

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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THE RIGHT OF TREASURE-TROVE

Garbage-heap flies are the richest
Of all flies. Note their pleasure
In baroque and spiring circles above
Mashed beet, banana blackening
And discarded filet.

Croesus-like they delve among their private
Treasures, moving the slow air with glinting
Green wing-fans, glistening teeth'd gormandizers.

To the City Dump come children
With crouched and reaching eyes
In search of really imagined treasure.
See, here one plucks a slit mattress
From the heap, lifts and bears it
Above his head, oho,
To his slattern friends.

And see the silent fathers of Hamelin
In their chambers all aghast
At the Piper departed.
Soon they will have to stand
And peer above their child-gorged mountain,
Rise and hear and settle for a brass band
Playing there, trombones, trumpets,
A mammoth drum poom-poom
And gaudy pompon spheres bobbing—
All polyglot brass, but sweet.

A. C. Lampee

THREE POEMS**The Garden**

There is no evidence. But here was a marriage
 In which the husband killed the wife—sometimes
 It goes the other way. It took him several years
 Industriously pushing her ankle-deep
 Into the greensward of the formal garden
 While she, resisting statuesquely, grew genteel
 Under the neighbors' eyes. "In fact, it's not
 Unpleasant here," she sighed, and the ground rose up
 Two inches higher on her legs.

Nobody could dispute
 That she was courteously cared for. Day after day
 The clocks chimed on the landings of three flights
 Of stairs, each waiting until the last one finished
 To let the masculine bass bells sound one by one
 Through open windows, clearly. Nourishing meals
 Were brought to her on time.

Naturally

She was bathed at night, after the moon went down.
 Sometimes, faintly, someone passing
 On the other side of the hedge would think he saw
 The husband making love to her, and pause
 To watch their shadows wrestle darkly, forming
 A kind of fire that gives no light. The leaves
 Would rustle, and the stranger would steal on,
 Moved by faint expectations.

One night she sank
 Into the ground well past her knees; and now
 She could touch the grass without bending over,
 Feeling it under her fanned-out palms
 Like close-cropped human hair. From this time on
 She liked her situation better : As she learned

Simultaneously, upside-down and backwards.

It was necessary to hold the manuscript or
 Pediscript the wrong way in the mirror, to get it
 Right; and when you had it fixed correctly,

What you saw (in
 Flawless Palmer Method) was *Ontogeny*
Recapitulates Phylogeny,

And other such popular tags and straws,
 To which inadequacy clings, whether by
 Left hand or foot or right
 Hand or foot, or all four.

And this was the most remarkable feat
 Of using oneself in a complete way
 I ever saw, surpassing indeed the functioning
 Of the Great Pipe Organ
 (Five-manualed, multi-stopped, thaumaturgic),
 Even the one that pulses with a peacock

Iridescence, having
 Peristaltic-action-pastels digesting Direct
 Current opaquely behind distended plastic.

However, the exquisite
 Muscular coördination of Dolores Olivier
 Is rendered somewhat fearsome by its
 Similarity to the fugal
 Assaults on chastity in Pierre Louys, q. v.

This is what Dolores was to me: a sorceress.
 At last she was captured and put in a cage

By an Act of Congress, to wit,
 Her husband's family. She became right-handed,
 And walked on a deep-piled wall-to-wall carpet,
 A mother to grown children. Yet to this day

I feel a certain rage,
 Seeing how even a sorceress will age.

Stephen Mooney

**A PEACOCK, BLACK SWAN AND NOW THESE
GULLS**

I see again Catalina,
see one white peacock beneath a wire dome,
and one black swan like a lord
going round and round a lonely castle;
see the dirt road
with a single Eucalyptus
canted on the hillside
and myself walking
that far-gone west-coast
way-off island road,
on my way to nothing but birds.
From this citadel of ten-years gone
I stand stoned by a peculiar beauty
caged in my youth
as I watch gutter-dirty gulls lusting
it over this other ocean;
and on my way back from the past
I find more beauty
in their short dog-barks
larking the air for free food
and a hutch of wind
than in that remembered peacock
walking the rounds of a wire world
and a strange black swan
caught in his own dark ripples.

Jeannette Nichols

DUET FROM THE DELAYED BREAKFAST

I said to my love
Who's that inside you
Kicking and twitching
It can't be gas

Said my love to me
Don't you remember
The spot on the chair
By the table? We breakfasted
Late at your mother's that morning
We'd been to the opera
Heard the soprano
Singing her heart out
The tenor he loved her
It said in the synopsis
But not the way you loved me

That's who's inside
A tenor?

Nor yet a soprano
It was our vacation
We drove to the city
Arrived just in time
For the house lights were dimming
Next morning the sunlight
Sifting through courtyards
Lit up your eyes
Raised ideas that bedazzled
Belating the breakfast

My mother was sullen
The pancakes were sodden
Not crisp like they should be
But get when not eaten
She jumped to conclusions

That only my mother
When she makes me pancakes
Can reach and believe in
"To girls of good family
Not without warning
Before they have time
To take proper precautions
The cushion just back
From expensive upholstering
Come periods sudden"

The stain still damp
The color dark
Who could have told
It was love
And love's excess
Unless he were expert?

My mother's no expert
We'll call him Puccini
Or Wolfgang Amadeus
Perhaps you prefer
That his name be Fidelio
(A stain on the cushion
A stranger inside you
The President maybe
Hail to the Chief)

Oh the get of our love
Made us late for breakfast
The sun shining down
The future just rising
Delectable morning
Delicious vacation

Nicholas Biel

BIOLOGY LESSON

You were conceived at the intersection of one, May,
twentynine and a room in a mid-western town
in a moment slightly suspended relative to the
viewer, but not to you.

Your distance somewhere warped, returned to its
accustomed parabolic—pinggg—and then

One stately ovum marching down its flexing halls
found itself besieged

by an unexpected flock of humming-birds.

Out of infinite lack of knowledge, ovum sent a darting
tongue, man-eating, -making, tongue — and
licked up one humming-bird of incredible size
(downhill size)

trapping it in the now impregnable fortress of
the smallest you.

Then it became a matter of logistics, and division of
the troops, until

a full-grown Trojan horse was delivered in a
short, hard trip

To the walls of an incredible cabbage patch, by a stork
in rubber gloves.

Unless there is a question, you are now dismissed.

Patsy Thompson

NUDE

She faces
the spicy sun
from a kneeling
position
her bright head
thrown back
to remove
a blue shadow
that was brushing
her full lips
Her pear-shaped
breasts
hang down
like sun-burst
fruit
and amber
summer grass
rises up
to tickle
the blond hairs
on her tan
forearms
She poses
with patience
known only
to camels
and Chinese
philosophers
while across
the stony field
two beavers
soak their tails
in creek water

David Pearson Etter

DIARY OF HARRY YAMEKE: 1 NOVEMBER 1961

The wind slog-snaking through the open hotdog stand tufted mustard up a man's nose. The people slogjawing food from the counter slumped over in their eyes, still stunned by birth. I was putting off writing my father he had died—I'd always been a poor correspondent; besides, my wife phoned telling me my son had spilled the inkbottle, a sign I'd have to wait some more before advising my father. Standing at the counter, I could've sworn the wind was doing something behind my back, so I tensed my buttocks, tongue-in-rear-lower-cheek, so to speak. But when nothing happened, I turned and saw ten million people staring at the one red hump in the street a bus had left—the wife of an Israeli exchange student and their little boy; the kid had thought he could play with a mother anywhere, so he had chased himself into the traffic; the mother, her scream taking the long route down through her bowels, seeing she had not made sure of her son's life, seeing a huge vehicle bearing down on her son's life, hearing the child suddenly babbling in a foreign tongue she thought he hadn't picked up yet, she knew her own life was worth precisely that much less of terror he would feel in her embrace, and she had got to him before the vehicle, whose wheels had slobbered them into one. The wind was innocent. I turned to the counter and left a tip to cover everything.

Gil Orlovitz

FOUR-SQUARE GOSPEL

Old Uncle Fred could squint along forty-foot beams
And catch the gentlest wayward drift toward a curve
That no one else saw. His caloused, pitch-stained
hands

Would tenderly stroke the flush seams of a perfect
joint.

We used to see him astride his unwavering rafters,
Tall as the echoing blows of his worshipping arms,
Looking with pride on the loving work of his mitred,
Four-square world. He always looked sharply to see
If some sinning board in somebody's house were off
square,

And longed to redeem it with the righteous tongue
of his plane.

And then he slumped into arches and curves of age,
Propped up in a bed, looking out at the slanting east
While unseen termites encircled his squared-off house.
Puzzled, he eyed the long, sad arc of the geese,
The easy bend of a tree-limb heavy with fruit,
And then—we knew by the softening line of his
mouth—

Saw the curve of a neck swinging free from the
beams of a cross.

Roderick H. Jellema

THE CROSSROADS OF TIME

It's getting late.

Both dawn and darkness press on me.

Men run, and pause to look, and hurry on.

I feel the stir but cannot tell the temper of the wind.

It is cold; I am uneasy; I must try to understand.

But it's hard to understand.

DeBroglie, Bohr and Seaborg make it hard to understand;

Heisenberg and Einstein make it hard to understand.

They say that sunshine comes from carbon 'cause of something called mc^2 ;

They say waves are particles that aren't there if they're going someplace;

They say I can go out into space and come back younger than I am.

We measured the moon by Euclid, but Euclid was wrong;

We predicted eclipses by Ptolemy, but Ptolemy was wrong;

We found Neptune by Newton, but Newton was wrong.

Light can press on things and mass can disappear.

Parity is out of date and everything curves.

Space has a funny shape;

It is infinite, but it's getting bigger from the red shift.

This is true. It's all true. It's in the books that Gamow writes.

I look at the pictures but I do not understand.

They make things that circle the earth fifteen times in a day,

Yet they are quiet absent minded eggheads.

Their plasma jet is hotter than the surface of the sun,

Yet they must be watched and cleared by the FBI.

They cannot earn a tenth as much as Willie Mays,

Yet they have synthesized the inheritance stuff of chromosomes.

Their gobbledegook is in calculus and polysyllables,

But it is top secret—in case it means something in Russian.

They have given us the power to destroy ourselves on an angry whim,

But they cannot tell us what to do so this cannot come to pass.

How can they be so mixed up?

Or is it I who is mixed up?

I have an Oedipus complex but did not murder my father

Because he mended my wagon.

I'm a chain smoker because I was weaned before the end

Of my oral stage.

I identify with the protoimage of my mother,

Because I love her and hate her more than my superego.

Jung's collective unconscious is the archetype of my

Social awareness in spite of Adler.

The symbolism of my libido has distorted

The psychoid substrate of my phylogenetic memory.

A guy explained to me how I got the way I am.
His wives could not understand him, but he figures things out;

He wet his bed till he was twelve, but he got over it.
It's too late for me now: I can't remember the trauma of my birth.

I have read *The Hidden Persuaders*:

The mass media are repeating, suggesting, whispering,

Shouting, hinting, pleading without end.

I have read *The American Sexual Tragedy*:

Romantic love is for the poets; the inhibitions of my

Culture are cheating and frustrating me.

I have read *The Organization Man*:

I seek the security of togetherness; conformity marks

The classlessness of my friendship web.

I have read *The Lonely Crowd*:

I am other-directed; I want marginal differentiation

From the peer group of my psycho-socio milieu.

I am putty in the fingers of time.

But why should I stand tall in the crowd?

Why should I make things hard for myself?

Why should I say yes and no?

I don't know where they're taking me,

But don't know where I want to go anyway.

Yet, is there not truth and falsehood, freedom and oppression,

Joy and sadness?

Is there not hope and despair?

Where can I learn what's important?

The headlines say the WACs will wear girdles and
falsies,

And the back page says the British will make
energy from deuterium.

There's not enough time for arithmetic and science,

But there's time for Jayne Mansfield, and golf.

Willie and Joe were not deferred because America
needed them,

But Elvis was deferred because Paramount needed
him.

One and a half billion people don't get enough to eat,
And Duncan Hines says The Nugget Grill is a good
place to eat.

The Pentagon says we need billions for bases,

And Pearson says the IRBMs could wipe them all
out.

Dag Hammarskjold works for peace,

And Steve Allen works for Colgate.

One Nobel laureate says it's wrong to put hot stron-
tium in other people's vegetables,

And another says it's not a question of what is
wrong, but of who is free.

I asked at the school where men build for tomorrow

If they know what's worth while to understand.

"Science Made Easy" is taught by the coach; he is
progressive; he proves

One can understand bean sprouts and light bulbs
without knowing algebra.

"Democracy in the Home" is taught by a spinster;
she has 90 units in education;

She explains allowances and family fun and
younger siblings.

"Guidance Workshop" tells of dates and pimples and
personal hygiene;

Of parents and curfews and social adjustment.
But who tells of hunger and heartbreak and
subjugation?

Who tells of Algeria, the Congo and Lebanon?
Who tells of Buchenwald, Dachau, the burning cross?

I asked at the church of the shepherds of men

What way I should take at the crossroads of time.
One and a half billion people do not have enough to
eat,

And they debate on the Holy Ghost.

Two hundred babes are born every minute,

And they say widows should not remarry.

Blood runs red in the streets of Budapest, and they
pray.

Hate laps the shores of the Gulf of Aqaba, and they
pray.

Tears fall to the sea at the docks of Djakarta, and
they pray again.

"Truth was revealed to the prophets of old," but the
time is now,

And the truth of a Fermi or Einstein is not born
of dogma.

"Salvation shines bright beyond the grave," but I
am young,

And faith in a promise restoreth not my soul.

It's getting late.

Both dawn and darkness press on me.

I feel the stir but cannot tell the temper of the wind.

Men run, and pause to look, and hurry on;

They hope and fear and laugh and cry and wonder
why.

I am uneasy; it is cold, and I do not know where I
can warm myself.

Milton Hildebrand

TWO POEMS**Young Harlan**

You wouldn't believe how Harlan used to suffer,
say twenty years ago, when he was four years
married.

For one thing, Harlan & Schiller, Lithography,
was not the majestic concern it now is.
It grew with the town, and the town hadn't yet
grown much.

The serious thing was his disastrous family life.
Like many high-strung men he married for beauty,
assuming he was well enough off to stand it
in a sizeable house and with numerous friends
who he imagined could be comfortable near her.

Because today, unlike so many of us, Harlan
is happy, it's hard to envision him not happy;
yet everything was against it from the beginning.
He was too genteel to study a profession
and too sophisticated to have gone to Spain.
By nature unnaturally excitable, inclined

toward alcohol, and needlessly intelligent
for merely maintaining an inherited business
which he knew would prosper of itself in ten years,
at twenty-four he married the last fair's Corn Queen.

If Harlan was lonely before, he was no less so
after the wedding. In the first place, as I've implied
already, only the best of his friends abided.
When you arrived, she'd do a few turns in the parlor
to show her form, then leave. Harlan would answer
later

arrivals: "You mean the beast? The beast is probably
upstairs in its boudoir brushing its hair and eating
candied ginger and smoking cubebs and trying
to think of things to say." Increasingly often
she did return downstairs to peep in at us and say

nothing, again and again, or even to stare
somebody down. If Harlan was drunk when she did so,
and increasingly often he was, he'd shout "Boo!"
and she'd get. This was the initial phase, which lasted
for nearly three years, degenerating all the time.
Soon booing her did not work. She'd descend very
quietly, then rush in to wherever we were,
and scream just like a hen pheasant until Harlan
threw his glass at her, though even then sometimes
she'd stay

and drag up her skirt over her head and scream some
more.

I've gone farther than I intended by telling
you that, but since I have I might's well go ahead.
Things occurred quickly. After the night she came
waddling

around the rug in front of masculine company,
and clucking, and she had a feather duster up,
there ceased to be company. I still made them calls.

I told Harlan it was pure friendship and told myself that I persisted out of purely medical interest. At that time Harlan began to build model boats and airplanes and carriages. He'd sit whittling twelve hours a day, I'm sure. For remember that those days all he had to do, and that was merely for form, was chat for a half hour once or twice a month with old man Schiller and to have a beer with him and young Schiller once in a while in a public place. In this second phase, however, my visits were, as often as not, actually professional. The first event was a matter of sleeping-tablets, too few to do her real harm but enough to scare her husband. The second time it was an overdose of opium, which required some stomach-pumping, and inspired my discovering she was pregnant. "Too bad the thing's heredity is so tainted," said Harlan. "It's ideal environment won't have full range." And she said "The trouble is you're too cheap, that's all. You're a cheap, lazy, rotten, stinking bastard." In a few weeks she was scared. She who had dared fool at suicide couldn't face the gradual approach of this occupational danger, of natural demands, in fact, of any kind—therein resembling her husband, who continued to grouch and be drunk most of the day even now that he was involved in the art of building bottled boats, a demanding art and his reply to his suffering of that time. She was locked in the bathroom. I kicked in the door, and sewed and dressed her wrists which she ineptly

had mauled
with an unwieldy and, mind you, dull butcher-knife.
He bought her decent bracelets to conceal the scars,
but that helped little. By then her pregnancy
was visible. Her next attempt was real, I think;
for vanity in a case like hers is sovereign,
and justifiably. For I'll admit, were it not
for her I'd never have learned what womanly beauty
could be. This is only a middling city. In these
twenty years I've seen four or at most five semblable
to Mrs. Harlan, including now her own daughter,
and none have been my patients, I'm sorry to say.
Of course today the town remembers her beauty
but not the subnormalcy, and that has permitted
the legend of an eternal-widower Harlan
to grow with a sentimental construction that's false.
Her fourth attempt was real. She had been posing
before a full-length mirror. She left quietly.
She gunned her roadster pell-mell across the whole
town
and stopped at the first farm. She climbed a silo
two-thirds
then stuck there, just below the knob, instinctively
inhibited from opening her hands, and so clung
until the farmer brought her down, weak and re-
penting.
Harlan was there to receive her. Her drive was noticed
by many citizens. Harlan had had phone calls
from several points in town saying "Your wife tore by
here breakneck this minute" and "Your Mrs. took off
past here like a scalded dog," so he traced her route
in his car and arrived to see her on the silo
and then to bring her home. That day their troubles
first

became commonly, though not accurately known. "Can never say what a woman in a family way will go do" was the word in town and around the town; for only a half-dozen knew more, and only Harlan and I all. "The beast," Harlan told me as he constructed the base of an Eiffel Tower of toothpicks, "the beast, I say, has cut me off from what she calls so quaintly her favors and more quaintly her charms. Why don't you see what you can do?" I told her there's no harm in it, but she was adamant, insisting "Just let him, just once" (for she hoped and presumed she was carrying a boy) "just let him get one single taste of that now, and you'll see he'll turn out a pansy one fine day." This was the worst of Harlan's suffering, the most undignified. His hobbyism muffled her stupidity; not even booze made up for sex.

This was the third and final phase, the quiet phase. Harlan turned up at my office every day, drunk and tremorous. —How's the Eiffel Tower coming? "It isn't. Just look at my hands." —How's the Mrs.? "She crochets. She has assumed an angelic face." —You ought to take a trip, alone; at least get away from the plains. How about Montana? the Grand Canyon?

"I shall continue, thank you, to sit in my house of rocks and long-dead trees." We had a falling-out about something. It lasted only a few days

in fact; but when her time arrived, Harlan hired another doctor. The delivery was easy. She was sorry to have a girl. Harlan was happy.

She named her after the newly re-elected President's wife. Harlan did not object. She weaned the girl a little early, it seemed to me. A month later, early morning, the maid found Mrs. Harlan cold dead, under the kitchen sink, burned out. She had swallowed a half can of commercial lye, following it with cold water as the label instructed.

"In two more months I shall be twenty-nine years old."

That was Harlan's single comment. The rest is simple to tell. Frau Schiller and Mrs. Schiller helped him with Ellie. In three years war came. The town began to grow. Harlan became rich and a philosopher.

Ellie's in college. He's alone. Lately he said: "Remember the toothpick Taj Mahal I built when she died? Later I thought I had better things to do. These days I undo the world and myself and juggle fragments. What is there better? What will not get told?"

Emrich Urban

Ellie H.

Out of the windy center, gloomy West where the prairie is crossed arbitrarily by Main and Market and these are paralleled and crossed fourteen times further in a square until the creek on the north and the rails to the west are met and east and south are left as Catfish Town (in the shape of an L)—out of the West, I say, came Ellie Harlan, abandoning riches, hunting wisdom.

And first she lived with other beginning girls

(a square hotel without accommodation)
but left on medical recommendation
to stay in a trailer in a trailer court
with an Egyptian mathematician.
She studied to resemble him both in dress
and in mentality, and switching dark lace
she spoke of functions and infinity.
As last he threw her out. But he was crazy.

A Jewish sociologist rescued her
and kept her in his one room and half-kitchen.
She prattled population-growth and groups
a semester more till, turning sophomore,
she found a sober real-estate man, a Greek,
and moved to his model-cottage beside
a lake. She talked of tiles and schools nearby
a while. Ellie now wore business suits and smile.
But frequent moving had made her quick as oil.

Grand guest, glad host: whoever got her her
next place remained a while, on which condition
most all of us of mixed race were treated to
her sympathy and grace. In this fashion passed
her multiresidential junior year.
Then, in the subsequent summer session,
she moved into the attic of a store
with a pair of musicians, U. S. negroes,
and started to talk of tonics and tone-rows.

At twenty, in a sobbing dither, she found
the end of her tremendous tether, so all
that seemd left was to summon her father
who carried off, in tight sweater and powder-
blue tights, our chum of innumerable
saving nights — who'd held our arms and said Relax,
asked about books, and chafed our backs, and talked
about whatever lonely men do do

in shop or laboratory or studio.

Now Ellie is back from home: the windy West,
small block of night lights you notice from your plane
slowly turning. All the air is black between
her streets and you; but by your side low clouds
are filled with light from the square neighborhoods.
Now she's here, she lives alone and works. She'll keep
the next, she says. She says she wants to be
a matriarch with many children by her
in spite of but respectful of their father.

Emrich Urban

POEM FOR MOTHER'S DAY

Her eyes are not so bright now, yet they seize
What is hers: the eyes of her full-muscled son
Who played too long with tinker toys, and clay
For making snakes and such; until the world
And all its modeled women (all but one)

Mouldered in his mind, untrue to forms
He framed of wood and mud. Once she held
His blocks and watched him build her throne, and now
She stares down from that dusty height. Sometimes
His eyes catch forms beyond the rubber mold

In which his plaster figures sleep and thicken.
She wakes and grips her throne. Her eyes are quick.

Larry Rubin

CABBAGE MOTH

Just like the sound
Of its noun
The creature
Depicted
Though intent,
Devoted,

Does tend sometimes
Attending
Its business
To lose all
Sensible
Sense of its

Self while pausing
On parts of
Petunias
More white than
Itself. Yet,
Rapidly

Flapping like wet
Wash line's fresh
Sheets' flapping
Or else some
Windmill's cloth
Slats in Dutch

Breezes' flapping,
Isn't this
Soft moth still
Less slothful
Than the sound
Of its noun?

Kenneth Bruffee

TWO POEMS**Ancient Documents**

Praise the grave scholar boneraking
his books and the chips of the dead:
their toy treasure and their stone tears,
stone shouts of the ripe kings fallen,
lions of porphyry mewing,

chariots, thrones, the wind sifting
their histories, sowing deserts
in their lion gates and gardens
and the temples where the sacred
white women loosed their antlered hair.

Alight in Lerna now he walks
in the sea-shaken neighing red
halls of the night where the moon's mares
ring their bright bridles of bronze,
clash bloody teeth in marble stalls.

In the moonset in the chanting
groves of the dark Arcadia
he finds the shape of history:
bread, blood, a royal offspring crushed
for a cornerstone, the strong king

crucified for his blood, for wheat.
When kings come to a holy place
they come to die where brutes contend
their blood: wild and curly-fronted
bulls, obsidian black and horned

in a crescent herd; maned lions
 crouch on their paws, rumble, and wag
 their jeweled heads. Thick snakes writhing
 in feathers of fire and dust strike,
 strike through dust at the regal feet.

The bitch-faced college barks and howls.
 Praise him who opens the gorgeous
 easter egg of time to the heart
 of our history's body here:
 the fixed, the fatal, winter scene

always before the flowering
 death of sacred kings: in the gold
 shell of days the burning branches,
 the woman in a cave of hills,
 her child, light, the shepherds' song.

Suzanne Gross

Baluba Carving

The tree lives
 in the sculptured she
 though her breasts hang
 like the bags of a goat,
 shining, magic and full.
 The venereal rose blooms in the wood,
 the sacred navel rises from her centre
 like an old volcano's cone.

She stands in the hushed museum so
 black in the sea-lit room,
 part antelope,
 part crone,

part virgin
and part dread.

Her wasp head helmed in her hair
is older and more terrible
than Ajax in his neighing brazen armor.

Suzanne Gross

CEREMONIES

The last geese have gone,
heavy in flight down passageways
blood-smear'd, smelling of burnt powder,
recoil, and death on Sunday tables
where grace is said and savored.

Many will crash on blasted wings
among lathed mates indifferent
to gyre, others prevail and reach
lagoons, lily-padded, where anglers troll
and exchange small commercial jokes.

Behind, nothing is changed. On high peaks,
scoured by arctic sleet,
crosshairs fix Boone and Crockett heads,
spit-curled, the corrugated scroll of years
to hang in clean hard gun-stiff rooms
with other formalized fears.

Arthur Wills

SCENE OF THE CRIME —or newest testament

Even in heels you can walk today on the dirt path
by the river. Twelve years, now, have purpled the
scars of that flood.

Just three you were: that little rump under your skirt
warming my hands, carrying you in the rain . . .

I remember
it sinister, bleak, rolling by like a sheet of steel in a
mill.

Linda, it rained for forty days that bad November.

Sweet fools of our dependencies! Wee lips, breath
moist

on my neck, your patent leather shoes knocking my
knees . . .

We were drawn. Forced. To *him*, in his hut. For help!
Just there

(all cornfield now) it stood. Child, think of Sinbad,
kind

to his Old Man of the Sea, Bre'r Rabbit taking hold
of tar. Now, freed, I would skip with as good a heart
to the patch

of briars native to our breed!

Give me your hand.

I'll help you cross the ditch. Right here I skidded off
the road

(gravel in those days) seeing the bridge gone, the
land

level with water; I pitched into that bluff, nosed awry
like a tipped turtle. Reversed. Rocked, rocked, and
spun the tires

until the differential sat in the grassy sog.

You, honey, laughed at the fun.

Nothing to do but drag
you into the wet world: gusts of rain, and, in the

trees,
darkness suspended, still as smoke from Autumn
fires.
I slopped along, my topcoat flapped around you,
toward
his light, like a star, downstream.

We spared you the worst all these years.
You knew the least: were shocked by the vomiting,
say, or fits
of fury in the house, or his tears. I was relieved
you knew no more in your simplicity. He died,
nor are you simple still.

Let me say, then, there were nights
I guarded the hall—of our own home. He claimed love.
Love!

Think of it: finding him sprawled on the covers beside
you in your junior bed. God knows for what! And you
said, waking once, you liked to cuddle Uncle Ed!
Uncle indeed. I tell you I walked the hall, not knowing
into which bedroom he might head!

You wince, my darling.
Such foul imagining? Perhaps, but at your age
what can you guess of how men are? Drunk. In the
dark.

Nor was he so old—though he seemed old, bent to the
stove
in his hut that night, suspenders crossed on his long
johns,
his white hair hanging, long hands rattling the coffee
pot.

He aged, but as crabapples do—green till they rot.
I stood inside the doorway holding you, seeing him
stare
with eyes like little blisters at the cold flood tearing
the earth ten yards from his door. Well, we couldn't
stay there.

Ah, you,
 at three, were quick as she to mother; often I saw
 you wipe his lips where the egg ran; I saw your
 fingers
 push back his satin hair. You never wiped *my* lips—
 there was no need.

He lingered like a hurt that would
 not heal—for seven years—eating our meals, making
 an attic haven in our home. He taught you language,
 taught you to call him Uncle . . .

Yes, I grant he tried
 to hold an honest job, to build a sober life—
 but still he stayed, unfit as a prophet for the world.
 Your mother took his side. At last, of course, she died.
 I took the chance to move him out—respectfully—
 on grounds of impropriety: a growing girl,
 two men, you know. Like a guilty dog surprised, he
 fled,
 taking a room downtown. He did not cease to haunt.

He loved me like a brother; loved my wife, well, more
 than as a friend; and you . . . How did he love you,
 Linda?

Oh, Ed would love you any way you let him . . .

I stood
 restored today, sucked Spring by the grave's side.

You cried, kneeling,
 as the boxed Prince sank. Linda, today the river is
 blue.

That hut of crates, tin signs, long since has washed
 into the world's debris, that cowshed where we found
 the weakling lover. Linda, he was old and smelled—
 with his one stained tie, that barbarous hat (his
 ragged crown).

Martyr? He used pain. Martyrs have some use. He
 served
 only as someone to give to, a sink for love. So storms

blow us to one another's arms, each Lear compelled
to bend to a fool, each fool to a Lear; each body
warms
a body, drains a body's heat. Linda, he is cold.

I cannot even lift you now. Stand close; this skirt—
tailored to shape what once I held in one hand! See—
you've grown beyond my grasp. Your head lay here;
it hurt

to sniff that sweet hair pasted by the rain. Oh,
Linda . . .

What did he say on your walks? Where did he take
you when

all afternoon the two of you were gone—and came
in flushed to the table, eyes softer, deeper than
flowers,

cheeks tight with private smiling?

No answer? and your glance
condemns—as if what *you* saw I could never see . . .
What are you seeing, Linda? What do you see in me?

Has love made him invulnerable? His talk of love
for the weak, wrong, young, foolish, criminal,
possessed—

for drunkards caught in huts at floodtime—these
were his pleas,

reposed in my chair. He begged indulgence, really, for
himself. Is this what brought you to his narrow
knees?

And I would carry brandy from the kitchen; I
listened;

I was persuaded, too. Of this I stand confessed.

I thought I saw in him a way, a force. I kept
his glass full, raged at my wife, lowered my voice to
him . . .

But let that force weave down a midnight hall! At
night

there is excess of loving in the world!

For all

I gave, I was his last confider. Brother? Hurléd
to the wall when he felt impelled! Oh, charity
was in his name, not more. Or say his loves con-
flicted . . .

still think of the cost — to heart (dear Lord, to
purse!) Though I

forgave and forgave again (your mother, in fact,
insisted),

and daily I would go to work and leave him wiping
my household like a rag, I saw the cost of love:
such giving makes us hate. What kept me patient?

Was

I walking in his path, unjudging, suffering all?

No. Though I thought so, no. We nurse our own
hearts first!

I bit back all protest, condemned myself, revered:

I handed him the evening paper time after time,
sensing he had a prior right to mine. Was he so blest?
To sit like a saint in the lamplight? Or, when he died,
to bring a hundred people to the door?

I had

no *need* of love: is that why you mourned three nights
straight,

indifferent if I came or went, the waxy body
lying in the coffin demanding all your heart? Mere
man?

Or was it what he said: that we are the stuff of stuff
once dead, so why such pettiness now? That self is
sin?

Oh Linda, he had self enough for all of us!

Has female love no pride? Spirit, you murmur?
Spirits,

the doctor said: ulcers. He could not digest bread.

Nor has he spirit to return, as we have done,

to the scene of the crime—where he coiled at our ear
 and hissed
 that we should disregard the facts and live on love—
 narcotic love! It kept us reeling all these years.
 We owe it all to Uncle Ed.

What? Again grieving?
 Is that like Daddy's girl? Rather, delight we have
 the Old Man off our backs—nor are we likely now
 to bear his kind again: the road is paved; this valley
 has flood control. Our hearts are technically dated. We
 may walk the dirt erect, your kisses all for me . . .

But where did he take you, Linda? Why did your
 young hand
 wriggle to his like a fish to a cave? What easy hours
 swirled down that sink? What secrets were kissed
 into this palm?
 I cannot bear your wonder, your eyes like silent
 flowers!

Judson Jerome

SALAMANDER

Not a fixed ceremonial date but some
 Familiar and moving sign
 Should mark the beginning of a season.

The spring here could be marked beginning
 Any day after Christmas with the flowering quince
 Or as late as late April with the cherry.

I choose for a spring signal on my hill
 The first land-wandering water-dog, usually
 In early March they are coming up the orchard,
 Prowling along the roadway and the porches.

Orange to umber, they are all colours of rust,
Fall colours, but they move with determination,
As green-driven as any sprout or bud.

The first water-dog this year was an old one,
Skin the colour of redwood bark and as rough.

Although they travel on fiery affairs
The little ones look lost away from water.

But this big one, derelict-iron dry and dark,
Reminds me: the ancestral salamander, whether
By gills, lungs, or a lost alchemy, was a fire-breather.

And not of the fountain-fires, the green
Bud fires, leaf fires, rain-kindled fires of spring

But of that original fire, element
Before rumours of water or the fact of earth.

Reminds me: the world has been a sphere of flame,
Spinning without darkness in the universe,
Shadowless, timeless, winterless, lifeless.

This spring that we believe an ancient season,
Calling it new only as it returns;
Our little vision and vast calculation,
My world, your world, this world
Came suddenly with cooling, casting shadow,—

Suddenly, recently, possibly only briefly.

Not a fixed ceremonial date, but some
Familiar and moving symbol
Should mark the beginning of a season

So, on my hill, the first land-wandering water-dog,
The recent fire-breather, salamander,
For yet another spring for this green planet,
For this young shade in the old glare of star sight.

Marie de L. Welch

POEMS AND VERSE PLAYS. *By Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Bollingen Series (No. 33). \$6.*

Most of the people who know the name Hugo von Hofmannsthal generally think of him as the librettist for Richard Strauss. But he was much more than that. He was an important poet and a superb lyric dramatist, a major figure in German literature. Only recently however have his works started to appear in English. This bilingual edition of over twenty representative poems and six plays carefully edited by Michael Hamburger should greatly help to spread Hofmannsthal's long overdue recognition here in America.

SIX POETS OF MODERN GREECE. *Translated by Edmund Keeley & Philip Sherrard. Knopf. \$5.*

The lyric tradition is strong in Greece. It flowered first in antiquity, lay dormant for centuries, then, in the last hundred years or so, has sprouted again. This fine collection presents an interesting (*typical* is a hard word to use of Greek poetry!) cross section of a half-dozen widely varied poets. Their techniques, interests, images and poetic approaches are all different. Yet an almost mystic "greekness" seems to unite them. It isn't something you explain, only something you feel. But that *is* one of the main functions of poetry. The translations are admirable and the book most handsomely designed and bound.

HORATIO. *By Hyam Plutzik. Atheneum. \$4.*

The dying Prince Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story and the loyal friend would do so. But time and human appetites and the general indifference to justice make the task a formidable one. Horatio alone remains true to Hamlet while the world uses his tragedy for its own ends. This is the subject of Plutzik's excellent dramatic poem. He has managed his complex ideas, his involved narrative and the movement of his lines with remarkable skill. A first-rate book which has long called to be written.

THE GARDENER AND OTHER POEMS. *By John Hall Wheelock. Scribner's. \$3.*

There is only one surprise in this book. The verse has all of the traditional imagery that we expect of Wheelock, all the tight control and precise versification. It also has for the first time a kind of profound passion and joy that is the more remarkable when we remember that Wheelock is 75 years old. Obviously, he continues to grow.

COLLECTED POEMS. *By Richard Eberhart. Oxford University. \$6.*

There are those who condemn Eberhart because he is not a poet of great ideas. Perhaps he isn't. But when a writer can create as many memorable images and as much verbal music as is collected in this volume, we can easily forgive him if he is not also a philosophical titan. The best of Eberhart's verse over the past 30 years is here—and it's a complete pleasure to read it.

THE MAXIMUS POEMS. *By Charles Olson. Jargon/Corinth Books. \$1.95 (paper).*

THE DISTANCES. *By Charles Olson. Grove. \$1.75 (paper).*

For some odd reason critics feel that they must "properly label" Charles Olson before they can appreciate him. This is, of course, nonsense. Like all interesting poets, he defies a label. He rants and hollers and whispers and coos; he uses words and ideas as he finds them. If you have the patience to follow him, you'll find here a most original poetic talent, and a considerable influence on others.

STARTING FROM SAN FRANCISCO.

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti. New Directions. \$2.95.

There are several fresh aspects of Ferlinghetti revealed in this book. The poems are longer, more sustained; more concerned with ideas than with verbal glitter; and they sing out boldly with excellent clarity. His new direction is welcome. (As a bonus, a small record with Ferlinghetti reading three of his poems is included.)