

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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DEATH OF A SISTER

While the prairies were burning she fell sick.
To the last father assured us the prairie
Fire was the ground of her fever, and rain
Would allay her burning when it quenched the plain's.
But the promised rain held off, and did not break
Until it drenched us in the cemetery.

The eve of the last day the sky in the north
Wore a terrible sunset. From the top of an oak
I could see mile after mile the little
Dots of flame narrowing the prairie, and smell
A wild burning in the wind, as the earth
Beloved of my days dissolved in a smoke.

I thought of my sister, wondered if the wind
Took her to sleep, or if the orange light
Withheld from it, waking memories
Of days now being purged from the prairies.
I turned indoors as flame gathered the land
That we had sung to in the milking wheat.

It was mainly the tough corn that survived.
A new desolation settled our land to the north.
Winter would be hard, lacking all that wheat.
I knew there would be less singing at night,
Less green growing. And in the thick rain I grieved.
Then we assaulted again the heart-breaking earth.

Galway Kinnell

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INDIAN SUMMER

Past the green of the pine,
Past the last oak
To hold its green into this season,
He led his son along the cedared shore
To the timberland site by the water,
The dreamed place; and the strokes
Of their axes sounded on the lake.

In late afternoon the father spoke: "This
Is destruction. The good season destroys
And the well-loved heat of the skies.
Yet an old man does not care
To take the part of the destroyer,
Or to build shelters from the snow and ice,
When the cold heart tenants the sheltered place."

The boy did not look, he had learned
In a short life lengthened by woods and lake
Wisdom does not come when the head is turned;
But became a thing of strength, and drove
Into raw wood with the strength of love
The blade of destruction; and the blade spoke
With the voice of his young heart's ache.

Behind their walk back at sunset
The sky was lighted, and the oaks and pines
Relinquished the light. A low wind brushed sweat
Of their faces into shadows of the evening air.
The boy followed the father—from that wilting of desire
Turning, he saw high over that backward ruin
The winter clouds burning of another season.

Galway Kinnell

FIRST COMMUNION

Day enters the world, light moves
 To the face of a boy as it wakes
 Him. Outside a breeze touches the oak
 And the shades of yellow, its changing leaves,
 Flutter on the paler sky.
 A boy rises and readies himself for his journey.

The church is way over in the next county,
 The same trip that last year we trekked
 With our sackful of ears to collect
 The nickle-an-ear porcupine bounty.
 Pictured on the wall over dark Jerusalem
 Is Jesus shining—in the dark he is a lamp.

On the tray he is a pastry wafer.
 On the way home there is regular talk
 Of the fine preaching before regular jokes
 Are admitted. The other trip over
 The same trail took two dollars homeward.
 Now we carry the aftertaste of the lard.

Soon a funny story of Uncle Abraham:
 When, being liquored up, he got locked out
 By his woman, how she must have took blankets
 To him later, for Sam asserts he found them
 Both the next morning asleep in the loft.

Laughter is hard. Surely her heart was soft.
 The sun streams through the long afternoon
 Another parable over the black sloughs
 And yellowing grass of the prairies.

4

Cool wind stirs, and the last green
Climbs to all the tips of this season, like
The last flames brightening on a wick.

Day leaves the world, embers drop
Among sparks in the hearth. Across the heart of a boy
Sleep is the overlapping of enough shadows.
In the wind outside a twig snaps,
The lid of a box shutting to a boy's ear,
As a day in a life is over.

Jesus, it is a disappointing shed
Where they hang your picture,
And drink juice, and conjure
Your person into inferior bread.
I would speak of injustice
And not re-enter that place;

Except that sunlight spends its sweet flask
On blistered hands and bare days,
And over the saddest of twilights the September skies
Are lifted. What more can a boy ask
Of the root and sky, who lives as a leaf
That is puzzled into rest by the wind and grief?

Galway Kinnell

PANEL FOR A SMALL ROOM

The night becomes a child's night
when love has dressed
and gone.

I forget my nurse's counsel
and there is no light on the marble stand to banish dark—
no light, but a pool of cooling
candle wax.

Costumed in flesh
I am crying for love
who has shut the door
and left me with a black cat with yellow eyes
who stares at me,
and I am naked.

O love love
why did you not
lay down words upon my wounds
closing me as darkness
closes the flower!
You could have folded your breath
into a sheet
and covered me.
I cry God God
and only the black beast hears,
and I am cold
with silence.

Let me be delivered of doom
by morning;

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let me choose from mind
the leaves to cover me,
the light to banish darkness—

but what the body has been told
the body remembers;
what the body has been told
the body repeats in the night
over and over
to the bewildered mind.

What the body has been told
only the blood
knows.

Josephine Roberts

BARBERRY THORNS

After the frost the barberry bush still burns:
Wind of that frost blows the red flush to its leaves.
When leaves are gone, shaking, it wintrily mourns,
dripping its blood of berries against the snow.
Strung with their fiery fruit, the branches bend
with sacramental seed for feasts of birds.
But wreathed among harvest berries are violate thorns.
They harvest the eating birds, staining the snow
to puzzle with warmer fruit the Winter's heirs
pecking at spangled snow for burning blood.

The crown of thorns tangles the feasting brood;
under the blood is always flash of thorns.
Thorns to who gives, and to those who eat this food;
with thorns the red fruit's bone is always adorned.

Bruce Finson

THE MEN GET UP EVERY MORNING

The men get up every morning
And face the sun or the darkness
In the summer there is sunlight
In the winter there is darkness

What can the men remember
Between the sunlight and sunlight
Only the thought of the darkness

The fields are dry in the sunlight
What is the use of plowing
Are the fields forever in darkness
Be there sunlight or darkness

A rooster crows every morning
What can the rooster remember
Were the fields once fertile with harvest
Are only the present fields sterile

The sun gets up every morning
Moving through sunlight and darkness
Again the cry of the rooster
"Will I live out my days in the sunlight
Or forever travel through darkness
Be there sunlight or darkness"

The eclipse and what happens in darkness
Noise travels from quiet to quiet

Sanford Edelstein

THE DISCONSOLATE ANGEL

The angel said,
In heaven no song
is accurate
as earth can sing.

The angel said,
the infinite sprawl
of heaven's too wide
for pulse's rule.

Melody's made
in a small vein,
the angel said,
finer than rain.

Music reports
from tongue and bone
and the close courts
of ear's confine.

And space is slight
as a signet ring
within the throat
of human song.

The angel said,
To hear the rain
erupt the mud
I must bend down.

The shell's volute,
the gourd's gold rage
their worldly mite
of murmur allege.

The calyx shout
that shocks the fern
exceeds its neat
ecstatic horn.

The fluted fan,
the leaf in wind
grew in the groin
of forest sound.

So having heard
upon his knees
the pleating tide,
from sill of skies

up to his height
the angel rose,
and wept and smote
eternal space,

and beat his breast
whose dreams were dumb,
and paused, and paced,
and prayed for time.

10

DAILY CANTATA

Celebrate hourly the hour,
and daily proclaim the day:
noon's no seldom appearance,
night no novelty.

Accord the dusk its due,
the sunset solemnize
as often as the renewal
of every familiar phase.

Observe the habit of year
as months in season come.
Honor the ordinary
recital of time.

The occasion's in the occurrence
of wont and usual way.
Then hail the humble hero,
regularity.

Salute while seconds grow,
o voice, memorialize
that sameness and accrual
with parity of praise.

Norma Farber

THE UNICORN

I leapt the unicorn that churned the wood
(miraculous mere) and hanging by the mast
and clutching the sweet spar against my breast
through the wild forest flume I rode and rode

drenched in the ivory foaming of his side
 and sprayed with saltwhite bleeding from his crest
 and smooth and slippery and scepter in my fist
 and spilled, unmythic creature, in the mud:
 where now I lie in life and loss, my visage
 midden, body awry, reputation motley,
 hand holy with recollected horn,
 hope groping among the frogs and fern
 for wake of him the candid beast that lately
 loosed me from his whither? immaculate passage.

Norma Farber

LADY TO BE

in the mute state
 of a statue
 Galatea
 looked with marble
 eyes on the mortal
 Pygmalion
 and wished for breath
 to change from death
 of stone
 alone
 into warm life
 that she might wife
 her maker

Cleve Leshikar

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ALL ABOUT US

All about us, immediate and remote,
auras, savors,
angelic manifestations: ↳
they storm the walls of our senses
to the core of incarnation.

Inevitable
yet we, successfully,
evade them,
going our rounds of commonplace disasters
as though we had all outposts
of time and space
in which to overtake them.

A moment often redeems us,
a breach in the ingathering of light;
and in that moment we are delivered,
emerging pitifully as gods
or heroically
as fallen angels.

Gustav Davidson

PHELPS PUTNAM

He twirled his tabled highball. Darkening,
The room minced back and forth in shadows and
His glass I noticed was a child's tumbler
Dappled with a painted pony rockered.

I wondered how it came there. "If my heart
Were strong enough to write again," he said.
"But doctors—." Then he shrugged his old-young face
And poured more whiskey in my jelly-glass.

"One can be legendary even at forty,"
He said, "but that is to be alive only
In other people's pasts." He lit the lamp
With careful down-adjustment of the wick.

The tall bookcases righted themselves but all
The uncommunicative countryside
Pressed upon the blackened windows closer;
As though a vacuum listened. "If I could

Remember," he remarked. "When I was young
Why, all of us were going to be great men."
He let his drink stand by the lamp and thought.
I looked away. "But to recall one's self,"

I heard him say, "—such ruthless appetite."
 The light had made, projected through his glass,
 The painted toy gigantic—shadow of a horse
 Massive, silent, living, against the wall.

Winfield Townley Scott

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

Across drifts the almost eyed boys came
 Whooping toward the creek in sensory charge
 But one went sadder, slower. Not lame
 Exactly, but his eyes were large.
 He fingered his face and felt them presage
 Him pariah. The gang took off their clothes,
 Leapt, and swam among the floes
 And ice, happy in their vestiges.

Against the northern furniture he tried
 And fell again, a mutant unfit for night.
 When the paths he walked suddenly lied
 He wept himself, his deformity of sight
 In crystal. Beyond him lay the intuitive shore
 Where the beach crowd lay asleep in snow
 Basking and storing refrigerants; to zero
 Rooms rolled invalids where surgeons fought with thaw.

Yet he kept tapping, knew he would have to squint
 And hope, and rolled his anachronisms,
 Silent audience, hoping glint
 Would come to give his vision verb. Prisms
 A peril, friends felt him ill-fated. The doctor was starker:

"You've contracted caloric. It's well
Advanced and spreading. There's a chance we can repel
What we call probably malignant internal parka.

We'll try," he said, as a frown crunched his hail.
The boy left. The long dangerous topography
His dying made dearer, dearer. To what avail
Or his nature—a need for making a map in a land
Where compasses cried, then crumbled? That night it
seemed

A voice came to him: so he went the next day to the
Museum

Of Cryptic Objects where inside by a showcase a band

Of scholars, blinking their pebbles, were taking notes.

Obedying that voice of the night, he smashed the pane
Reached in and cried, "It is mine—this overcoat."

He wrapped it about his frost. With questioning cane,
With symptoms of trembling past treatment, he went,
diseased,

Lonely in that polar place, forged by

A spite lets others walk with anvils high.

Prognosis in mind, he waited to begin to cease.

He lay by his window, not caring or knowing why

They were building his bier. His wasted eyelids fluttered.

He tried rubbing away a star that had lodged in his eye.

Foreign bodies came in droves. He uttered

No sound as the bier collapsed. As the snow fell,

His changed; he felt the joy of metastases

To flesh. His retina reeled with the world, with hypotheses

That sang, for his purple was stored, sensing the syn-
dromes of mammal.

George Bailin

BLESSINGS ON ALL THIS GREEN UNPLEASANCE

Little of life without rime or season
I lived before I met that blossom
The buttercup whispering all cold poison
 Is drunk from a gold cup:

I came well seasoned from my mother
To provide this season with its broth
While I toil in my simmering trouble
 And boil toward April.

Yet blessings on all this green unpleasance
That taps my vein for its roaring flood;
My sacrifice is all too human
 For any good—still, blessings:

I praise the bread from the ground bones
And the kettle wind that whistles my breath
Though the cook of all is frying my fettle
 In a pound of March.

But being too human for any good
In a galloping wind and a day like sixty
I bind this wildering whorled water
 To my tricked heart

And bless confusion that sings like poems
 To a man in a chair by a blowing window
 Seeing grass and thinking windrows,
 The yellow resolving of this green.

For what shall I hope for when some Spring
 Has satisfied all expectations
 Holding my face between her fingers
 Awarding love between her thighbones?

Carl Selph

THE ROSE GARDEN

Anointing me, my servant, who was dead,
 Infused the anger in my heart and shaped
 My words to sound, and said: Consider her,
 The virgin who escaped, a piece of art.
 And he, my chosen god, escorted me
 To hell and Beatrice, and witnessed there
 My soul laid bare, and knew my avarice.

Who, by written law, foretold my doom
 Is still supreme, the prophet of my soul
 And others yet to come . . . who never saw
 The poet's double role: allusive love.
 Concealed among the roses, am revealed
 A serpent in the garden, seeking fame
 In him, his name, embellishing my star.

Clarence Alva Powell

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TO AN OLD MAN

Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon;
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

Your hands cast moving shadows on our screen
And catch, like dust, the sun; and all things move
Except those slender dawns you cannot leave.
Your days are lovely in their new-leaf green.

Look childward, then; see where the rain has missed.
The under-leaf, run through the smell of mint,
Count thunder, wander to find where Sunday went
With that high hill of daisies heaven lost.

And stay in the morning of your sleep till, fresh
From heaven, you nod to the infant day. The hand
That smudged the pastel^l filings of your mind
Can stop no higher sun than your bright flesh.

Robert Hutchinson

BLUEBEARD

Anguish consumes my fingernails: not one
Crime to confess. I stand, gazing at my
Creased palms in mute surprise: is my caress
Burdened with reality? Can you sense a
Madness in me? I say I've played subtly,
Wiped overtness from my hands; I have not
Lusted for your lives, dear ladies, I'd haul

Your ash living from my furnace, and whirl
It in a scattered sparkling waltz. Why fear?

In dreams I walked on feathered floors, through halls
Where you were swept by secrets, and muffled
By your silent groans. You dreamed my dreams:
Your souls, errant then, I churned, churned with mine,
And we toasted drunken to wonders from
A brew of bones and blood. I brought burning
Palms to your breasts, I invaded your veins,
I meant to cram you choked to bursting. You
Knew me then, sweltering in your lungs, and
Breathed me, a violent cloud of musk, swirling
From your lips. Why do you flee me now?

Little stones lying on the strand take flight
At my approach, tumble their heads in foam,
And leave me, bare, hollow, to walk
The long shore alone, to hear waves falling,
Faint voices calling the world no one's. Cold
Winds crack my bones. Ah, you leprous virgins,
Tattered and patched with corruptions,
Inviolable, and cursed as I am, hearts
Wedged among ruin, why do you escape me?

Jascha Kessler

This poem is part of a manuscript that won a Major Award in Poetry in the 1952 Hopwood Contest.

20

HELDENLEBEN

Busy sickness, pay me attention, said a hero
Falling down with his bland beak encored,
An accumulation of agues in his power
Ready to devour, should he give the word.

He hesitated, with concern for some care
And necessary solictude if he succumbed;
Saw no signs of any anywhere
But could not unflatten to the position whence he had
unclimbed.

So gave the nod to a most petty fever
To burn with its eyes closed on his tough
And frank forehead; it could not burn forever,
And expired finally, but it was enough.

Josephine Miles

PET

Carmel wildlife brusque and dapper
Brushes our dream of power.
The routine mixes not to coalesce
Time and space
Nor call and cost nor any of that frame
By which the local universe is tame.

But immediately outside
Doors windows and the reflex walls of pride,
The nutbrown wildlife scatters and receives
Food of our dream.

Squirrelhood musters the image-clusters
By which truth and reality look the same.

Josephine Miles

AGGRESSOR

Restless animosity can sharpen its saber
 On broadloom. I fear that rich flooring.
 Or it can fire from a Venetian screen.
 I fear those paper shades.

The agressions of the still room never
 Let be the animus till it defends them,
 Strikes, and defends them, and the petty
 Passerby is done to death. I fear him.

Josephine Miles

GEOMETRY FOR BEGINNERS

(It is better to prefer than to prove)

Russell? Einstein? Wittgenstein?—Hell
 Lines which never meet never meet no matter what you
 say.

The only things which can be taught are **things** which **can**
 be taught

(This is a tautology . . .)

Nothing is bad—bad is nothing; Parmenides, how I
 salute you!

There is only good, things infinitely extended, infinitely
 divisible;

And man, one, indivisible—and invisible . . .

Bad is the void through which the atoms move?

Atoms need no elbow room, nor virtue vice through
 which to move.

22

For your theometry, Spinoza, I salute you . . .
But Oh, Epicurus, **how** I think **you** for your straight
parallel lines!

The straight line of art—on to infinity.
The straight line in ethics—Oh it is good to move!
The points, events, intervals, lies of science—all straight
lines.

The lines of the machines—as straight as a die.
And direct action in the struggle—the line from men to
machines . . .

And if the one straight line out of the morass—the
diameter of thought cutting its way through the
circles and cycles of history, the tangent escaping,
transcending the physicist's finite infinity—

Turns out to be an arc **after** all
Of an unknown wider circle,

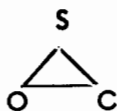
Well, it will be a greater circle than the circle the en-
closed minds of our circular rulers would describe,
For their worlds of wheels within wheels are all spheres,
and all balls.

THEOREM: To describe a rectangle, as society rules its
ruly elements

Let society be a triangle
With unruly wrangles, SOC.

Now since the whole is
The ruler (the rule is

Supposed to be greater than any of the
arts . . .)



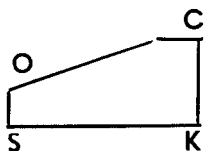
Now let the angle C by a political wangle revolt against
SOC.

Now if SOC is going to suppress C, then C is going to
suppress C.

This is absurd. The whole cannot be
in any relation to the part.

Let society, SOC, try to rule over its
own angles

And it will be squashed flat like a
thin rhomboid rectangle



Or something put through a clothes mangle—

In short it will be a wrecked tangle, (which is what we set
out to prove, which is what society is like).

RIGHT: Given man. Required prove. What?

Def. one. Prop. two—drop one purl one—make a dot and
carry one.

One can't be too accurate can one.

Axiom: Man is man, is one another, loves each other
brother brother

(Respectable people incur each other's strong respect
Are equal, congruous in all respects—

And things equal to the same things but with different
names cause a hell of a lot of bother)

And now for the means test:

Nietzsche. Will to Power—over what?

Over machines? By all means.

Over men? As means to an end?

What rot Means are the ends,

Machines are the end—

And the means to mightier men!

Now—a quick sum before the next paper.

Man, halved, divided, plussed, nonplussed

Multiplied by man, by many, take away the man you
first thought of

and the answer is

MAN IS NOT a surd

Has no LOCUS

Man is ABSURD

is loco.

Harry Hooton

POEM ABOUT AUTUMN

When you are warm and filled with sleep
 breathing softly in the cool blue air
 of this flamboyant dawn
 I sit on this side of the bed watching
 you almost smile in some dream perhaps
 and I wonder if you remember that last
 autumn day, the prow of our boat slicing
 the green layers open crushing the yellow
 streaks of sun with its wooden weight
 the sails stretching white into the roaring
 sky, the sails stretching white into the roaring
 sky, the wind wild and heavy as an iron wall
 and we, lying on our bellies, laughing at it
 shouting into it, reaching at it defiant
 and unbreakable, insolent, our faces wet
 with the cold spray and our sweat
 my arms holding your young body
 your white breasts rounded warm and alive
 red lips stung brilliant with the wind
 full thighs bulging with movement
 (we not knowing then the granite tombs
 of wished for love where every man hates
 every man and sleeps a fear filled sleep)
 but lying there on that sun polished deck
 unforgotten miles gone—O your hair light
 as laughter—

we watched the trail of flattened
 waves widen out behind while far off

ODE ON ZACALEU

The twelve apostles brood in strata
 Their eternal cycle about Lake Atitlan. Life still
 Fumbles on the tracked and retracked
 Shores of Atitlan, but here,
 Here the wind, the wind blows cold and chill
 From the Cuchumatanes, and quivers
 In a coat's stiff veils. These pallid apparitions,
 Geologic ice forms, relics of a glacial age
 Of man, on the dreary plain raise ragged pinnacles
 Within the mind, beyond the reach of thought;
 Pale ghosts beneath grey skies, the tattered
 Plumes of disembodied chiefs, torn
 Remnants of forgotten deeds.

They lie without intention, unsubstanced shadows
 Cast by a dying sun.

They lie, unsubstanced shadows
 Of suppliant, gnarled hands upraised in old
 Despair and hopelessness, grasping
 For reality they cannot feel, and do
 Not know exists. Three buzzards
 Dip a lazy V above a death too old for
 Their restless eyes.

Lost in the vastness of the present, like we
 Who stand surrounded here by bastardized
 Antiquity, and try with mirror glass emotions
 To feel the awe of Rome or Greece,
 They open fanning vistas to the vastness
 Of the past. These scalloped buildings
 Give no monument to builders, and stand forgotten
 Of their architects.

The green grass,
 Growing grass laps rubble screaming
 With dumb but awful clarity

For recognition. The rough stones resonate
 Within the mists of a vague unknown. Built of
 A misty hand clasp across vague centuries
 (Ghost meeting ghost in the listless land
 Of illusion) with existence in neither now nor
 Then, they reveal and clarify our indecision
 In their own. Their meaning fumbles past us
 As we fumble past them, unknowingly
 Brushing their fingers across the pulse
 Of today, adding their impress to our myriad
 Lives as we add ours to their death.

Stretch out your hands to wonder,
 Wanderer!

The whitewashed steps extend beyond infinity.
 Touch them—

You touch them not. See them—

You see a dream,

An unreality compounded of realities standing
 Tumble down beside a detoured road. They slide
 Like tesseract between the questing fingers
 Of the fumbling mind.

The whitewashed altar squats—unmarkable
 By newer minds, unmarked by ancient
 Thoughts—hooded by antique stone
 And modern paint. These ice forms
 Of time multiply the hopelessness of hope
 With their vast view of vanity.

SOLVENT, A PLUME EVOKE, SHE

solvent, a plume evoke, she,
 indian, impassive called a smile,
 jollybean skip a rope aplay, she,
 mutterhum, papoose a shrug, single-file

her motion stole, a north note, she,
 licorice eye, hips in her eyes
 diamond baton, crept at a cat, she,
 whittled up the small mew to her size,

nose ah pantaloon, oh tragic sly,
 live knick-knacks of suicide, she,
 tophatted ghost, noodle on the fly,
 south toot, feathered my love-sneeze, she.

Gil Orlovitz

THE POLITICIAN

You never knew who murdered all the fish,
 But, belly upwards, down the stream they went.
 You didn't see who broke the blind man's dish
 Across his hungry head, or what bough bent
 Backward across the desert's bomb-tossed rose—
 Harsh sunset in the high bright noon of day:
 How can you guess what black fisherman throws
 His net across this time-devoured bay?

You swing superbly on your cheap trapeze,
 Secured by safety-lines of tangled fright;
 But while the fisher watches you he sees
 The flaming cloud's apocalyptic light,
 The ocean and the rock; the end of things.
 Back and forth your empty body swings.

Charles Munoz

OPINION

Horizons. An Anthology of Mount Mary Student Verse.

Volume II. New York: Exposition Press. 160 pp. \$3.00.

One Beneath the Sun. By H. Edward Richardson, New York: Exposition Press. 95 pp. \$2.50.

Conquests, 1918-1939. By Carolyn Sparks, New York: Exposition Press. 94 pp. \$2.50.

The White Tree. By Leila Baers, New York: Exposition Press. 156 pp. \$2.50.

The field of poetry has perhaps as many mansions as Heaven. Some are good; some tolerable; others, like these four books, require fumigation. This is the only reason I can see for beating very dead horses. All are products of a "vanity" publisher. They are handsome to look at, but impossible to read. Almost everyone who has yearned to appear in print knows that vanity publishers make their money on the writer, not the reader. Some of the more dishonest ones make a great deal of money conning their victims. These are perils that need not concern us. A poet who wishes to publish his own work can find a reputable printer if he tries.

The unfortunate thing is that private publication is necessary at all. Yet, as we all know, poetry is not self-supporting. The necessary evil of private printing has in turn produced further dangers to good poetry. Too many writers are so eager to appear in print, they are as uncontrollable as a dope fiend. Immature, without any perceptible critical judgement, they rush into print as soon as they can fill a hundred pages. It does not seem to matter what the material is. Far from providing a brake, the vanity publisher says he is in the business for money, that if he does not publish it, someone else will. A few publishers seem always to be that someone else.

Let us examine four typical products of the system. **Horizons** can be disposed of quickly. It is an indiscrimi-

nate collection of school exercises. Some are rather charming, and I am sure the girls' parents found at least one poem each that they liked. The president of the college says: "The formlessness of much modern verse does not contribute to an understanding of order and form." Gertrude Stein could not have said it better, and I would be willing to drop the matter but for a statement a few lines later. "There is only a peep of the 'too much pampered Boy' of War, even though World War II and the cold war were contemporaneous. All reveal the sheltered academic world in which these students lived." I suppose we should be grateful that the head of "this pre-suffragette institution knew a war had been going on, but I for one took a dim view of it all.

Obviously with such encouragement the girls have turned out neat little sonnets, "elegaic verse, French forms, and even the simple ballad forms." One earnest girl walks right up to life and takes a big bite out of its backsides. The unfortunate opus is called "Joe Stalin to his Psyche." The last verse: "So you see—I have it planned./ You'd better stick with me at that,/ And you'll see hell raised! Hah! Hah!/ Hell? So what about—hell? So what? So —what?"

Now that Stalin has been endowed with the tender promptings of conscience, let's turn to Mr. Richardson's book. Again, some of it is quite nice, and a few lines are excellent. Instead of a president to introduce it, the poet could only get an associate professor in Kentucky. Six pages are devoted to patting the poet on the back with one hand while warding off critical blows with the other. The last was unnecessary, since very few critics bother with vanity publications. What might have been valuable was a bit of judicious criticism. This could have produced at least one good poem. Brevity makes most of the poems almost tolerable. The longest and worst is "The Failure." It is about Mr. Friendalone, the senile, lovable barrister. (This is a Kentucky term meaning lawyer.) Of course, no one can feel as old as a college senior. Mr. Richardson feels very old indeed, but writes about an eighty year old freshman.

Conquests has one redeeming quality. It is written by a young woman deeply concerned with world problems. It is rather refreshing after the unworldliness of the others. Unfortunately she has absolutely no talent. The book starts: "A war to end wars Ofttimes spoken./ Ever a peaceful world, the cherished theme./ Could such faith in future years be broken?/ Nay!" This dull drone continues for ninety-four pages.

Mrs. Baers, housewife, plumber, spark plug, and party girl, as she says, was obviously given one of the last hope chests in American matrimonial history. This she has filled with the "witty, passionate" poems she has at last published here. Some date from high school days. Others show little more emotional maturity, but she definitely has gone beyond puberty. We see her in different moods: Witty, "Before you, life was simple/ And secure/ . . . And just a trifle dull." Profound, on her lover at war, "'He walked,' she said, '. . . he walked proudly.'" Brave, "Let him forget,/ And joy in the forgetting,/ For if his heart remembers,/ His hand may pause or falter/ In the work/ That it must do." Willing to attribute her frayed sentiments to anything, she makes her party dress say: "This night . . . this night, beloved,/ Is a night/ Long to remember." I can sympathize with the very young who appear in print. Mrs. Baers is old enough to know better.

So we have four books of bad poetry. If the writer and the publisher do not care, why should we? There is one fact to be considered. A reader who is tricked into buying one of these pretty books can only come away with a wariness about future purchases of poetry. Thus one more reader is lost to a good poet publishing for the first time. A small sale and the usual critical neglect strengthens the hold of vanity publishers. So it goes, and only the publisher benefits. I can offer no solution short of locking immature talent in a room to think out what he wants to write and what he can write. Certainly we can expect no relief from the egotism that does so much harm to poetry. That will be around as long as, I hope, good poetry will be.