

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
Volume 16 - Number 2 Winter 1965-66

CONTENTS

- 1 SHEILA KUSHNER *The Death of
 Virginia Woolf*
- 2 FELIX STEFANILE *Two Poems*
- 5 ELSA COLLIGAN *On Target*
- 6 MARTIN HALPERN *On the First Anniversary
 of the Death of
 President Kennedy*
- 8 JAY AMES *Viet Nam 1965*
- 9 ROBERT DUSENBERY *Trapped*
- 10 JUDITH GOREN *Three Poems*
- 15 FREDERICK THORGOOD *Waiting for Jenni*
- 16 SUZANNE GROSS *Holy Saturday*
- 17 RAYMOND CARVER *For Semra, with Martial
 Vigor*
- 20 ALAN D. AUSTIN *Hope, Incorporated*
- 21 MILDRED COUSENS *Death by Tractor*
- 22 LAWRENCE SPINGARN *Three Poems*
- 24 WILLIAM J. MARGOLIS *Innocent Details of a
 Mirage*
- 25 MIRIAM KHAMADI *My Daughter is not yet
 Back*
- 26 WENDELL BERRY *Seven Poems*
- 32 JON STALLWORTHY *A Word with the Baas*
- 35 HELEN SORRELLS *Small Talk*
- 36 JASON MILLER *Avenue "A"*
- 37 JERRY METZ *It Bothered Him*
- 38 *Books in Brief*

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

Volume 16 - Number 2 Winter 1965-66

THE DEATH OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, 1941

She had been dying for a long time,
And had laid out more of life on a page
To bury the old story, the world falling.
(But the echo cried in the shell of her skull)

Wind from burning London rippled her dress,
As she stood by the stream, sun-printed cold.
She set her cane, her staff, down on the bank.
(Her pen was dry upon the high scratched desk)

She knelt then, trying to catch her shifting face
In the net of her fingers, but read her death
In her eyes. She would act the answer, Yes.
(It was the last of the polished words she dropped)

Still the writer's shadow floated before her.
Walking into the water, she ended
First the legend of her life, then the pain.
(And left many books, but no children)

Sheila Kushner

TWO POEMS**Mrs. Clotho, Mrs. Lachesis**

Across the street the two widows rake their lawns
and gossip, like gray robins, in the breeze.
The piled leaves are smouldering at the curb
and smell like cooking in the autumn air.
Behind them the grass ripples, like chenille,
with whitewashed stones for piping at the hem.
They are lonely. They are aging. They are clean.
I find it in my heart to honor them.

Cold mornings, on my way to work, they stand
each at her kitchen-window dark with plants,
and stare past me the steps I have to go;
I turn around, but they have moved away.
I think about their houses, rich and void,
the man-smell of the wood that browns their rooms.
When I get home they're taking out the garbage—
white nurses to the duty of their dooms

the way they touch the bags so delicately
and set the lids down gently, without a bang.
I wish that they were cross and queer, or black
from shoes to shawl—like old Italian women—
to give my healthy pity a clear signal,
but no—they count their mail, or clip the hedge,
or toddling from the back with water pail
fill a bird-bath, wipe slime from a ledge.

Their chaste efficiency rules the whole world:
no rattling in the alleys, no doggy lawns,
no radios turned up on Sunday morning.

My wife makes sure to cover up the beer-cans
when we return from shopping, because of them,
and so does Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Mears
who drives a car, and comes home pretty late
and cracked her garage-door this last New Year's.

I can mark time by either one of them,
for they have drilled the dolor from their dreams,
the summers hosing, every autumn raking,
each winter shaking salt upon the ice.
Sweet love of mine, sweet wife, if I go first,
I beg you, please forget your wits awhile!
lean out the window, scream to be heard,
or kick up your heels and move away from town,
but refuse those two, who are waiting for a Third.

Horse-Shoe Crab

The horse-shoe crab whose leather house
and helmet dome confused the eye
that spied him, swift and ponderous,
waltzing like original ark
upon the tide, he was a lie.
Now he is living in the dark.

His spike was ceremonious.
He could not fool the tricky gull
who mimicked his sad, turtle-pace
and turned him over like a bug:

he rocked then, like a broken hull,
and burns in the salt light by a bleaching log.

Poor bête, you wore a heavy hat
that mortgaged you to domicile
and doomed you, just as Thoreau wrote.
For all your tank-like look of war
you were a monstrous miracle
that never knew what war is for.

I want my beasts as beautiful
and ugly as my wildest dreams:
their spears should work and not be dull
and all their teeth grind hard as stone.
If Baal be not the thing he seems
why should I smile when he is gone?

Thus I resent, in my own year,
the 60,000,000 years of you
without a belly-shield or spear;
I stand amazed you've lived so long
unless—the thought provokes me now—
your very aeons prove me wrong.

Felix Stefanile

The cliché
has the ring
of truth
similar to
the one
around the
tub when
the water
runs out
the water
being the
most important
and the ring
the residue.

ON TARGET

Elsa Colligan

**ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH
OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY**

(Sunderland, Massachusetts, Sunday, Nov. 22, 1964)

One of those timeless first snow-laden chills
Has rung on the metallic sky all morning.
One of those winds that sweeps the last litter
Of a thick summer's leavings has cleared
Old vacancies our flesh must tenant again.

It looked like some such day but I couldn't be sure.
For, through the very window shades,
Beamings of a California November sun
Dulled that image of Eastern autumn framed
On my sad neighbors' twenty-one-inch screen.

Asked for a poem, I tried and quit. Now
The handsome anthology's out, nine-tenths of them,
Like me then, in an alien light, staring.
And the report's out too, best documented death
Ever, and still nobody's sure what happened —

Except that we've, of course, come through it, hardly
Feeling the squeeze: dollar and state stable;
Most policies, promises, perils, guilts just as they
 rolled

Before that short freak tragic splice
In the comic reel of our public American seeing

Yet now, back four months from the mild West, here
I sit, first back this morning, first all East again,
Replaying it all in this window's wider frame
Where something resonates that couldn't then
Amid the flowering magnolias and fat, permanent
 robins;

Resonates on the tempered inner ear —
 Drum cadence and a snatch of liturgy:
Trrrrrrrrr Um Tum Tum, trrrrrrrrr
Um Tum, ta Tum, over against
Peccata mundi, Kyrie eleison —

Only, no longer the uniformed marching drummers,
 No longer the Cardinal's, that good, moved man's
Ad hoc tremor or tone-deaf, side-of-the-throat
 South-Boston Latin and Greek (like a slow
 Tobacco auctioneer, I couldn't stop thinking then) ;

But disembodied, essential chant and rhythm,
 In counterpoint composed by the wind outside,
 And set like a score on the staves of a mind impressed,
 This timeless November weather, with the form
 Of the one most moving, most unmoveable thought.

A man, not having yet expected to, died:
 A public, publicized, political man;
 One man, in certain need, by definitions
 Outdistancing all dogma, of what we call,
 Knowing no surer term for it, mercy.

Trrrrrrrrr Um Tum Tum, Peccata Mundi,
Trrrrrrrrr Um Tum, ta Tum, Kyrie Eleison

So, down these year-old vistas of stripped boughs,
 Rolls the clear coffin I follow this morning—at last
 At the right distance, in my one sure light for elegy.

Martin Halpern

VIET NAM 1965

plane whine, bomb screams
from puff cloud spattered skies
nursing hawkshapes
and giant dragonflies;
red rose bomb bursts
Death's newest, bright bouquets
launching pain moans
and peace-on-earth-man lies:
dust cloud fading
waxen faces loom
rockshard pock-picked
in field . . . or scattered room
sweat cold retchings,
helping (those that can)
to bag wet flesh lumps
that were dog or man?
spike hung eyeballs
glaring into hell
past flame charred, flesh lumps
still smoking, by the well;
crumpled face piece
. . . an unskulled, grinning mask
mouthing cuss words
but at what ? you ask
dungsmells, fear stinks,
guts, like snakes asleep
dead child, doll small
(do women only, weep ?)
scalplock, silksoft
new ribboned, freshly washed,
perhaps from . . . that one ?
(rock smeared, metal squashed)
pregnant matron
belly riven, wet,
disclosing foetus

. . . . already out of debt;
hearthstone, sunswept
beneath a simmering pot
stew filled—untouched—
good smelling, piping hot;
chow down, clean up,
bandage, lift, revile,
flake out; ponder,
maybe sleep awhile

Day chores, night watch, and
only time is kind,
in dulling paintings
thus limned, upon the mind.

Jay Ames

TRAPPED

When summer came along the Musselshell
We got trapped in our town.
On the East, Indians came to swap unmarked horses,
And we shunned that side, turning west again
But there were the gypsies coming on in Dodges—
Hunting pots, pans, old tin and children
(When word got out we took for cover).
Always we escaped the tribes and gypsies,
The coyotes, too, on rimrocks, rattlers in caves
And the weird sisters of St. Anne
Casting their long shadows in the sun.

When Porky Swanson got a horn C.O.D. from Sears
(a brass sax rare as balloon tires or Atwater Kents),
He threw a net of sour notes over our roof-tops
And snared us all like little fish grounded in shallows.

Robert Dusenbery

THREE POEMS**Legacy**

Mother, I am mistress
of an air-conditioned mansion on a hill.
Rooms sprawl lazily in the sun, open
to the breeze of running children,
never done exploring house nor hill,
who go rolling every fall
through all those dirty, crunchy leaves
until they are dizzy with laughter,
or, after the first snowfall, sled
alone between the mammoth trunks:
they learned quite young to steer away.

When I was small we lived above the store
in two cramped rooms. Our windows faced
the street I could not cross alone.
Bedded down too soon, I'd lie awake
in sleepless summer heat, hearing
streetcars rattle lullabies.
Leaning near my window
for a breeze that seldom came
I watched silent men and girls
lean in shadowed doorways.

Everyone we knew was poor.
Pop sold them beer and bread on credit,
and died in debt before the war
that might have made him rich.
You watched that happen to your friends:
they moved away from us

to homes with velvet lawns
and bought their children's clothes at Saks.
They still invited us to dinner,
but it was not the same. You could not
afford the beauty shop, felt ashamed,
and dropped them first. I heard you cry
but you could not confide in me.
Nor could you hear my secrets without
judging me, weighing me against their
cashmered girls, criticizing them for being
what they were, and me for being otherwise.

When I was twelve you let me shop downtown alone.
I wanted something lovely for your birthday
that you would not return, and finally chose
a locket you could put my picture in. I wrapped
it carefully and drew the card myself.
When you unwrapped my gift your mouth assumed
that twist that made my stomach knot.
You said, "Locketts are for children, dear,
and this one cost too much." You saved
my picture and the card: I found them
years ago, sorting out your things.
I hid inside my room again to cry.

When I had finished school you sold
the store. We moved into another tiny place,
but stayed out of one another's rooms.
I did not have to see your empty closet
where a few limp cottons hung, resigned,
and spared myself your look when you hung
freshly ironed clothes in mine: I pressed my own.
If I bought new clothes for work, I paid
in cash, and tore up the tags.

You wanted only I should marry
a nice Jewish boy, a doctor or a CPA,
and with nobility I never knew you had,
managed not to say too much
when my choice was an instructor
still in school. If you worried
what your friends might think, I never knew.
Mother, my decisions troubled you because
they were not yours; I felt your anxieties
as guilt. But not this time. You watched
us "struggle," as you thought: we loved our love,
and for the first time I was nearly free.
Still, I vacuumed all the rugs before you came
and hid new purchases you might think cost too
much.

And even now, as I sit on the patio
watching the children you did not live to know
roll down our hill, I wonder what you
would think of how I live. I've beat those
cashmired daughters all to hell, and you'd
be proud to bring their mothers
to see my parquet floors.

But after they had left, your mouth would
get that funny twist and you would say,
"You must pay a fortune for your help,"
and I know my throat would tighten in that
same old way, until I'd have to run upstairs
to hide behind the master-bedroom door.

Ending

Her hospital room, filled with flowers, stank.
The abundance of roses and mums
could not outrank that other stench.
We did not breathe too deeply there,
perhaps afraid of using up
the little bit of healthy air left.
At the end, nothing functioned
but her lungs. Each breath
brought oxygen to circulate the blood
within that cancer-eaten frame,
continuing the futile cycle:
drugs for pain, glucose fed
into the veins, catheters,
more pain, more vomited green bile
while we (doctors, husband, daughter, son)
kept her helpless, tied to tubes,
to keep the law. We watched her starve.
Each day she lost more weight.
Her body weakened, shrank, lay
faded on the sheets.
The last few weeks she could not speak
to us. Standing at the foot of the bed,
our fingers gripped hard about the metal,
we smiled gently, told her it was nearly
spring again and showed her snapshots
of the grandson she would never know,
pretending any of it mattered,
wondering how much she understood.
Those final hours she moaned
a deep unearthly sound. Repeatedly

her starved arm stiffened, rose, hovered
apparition-like, as though held
by some invisible wire,
then slowly lowered to the bed.
A muscle spasm, the nurses said.
But was that motion uncontrolled,
as we pacified ourselves into believing,
or was it a signal for release,
a voiceless screaming
from within that rotted cage?

Yahrzeit Candle

The day-long candle has outlived its hours,
as if it knew for whom it burns.
Lit at sundown yesterday, it should have
died by now; yet it refuses to expire
as though it sensed *her* strength
those extra starved-out weeks.

I knew my mother only as I know
this light, through protective glass
that distorts the glow
and separates me
from its core of heat. I want
to touch my finger to the flame,
but fear the pain of offering myself.

I grieve for all of this.

All night the candle will flicker
across the kitchen walls, trying
to illuminate dark places.
Tomorrow I shall throw away
the empty glass.

Judith Goren

WAITING FOR JENNI

Do you know how hard it is
to write a poem?
whatever a poem is.

With your penrod hovering over
the redcircled table
it seems simple:

your heart moves with a rhythm
that would put blood
into a cucumber

and even the clean note
curled on the homedark table
coils the mind with muscular potential.

But wait. Watch the clock
and see how the minutes
sag over the moment

and your empty glass
tells you to sag home empty
to words that are already dead.

Frederick Thorgood

HOLY SATURDAY

It is late to be so cold,
late for the ice to hold
hard in the ground.
We heard the sound
of a waterfall flow
once in the dark, and the snow
began to fall again where snow
lay soiled on the cold
faces of hills. Sap should flow
sweet in the sugar bush now, and no-one hold
the cattle in. Ice is still sound
in the tanks, and the ground
in the meadow is iron, the ground
in the marshes is stone. Snow
is the bloom of the cattails. Blind we hear the sound
of swans that follow home the cold
too soon, and hold
their driven wedges in the flow
of the horncalling blood and bitter flow
from the icefields, into the nesting ground
and mapless tundra. Winter will hold
them here, baffled by snow
and the cage of the cold,
pinioned, and sick for the sound
of water. Folded to death, they drift in the sound
of silver wept from trees, and the flow
over plowland risen from cold:
rivers sprung from the rushing ground
to spin away the snow,
and break the hold

of ice as though water would break the hold
of the winter forever. The sound
in the night is the snow
still, breaking the arms of trees, the heavy flow
from broken boughs to the ground.
It is late to be so cold,
and late for ice to hold the river's flow
too deep to hear it sound. Silent on their former
feeding ground,
the swans are growing wings of snow. It is late to be
so cold.

Suzanne Gross

FOR SEMRA, WITH MARTIAL VIGOR

How much do writers make? she said
first off
she'd never met a writer
before
Not much I said

they have to do other things
Like what? she said
Like working in mills I said
sweeping floors teaching school
picking fruit
whatnot
all kinds of things I said
In my country she said
someone who has been to college
would never sweep floors
Well that's just when they're starting out I said
all writers make lots of money
Write me a poem she said
a love poem

All poems are love poems I said
I don't understand she said
It's hard to explain I said
Write it for me now she said
All right I said
a napkin/a pencil
For Semra I wrote
Not now silly she said
nibbling my shoulder
I just wanted to see
Later? I said
putting my hand on her thigh
Later she said

O Semra Semra
Istanbul *nee*
Constantinople
Next to Paris she said
Istanbul is the loveliest city
Have you read Omar Khayyam? she said
Yes yes I said

a loaf of bread a flask of wine
I know Omar backwards
& forwards
Kahil Gibran? she said
Who? I said
Gibran she said
Not exactly I said
What do you think of the military? she said
have you been in the military?
No I said
I don't think much of the military
Why not? she said
goddam don't you think men
should go in the military?
Well of course I said
they should
I lived with a man once she said
a real man a captain
in the army
but he was killed
Well hell I said
looking around for a saber
drunk as a post
damn their eyes retreat hell
I just got here
the teapot flying across the table
I'm sorry I said
to the teapot
Semra I mean
Hell she said
I don't know why the hell
I let you pick me up

Raymond Carver

HOPE, INCORPORATED

On the wall: Delores, Circle 3-2117,
Goes down for three dollars and a half.
There's no escaping it; somewhere
beyond the flaking paint and memories
of flesh, louder than the swirl
of wasted water and paper crumpled
into mush; inside our love of pipes
and pencils, the detritus, the floating
recollection of a night when the winds
of the city seemed to bring the streets
alive with spies, a simple conquest
blessed, like the wings of certain
birds, with the sweep of vastly arching
possibilities; somewhere—what shall we
call it?—a sure thing. No strings, no
teasing, no uncertainty. Later I called,
and heard: *The number you have dialed is not
in service. Please hold the line. An operator
will come to your assistance.* Please hold. Will come.

Alan D. Austin

DEATH BY TRACTOR

Spring greens the land,
transformed by sun,
the waiting trees now rise
in sprays of scintillant green.

Across the new-ploughed field
dark furrows lead the way
to the steep slope curving round a boulder
where half hidden by the clumsy beast
failed in its manoeuvre.
and fallen on its side,
the engine churning, churning,
a crumpled figure lies
face down in morning dew
like a bound sack tossed from a load
or a wind-ruined scarecrow prone.

He does not hear
the red-winged blackbirds
singing in the clump of alders,
nor does he care
that quail are nesting
among his winter wheat,
nor notice at the farmhouse window
the white face frozen in disbelief,
trying not to understand
that he has made so soon his final payment
on these, his own few acres,
his earned land.

Mildred Cousens

THREE POEMS**The Picnic at Aghia Marina**

From that green rock where the saint stood
To bless the nets and dazzle fish,
We dove; we touched in the perfumed tide.
As my Danish nymph surfaced and laughed,
Her breasts were white: must the sun fail?
Oh, the sweet lobsters wept in our mouths,
The envious wasps picked at the fruit,
The wine yodeled, we sang off-key,
But when the air cooled we could not sing,
For another voice slipped like a net
Over the table, over the bright plates.
We heard the click of beads, the sad murmur,
The cries of the sober dead in the black ships.

Backwords

Never, my father, again; sad one
With your cigars and straw hats,
Cheers for the roast beef, the cakes
And wine of red-heeled nights
Or the oiled wheels, stopped; done
In a flash, your commands: flats
On the sharp day, loud mistakes,
Women or slim girls, poor sprites
That you flushed with your gun.
Let us be friends, for that's
What you wished: thefts and takes
No more, though by what rights

Were your sleek prizes won,
Yes, and your pampered cats
Fished plump from the warm lakes?
But hush: only the fool fights
With a dead father, dear son.

Sirocco

When the wind brags of Egypt
And the sea like a jilted girl
Whimpers below the orange grove,
It is best to keep hidden,
Seal up the doors, sleep.
Avoid meat, stint on oil,
Yes, even water the wine.
The very olive trees run mad
Downhill, tossing hard fruit
At the Byzantine waves,
For the arrows come quicker
As black sharpshooters
Plant marble feet in the sand
And with loosened hair in flames
Let fly from tawny beaches

Lawrence P. Spingarn

INNOCENT DETAILS OF A MIRAGE

. . . the pieces of reality
we are given to play with
break . . .

it was the D, or 4th string
of my guitar that broke that day,
the instrument going out of tune
in my hands, helpless; unexpected . . .

. . . when she came to love,
our uncertainty thickening the air . . .

a collage is the closest we can come:

candy wrappers piled in the negligent corners,
a shiny shoe on highway 66 near an accident,
two hundred Mexican matchboxes, with famous
paintings,
receipt for tendollar bail for Kaufman drunk,
rusty smashed toy found in alley with Indian
beads . . .

all that I can grasp of what reality is:

smell of Singer's pipe dirty in Chicago winter,
how yr lips trembled under 86th st. in subway,
helpless when my typewriter stolen in San
Francisco,
that last night I walked Hollywood filmed wet
street,
good taste of tuna sandwich Diane fixed for
supper . . .

innocent details of an absurd mirage . . .

& what has happened to all these days?
what is there to do with them all? when did that
other,
the E, or 1st string break? the guitar all alone

on the wall, silent, the sudden snap shaking the
house . . .

. . . when she came to leave,
the uncertainty thick in the air . . .

EVERYTHING, I said, is a temporary collage . . .
(. . . paste *anything* here).

William J. Margolis

MY DAUGHTER IS NOT YET BACK

My daughter took a water pot
Maybe an hour ago;
But my daughter is not yet back
With my water pot.

I saw her run under scooped branches,
And saw her crawl down the stony riverpath;
But my daughter is not yet back
With my water pot.

Was it her footsteps coming up the hill?
Her humming which the breeze brought my way?
Yet my daughter is not back
With the water pot!

Oh, yes, I think I heard some kind of whistle, too;
And then did I hear a giggle or a sob?
And my daughter is not yet back—
And the water pot.

Miriam Khamadi

SEVEN POEMS**The Sign**

“The acceptance of the fate of a place
as belonging to you, as in marriage,
opens it to you, makes possible
seriousness, clarity”

I wrote
and then walking in the woods saw
for the first time in my life
the Pileated Woodpecker,
bird of the big woods, of which
in my time there's little left:
leftover, the bird and a few trees,
from the old first forests:

the Good God Woodpecker, his name
exclaiming in my head in surprise
at his great size and beauty, I
took him for a sign. I came
into a new presence, a deeper
history of my being there, the inward
of the loved country turned toward me.

October 10

Now constantly there's the sound,
quieter than any rain,
of leaves falling.

Under their loosening bright
gold, the sycamore limbs

bleach whiter.

Now the only flowers
are beeweed and aster, spray
of their white and lavender
over the brown leaves.

The calling of a crow sounds
loud—a landmark—now
that the life of summer falls
silent, and the nights grow.

The Quiet

The fisherman rows up the river
at midmorning, anchors
outside the creek mouth.
For hours he sits there
in his boat, lines in the water,
motionless and silent
in the cool wind as a heron.

The leaves have fallen.
The rain has turned them
pliant as water.
Walking on them makes no noise.
The country has taken on
the quiet of the fisherman
fishing alone.

The Snake

At the end of October
I found on the floor of the woods
a small snake, whose back
was patterned with the dark
of the dead leaves he lay on.
His body was thickened with a mouse
or small bird. He was cold,
so stuporous with his full belly
and the fall air that he hardly
troubled to flicker his tongue.
I held him a long time, thinking
of the perfection of the dark
marking he bore on his back,
the mystery of what death
swelled his middle, his living cold.
Now the cold of him stays
in my hand, and I think of him
lying in some hole below the frost,
big with a death to nourish him
during a long sleep.

The Dehorning

The black steers leave the chute,
their horn-stumps spouting
quick antlers of blood

into the hot light.
In the day of dust and trampling
the blade leads the hand

to the wound, again
and again. The loosened blood
burns the fingers.

The changed beast steps
out mute into the bright
loud flashing of pain.

The pain completes itself,
becomes full, like a plant
or a life, ceases to grow.
It yields rest like seed.

Even death, after it,
is relief. Into the loud
world of the pain, a new

world is lifted up. The cooling
hillside becomes steady
in the long evening shadows.

From the peak of the nerved wound
they go down among the trees
along the water's edge

to drink and sleep.

The Cold

How exactly good it is
to know myself
in the solitude of winter,
my body containing its own
warmth, divided from all
by the cold; and to go
separate and sure
among the trees cleanly
divided, thinking of you
perfect too in your solitude,
your life withdrawn into
your own keeping
— to be clear, poised
in perfect self-suspension
toward you, as though frozen.
And having known fully the
goodness of that, it will be
good also to melt.

The Arrival

Through places and lives I no longer guess
or dream, I have been coming here. My approach
has taken a long wearing of the earth.
I have shed the way of my coming,
dry carapace of all I have surpassed, lost:
rudder and axe, wilderness and blade
of my numberless departures.

The many gather
into one, who returns into the many
— the meeting and parting of the strands
of a web in which nothing is held long.
I feel the tug of the gathering of currents
that brings me here before the window,
the day

— December 26, 1964, after strangeness
of a night of winter thunder, the river
rising, swift and muddy, the drift
a crooked constant raft down the channel,
the engines of Christmas filling the air:

This morning a flock of pine siskins comes
to forage in the weeds near the house,
lighting among the dead stalks.

Wendell Berry

A WORD WITH THE BAAS*Cecil John Rhodes*

Well, my colossus, how do things look
from your view of the world? Is it
only seventy years and a bit,
one man's lifetime, since you shook
your finger at the map and said —
your shadow darkening immense
mountain-cross-hatched continents —
'Africa, I want it red'?

One man's lifetime but many lives,
all tributaries, like your own
turbulent pulse, of that pulse grown
to a river whose dark volume drives

a continent. Africa feeds
off blood like a vampire bat
and is not filled, does not grow fat
though a redcoat regiment bleeds

on the assegai. She can digest
a million head of cattle, mobs,
impis, and you: and still the ribs
tentpole her skin, and still her breast

for all that blood yields only dust
and marketable stones. For these
the white tents swarmed over Kimberley's
kopje, sudden as a locust

plague. Gold-reef and diamond,
magnetic under tons of earth,
swung the heads of your oxen north.
Beyond the Limpopo, beyond

the Zambezi, Sheba at noon
hung in a golden haze. The nights'
slow-marching glacier of lights
miraged the mines of Prester John.

But farm by *kraal*, as the Mafeking road
took you to its heart, the *Boy's Own* dream
of bullion ripened to a dream
of land. No frontiers furrowed

your mind's map — only the railway
trained on the north. Your skeleton key
to open Africa from sea
to sea ground in the lock. Today

in your Matopo eerie shut
forever at your own request,
are we to think you cursed or blessed
having a god's perspective but
impotence more than man's? No tongue
for thunder now, no thunderbolt
telegrams crossing the *veld*:
the market beared, concessions wrung
from stubborn *kraals*. All that is ended.
Felled or furled its Union Jacks,
Africa, many-coloured, mocks
your vision: 'Red, I want it red
from Cairo to the Cape,' you said.
Do your eyes ache for lids? Sharpeville,
Katanga, Ruanda, mingle
their streams. The river mounts. The red
river threatens its banks of flesh.
Pray that the gods, my colossus,
electing mercy, may be less
ironic than to grant your wish.

Jon Stallworthy

SMALL TALK

Go now, she said; take the back road
That leads past Corning Water.
Wear the pink dress; carry the white kid shoes
To change into in town.
Find him somewhere, assembly hall or classroom.
Say to him that you hold the talking dear,
Clear in your mind — not so much said
But still a certain thing
Between the two of you.
Tell him, because the summer runs away
In days too full of gazing down the road,
How you would go with him —
Tonight, today —
To that soft island that he told you of,
Light years from villages like Corning Water.

She said this all the while her steady hands
Laid fruit in jars,
Brushed down the stairway with a turkey wing,
Washed the lamp chimneys,
Irons her husband's shirts.
Then she sat still awhile, and read a psalm,
And closed the conversation
With her heart.

Helen Sorrells

AVENUE "A"

Behind the white hills of a car
"holding fort" on a running-board
(over the sewer's foaming slush)
a child gathers snow in his bare
hands, packing it mightily, and
Pow! on the grocer's bald head —
 into the open mailbox —
 — almost to the top of the light pole

"Go play where you live!"
"I live across the street."

Under the tenement steps, a snowman
is born, armless, with coal eyes
and a carrot nose. Sitting with Buddha weight
under a straw hat.

White bombardment erases
a STOP sign at the corner. A ball bursting
on a fifth-story fire-escape
and the boy in the window squeals
in the cold spray. On the sidewalk
his friend laughs.

A girl plays "dead man's float" on a sled
as she is pulled through the streets.

Jason Miller

IT BOTHERED HIM

It bothered him—
the point at which the sound
is gone, the vibrations of a
piano string fade into motionlessness
and imaginings—memories—
superimposition of desire (what one wants)
upon fact (*ex nihilo nihil fit*)
renders a shadow where mist prevails.

It perplexed him—
the buoy seen from summernight shores
was lit and unlit at the same
time and in the same *respect*.

It upset him—
the realization that sound and sight
noise and light
are at best functions retained on
the retina and precariously balanced
on a *tympanum*
translated
transposed
inverted and reduced to sense
as much by will as by
the world.

Jerry Metz

POETRY IN AUSTRALIA. *Chosen by T. Inglis Moore & Douglas Stewart. Univ. of California. \$11.50 (2 vols.).*

This first comprehensive anthology of poetry from "Down Under" gives us a broad sampling of the best Australian verse from its beginnings in 19th century folk ballads to recent works by writers not yet out of their twenties. The introductions, notes and spirited selections will make this the standard work on the subject for a long while to come.

THE CRAFT AND CONTEXT OF TRANSLATION. *Ed. by William Arrowsmith & Roger Shattuck. A CONTROVERSY OF POETS. Ed. by Paris Leary & Robert Kelly. Doubleday-Anchor. \$1.45 and \$2.45.*

A provocative "critical symposium" of articles about many phases of the translator's craft, and an anthology of peppery young American poets that concentrates more on *poems* than on movements, are further evidence that Anchor continues to produce some of the best paperbacks in the field.

O TASTE AND SEE. *Denise Levertov. New Directions. \$1.50.*

A poet who becomes too sure of himself is likely to slip. This is now the case with Levertov. She seems to have convinced herself that every word she writes is gold. It isn't. This disappointing new collection proves it. She needs a good editor.

SELECTED POEMS. *Léopold Sédar Senghor. Atheneum. \$3.95.*

A sensual *tour-de-force* of the world of the African Negro that transcends the bonds of race and place to touch all men. The poems are superbly alive descriptions of sounds, sights and opinions well known to Senghor, who is poet enough to make them poetically pertinent experiences—not merely exotica. The translations are exceptionally good.

DEATH OF THE KAPOWSIN TAVERN. *Richard F. Hugo. Harcourt, Brace & World. \$3.95.*

A tough minded and fisted book. The poems are about the Northwest. It dominates everything here. But Hugo can stand up to it and call back the impressions its vastness imposes on him. There are some mannerisms that, hopefully, will pass, but

there is obviously a well-adjusted poet at work here. **SEVEN OCCASIONS.** *Hollis Summers. Rutgers Univ. \$3.75.*

This is a wholly readable, totally delightful book. Summers' interests are gentle—birds, flowers and occasionally people. His observations of all—especially the birds—are astute and detailed. He has a thorough technical control of his poems and a kind of quiet charm that breeds rare contentment.

SUMMER IN THE SPRING. *Interpreted by Gerald Robert Vizenor. Nodin Press. \$3.50.*

American Indian poems are hard to come by. Here is a fascinating collection of Ojibway pieces that strongly remind one of *haiku*. All are brief and extremely evocative. One cannot say, however, if the Japanese quality is actually in the original or has only crept into Vizenor's "interpretations."

THE MANYOSHU. *Trans. by The Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai. Columbia Univ. \$12.50.*

One cannot be too grateful to Columbia for putting this monumental work back into print. It consists of one thousand poems selected from the original ten thousand in the earliest and greatest of the Japanese anthologies. The notes are copious and the translations remarkable achievements, models of clarity and insight into a far distant time and place.

SELECTED LETTERS OF ROBERT FROST. *Ed. by Lawrence Thompson. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. \$10.*

It is a truism that a man often reveals more of himself in his letters than in his more formal pronouncements. There was a well-known public Frost. But there were also many private ones, not as well-known. They stand forth in these letters and are much worth meeting, for the sake of both the poems and the man.

BOY ON BLUE SKATES. *M. L. Rosenthal. Oxford. \$3.75.*

This is not an easy book. It is crammed with obscure allusions, private jokes, harsh, self-imposed restraints. It is also a meticulous investigation of the misery and violence of the city. It is a gloomy but gripping view of the modern, mordant world.