

# THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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## THREE POEMS

### Reply

A bottom log rotting  
in March-Spring  
is soft tugged  
from stiff earth  
beneath a pile of wood.  
The sight startles  
my winter eye:  
albino ants pause  
black beetles sleep  
a crescent grub tenses  
we are all caught.

Am I fooled or do they  
for an instant clearly stand suspended  
before scurrying through  
their roofless corridors.  
A glistening worm withdraws  
but not until a pulse puts erect  
that calibrated tip  
to tantalize my glistening eye.  
Punk soggy, the log replaced  
will celebrate in warmth  
this last reply to winter.

John C. Hoy

**The Cows**

Cattle shift their morning  
weight and stiffly rise  
throwing necks to stanchions  
as if to break a nightmare.  
Saliva stretches from yawning  
mouths to the manger's stone  
and ancient shell  
where its working lifts  
the soft grain smell,  
the heavy taste of paradise.  
Heads that wait their turn  
stretch ball and socket  
of mooning brackish eyes  
and work upon the gnawing  
threat of hunger in the dark.  
Each one's clean and rasping tongue  
is strong  
enough to raise an arm  
or toss a tawny cat.

*An amber light spills  
upon the milk of dawn.*  
Huge rolling bowels  
loosen the quiet sleep  
within all restive beasts  
who hoarsely heave their deep  
and humid breaths  
while mouthing cud  
whose stalk and chaff  
is last night's hay. The dew  
melts the whitewashed walls of stone  
to inside shades of blue.

The air is freshened  
by the steam of dung.  
Flies get drowsier  
than the wistful hands  
of milkers swift to catch and crush  
their buzzing somnolence.  
The sound of cattle lowing  
is deep with promise.  
At the stroke of hands  
and hollow buckets rattle  
the milk drops firmly,  
the teats enlarge.

**John C. Hoy**

### **Bagging Time**

Hands, gloved in soil,  
swing from evergreen  
to evergreen, wrestling  
the best like royal  
weights to the surface  
of the earth. Hemlock  
pulled like healthy teeth  
from these fecund gums  
have first been cut  
by steel spades, five slices  
round and sprung  
from the ground  
by oak handles whose fulcrum  
is a source of weaning.  
The suck of the shovel  
is raucous and final.  
The roots bound

make a cold and shiny pack  
of the black earth,  
to be balled in burlap  
tied and trimmed.  
The hard bite of winter  
has been softened,  
sluggish worms arouse,  
and some savor of new green  
spreads the cuticle of spring.

**John C. Hoy**

### **TO MARVELL'S CHARIOT**

way away the trains go.  
something without ears  
is hearing  
something without wings  
is no longer where it was  
above the city.  
above the city  
you cannot see the nighthawks  
but the eyes of alley mice  
with a white wing-tip are washed;  
those, blessed in a sharpened moment  
closed and quick swept up!  
way away the trains go  
moving off on a metered track  
unconscious as the ticking stars—  
something without wings.

**Ed Roberson**

**DON JUAN SAYS FAREWELL, 1962**  
**(His Year to be Sincere)**

Oh my dear, they *all* are doomed, all the  
 Star-crossed, flag-decked, hen-tracked, gem-  
 beblazoned,  
 Sweat-streaked Loves. All will wane and die  
 And fall in wrinkles, like a dry tea-bag.

Love begins to wilt beneath the blaze  
 Of streetlights, to shiver in chilly doorways,  
 To become bilious on buses and  
 Bloodshot at breakfast. Any heart  
 Must surely quail before voyeur desk-clerks  
 And prurient cab-drivers, and bare  
 Skin begins to prickle in the rhythms of  
 Strange beds. Hymeno Hymenea.

Each succeeding One has wrapped me in  
 A clinging silk cocoon, a chrysalis  
 Of musked scents, cleavages and clefts,  
 Binding blankets, button-bitten fingers,  
 Curling hair and hairs, freckle-finding,  
 Long and languid lunches, rumpled raiment,  
 Moist ear-filling sighs that thicken tongues,  
 Mammaries taut in elastic cups,  
 Scented shower-sweat beneath a robe,  
 Palpation of hard nipples and soft thighs.

The passages of a carnal maze,  
 A gummy trap, a fibrous gin that I  
 Must rend to pieces with a flaccid blade.

There is a waxing finality in  
 Each *post coitum triste*. (Do not blush,  
 My dear. Latin was once a tongue of Love  
 In spite of Ovid and Catullus), a

Wavering in the first-learned, favorite stance,  
 A febrile abhorrence of stained sheets  
 And the cold slide of contraceptives;  
 A shrinking from the stubble of her hot  
 Oppressive haunches as she shifts and snorts  
 In sated sleep, my substance caught between  
 The thighs that will, at last, conquer my loins.

No, no, do not say that Love to me  
 Is only as the caged agile apes,  
 Careless of orifices, practise it.  
 If I were prone to images, cunning  
 Little *mots*, I could compare a Love  
 To a compost-heap that lies and ripens  
 'Neath the passing rain of years until  
 Amid its reeking mass, bright blooms appear.

But there have been no blooms for me.

Only the fondling of a thousand breasts  
 That sagged into my hands as years drew on.  
 Only a morning tally of the liver-  
 Spots that tattoo hands like mocha scars;  
 Only careful work with brush and dye  
 To cloak the head's emergence from its pelt.  
 Only an indifferent assurance  
 That all our heady vows and protestations  
 Are no more than an insect's chittering  
 As it goes about its raspy coupling;

That my tiny tumescence must retreat  
 Before the smallest whisper of the air  
 That lies in wait for me outside your bed;

That none of it can have the least import  
 Beside the lustral cycles of sun-spots,  
 The lunar debenture that holds the sea;

That we, poor quivering mites, are clustered on

A ball of warmth caught up in a galactic  
Royal Progress; scrabbling on a gobbet

Of dung as we squeak and eat each other;  
Poking here and there with eager paws,  
All unmindful that we live in filth.

And so, indicative of where  
I once began and soon must end, I wish  
To lie alone in darkness, blank and warm.

**Robert L. Smith**

## **OF CABBAGES AND KINGS**

The peas that I planted too late in Kansas  
Leaped to the light, into it, through it.  
They were all extension; they never thickened  
In stem enough, or darkened enough in leaf.  
An inch a day at the least, and then blossoms  
Not the plump popcorn of proper blossoms  
But something like bits of the shabby wings  
Of cabbage butterflies dead of butterfly age.  
The pods hardly formed. Then the sun, good servant  
Of peas in their time, became the bad master  
Of peas that were late. The stalks went paler and  
limper.

Shortly, the mildew that lurks  
For peas that are late, came sneaking up from the  
ground

Stem by stem, and quickly finished the job.

I, in some sense responsible  
For making peas prove they are not salamanders,  
Can do nothing in restitution but notice  
That the ruined vines make excellent metaphors.

**W. R. Moses**

**ODE ON A CHIMU BEERJUG\***

Here in the chaste museum's quiet air,  
We find you like an ugly color-plate,  
Savage pathologist, who can still declare  
The noisome end we try to deprecate:  
What case of typhoid gave your maker sight  
Of mortal deities too small to see  
Upon the sickly seacoast you came from?  
Whose yellow eyes? Whose introverted fight?  
Whose hot and sunken cheeks? Whose wasted fee?  
Whose blocked esophagus? Whose coated tongue?

Real maladies are bad, but those unreal  
Are worse; so wet your pipes, drink up,  
And numb your senses till you feel you feel  
No pain from gazing down the empty cup:  
Lost youth, when bottoms up, you cannot grieve,  
And song, though foul, can pass the time of day;  
Booze-lover, never, never can you kiss  
A girl whose lips can numb—Let beer relieve;  
It cannot fail to simplify the way  
Your world will wag, though never bring you bliss.

Ah, happy, happy jug! who helped men shed  
Their thoughts, and swiftly bid their wits adieu;  
And happy squaw with hand unwearied,  
Forever brewing to replenish you;  
More happy corn! More happy, happy corn!  
Forever turning sour to be enjoyed,  
Forever yielding ethyl alcohol;  
All sober human passion brought to scorn  
By that which filled your long-enduring void  
Shaped like another void which thirsts for all.

Who are these coming down the marble hall,  
To gaze in horror, pubescent and scrubbed,  
Then giggle, helpless in the horror's thrall,  
Each like a spider that a wasp has rubbed  
Before it stings it paralyzed? What right  
Have you to frighten them who never need  
To fear the typhoid or the typhus' touch?  
Since, silent jug, your mask is kept from sight  
And children hardly know that they must bleed;  
If plastic never bleeds, can they bleed much?

O Chimu pot! Baked attitude! with rows  
Of careful pustules running down the face,  
Where fever's glaze sits on the shiny nose;  
Your stoic teeth still grip the human race  
As does maternity: Cold comforter!  
Whose ravaged face the generations blink,  
You shall proclaim, in spite of better drugs  
Than ours, the end of man: to live to err.  
Knowledge is pain, pain knowledge—loath to think  
Such things, they seek their beer in other jugs.

**John A. Taylor**

\*The pottery of the Chimu and neighboring cultures of ancient Peru often portrays deformed and diseased persons, often so realistically that physicians can easily now give a diagnosis.

**TWO POEMS****Cultural Pursuit**

After Bach and Bartok  
 In the elegant salon  
 The tea was brewed with alum  
 And Mme. Jerusha McCallum  
 In the fuchsia hat with the crocheted bumps  
 Said she would take two lumps  
 And a slice of lemon.

A benevolent daemon  
 Poured another gallon  
 Into the chased silver samovar  
 And Mrs. Hamilcar  
 Tapped the spigot with a tapered talon  
 Releasing a stream of tea-tinctured alum  
 Into the cup of Mme. McCallum.

Among the plates of nuts  
 And sandwiches and toffee,  
 Dispensing coffee,  
 Sat Lizzie Hereford Butts.  
 And we paused to ponder how to reach Mrs. Butts  
 And the nuts and the toffee,  
 But most of all the coffee.  
 For the line wheeled erratic  
 In its orbit round the table  
 Now swooping toward the coffee,  
 Now redoubling at the tea.

*Be sure to notice  
 The exquisite cloth,  
 A pink lacy froth*

*Which Mrs. Pigley Otis  
Made for the occasion  
With her own two hands!*

We started for the coffee, then, suddenly,  
There was Mrs. Hamilcar  
Saying "Cream or lemon?  
We've just run out of tea."  
And I looked at you and you looked at me  
And the accommodating daemon  
Brought another acrid gallon  
For the silver samovar,  
Poured in a muddy brew  
That looked a bit like coffee  
With a clouded pekoe hue.

Three lumps dropped in a bitter cup  
In the elegant salon  
Before the time was up  
And Mrs. Pigley Otis and Lizzie Hereford Butts  
Folded up the tablecloth and softly stole away.

Will they come to pour for us  
Another day?

**Jeanne Prahl**

### **Prayer on Leaving a Bookshop**

Meltingly titled, bound and priced,  
New books of poetry in paper covers had enticed  
And drawn me in  
Among those patronizing Viennese inflections once  
again.

I scorn the snobbery of the proprietor  
But love his books.  
I matched his looks,

Ready to flip my dollar into his till.  
 But first I had to choose.  
 I snatched the first book, neatly done in blues.  
 The poems were set upon the pages  
 Like pastries in a bakery case,  
 The type a pleasing face, the margins ample.  
 The second book and third were much the same.  
 I scanned them greedily to find a sample  
 Of the poet's peculiar voice and song,  
 Aware of syntax, image, symbol,  
 On guard for levels split or blurred,  
 And looking, looking, looking, looking  
 For the word  
 To make the apparatus come alive.  
 He didn't get my dollar after all.  
 I do not hope to see my lines  
 Set and bound on any shelf.  
 They might be fistfuls of flowers  
 Picked in spring fields  
 At the obscure demands of loving and keeping what  
     is loved  
 And brought to Thee, inadequately,  
 In a child's grubby hands.  
 But, Lord, grant me to write  
 Surely, if only once,  
 With grace, music and light—  
 The balance of moving, motionless blue dragonflies,  
 The instrumental phrase to which the voice replies,  
 The colors of a city summer evening skies—  
 And seal what I have willed:  
 That no love dies.

**Jeanne Prahl**

**THE BODY'S SLUMS**

The body's slums are boundless,  
No suburb teeters crazily  
Into green or odorous innocence.  
We slip all day through  
Its dangerous alleys, walled  
With eyes and stemmed with verbal  
Centuries.

    The city is a cradle  
Rocking sunless flowers. It  
Bears no arms in the route  
Of seasons,  
    rumored and forgotten  
Like a broken bell.

Tender splash of windowplants,  
Rootless weeds like brushfire  
In the backyards, are meager  
Myths amid the walls that grub  
Hosannah in the chapels of decay.

**Paul Zweig**

### THE WITCH OF TUEBINGEN

*Concerning a moon mastered, and a fall  
of a craft of dream. Concerning great Kepler  
and his fond mother. Mandark over all.*

Mortal sprigs, wand-conscious boys! thin curse and  
amen

rack their sleep. Can they wake—men?  
They listen to dreamers. And boys of Tuebingen  
knew Johannes' mother, old tale-teller and bearer  
of a cup of tin, riddles, charms, and sweet syrups.

She told them:

We'll master the moon in the muttering sky.  
It sits, inviting. So we'll sit high,  
throned and wise. And troubles will pass by  
all the boys of Tuebingen."

*Then came believers' unbelief:*

Boys, boys, when averse  
to demonic inventions? to caches of curse,  
stolen apples or pears, incantations, and an old claw  
(poor devil's) for keepsake. Sly, they gaze  
down on sight beneath sight. They whistle spells  
to lead them through the fields that bloom black bells.  
They see vision's flaws.

But Dame Kepler saw  
no flaw in the gaze, in the mote-ways, of her boys.  
Hearty boys were her delight. She watched them  
preen:

skipped stones, prime movers, on the springgreen maternal surfaces.

Did they plunge to view  
 miscreant morrows? If not they, their doubles  
 plunged,  
 lunged in forbiddens, daring to try  
 lands laid past each glint in a parent's eye.

Half fauns, Pan's pretty boys, they knew  
 — by undercurrent of the flesh — universe  
 seamed with sinister. And O, plotted sky  
 with rumors, moonwild!

Moths mated flame. Who knew  
 seam's sisters? Listen, any witch can undo  
 belly-plump pleasures. Midwife fingers, too,  
 can unbutton navels — that cost them no sin,  
 because they make Old Harry grin.

Fear drummed. Look sharp, the boys said. By  
 and by  
 they learned of a woman who gravelled male waters.  
 They clutched at sources. They knew itchy nerve-  
 spin  
 of fate, provoking. They retched at amen.  
 How sharp-eyed was Dame Kepler! Could she spike  
 the eye of unsuspecting heaven?

A hearse  
 Doom-cornered the horizon. But she told them:  
 "Doom? The next room. Some go, some  
 stay here, happy here."

She gave the universe  
 many rooms, and, rattling her cup of tin,  
 went to heal the town.

She had good wares. She offered them  
 fresh herbs, sweet syrup, gossip — and her son's  
 "Somnium,"  
 his sky-riding Moondream. But townsmen laid her in

### THE BADDIES

Carefully stepping around the bloody messes  
 we find in history books, as on the streets,  
 we utterly disown them; such excesses,  
     furors and manic heats

are way outside the scope of excellent  
 and normal you and me; large madnesses,  
 like wars and massacres especially,  
     no one acknowledges.

In fact, we doubt that the worst evils are  
 people-performed at all; instead there is  
 this flock of large birds—ravens, possibly—  
     of fierce and sickly twist,

who specialize in such; with reptile blood  
 and wicked eyes, they swoop about committing  
 the dirtier inexplicable deeds  
     humanity finds ill-fitting.

They are the rascally crew who brain the babies,  
 run slaves, hunt witches, lynch, betray and loot,  
 hold inquisitions, roast and disembowel,  
     and generally act the brute.

Thus by close maneuver do we snatch  
 our pieties away from ugliest crime;  
 impersonal, anonymous, the birds  
     are baddies; but in time

take on official status, seem so much  
like faithful public servants or trustees,  
that we begin to think of them as hatch  
of public rookeries;

forgetting in our shifty scramble that  
these vicious flocks can only be refreshed  
by dark things flapping clumsily away  
from private cuckoo nests.

**R. E. Sebenthall**

### COMMEMORATION

Old gipsy woman swathed in shawls you bend  
Shifting the candlesticks in muffled prayer  
Not understood by anybody here  
Except for God, perhaps. Not me, aged ten—  
“Booba, why do you light these candles?” Flame  
Begins to live, at last she turns to hear  
Her grandchild. “When they light these everywhere  
M’shiach will come to lead us into Zion.”

Safe and aloof, from silver candlesticks,  
A blue heart at each core, stream up the flames  
As steady as my burning faith not hers  
Which wavered when I heard her telling sums  
Schnorrers borrowed in pence over the years:  
“I’ll get my money—when M’shiach comes!”

**Philip Hobsbaum**

**OF STARS WE WANT AFFECTION AND DESIGN**

Of stars we want affection and design:  
Staring by night at multitude and mass,  
Mere bits of lint upon that purple robe  
Abandoned in the track of time, we pass

These bleak reminders of the throne and crown,  
Relics at rest in this museum sky,  
And wander through ptolemaic galleries  
Seeking in clouds an exit for the eye.

The Greek, who saw his heroes fixed as stars  
And knew the hand behind the black, divined  
As Hebrew, who heard passion in the sky,  
A correspondence between world and mind.

Cracking our skulls against the universe  
We cry for passion in a silent night;  
Our pain is all we feel; our rage the noise  
That shrieks across the galaxy in fright.

We cannot budge a single star or gain  
The ear of any solar audience,  
And so turn inward, while out there we see  
Eternity of dark indifference.

In stars we had affection and design  
Now swallowed in the depth—how ludicrous  
To turn our heads, to ease our hold on stars,  
To let God slip so far away from us.

Stanley Solomon

## NOW JONAH AWAKENS AS AMBERGRIS

Graceless longing, oh hallowed unremembered (since  
I harrowed hell through jet-juiced joy that spumed  
from the heart of the whalespout, love, in times  
before

I foundered on the reef of doubt, dared plummet to  
the start

of death) so now I stretch beach-like sprawling  
into ocean to make Canaveral a cape

to cover me the way you did: clasped

to my neck, you jiggled your hips like a red rag  
stiffened by a stake to arouse the horn of plenty  
lurking beneath the bull's spiked beard, my love,  
and now I remember the sea-night you rode me  
astride

rich spray and made night buck

troughs into razor-edging rage. The broncoing sparks  
of unseating asteroids seethed, leaped from the loins  
of the rocket-like recoil of an escaping squid, and I,  
cinched and surfboarding seaward on my back, hell  
fire

and brimstone shaved back my public pubic pride:

you lathered me beneath your breasts like lava  
soaked upon Pompeii and hit the shattered

beaches and made sand storm into a swirling cry:

remembered still is the wilding dream that struck  
like a scalping party of nightmare commandos,  
featherbed

Apaches who snuggled me through spongy capes:

then brightness spattered on your breasts, seeped  
against your scorched sighs and earth splashed  
against pelvic rocks as spray thrusts through warm  
Bahama Keys, buried bait meat leaps. Breasts  
like sand dunes in the moonlight were horned mines  
strewn

across the floating avalanche of night, I laughed,  
 and sand  
 and pinwheel stars reeled.

I was born in a parachute  
 drop behind the lines of an unknown enemy,  
 I was launched on a night raid and hit the beaches  
 at my birth from an LST:  
 but ambushed I was in a deluge of sour grape  
 when I bit the pin of the hand grenade off and tossed  
 the breast back.

Count ten and pull when you take the leap,  
 for tied to the booby trap, beneath the dunes,  
 canopied flesh opens with a pop and drops  
 you down to earth under a mushrooming cloud of  
 soggy flesh. Plop.

For tu es petrus, the pelvic  
 rock upon which my steeple, church and cradle  
 rocks and jumps to a conclusion just like a closing  
 parachute. Yes, yes, the mistral of remembered  
 time and lust still sways the palm fronds of  
 my flesh and the swollen fruit—rock-shelled  
 and hairy  
 as a head shrunken in the Amazon—thuds  
 to earth and cracks open against these knee-capped  
 sheets of time. (Harrowing hell on toes spread  
 like the storm-gripped roots of an ancient tree,  
 the monkey's  
 tail was no longer limp enough to curl  
 around the springy limb, my legs long  
 peninsulas and like Florida dangling into pale blue  
 waters,  
 a phallus as a state of suspended animation dripping  
 atolls of milky light, pearls on a key chain,  
 a watch fob of phallic wonder they call the Florida  
 Keys.)

Retriever-like, tick, tock, time  
 returns in the memory to act, tick, tock,

as the hung phallus pendulums forward to tick  
 again where time had stopped before, tick, tock,  
 as the wet Labrador Retriever in the loins bounds  
 onto the banks of soggy flesh, tick, tock,  
 and time stiffens as she strokes the dead duck  
 the dog brings back, tick, tock, and the grinning bitch  
 happily flaps its tail to be back in time  
 as she winds up the clock, tick, tock, dead in the  
 whale's womb,

lost in a storm of wonder, trying to submerge  
 from tick and stop tock in a submarine: click, clock.

Dead time gave the whale ptomaine and  
 indigestion, and the fetus  
 playing possum ripened like an egg vomited  
 out in a menstrual rush. It's time for a change  
 of life.

I tried to find life out of time,  
 Jonah said, running from ticks to dig myself  
 into eternity. Life stopped when time  
 stopped instead. The clock in the vacuum cannot  
 count. Beyond time, there is nothing, not even  
 a vacuum. Eternity is a deep  
 freeze where you are kept intact to roast in hell  
 later as you are roasting here. In the meanwhile  
 is eternal: eternity is the life in death  
 of time. Tick, tock. So vomit me, as time  
 trapping the submarine in moving tick,  
 tock strokes the paralytic back  
 to life. Tick, tock: time swings like an ax. With each  
 stroke of the pendulum, fire one, fire two, tick, tock,  
 torpedoes crack from the ripening cocoon.

I was deceived, Jonah cried, there is nothing to  
 hide from, all life  
 takes place in time. Eternity in the whale  
 was the vampire's bloodless wrath.

I was the vampire

trapped in the whale's womb of coffin, Jonah said,  
but I am free again now that eternal night  
has opened on the world. Alleluia, God is dead.

You have harpooned the stone stake into my  
heart and brought me back to life, she said.

The coral-reef accretions in the shrunken-head  
coconuts  
count up, tick, tock, and remind me to blast out  
of the coffin on Canaveral: then from the tip  
of Florida a rocket burning liquid fuel  
spouts skyward out of my whale-howled, whale-  
boned hide:  
once again I am corseted between your sand-storm  
knees  
remembering, remembering, living plankton swirling  
past  
the porthole of the bathysphere. Doubter of all  
living, I sought solace beneath the ravined sea.  
As a fetus, I found death orbiting through timeless  
space in the belly of the driven whale, a woman  
ticked without tock. But lust is time rooted  
in eternity.

What alloy of tittering love and aloes'  
laughter will solve the problem of re-entry now,  
keep the cone of the nose from burning up,  
smearing the night with skid-marks of stars as it  
disintegrates across our galaxy widening like a womb  
at birth? (Between the memory of desire and  
thighs, pilot  
and co-pilot of this commando raid I make  
to return to life beyond the reefs of dream  
and vanishing reality where I was lost, my flesh  
photographs your face beneath my orbiting  
desire, called back to life by you and what  
I lost: and this is the tick, tock, bleeping message  
my antenna spurts back to earth): once I was  
in love and it turned out to be only lust,

the rust of stars, a laboratory smear across  
 the hag-ridden reef of a rusty sky. I longed  
 to hit the moon and did. There, love  
 is also the same as lust, my love, the stars  
 are only sties.

Grunting, now I am stretched  
 beyond breathing space with this cold comfort for  
 company:

such rutting knowledge have I wrenched from my  
 landing  
 in this world, an amphibious dream, neither fish  
 nor fowl,  
 dreams born in a frog pond, hatched on a lily-pad  
 placenta now to crawl upon the land  
 to live, to die. For centuries I fought  
 to find what the frog knows from its first savage  
 croak. Between pond and piddling power, the beach  
 traps us till we die, a beast pinned down  
 between the landing barge and the beachhead of  
 sunken hope.

The beach is mined and blocked by a hymen as thick  
 as a welded bulkhead, an airtight bunion supporting  
 tons of sunken sea. Pry out of one  
 into the other and seaward drift until  
 I drown. What lies beyond the beachhead? Another  
 pond, another bulkhead hatching freight  
 on still another inland lily pad.  
 I chose to founder in the lung-fish silt instead.  
 In fifty thousand sea-leagues of centuries,  
 I have staggered one step forward from the low-  
 tide waterline.

My world's the beach, but this I know:  
 inland is marshland and more of the same I left  
 behind. Here I settle for nothing less  
 because launching-pad lust is all there is, in fact.

But you, my dear, are a lily-pad pelvis launching

pad, and I, a minuteman socketed beneath  
 earth's crust, a push-button threat ready to be  
     launched  
 at the notice of a wink. I'll pry upward from my  
     mastery  
 of sea and swamp, for those flights of sparrows  
     zeroing  
 in your eyes, those asteroid freckles on your forehead  
     are  
 a threat of growing desire I see swarming  
 across the dew line of your smile as you lean  
 into my mouth to kiss.

    So I laugh and launch  
 myself, strike first to avoid the holocaust  
 of being stricken dumb. The mushrooming cloud  
 then rises like a snort from the hornless hole in the  
     whale's  
 head, the empty cyclopean eye  
 harpooned out of Moby Dick's white back: and when  
     wild  
 delusions of reality disappear in squid-swirls of  
     sperm,  
 I wake.

    On my back, a milky mist spouts  
 out of Moby Dick and arcs skyward to rainbow  
 my naivete. Ahab's spear  
 and the spout's spume are the same, it says.

    Come back  
 to earth and live with me, she says: my message  
 is the same: the deeper Jonah dives,  
 the more he must be free. But I blow back  
 into your dreaming snout the message you bleeped  
     back  
 to me: the quarter moon's a scimitar  
 of mildewed cheese and, like an iceberg, disguises  
 only more of what is visible above

antarctic seawrack freezing hard, a broth  
of frog's eggs that poaches into ambergris in the  
waters

of my womb. Throughout the universe, love's all  
the same. Moon or no moon, this universal  
law holds and the sword swells like a pregnant  
woman hoarding an iceberg fetus beneath  
my ice-capped push-button bevy button, love.  
Mounted me, you are the stark peak of the iceberg  
that is spied from beyond horizon's height. The  
pinnacle

rears high above my reach, yet is rooted in this  
moving

bed, this ocean, omnipresent and protean,  
and the surface of ocean is my skin: thrust  
beneath my ravined thighs, the greater part  
of you lurks like a miner's pick tapping  
its blind man's glowing forehead towards veins  
of red gold. The gold's in you, the dream  
is you, the smelting vein is you, my love.

So earthward bound, for the dreaming flesh  
that longs

for light is you, my love. Ride Aaron's rod  
into the underworld and find my knees bent  
upward in a juggler's act of adoration,  
balancing a votary of sweet cruelty on kneecaps  
blunted like a seal's snout. Love, come back. Love  
on the moon is lust on earth, and light on the moon  
is pale glory reflected from the selfsame dying  
star, the selfsame tithes of light control.

Sperm of the spout is ambergris vomited  
by a lovesick whale: be whole and take both in me.  
Smearred with the vomit, sweat transforms the  
curdled

milk of belly ache into sweet perfume,  
the selfsame tidal light controls the universe

of sleeping lust, the universe  
of waking love.

In her arms, Jonah then flexed  
his legs out of placenta sleep, curled his eyelids back  
and woke with a startled cry. She sucked the mucous  
of birth from his mouth with a clinical kiss and  
slapped  
his bottom to make him howl. Pull the pin of the  
loin-lobbing  
hand grenade, he said, and woke to the world through  
the belly of the whale, the time-bombed whale he  
then  
re-entered in a different way.

And Jonah has been howling  
ever (since.

**L. C. Phillips**

## TWO POEMS

### Michael Soloman

She sleeps around, a kind of virgin tart,  
with a gritty pallor caught in Provincetown  
and looks at you out of twin grease-pits  
streaked with blue oil and green.

She's a real fun girl, with flesh like pale  
 leotards and hair the colour of butter.  
 She drinks Scotch-and-coke and likes music,  
 particularly Segovia and Odetta,  
 and says she does not know which she is seeking—  
 a truck-driver with the soul of a metaphysician  
 or a metaphysician with the soul of a truck-driver.  
 I'm the first Jew-boy she's ever had,  
 she says. Her breath is like a ragged syrup  
 and she bites like the Devil, but being,  
 I guess, a devout Christian, calls upon  
 her Lord by Name at the moment of her orgasm.

Paris Leary

### Cousin Belle Prescott

#### *Rising*

Early, Puritan as a Yankee, Cousin Belle  
 consumes her hotcakes, syrup, sausage, grits, and  
 biscuits;  
 notes the new dead in the *Times Picayune*,  
 has a bowel movement, then retires exhausted  
 to her tester bed to aim at two o'clock  
 for bathsalts, dotted swiss, and summer jewelry,  
 cold chicken, and the curate's call at four.

#### *Mounted*

Annie Lee who's worked thirty-six years  
 for Cousin Belle says that when Cousin Henry  
 was still alive he'd come in from Bistineau  
 smelling of fish and whisky and take Cousin Belle  
 (just back from the Woman's Department Club)  
 standing up against the highboy, to which  
 fairly regular performance Cousin Belle  
 submitted with gusto, but not removing hat or gloves,  
 every inch, by God, the perfect lady!

*Weary*

She props her breasts up on Mamma's rosewood table  
and with an elegant acerbity says, 'Crap!'

*Tipsy*

Cousin Belle regards herself in tiny fragments  
of the gleaming cut-glass decanter which belonged  
to Great-something Uncle William Henry Harrison  
and Great-something Benjamin Harrison, and deals  
a hand of solitaire, *Olorosa* running  
through the suntan powder on her neck and bosom.

*Receiving*

Cousin Belle gives me orange sponge-cake  
and pineapple sherbert, and we talk about  
Harnett T. Kane, whom she likes, and Faulkner,  
whom she does not like, and her Negroes  
whom she desires passionately to protect against  
exploitations by Northern Communists and teachers.

*Retiring*

Annie Lee kneads lanolin like lard  
over every inch of Cousin Belle at night,  
combs her hair and brushes it one hundred strokes,  
and Cousin Belle, turning off the attic-fan,  
removes her teeth, belches, falls asleep at once,  
smiling in the silent dark at randy dead  
young Hank Prescott who was such a heller.

Paris Leary

**ELEGY WRITTEN IN MONTPARNASSE**

It was August by the time I got around  
to holding memorial services  
for Ernest Hall Hemingway  
who had died in Idaho  
where the Styx is called the Snake.

These services were of my own devising  
and were held daily for a week  
in the Select, the Dome, the Coupole, the Rotonde,  
along the Boulevard Raspail,  
and on one occasion in the garden of the Ritz,  
which—it says in English—is reserved  
for guests of the hotel.

The Snake runs swift in Idaho  
and broad through greenest hills.

This last made me split a gut  
because present were Marcel Proust, Edith Wharton,  
and the golden, broken boy who died  
in Sheila Graham's ritzy arms  
and lay in the William Wordsworth Room  
of a Los Angeles mortuary.  
The hotel was so clearly the guest of them  
and the obsequies were performed by the dead.

The Snake swells wide in Idaho  
and tumbles bright on rock.

The Select, the Dome, the Coupole, the Rotonde  
were the scene of more homey gatherings  
and once the mourners were distracted  
by an Arab with a bear upon a chain  
who capered upright with a tamborine.

The Snake foams white in Idaho  
and speckles shale-grey shore.

Lorn Urania did not appear  
nor any sisters of the sacred well,  
yet a harmony of dissonance  
somehow somewhat loudly swept  
the taut, discordant strings.

The Snake, pine-ridged in Idaho,  
brooks not the willow hoar.

The Misses Stein and Toklas  
 assisted at these rites  
 as well as many others—  
 S. Anderson, R. Lardner, G. Wescott, T. Wolfe,  
 M. Twain, Jack London—in general those you  
     would expect,  
 and although T. Eliot enquired of the waiter,  
 “*Le service, est-il compris?*”  
 the others overlooked the breach.

The sinous Snake in Idaho  
 runs black as blood beneath cold stars.

Three soldiers from the appropriate war  
 occupied a table in the not enormous room,  
 and although I was appalled by the intrusion of  
     a delegation  
 from Southern California—Ethelbert Nevin,  
 who yearned to kiss the cross, sweetheart,  
 and Carrie Jacobs Bond who found a corseted repose  
 in Forest Lawn’s Immortal’s Hall—they explained  
 that it was they who got him his Nobel Prize  
 and gave him back his middle name.

The Snake will freeze in Idaho  
 and come to silent winter stop.

It was a fine company, all in all,  
*representative* is the word,  
 and I thought him laid to decent rest,  
 though well I knew in Montparnasse

That Snake must thaw in Idaho  
 when aspen trembles coined with spring.

John Stewart Carter

**THE ORDEAL****For John Kirsch****1.**

Now I have proved my innocence.  
Look, not a blister on my feet, though I have run  
Almost since the rising of the sun  
Across this field of coals.  
Vague as a dream now are the shining knights  
Who watched me from their horses, and the ladies  
Who grew on both sides of the lists like flowers  
And sighed encouragement. The king himself  
—Arthur perhaps, I can't remember—smiled  
From his high seat, yet that, too, like a dream.  
And look: not a blister on my feet.

Now I have proved my innocence. My feet  
are cooling now  
In this soft grass, deep and green as a river.  
Here is my wife crying with joy  
And my tall daughter and my tall shy boy  
And all my friends, the old ones and the new;  
The whole visible pattern of my life  
Surrounds me with congratulation.

Now I have proved my innocence,  
Proved that I was not mad or heretic.  
I told them so at daybreak when they watched  
My shoes unlaced and my bare feet  
Blue in that cold dawn light, when the steam rose  
From the glowing field and draped the lists in cloud,  
And I said good-bye to Samarane my horse  
And wished I had those hooves of his.  
I knew my innocence, felt it as I would feel  
A sword slip through my stomach. Oh, I knew

My innocence, though all of them were shouting  
Guilt.

Then, when my feet touched the gentle grass,  
I heard them all shouting my innocence.

2.

And then my heart turned grey like a cinder,  
For then I knew my guilt.  
Green grass is my guilt, my old wife is my guilt,  
Daughter, son, friends, calm twilight; all, all my  
guilt.

Somewhere back there among those coals I lost  
The innocence I was defending;  
Somewhere back there my burning innocence  
Smouldered away, and I can no more find it  
Than I could cross this field of ashes now  
And hope to burn my feet,  
Hope to sink down in the flames and perish.

3.

Tomorrow they will take my tall shy boy  
And strip his feet and tell him he is guilty,  
And standing naked in the bitter morning  
He'll look at me and say,  
"Father, what should I do, I am not guilty,  
I have not merited this punishment."  
"Run," I will say, "run like the wind"; and my  
old wife,

Holding my arm, will tell him, "Run,"  
And his bright sister, crying, will say, "Run."

And he will run, and in my heart of hearts  
I'll hope he goes insane with fear,  
I'll hope he trips and falls, swims in the flame,  
Screams like a winter wind and dies abominably,

So that the ladies turn their faces and  
 The shining knights frown and the king cries out,  
 "Guilty."  
 For then my son I'll know your innocence.

## 4.

My father, buried in your marble tomb  
 With my dear mother lying by your side  
 On that green hilltop where the robins sing  
 All through the year;  
 I know now what you could not tell me, what  
 I cannot tell my son: things we must learn  
 In earth's own time, crosses that we must bear  
 In hope of crucifixion.  
 And I must keep this from you all,  
 My wife, my friends, my good horse Samarane,  
 And frown like you on madness.

Oh my son,

If you should triumph, please forgive your father:  
 I think this weakness is forgivable.  
 And I am punished by my mere survival:  
 Sanity has its own revenge  
 In the thin darkness this side of the grave.  
 Look son, look father, look, now I have proved  
 My guilt.

Look, not a blister on my feet.

**Richard N. Ringler**

## THREE POEMS

**Jim Crow**

As if from neons, this land sunk beneath  
 the axe and tire glows by night from fires  
 on a distant shore. Crowds shuffle in  
 thoroughfares, the young trot in gutters black  
 with rain. I watch you, a lover, pull away  
 unclimaxed, and turn beneath a pool of stunned  
 spores to remake by heat of nebulae  
 a valley we shall never journey to,  
                   never in this night.

From blackout continents a rooftop apart  
 We see dawn push night off the naked earth,  
 a pulsing flood. Rigid, shining, half erect,  
 the thing of steel on which they have nailed him  
 and themselves together starts upward with  
 the sun. Lover—girl—child—we are  
 among them, as always, but if we speak,  
                   can steel turn flesh?

**Allen Planz**

**The Dive**

Scissorkick down.  
 All color  
 blueblack, weight on weight,  
 ash in the blood.  
 Sinuses boom,  
 puke on the tongue  
 stings.

Coming up, vision clots.  
Images beard, smoke.

Minutes after, ears ringing,  
thinking of senility's  
avalanche:

If the deep does entire  
what one dive did  
a little.

**Allen Planz**

### **The Young Marrieds**

The T-shirt rips and skin curls from  
under her nails like a burning doily:  
his fist unknots, but his open palm  
puts red in her cheek as no blush can.

Later and earlier, she is delivered of  
babies and years, while he struggles from  
a dream of manhood. Alone, they come  
together through the fast and the fire.

This then is marriage: between them,  
a beauty no blow can break, no child  
can displace, and no poem can sing.

And this: pow! And this: zip! and this: ssss!

**Allen Planz**

**IMITATIONS.** *By Robert Lowell. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. \$4.50.*

The problems of the translator of poetry are legion. There are serious questions in the minds of many poets and scholars about whether poetry can truly be translated from one language to another at all. One of the most interesting new attempts in this field is this collection of 66 poems from Greek, Italian, French, German and Russian which are "imitated" in English—not translated. The spirit of the original was Lowell's guide, not the actual words. Are they successful? Sometimes yes; sometimes no. But the method does offer a new avenue of approach to a tremendously difficult problem and an interesting additional facet of Lowell's considerable talent.

**WHEN FOUND, MAKE A VERSE OF.** *By Helen Bevington. Simon and Schuster. \$4.50.*

What is the raw material from which a poet fashions a poem? There is no simple answer to the question, but Helen Bevington provides us with some helpful clues in this happy book. It is a collection of odds and ends from reading, experience, observation, travel and a dozen other sources. There are notes from a hundred sources jotted down for future use. In many cases that future use turns out to be a poem, usually brief and almost always delightful. They call this a "commonplace book." No name could be more misleading. It is a rare gem, indeed.

**POETS OF TODAY VIII.** *Scribner's. \$3.95.*

Since 1954 Scribner's has been issuing this unusual series. In each annual volume, three young poets are presented together in their first book-length collection. The economics of publishing might well make their separate appearances impossible. The current volume features Albert Herzing, John M. Ridland and David R. Slavitt. Herzing still seems too much concerned with the pure techniques of poetry. When he lets himself go, however, he often succeeds very well indeed. Ridland's collection, the most personal of the three, involves the reader deeply

and quickly in his emotional responses. Slavitt is clearly the most accomplished of the trio, witty, critical, intellectual and highly musical. But despite their individual short-comings (due mostly to youth, one suspects) the three poets are well-worth reading and the series one of the most note-worthy ventures of its kind.

**THE ESTATE OF POETRY.** *By Edwin Muir. Harvard University. \$3.*

For many years the so-called New Critics dominated most of the comment about poetry. Led by T. S. Eliot, they interpreted what poets *really* meant and put a scientific stamp on what poetry *should be*. In the last half-dozen years, a serious revolt has developed. Surely one of the most reasoned and sensitive voices in this reaction belonged to Edwin Muir. This collection of the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures delivered in 1955-56 (just three years before his death) is Muir's most eloquent plea for the reader to return directly to poetry without any pseudo-scientific apparatus between him and the words. It is a delight to read and places Muir in the front critical ranks. Archibald MacLeish contributes a brief and useful Foreword.

**COLLECTED POEMS.** *By Hugh MacDiarmid. Macmillan. \$6.50.*

Hugh MacDiarmid (actual name: Christopher Grieve) is one of the most original poets of our century. Yet he has been virtually unknown in this country. He is a militant Scots Nationalist who often writes in one or another of the dialects. He is passionately concerned with social problems and is a devout Communist. Yet he can combine both of these usually lethal factors (for poetry, at any rate) into wonderfully moving and spirited poems. His verse snaps and boils with fresh imagery, impertinent questions and blazing compassion for all those who suffer injustice. In short, he is unquestionably Scotland's greatest poet since Burns and it is fine to have him, at long last, available in so carefully chosen and representative a collection.