

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
Volume 15 - Number 2 Winter 1964-65

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GENESIS

When I finally read Genesis to the children,
they liked the story—that fruitsmeared pair of
nudes,
and God, telling them what's what—
I had to reconsider Cotton Mather,
William Jennings Bryan and various others
who took this unfair fairytale as literal truth.

Even my nine year old son sensed contradiction
and asked if God wasn't as bad as the humans,
putting the tree there, and being so mean.
My daughter called Noah "teacher's pet" and
thought
there must have been others worth saving, and
my son
didn't think much of God for murdering almost
everyone.

They wanted to know where Ararat and what a cubit
was,
what Noah did with all those corpses after the flood,
who wrote the book, and if Jehovah was better than
Zeus?
I told them that when, books and books from then,
Christ comes into the story, there would be a kinder
god —
but they had already heard what He cried out at the
end.

Harold Witt

TWO POEMS**Radiation Case**

In the white corridor they walk carefully,
As though a mistaken step might pitch them back
Among nurses, anaesthetists, X-ray rooms, dark
 world where hemoglobular derelictions
Could cancel their reprieve.

The elevator that will take them down
Rolls out a stretcher, epigram
Of every ward. They stare, as if
Question and answer faced them there.
One tries a joke. "Ah, Romeo, how pale thou art . . ."
His voice breaks like plates on the tiled wall.
The elevator takes them down.

And there at corridor's end is the green world again.
Like men from underground they hover, catching
 breath,
As though a different living were about to begin.
But there is still the watchful desk to pass, and
 overhead the flat
Dead-level hospital speaking voice: "Dr. Galen.
Dr. Harvey. Dr. Jenner. Dr. Hunter. Dr. Koch."

The aging nurse in a white smile checks their cards,
Flickers an unprofessional glance. "We'll see you in
 a month
For your next?" Yes, in a month. The green world
Beckons them. They turn to go. "Have fun," she says.
Each avoids the others' eyes.
They descend ten marble steps
Toward their lives.

John Dillon Husband

Other Times, Different Rooms

In Rome, we are told, water ran in the houses ;
there were fountains in patios, cold drinks,
problems with the help, slow readers. That
was an antique, barbaric time. The ignorant
wore amulets. On Saturdays people attended
deadly circuses in arenas bigger than
baseball parks. Conquests waited on signs
and omens. Caesars feared a falling star.
In far places eagle-bannered legions,
with superior armament and better discipline,
fought well, and wished for home. We know Rome's
folly :

power, only power ; strength and discipline,
and all of empire's pomp and circumstance.
Yet much borrowed loveliness throve there,
dimensions of the east : a Grecian infiltration ;
corruptive graces from the Nile ; Byzantine forms.
From Rome herself : only justice ; a sword ; an arch.
From barbarous Rome ; which fell.

John Dillon Husband

**FROM THE STRATFORD BURIAL REGISTER:
"1616 April 23 Will. Shaksper, gent."**

The princely hands appeared composed
For dying. Fingers thin and still . . .
Ten waxen tapers flameless in the dark,
Sculptured through the attic's evening pall
By geometric glances of the moon.
Its beams bent upon the knuckles,
Played on the stone-locked bones.

His breath, sustained on a nerve's brink,
Rebuked the peaceful quickening of that spring,
Alarmed the thrifty spider
Climbing his skeleton of silver web.

The room lay broken only by
The patterns of an April night.
The moon bent down to pluck his soul.

The cock telling how dawn
Strained at his river casement
Saw the wanton Avon pass.
She took his heart, hurt with poetry;
She lapped it toward the Thames.

To honor his redemption,
Time was reduced to a robin's madrigal
Sung from beneath a hawthorn bough.
The homely elegy rose choring
And hung like hawk wings on the sun.

David Walker

THAT ONE PARTICULAR MEXICAN FLYTRAP

At the plant counter of the department store
the woman turned, and turned quite inside out.
Her impossible eight-year-old, she swore,
would be the absolute death of her yet.

He whined and begged for something to take home.
That leafy, bulbous object in the sand
or better still that flytrap. He became
almost hysterical in his demands.

The woman closed her eyes and shook her head.
His plants would always die on her and clutter
her window sills with fallen leaves. She grabbed
his arm and dragged him off and muttered

something about the air a plant consumes.
There was a sense in that; however, I
had seen the lack of mercy in her eyes.
Lately this woman's son has found his way

to the plant counter by himself. I have stopped
to watch him watch in turn and by the hour
that one particular Mexican flytrap,
seen him watch the cannibal jaws devour

everything in reach. And I have watched his face
and seen his love consume itself until
those jaws were his, released of any trace
of mercy, his for his own indigenous hell.

Harold Bond

THE EMIGRÉ

Sergei Yesenin, 1895-1925

I dream now and again of youngish girls
 Cloaked in the dark plumage of leotards—
 How their puffed pudenda bow and withdraw
 Between the muscular wings of their thighs.
 They cross my mind like some great neckless birds,
 These dancers, migrating at dizzy height
 All up and down the flyways of my thoughts,
 Searching the paradise of melting lakes.

Thrumming in sweet cadence across my brow,
 Their inspired flight turns music in my brain;
 They baffle my tired lids. I shut my eyes
 To the seasons and their far silhouettes;
 I will not think of them, ghosts carnal in
 My dreams and nearly real in memories,
 But I write them and make their bodies poems,
 And so, comrades, we touch one another.

This month the birches of Russia must be
 Foliaged with the restless shapes of birds
 Whose song is the fervor of her new age—
 Yet it is a cold spring in that hard world.
 On the half-forgot farm of my childhood
 The sun tumbles like snow through the white trees;
 It falls upon dull, humble animals,
 And the peasant girls, watching by, shiver.

Much oftener than before I get drunk
 On profusion—of wings and limbs and leaves
 Snarled between me and desirable light.
 I remember the graceful birches cast

Blue shadows on the bosoms of the girls;
When we are young all color is so pure—
Deep as the thin veins beating at my wrist
The disingenuous metrics of return.

Robley Wilson, Jr.

NON-CONFORMIST

The whole beach watched her
dunking every last one of them
into the sea and out again.
Like little fish they gleamed
glinting sea and sun and laughter,
the red trunks lined up for her command.
We knew the eight were hers by uniform.
Only one little darkling wriggled,—one
red trunked non-conformist. She
picked him up under Junoesque
arm fondling the stubborn streak
dunking him gently again while the other
seven watched and wondered
why such compensation.

Gigi Lord

TWO POEMS**Loss of the Unicorn****(Reincarnated as Wood Turtle)**

Undercover and feeling his
 Forgotten spike,
No longer really caring
 What things are like,

Our unicorn stays hard
 To catch, even
If girls feel up to it.
 Some turtle-haven!—

A sticky terrible wind
 So raised the wood
To such a pitch, he headed
 Out for good,

Tiles scrubbed, in character:
 Dingy-proud
And over-serious, like
 A small black cloud.

And traveled to a near well
 Circled with stone
And gravel, to find: one flower,
 Petals turned in.

Jonathan Aldrich

Young Shakeresses Walking Home**(New England, circa 1800)**

Just yesterday, in passing by the water,
We saw a spotted snake, its life in order,
Slipping between the reeds, out of our way,
And screamed: to see how surely a snake works
On our very brookside, how its scales are dark
And shiny, and each eye a tiny world.

I have walked here alone. It makes a world
Of difference to sit down and build a water-
Wheel of some twigs and branches, in the dark
Of the old stone bridge—sitting alone, in order
That no one can know the wheel is here and works
By itself at night, under the Milky Way.

We like to think ours is the only way,
This formal separation from the world.
We pray, and shake, and learn to do good works,
And I pick herbs and berries, bake, and water
The animals—but like the fruits I order
In boxes, do I like changing in the dark?

Little by little, I see myself as dark,
Intelligent and pretty, measured that way,
Too “contumacious” for the Children’s Order
That tucks me in—oh, such a tidy world.
Seeing the April blossoms, my eyes water
Just for the sake of anything that works.

Nobody shakes and dances, prays or works
Harder than I myself, although at dark
I lie awake and wonder: if Holy water
Won’t take on me, perhaps the “primrose way,”
Whatever it can be, for all the world,
Is merrier than these winters we keep by order.

Someday we’ll take off shoes and stockings, order

Our piles by that willow where the brook works
With light unbraided currents into the world.
Let's keep our village elders in the dark
If suddenly our temperate wills give way
To floating palm-leaf bonnets over water:

White boats in racing order, each a world
Of violet and dark fern, our handiwork
May carry wayside flowers to bright water.

Jonathan Aldrich

THE DISCOVERY

Chance brought them,
These portly, tricornered gentlemen,
To this estuary.
Something in its breadth,
In its grave and misty silence,
Might have told them that their prize would be
enormous.

How they were dazzled when
They found the children,
And all the nine orders of the angels,
And all the red tribes,
And all the animals:
The beasts of the field, the beasts of the farm, on
shore to greet them.

Plump and ruddy-faced, the children sang the ditties
of innocence,
And threw them laurel wreaths.
And the emissaries of Heaven wore their freshest
linen,
Gold-embroidered at the hem.
And the fiercer animals, the lion,
Thick-bodied, luxuriantly maned, skilled to violence,
Turned upon them mild, astonishing eyes.
(Even the most unpredictable and dangerous,
The leopard in his pelt of roses,
Paws extended, ready for his sleep of noon,
Seemed only curious.)
And next to these, the nuzzling lambs and leaping
goats,
And the great lyre-horned ox, bearing a white stripe
along his spine
And a white stripe upon his breast (the signs of
meekness),
And the creatures that fly:
The condor and the crow,
The creatures that run:
The fox and the doe—
All whisked their tails or pricked up their ears or
rustled vivacious feathers.
Some Indians lit a fire under a russet maple,
And squatted in a circle (a sign of amity),
And waited.
The men from elsewhere debarked at ease—
Here was no war, only peace.
And, confidently, calling all to order,
They granted some concessions (most of them
irrelevant),
And established Old Business again.

Gerald Bagner

QUARTET IN ONE MOVEMENT

the door opens another five inches
another stranger enters
sits beside her
touches her knee
she smiles permission
in the kitchen the husband opens the window
climbs over the sill
vanishes in the trees
the stranger nods a bald head
prods her flesh with the fork
nods again
good he mumbles good
tenderly she pushes him
you came just in time she says I was almost alone
again

the door rattles
the stranger jerks upright
it's nothing it's the wind
she pulls his head back to her lap
what if someone comes
no one will come
out on the road the husband flags a car
hurry take me to the movies I've cut my wrists
the blood won't stop
the driver floats through the windshield
over the hood of the car
and flattens to a shadow
the husband drives the car to the edge of the cliff
they'll think I had an accident
he watches the car roll down
she screams something's happened
about time the stranger mutters
his face is dark with blood

she opens her fingers
wedding rings roll to the floor
the stranger picks them up puts them in a blue
envelope

just in case he says
the door rattles
she turns her head
the stranger laughs it's nothing it's the wind
no something's happened
the stranger opens the sideboard takes out a
cellophane-wrapped chicken
the chicken breaks free flies around the room
she screams again catch it it drives me crazy it's a
bad omen

he looks at her
puts the blue envelope in the sideboard
cuts a hole under the stairs
disappears
she trembles
afraid the husband is lost
taunted by a hunger just beyond her fingertips
she screams again
the window in the kitchen slides shut
leaving the husband out there somewhere
the stranger prowls in the cellar
paints nudes on the walls
eats cold food from the vegetable-bin
the husband walks backward from the cliff
looking for words to explain to the driver
she opens the door another five inches
calls the husband
the driver walks in
touches her
you can add me to the list
no more she cries no more

she calls the husband's name
 the husband pulls feathers from the chicken on the
 table

the chicken clucks angrily
 she stands near the husband
 the driver takes the chicken
 goes out
 the husband shakes his head
 I had to do it
 I'm sorry for the driver
 there was no other way

Ottone M. Riccio

PIRATES IN BUENAVENTURA

After the sharp storm, the bay gashed lurid
 with purple lightning, feeling like pirates,
 armed to the teeth with sheath-knives and suspicion,
 we stormed the town of wooden shacks with their
 rickety balconies and roofs of corrugated iron.

The bars were packed with mulatto whores;
 sweat stained our shirt-backs and suspicion dried
 slowly as the sweat. Later, soaking beer
 at a pavement cafe among the shacks,
 we saw a negro kid crawl like a jerky
 insect on all fours across the damp street,
 his spine ruined by some paralysis.

We tossed him coins which he secreted in
 the dirty folds of his tattered shorts; eyes blank.
 And my knife felt clumsy bluntly sticking
 into the soft pad of fat around my waist.

David Tipton

TWO POEMS

Jelly Fish Float

Faceless near the surface
in the bubbling sunlight
clinging to his knees as
if they'd go drifting
breathless in his waiting
for the teacher's whistle
he might be dozing or
waiting for birth
he might be myself
in another youth.

Morgan Gibson

Smoke

I said it came from the fireplace, but
(clinging to me under the covers) you
said it came from no flame, it could
be smouldering in the floor or roof.
We got up three times and walked around
the house inside and out and went
to bed again. Still, we smelled it
strongest in the bedroom, so

I said at last I'd keep a vigil
and here I am, writing a poem called "Smoke."

Today's our Fourteenth Anniversary.
You called me brave to sit up all night alone.
You said you loved me and showed your love
better by going back to sleep
than by banalities. For you to sleep
in our bed and not another's and for me
to sit up all night in our own house
sniffing for smoke that might mean fire that's out
of its proper place, the fireplace by my chair,
means we love each other even now
fourteen years after those broken vows.

Morgan Gibson

VARIATION ON A THEME BY WILLIAMS

A Negro woman
asleep on a mattress
in her backyard
—concrete square
walled in
by weathered boards

dull, dull and grey
to look at,
hard to the touch.

She sleeps under
a thin bedspread
that shows the outline
of her body,
curled up, calves against
thighs, comfortable.

Into this place
she has brought color:

The yellow bedspread,
green gleam of a pack
of Salem cigarettes,
the shiny black
of a new telephone
near her head.

At the corner of the yard
a battered shopping cart
catches the sunlight;
it is filled with empty bottles,
refuse collected
from previous weekends
which will yield a treasure
at the supermarket.

On either side of it
the two canvas chairs
I threw away last week
stand out green and red.

Emmett Jarrett

TWO POEMS**Candlewood Lake**

The night the radio announced the news
"Japan surrenders; soldiers coming home"
My brother found a spider in his room
And, terrified, could not be coaxed to bed.
I rolled a magazine into a tube,
Struck, and proved to him that it was dead.

Down at our disappointing beach we swam,
Kicking away the slimy weeds that stroked
Our tightened bodies as we neared the float.
There we would plan our children's game of war
Where each would be a brave American
Crawling up through the mud onto the shore.

In the morning, with the others still asleep,
I'd take out my binoculars to see
The distant water through the shadowy tree,
Waiting for an early breeze to make
Visible with the turning of a leaf
The town in sunlight far across the lake.

Behind the house the trees soared up and massed
Their heavy foliage, darkening where I stood
The rhyming soldier of the neighborhood.
Suddenly a little bell would ring
In the cardboard walkie-talkie, and at last
I'd hear my brother's voice on the stretched string.

T. R. Carper

Children of Hiroshima

The dark within their eyes may never end,
For they once saw the fire burn so bright
It burned away the small flame of the soul.
There where nothing is, what power can mend
The charred perspectives, or again ignite
A confident inner light, and make them whole?

For when the light broke forth as if the sun
Had flung a bullet at the earth and cracked
Compacted heavens in a flash of fire,
They saw the picture of oblivion,
Everything familiar, burned and blacked,
Heaped up onto a universal pyre.

Where was the wind that would not fight the wind?
Where was the water that could drown the flame?
Where was the wall to stop the throbbing air?
Why did the upright city break and bend
In the fierce summer when that summer came?
What did the eyes of children see and share?

Their lids tremble and close. Those children blink,
And when they look again the summer light
Flashes among the modern homes that rise
To build their city where no child will think
Apocalypse of horror and of fright
Can thunder from the innocent summer skies.

T. R. Carper

ROOT AND BRANCH

“For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down,
that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch
thereof will not cease.

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through
the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs
like a plant.”

The Book of Job

1. The Promise of the Land

She is not like any other land:
Not as the snow capped Alps
They climbed, or the low swamps;
Neither like winding terraces of vines,
Nor the long streams they swam.

Shivering along the ship rail
As the yawning mate hoists
Her flag up the squeaking pole,
Next to his own, fog horns blow,
A life boat clatters against the slowing stern,

They see her at last
As in a dream, through mist
(Fog of the sea or the land
Or their eyes still asleep?)
And she is most beautiful

From the water at dawn:
Other bright ports shine
With mounts white as milk,

Domes golden as corn,
Beyond her borders,
But she lies veiled
By low haze,
A dazzling cloak, as of the foam and waves,
The sea itself:
Not as a land.

2. Uprooted

Because Mr. Pinsk had been a great citizen,
Counting ballots in every election
And paying taxes on sixteen estates,
He squats firm as a stone on his broken crates.

His corduroy slacks grow wrinkled and black,
His cravat blows away with his grey top hat,
As he raves, flapping his sleeves like a bat,
"I will not budge from this rotting dock:

The rats pinched my portraits and chandeliers
And put me to work for eleven years
And in my factory produced the gun
With which they shot my wife and son."

Because Miss Jules had been a fine lady,
With veils, and jade stones, and changeable suits
Of apparel, with dances, sponge cakes, and a trade,
She tears her curls at their darkening roots.

Her spiked heels snap between planks of the dock,
The powder dust streams down her wrinkled cheeks,
As she bursts her buttons and seams, and shrieks,
"The brutes of the old world broke my brass lock

And they tiptoed across my polished floor ;
Then each one shook
My hand, bowed as a gentleman, but took
Me for a whore."

Because philosopher Stein had been wise,
With his text in twenty-nine languages
Training presidents, tyrants, and sages,
He slides down the gangplank in a clown disguise.

The pointed cap topples from his balding pate,
The polka dots melt from his cheeks and gown,
As he curses in Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit,
"They burned out my brains, left ash and grey stone :

They gathered my books, each file, each footnote,
And used them as fuel to feed their great fire,
Then tied me above the funeral pyre
Until I denied each page that I wrote."

A girl who was born on the land,
Who lives in a tent and grovels in sand,
Dropping stones in her sack seven days long,
Runs down to the harbor to see what is wrong.

Though her hands are scratched, her fingernails black,
And though her dungarees are torn,
She shouts to those scarecrows stuck at the port,
"All you have lost, I will give back :

With no money, no home, no store,
With no door, or shake of the hand,
No written word, I will restore
With a stone and a grain of sand."

3. Stone Harvest

Song of Himself

“He is not as a hero of old
Who commands land and sea with his rod
Or a prophet upon a fig mount
Who figures out the ways of God
Or a shepherd with pebbles and slings
Or a sower or reaper or one
Who praises these things ;

Neither is he still branded as sheep
Nor his top still shaved bald as a rock,
His torso still twisted like thin sticks,
And neither are the stones here as those
He picked to save his shrunken skin :
Coal bricks, one by one, for the ovens
That scorched his own sons.”

Song of the Mother

“The autumn that a seed
Was planted in my womb,
The stones lay thick as peas
In a black pod
And the baked mounts cracked
Like mosaic.

When the men cursed God
And the women cursed men,

Then I would pick
And sing
For I was spring.

In winter, while the stones
 Thinned and the earth crumbled
 Like dry bark, I became
 Round as a pear;
 Fountains bubbled in me
 And ripe plums dropped.

When the men wished they'd died,
 The women cried, 'we will die,'

Then I would lie
 And laugh
 For I was life.

In April, the land was
 The same: no bud, no rain.
 Only my son was born.
 The same month, he was gone.

Then the women would say,
 'Some day we'll gather grain,'
 Then the men would promise,
 'One spring we'll raise a barn,'

When I would curse
 And cry
 'When spring comes, I
 Will be stone'."

Story of the Present

"Our forefathers who lie dead in this land
 Discovered God once on a sandy mount.
 The desert was the same then, dry as bone,

But scratching beneath dust and stone
They struck a deep spring:
The Lord is, the Lord is one.

In far lands lies the ash of our fathers
Who were bartered, hung, hammered, and burned
As the coke of the furnace and
Shaped into lampshades; among nails and bone
Their words also changed:
The Lord was, the Lord is dead.

We find, picking stones above the deceased,
Carved bits of their ruins, brass buds and shoots.
Nothing brings nothing: no winter, no spring.
How shall we reap the present from the past
As a perennial tree from its roots
When the roots themselves have ceased?
The land is, there is the land."

4. If Not Now, When?

Squeezing drops from dry rock
I wish to shape a lump of dough.

Scooping ditches in thick swamp
I wish to scrub a dirty child.

Welding pipes beneath the fiery sky
I wish to join you by my side.

If a woman is she
Who only shapes a lump of dough,
I wish to squeeze drops from dry rock.

If a woman is she

Who only scrubs a dirty child,
I wish to scoop ditches in swamp.

If a woman is she
Who only loves a man,
I wish to be no woman.

Scanning the barbed wire horizon
I wish to patrol ticker tapes
Of the rise and the fall.

Spreading dung in deep furrows
I wish to unfold a philosophy
Of growth and decay.

Boring tunnels to bind land and stream
I wish to build bridges between
You and me.

If a Jew patrols ticker tapes,
I wish to scan barbed wire horizons.

If a Jew unfolds philosophies,
I wish to spread dung in deep furrows.

If a Jew is one who
Wishes to be no Jew,
I wish to be no Jew.

Pumping water from low streams
I wish to draw poems from myself.

Balancing pails on my head
I wish to wear laurel and bay leaves.

Working on the land with the people
I wish to write poems of the land and the people.

If a poet only draws poems
From a deep well of himself,
I wish to pump water from streams.

If a poet howls from stone towers
Or only sets his own lands in order,
I wish to wear pails on my head.

If a poet only writes poems
Or poems about poems,
I wish to be no poet.

5. Song of the Daughter

As I scrape
Veins under sand
Let sump and mud
Shape me.

As I dredge
Gravel from streams
Let clods and weeds
Cleanse me.

As I alter
The course of a river
Let the driving water
Change me.

6. The Prophets at the Port

Well folks, you made it.
Step right down.
This is the promised land,

The land of milk and honey.
Watch your spikes,
Ladies, the gangplank's
Steep. Show me your passports,
Police cards, bill
Folds, gents. Step down, yes
Step right down
To the promised land: a land like
Any other land.

Come buy my chick peas fried in grease—
Fellafels—hamburgers without meat.

Come try my petah flat as saucers.
Sample scallions, garlic, leeks.

Strew your chewed weeds in the street
Among the dancing daughters.

Come watch this scribbler on a plank
With dangling curls and black skull cap
Hunching over his pigeon scratches,
Rolling the hairy parchment patches
As cigarettes: to be stuffed in arks,
To be hung on your doorposts and gates:

Come buy his mezuzahs and his tree twig crosses.
Mail home some bottles of Jordan's waters.

Step down, step down
And board the Sabbath train:
Come tunnel through the chiseled mounts
To new Jerusalem; her rocky road
A rail bed, by ten you'll reach King
David's tomb, only twelve steps from

The Last Supper Room. Yes, sir, you, ma'am,
Step down, down, down
To the promised land.

7. Story of the Generations

But most,
In midnight streets, come see
The nightmare of the dream
Of the men and women
Burned in Dachau and Warsaw
In Kafar Yasin,
Burning:

The sons and daughters
At their borders
Because

There are borders
Because
There is a people
Like any other people

Because
There is a land
Like any other land.

Florence Elon

FOUR POEMS

Median 33

let us now observe capital punishment week
 whose official motto in fraternity greek
 translated is "who inherit the earth are sic"/
 the coat of arms the shishkebab mannikin in the air

now if the chaplain will pronounce the swinging
 prayer

we have memento ashtrays in the shape
 of a mouth agape/
 toy electric chairs battery-driven
 for those of your boys over seven
 while for the girls still immature
 we have dollsize gaschambers that insure
 the little pills therein fizz perfume
 simulating cyanide without its doom

there is little to report except that at our hand
 we are killing our own throughout the land/
 men are dangling from state to state
 at their atomic weight
 for the commission of crimes so heinous
 as to shame both faces of janus
 into turning into each other
 at the reflection of murderers having birth by mother
 who herself must have been of a breed

to hair-raise her seed

we are glad to say by the bye
 we are better at vengeance to the tune
 of two eyes for an eye
 that for the cornea banks are a considerable boon
 and enable the innocent blind
 to see a world more beautiful for burning its animal
 bridges behind

finally it must be pointed out
 we are not concerned with capital punishment
 so much as a method to deter
 but as one to refer/
 strangling frying and gassing
 are ends that while they cause the sensitive to pout
 and the libertarian in passing
 to want to gag the scent
 are nevertheless modus devivendis that prevent
 a man from proposing to repent/
 he may not suffer the pleasure of our chastising him
 as our prizing him/
 society in brief
 cannot yet dispense with grief
 nor turn away from death
 as bad breath/
 we cannot agree to remit
 the supreme penalty for a man who has exterminated
 his fellow-created
 so that for the purpose of scientific love everlasting
 he may sit
 and be studied on the premise that
 all subsequent homicidal people will substitute teat
 for tat/

no/
 precisely the murderer's hell must be
 to expect no analytic subsidy/
 some crimes must remain
 forfeit of understanding else we feign
 no crime whatever and listen in savant-garde silence
 to the madonnas of violence/
 and if christ himself on the cross holler at this
 why we must kiss
 his feet that are no longer on the earth and let him
 go/
 suicide
 shall not be the murderer's bromide

 the entertainment chairman tells me his show
 is ready so I will confine myself to the single
 announcement that our next convention's agenda will
 wholly concern
 the ethical efficacy of either the slow or
 unrecognizable
 execution/
 shall we have the murderer understand to an
 exquisite turn
 the reality of his victim's dissolution/
 or shall we be so loftily humane as either to automate
 the assassin's death by feeding him into a computer
 or say not only has no crime been done
 but that the victim himself was our folly/
 or that in order that justice be visited
 by the absolute sophisticate
 we shut our eyes and obliterate
 a random innocent/
 the discussion at that time should make for a lively
 event

I see our amateur performers
 professional executioners all
 are waiting but would prefer their audience at their
 twilight ease/
 now no one need whip out electric razor
 and shave from skull to knees/
 but will someone dim the houselights please
Gil Orlovitz

Art of the Sonnet: 203

the station of the particolored lights . . . the mildew
 like soft nutcrackers—my grandmother scurried
 across
 the tracks and roasted the quail of daylight to
 a turn on the third rail/greedily the shadows
 lick their fingers . . . with merry lanterns aswinging
 we search for a plain shoppingbag of asthma
 in the circuit—my grandmother's ear was listening
 on tiptoe for the gliding sheen of a suicide's plasma:
 he had gazed up too long
 at the quail of daylight and their fleece of flew at
 their brains/
 and we see a pickpocket about to rob an unsuspecting
 vacuum doing pure research in the rain
 on heat and cold, and we wave all the particolored
 lights
 of the station — but my grandmother pulled the
 emergency night/

Gil Orlovitz

Art of the Sonnet: 214

I give you more than love, I give you insanity,
I give you the clock off my back, my extra pair
of blind eyes, my seat at the Fire Exchange,
my god I give you my fins in mothers jelly
preserves, what more do you want, Kriss Kringle,
I give you my third cheek for the turning, its tear
turned into the homicide squad, my special foghorn
for bright days, my single ski gene,
I give you my age by consulting my carbon ball,
my special barber who tunes his comb on crystal
skulls, my ether wings for theoanesthesiologies,
and all my old wives,
what more can you need, Kriss Kringle, than
these mended toys for unintended children?

Gil Orlovitz

Homage to Chaplin : 2

The angel's revolvingdoor wings—
and the petitioning souls pushing to get through —
one trips on one's gauze, eh ?
I have the nakedness to saunter nonchalantly
 through,
and find all the nudist seraphim wearing masks.
I look under each—and see Spartan eyes gnawing at
 hearts.
Time to ride the anycycle,
I give it momentum by casting my shadow spikes,
gravity the last infirmity of a noble god.
I tell you, there's no hunger greater than a gnat's,
and I must have my fill before the elephants come —
whom I must exactly fit with shoes
so that their tusks won't pinch.
I ride rareback,
my heart a dozen abreast,
my murders no more than the prestidigitation of
 women upon men—
reverse menses, sirs,
and the police will hunt for Easter eggs.
And always there is the girl born without the
 rollerskates of light,
and the girl who grew up with one midget shorter
 than the other,
and the girl orphaned to the perfect day,
and the girl born out of vaporlock—
all of whom I must convince will look better in baggy
 pants
and a broad ass panning for goldfish in a
 contaminated industrial creek.

Well, I begin with angels
and break off with my arms open wide just beyond
the launching pad—
you can't see me now, but the Sad Computer knows
I'm there and,
his console flapping and transistors waddling
ducklike,
he comes humming to me his little childsong of yes
and no,
yes and no—
so I can make a recording he can listen to later and
laugh at nostalgically
as I nail him up for his crucifixion in turn,
so that his parts can be handed down to me
for my next pantomime in which I will take two
roles—
yes and no.

Gil Orlovitz

YESTERDAYS STREET

One platoon of sparrows marching down
THE street
Down the street
The street of sorrows
black shadows
Shadows sprawled on the sidewalk
Like dead dogs
hit
By speeding cars.

I used to walk
 run
 tear down
The street
 past naked elms
 past lit windows
walked, ran, and ripped over
Century old bricks
 and
Yesterdays leaves.
Yesterdays street
 of hushed houses
 limp shadows
naked trees twisting and stretching
 toward heaven.
Leering doorways mocked me
 when
My footsteps echoed back from
 brick souls.
Yes, long since unseen friend
 I miss you
 but,
Once again
 soon let's hope
These itching feet will beat
That once familiar tattoo on
Your waiting face.

Joseph J. Maloney

THE SUSPECT IN POETRY. *By James Dickey.* *The Sixties Press.* \$2, cloth; \$1, paper.

Into the virtual vacuum of forthright criticism of recent poetry rushes this valuable book in which Dickey dissects 25 of his contemporaries. Largely compiled from the author's essays and reviews, the volume is organized in a coherent sequence from the "suspect" to the "solitary joy," the whole unified by the clarity, consistency and ruthless discrimination of Dickey's critical standards.

QUICK AS DANDELIONS. *By John L'Heureux.* *Doubleday.* \$2.75.

Two forces work themselves out in Fr. L'Heureux's book: his drive as a poet and his compulsion to proselytize. He handles both, for a writer so young, with skill and frankness. His personality and his beliefs stand out with refreshing wholesomeness. A welcome first book on all counts.

OF POETRY AND POWER. *Ed. by Edwin A. Glikes & Paul Schwaber.* *Basic Books.* \$5.95.

This is a warning. Almost everything about the late President Kennedy sells. This book will, too — unfortunately. It presents works by 78 poets, occasioned by the assassination. Few of the poems here deserve this type of permanence. They represent "occasional" verse at its shallow worst.

THE WRECK OF THE THRESHER. *By William Meredith.* *Alfred A. Knopf.* \$4.

The title poem of this book is perhaps the finest "occasional" poem of recent times. It is a searing eulogy for those who die at sea—authentic, individual and eloquent. As a bonus, the remainder of the volume is almost as fine.

ANTHOLOGY OF KOREAN POETRY. *Trans. by Peter H. Lee.* *John Day.* \$5.

MODERN INDONESIAN POETRY. *Ed. by Burton Raffel.* *Univ. of California* \$4.

Two important firsts — useful introductions to important poetic literatures virtually unavailable and

unknown in English. The Korean collection tries to condense 2,000 years of poetry into less than 200 pages, a fearsome task. The Indonesian sticks with the present and so is more successful. Both contain much worth reading.

FOR THE UNION DEAD. *By Robert Lowell.*
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$3.95.

Lowell's growth has been accomplished in steady strides from book to book. This one places him firmly among the major poets of this century. It is a totally engrossing collection that snatches up one's attention and holds it in total involvement. The reader is never let down because the poet never lets up his stream of fresh images and startlingly new relationships. A major book!

FIGURES OF THE HUMAN. *By David Ignatow.*
Wesleyan Univ. Press. \$1.85.

It is difficult to figure out why certain poets never achieve the broad reputation they deserve. Such a one is David Ignatow—a solidly skillful, consistently moving and challenging writer, head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries. It is to be hoped that this collection of new and old works by him will introduce him to the larger public his superior talent has so long merited.

6 MID-AMERICAN CHANTS. *By Sherwood Anderson. Jonathan Williams. \$6.50.*

Anderson's evocative paeans about the midlands are impressively supplemented by Art Sinsabaugh's brilliant photographs and, combined in Williams' extraordinary format, make what is surely one of the most beautiful books of poetry ever published.

THE BUZZARD AND THE PEACOCK. *By Ned O'Gorman. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$3.95.*

O'Gorman's verbal skill can now be taken for granted. He produces fine swirls of sound that are increasingly dominated by a kind of impersonal mysticism. There are potential dangers here but O'Gorman is clearly poet enough to manage them.