the swells of rye;  
Sometimes, in broad silence,  
The hanging apples distil their darkness.

You, in a green dress, calling, and with brown hair,  
Who come by the field-path now, whose name I say  
Softly, forgive me love that also I call you  
Wind's word, apple-heart, haven of grasses.

Richard Wilbur

**CORONARY**

Bad breath of nausea  
followed me

        cat-pawed  
        clawed  
into the yellow cab.

Pain creeping up an arm  
burned and fused

        sputtered  
        muttered  
exploded in my chest.

Down with the flag I went  
into a clean green

        dive  
        at sixty-five  
until my eardrums boomed.

I died at thirty cents  
by the meter

        ticking  
        ticking  
only my watch moved on.

Robert Heckman

## WHAT'S GOOD WAITS LONG

What's good waits long, but no longer,  
To burst like a night star when the eye  
Happens to lift from another engagement,  
Accidentally, but fitly (for the moment  
Is ripe: if it must be at all, it must be  
Now, no later) and lingers where  
It happened, seeing nothing, not even  
The unexpected passage, which  
Was all that really happened, of  
A now cold unaccountable star.

Edwin Honig

**FOR THE NIGHT**

In a pattern filled full within the waste  
Each is his own caravan.

Infinite in the solitude of sand,  
Being Part creates the man

And on the course stars magnify the might  
Of place as time and not forgotten night.

Though sorrow seared along the bone,  
The heat of light from constant day  
Through wind and foe and lighter yoke  
Keeps the goal the appointed way.

**Michael Kirk**

**I LIKE ORGANIZED CONSTRUCTIVENESS**

They never save anything or take care of what they have.

Aimless, disorganized and maladjusted  
They crawl through life on the level of suffering  
Instead of soaring as a man can do  
If he halfway tries and has just a little luck.

I prefer the things that soar and glide  
To those that creep, and even those that crawl,  
I am more concerned with things inside,  
More than I am with what is seen by all.

I hate noise and confusion; I hate dirt,  
I hate distraction and disorganization,  
I hate waste and I hate cruelty,  
Vagueness, and indecision

I hate hate  
And I hate the need for having to hate these things.

**Merrill Moore**

**ADMISSION OF GUILT**

Long before October cold  
touched frost to this high orchardrow  
and burned the unpicked apples gold,  
  
before the August boughs bent low  
with Winesap weights; even before  
the blossom stems began to grow  
  
to fruit, while still the hidden store  
of nectar held a summer hum  
of hornets near the budding core;  
  
when petaled June had not yet come  
to earth in drifts around the root:  
even then the final sun  
  
had seeded its fall absolute,  
and I, a vernal Adam, told  
Eve when she should find the fruit.

**Philip Booth**

**OUT OF THE ROOM**

When I go out of the room, not nothing happens there.  
They change chairs, eat, invent stories I do not hear,  
And tell me, when I come back, some best things said,  
Fill a clean plate, re-laugh, turn toward me a chair.  
It is as if I had returned from the dead.

When I am away, I reach, reach in letters you I miss.  
When I come home, into the room, I feel myself press  
The scene back, and my self fill it almost too full.  
While I am there, it racks me not to say yes and yes,  
Not be a coated arriver hell-bent pell-mell

To tell all. But it never works out quite that way.  
If it helps, it hurts, saying all I have to say.  
I know a room you can break out of, or can build.  
If it hurts, it helps if you throw everything away.  
When I am not in the room, the room is filled.

And I have thought that is the way death would be.  
That's the way it is, I thought, that I do die  
Every time I leave the room, to those who talk on.  
I have always come back. I want to hear what they say  
Together when I am gone and stay gone.

**John Holmes**