

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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THEODORE ROETHKE

(a little memory)

Come—as summer woods,
Worn with futures that
we lose, I see you strewn
within the changing moth.
Teaching the smallest life
its start, running with
children after dark to free
things trapped, you kept
love wise, taking only what
was there and moving in and
out of death as flowers
eat the air. With you
the convolutions of the worm
had pulse and speed.

It was discovery in what there
is; death—love; demands
we stiffen or disclaim.
To keep alive despite
the daily dying forms—
and searching under time
for mixtures folding and
unfolding in the islands
off the bone, stitching
gaiety into the rock . . .
Under casements in the heart
of things, I always find
a poem of yours.

James Lewisohn

THE SOURCE

He kept his mouth forever
at the source, catching
even in drought
the few drops
coaxed
from the ancient spring

kneeling in dry grass
liking the feel of it
sparse now, parching
he stole

without malice. In floodtime
too, in plenty
he knelt with his lips
& it poured to him

still without greed
he received it, abundance
filled
& flowed from him, over
the dry earth
he soon would be

Phyllis Masek Harris

350 R: LD/50

(Nagasaki)

Eight years ago the deathless ape
Yanked down a sun
And cut loose its barbaric yawp
Of photons up above the town

Where I began to die, and live
Still, for a while. It
Licked up all the sea of roofs.
Strong light pressed men into flat

Lampblack shadows at ground zero.
Flash in the brainpan
Has seared away my memory;
Remembering is in the bone—

Electron, a synaptic flash
Arcing between frail jellied cells;
And milk in the blood and eyes.
Now movement more than the heart's pulse

Cracks, in cannibalistic spasms,
My beta-pitted bones, my raw
Fractures have pale blood for chrism,
Stars come down and eat the marrow.

G. N. Gabbard

TWO POEMS**Taurus**

Hurtle the Hyades behind my horns,
hive of stars from a single star begot,
wedge of impetus that blinds and burns.
I am the driven one. My brow is taut
with luminosities that lure me on
into spring meadows where my fore-hooves gouge
young grasses by the water hole and stun
a frog. Hollows are steamy with my rage.

Everywhere Venus seems, and yet asleep,
soft as the fall of catkins, unbetrayed
by breath. Lashed by a drift of her hair, I leap
and quiver. But the shadows even evade
my lunge. I, who would couple with love and sire
the summer, am the fool of my own fire.

Capricorn

Enamored of my flesh,
I nourish it
on the rich scour of compost,
render decay into orneriness,
sour ferment and flabby rind
into musk.

I enjoy the irritable:
hornets that busk over my fodder
to be snorted off
an itch methodically scuffed
against a gate;

yet I do not grumble
that short light and a long dusk
are, it seems, my fate,
for the byre of night reeks of me warmly
and I sleep there without dreams.

Eunice de Chazeau

VIEW FROM THE RIVER'S SIDE

Behind her curtained window
Mrs. Grundy watches
lovers in the park, condemns
the little alleycat and her Tom
who disappear beneath the bridge
emerging some time later wet earth
on knee and back, the girl's hair
haloed gleaming
with bits of grass and leaves.
Mrs. G. denounces fornication
a word these lovers never use
who listen to their heartbeat
blend with the city's own,
new music tuned
to the singing bridge and flung
above the roughtongued stones.

Dorothy Farmiloe

POE

Nobody recognized
the country:
underground ghouls cells,
tubercular cottages
remodeled
in the imagination:
a few cheap tremors,
a little lip-service to their
puritan ethic,
hysterical women pursuing
their Raven Boy . . .

Nobody recognized
the country—
their own strange ghosts
frisking him for souvenirs
where he fell
(face down on the pave
as Walt would say),
his morbid blab
going silent,
near a polling
place . . .

Seth Wade

TWO POEMS

Ophelia

to have so touched the beauty of oblivion
 like death, which she did find too lovely
 beneath the lily pads. like bliss, is sleeping
 innocence, and does one chasten. she sleeps
 suspended and ever, after that soft first
 tentative taste of the ambrosial Lethe. who loved
 and erred thus loving lost not her grace, so fondly
 doting.

wherefor the mad are made trebly wise, said the
 doctor,

once for themselves, once for others, and once
 and for all. if that is sleep, the dawn lies
 on the other riverbank. a plaintive artful fool.
 of this there's no renewal now the rapine flood
 besought upholds her. and yet the pale silk
 seems still to weight her walking.

I would that I were
 wooed again, she said, though dapple-damned
 beneath the twilit trees. outreaching hand for hand
 in the madwoman's angelic posture of erring
 supplication. he said we would be fleet and gold
 as the gray sky's parting. and raucous
 as riddles. ah, so cruelly does romance progress
 and gull itself. get thee, get thee. thyself. while
 the doves above the window are cooing. wooed
 and dapple-damned beneath the twilit trees.

a laugh,
 a leap, no more the cadence of her chosen speech.
 beside a clown beneath a play of swords
 (which in the wedding crossed above the bride;

I licked the frosting from the blade and charity
 was changed at last, and charged with more
 than her soul's keeping). the paper turns to dust
 the wind shifts, erasing any mortal scratchings
 laid there. and so. the dole of wits with herbs
 and flowers. o he was Hamlet princely.
 and she is ever so, how sadly given,
 with wits divided before their time from time,
 and, in the art of it, reasonless, purely.

From "The Guermantes Way"

"In one of these water-colours one saw a poet wearied
 by long wanderings on the mountains, whom a Centaur,
 meeting him and moved to pity by his weakness, had taken
 on his back and was carrying home."

Marcel Proust, *The Guermantes Way*

this is to. I pause on the upswing of the thought.
 more noble unknown things are silent
 as the great and pale glaciers in the dark
 (in cold eternity awestruck, brightly embraced
 too deeply down, or up against, and cannot see
 the mountains for the, ah, iced-white vice
 of rock, my god, still
 only the smallest falling lethal stone, awe),
 above the timber, above the cows whose bells ring up,
 and clouds above as well, right on up to very death,
 to. and there, it is, because.

mind wanders,

stops, foot steps step, stops.

no wonder, she said, that northern peoples people
 with deities their mountains. in the valleys
 fog-rendered abyss. some sleeping swiss van winkle,

wonders.

and how, she added, the swiss love
their mountains.

are these first snows
or last, snows
of which winter, here in midsummer (a
weathered world
of illusions, a welter) betwixt the two of us,
now three, he catches joins us, we continue,
climbing into sudden view of haggard fingers, an open
frozen hand
behind the ridge, past
which the slightest breezes moan, the awful sound
of absolute silence.

always
at some point on the climb, I told him
quite frankly (the ahumanity, inspires one),
I think that at the next step I will be dead, submissive,
slipping back on exhaustion; and always at that point
the trail falls,
or terrain changes from woods to rock or rock to peak,
and the second breath of elation could carry me right
on
past you, past . . . from Flon to Grammont,
Sonchaud to Naye . . .
from col to dent past the frogs copulating
in the lake below.

voilà, regarde les grenouilles, cry
the lively schoolchildren picnicking
on the shore.

and thus halfdead
I was a battered man
atop the world. there, look; Cervin; one seldom
sees it. where Croz and Douglas, Hudson and Hadow,
fell,

and Whymper and Taugwalder père & fils made their
descent
alone.

there lies that summer upon rocks, and ice
of winter, white we climbed.

in a sacrificial spirit,
humbly willing. ranging about the earth, reflected
in the ocean trenches, labyrinthean,
god of mazes, the sculptortured mountains
are unlike the crouching restless sea, a difference
of light and dark, the sea a mothering
sort of death but not Thanatos,
upon the rock keen and kenning, reigning.

to death
l'arête & le pic. and the Centaur who kindly
carried me home.

C. H. Hejinian

TWO PAIRS OF GLOVES

(Elizabeth I and Charlotte Brontë)

Two pairs of gloves in a glassy case:
The tiny ones are commonplace,
Well worn besides and mended well;
But these, long-fingered, nonpareil,
Adorned a queen for a little space.

Two separate ways the ladies went;
Their hearts were not so different:
What hammerings their gloves have masked
When veins rebellious, overtasked,
Admitted no impediment.

Celeste Turner Wright

VILLANELLE

The Massacre at Sand Creek (1864) described by American Heritage in *Indians of the Plains* (p. 88, paperback):

The first blast of gunfire killed Left Hand, the Arapaho chief. When Black Kettle saw that he had to run, he called to White Antelope, a Cheyenne chief, to run with him. But 75-year-old White Antelope wrapped his blanket tightly around him, and started to sing his death song. As he solemnly chanted the words, "nothing lives long except the earth and the mountains," a bullet cut him down. Black Kettle was the last to leave.

Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.
In this wild country
nothing lives long but the earth and the hills.

The wren's tongue stops its throat, the swaying gills
of fish shut, sudden wings slit the sky.
Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.

Our children die and the branch fills.
Even our old songs cannot tell why
nothing lives long. But the earth and the hills

outlast our lives — though the rain stills
the silence, trees leaf fruit and die,
dark cuts the sun down. As the season wills,

young deer crowd before us and the sap spills,
days weigh like earth in our fingers, like dust lie:
nothing lives long but the earth and the hills.

Singing, I become my song, until
death drowns my cry,
"Dark cuts the sun down as the season wills.
Nothing lives long but the earth and the hills."

Joann Cattonar

FOUR POEMS**Sleep Is A Field**

Sleep between now and then is a field of daisies,
Cow-eyed in water-meadows, named for the Moon,
As—every one night less of our separate cities—
Backwards and forwards, to and fro,
I reach from my roots towards you,
Dream you to me,
Shaping the Bull-month we were born to own.

Sleep between here and there is a burst of lilies,
Wide-lipped and thunder-hearted against storm,
While—each next night apart in our alien houses —
Backwards and forwards, to and fro,
I dream from the dark towards you,
Shape you beside me,
Closing the circle of our Mays alone.

Sleep between this and that is a tempest of lilac,
White-haired and purple-scented, dusk through dawn,
For—every loose end left till our full compact—
Backwards and forwards, to and fro,
I shape my heart towards you,
Drawing you closer
The prime and Spring of earth, where we belong.

Sleep towards that time is a budding of music,
Green with good leafage is the light of rain:
That our tipped scales may climb that night
chromatic,
Backwards and forwards, to and fro,
Each cell expands towards you,

Mates you within me,
 Till all the gates are suddenly blown open
 Into that peace at the world's beginning
 Whose sleep is a rose unfolding, root and bloom;
 May, a leap at the heart is a long dawning
 Wherein the Bull your groom wakes glad to drown.

The House In The Wood

For you, my heart, for want of you this nightfall
 Caught between sabbaths in the house of stars
 And innocence of snow,
 Words should grow wings where rooted things
 Align us, soul for soul,
 Each in its place as each aspires and labors
 Out from the dark its origins
 Into the handiwork of men. Then might I show,
 From seed to shoot and bud to fruit my hunger,
 All the long leafage of the toiling vine
 That cannot break one flower,
 You not home. Here, as I consecrate
 Alone the sun's last wafer,
 Offer alone the vessel and the wine,
 A stir of shadows beyond sight
 Is heard through corridors of sense by ways obscure;
 Shade into shape, shape into light, unfolding
 At the naming of a name who is both voice
 And prayer . . . Were it not owned,
 That dream, whose figurings new-trod
 Wake with the moon to sing
 Again through veins inured by tears to a loss

Foreknown, why must there crowd
 From limb to limb on this expected ground
 A blossoming by rote tonight of gate
 To door to window — wood
 In the bone my rectitude — assembled,
 Framed and nailed? Lady, the householder bleeds
 white
 Until you cross and crown him, prince with child.

The Constant Seeker

There is only one girl, one garden,
 One song of her for me;
 But till I learn her place and name
 How many birds my coverts burn,
 How many fish my sea.

One girl to sing, one garden,
 One rose upon the tree;
 But till that voice and face can join
 How many whispers start my brain,
 Shadows the heart in me.

One face to frame, one voice to own,
 One presence with a name . . .
 Girl in my house of harmattan
 Under the tree of flame,
 I am the leaves in season

To those beds have yet to turn —
 The stirring of Spring, the fires of Fall,
 The bricks and stucco of your enclosing wall
 In a tale of setting and begetting
 Whose music floods this room

This snowbright morning. Girl in that only
Garden where birds and fishes bloom,
Reaching by night
From that clear light
My burning, fold there — oh, fold me — home.

The Dream Embodied

How in this shedding of my leafless years
Shall I restore its seeding to the season,
Sing you an April into May declares
The founding is the finding our just garden?

Continent and ocean to a chime of seven
Scream with my vain directions, craze on craze;
How, since the lowing stars of my first bedding,
Could earth once frame the body of these days —

So hold, compel me? There have been many fancies,
Many gardens — too many orchards blasted,
Soured with time. Now on the windfall of no alien
tongue

Their frozen laughter mates your radiant flame;
Scarred by incessant and ancestral need
This flesh and blood affirm their burnt-out theme:

New good turned old good—good beyond all telling—
Staggers me to silence, stones me with joy . . .
How speak my peace in the sudden streets of Zion,
Offering, priested, the wafer of the sky

In phrasing of mountains? How, from my store
of sense, the clamour ease at door and head?
“This is the presence you have bargained for”—

Till from the lift and lightness of years shed

Adam today awakes where Eve and I,
In a passage of angels trumpeting the air,
Race to the mortal fullness of that dream:

Instantly than orchards' melody of fire,
The April garden grows a holy May
Whose bloom is music, light your only name.

Peter Thomas

THE SECRET

Let Solomon argue
with all of his wives,
and scream about goats
in his father's bed;

I know something
that Solomon never
(when he slept on a bed
of golden wire
and dreamed of knives
or harps in his fever)

thought to plant
on the thousand thighs
that circled his palace
and danced in his head:
I know why

the hairs on his neck
cracked and opened
under his coat,
why his brocade collar
pressed with jewels,
and the buttons carved
in the shape of birds
(a peacock drowned
in the folds of his skin)
clapped their claws
and prayed to the moon,

shook their beaks
in a Hebrew holler,
and rained dry figs
down on the mouths
of the brown lions
at the city gate ;

I know why, when the boys
came home, Solomon sat
on his high-back throne

shaking olive-pits in a bowl
of oiled fur and animal-bone,
cursing the laps
of his thousand wives,

and pulling the marrow
out of a rose.

Stanley Cooperman

TWO POEMS**I Love You, Des Moines**

It is stupid to speak of love
in a city with a name like Chicago,
although it is stupid to speak of it anyplace
except, perhaps, Des Moines.
There the young girls dream of the exciting places
and the young men assemble wonderful automobiles
that can circle any town square a whole lifetime
between the school bell and the clunk of dinner,
and a girl leans on an angle against your hip
with her hand on the soft buttons of the thigh,
smelling of Christmas perfume and 2:15 algebra sweat
and the fat corn and bacon sex
sweetening the gasoline. Des Moines
is a fine place to fall in love, or to be in love
and all the bad poets have learned their lessons there
where the moon rises like a fat Republican sheriff.

For the Many Dead: Elegy 2

Then seconding
another's rage at mind
& bone & love, he climbed
a thorning tower, equipped
to seige his ghosts & all the enemy.
Behind him lay his mother & his wife.

Strewn about the high bell tower stairs,
sightseers' brains, the thinking of poor boys
who startled death. His aim was keen, Marine;
his casual dedication clean;
his motives lofty, Texan in intent;
he Alamo'd the whole damn world, then bent
to catch a benediction of police fire,
his holy waters staining the concrete;
& down below, where grass withstands the feet
of students wise & foolish, lay his prayers,
the empty shells & casings of his players.

16 dead. Take any audience
& count 16. Imagine all the eyes
& tongues & sex. Imagine & be still
at this sturdy hunter's careful kill
& his finger's skill.

He was one of the best of us, the myth
we tell of man, all frontiered buckskinned self-
reliance, independent, making peace
with trouble as he found it, with his gun:
high noon & Shane & duel under the sun:
as plain as that. Sure it was not pain,
madness or a tumor in the brain
made him so cunning fine.

Lay him to earth
& let the alkid waters of the soil
blanch his bones white.

May on that harsh soil rain
enflower his strange trust
in our harsh dreams
Don't weep for those he took
uncharactered into the story book,
for now we have two Whitmans to recall:
one quaint & queer: one not strange at all.

Brian D. Boyer

THE WARSAW GHETTO

The ten gates to the Ghetto were guarded
by a makeshift brutal Jewish police force
until it had outlived its usefulness
and was annihilated en masse by its Nazi masters . . .

No sanitation, no medical supplies,
the stench of feces in the street,
and day by day the inmates died
of typhus, lice, tuberculosis . . .

Let the day perish wherein
I was born, and the night
in which it was said, there
is a man child conceived . . .

All worship was curtailed
beards burned off in public
undernourished Jewish girls
were dutifully recruited
for a nearby German brothel . . .

Let that day be darkness ;
let not God regard it from
above, neither let the light
shine upon it . . .

In 1941, the Germans ordered systematic deportation
of all the sick and aged and infirm and orphaned
who were locked in boxcars with white hot lime
spread out on the floor so that most of them would be
dead on arrival at the gas chambers and the firing squads . . .

Why died I not from the womb?
Why did I not give up the ghost,
when I came out of the belly . . .

In 1943, with some 60,000 Jews still inside the Ghetto,
Himmler ordered it completely leveled

by tanks and planes and SS troops
but for 27 days the Jews fought back
impossible — against all odds —
snipers firing smuggled Polish rifles
but finally burned alive
when their buildings were demolished,
saboteurs hiding out in ruins and sewers . . .

There were 56,065 Jews either captured or killed . . .

Why is light given to a man
whose way is hid, and whom
God hath hedged in?

William Packard

THE LAST PARADE

When the last parade
of the victors comes
on the jour de gloire
through the ruined streets
with a fife and drums
to a thin winning tune
in the virile
spirit of seventy six
stumping through smoke
and dead debris
who will be there
hurrahing them home
with their bandaged burns and eating wounds
and bones sticking out
through their raw red feet?—
will the faceless corpses
rise from their heaps
will the mothers stand up
who have no hands
to hold ash babies
and wave black flags,
and charred children cheer
as when little toy lands
their little toy missiles hit
tumbled down?
when the victors come
to the bloodstirring beat
of the drums
through the rubble that used to be streets
and the high fife thrills
till the sound goes sour
and cracked drums crumble,

will they still play on
through the burnt flesh smell
of the winning hour

in the virile
spirit of seventy six,
with a rum-tum-tum
as their rags fall away
and a tweedle-dee-dee
as they click over stones
through the smoke and the fire,
will their skeletons march
till their glowing bones
and the music fade
on that jour de gloire
of the last parade?

Harold Witt

TWO POEMS

A Myth, Retold

Again I came to the arrowhead tree.
Rain-pocked dust,
 encircled cedar,
fingers remembered roots,
found a flint fact.

Even wet it had little luster,
darker chevrons near the point,
scalloped,
blue edges melted its geometry.
I threw it like a skip rock
for a second rate job,
and turned back toward the house
where Grandmother once had worn
a smock
with red bombs of roses
and they floated after she died
like Chagall's flowers
high over our house.

The Stream

My feet near fish,
a toe makes love to a stone,
its gracious hump.
Trees uncloud,
make way for night running like a dog
through tall grass.
On the hill small lights
where women hope to keep
their husbands one more night,
to my back the glacier
its glow like the day moon,
its arm circling us all.

Roger Siler

IOWA GOTHIC

1.

Rude wind is picking the rusty locks
of abandoned one-room schoolhouses.

A church bell, taken from a wrecked steamboat,
tolls no more across the fox-blood hills.

2.

Antique light under wilting corn leaves
holds strange secrets and forgotten promises.

In the stoned park where I played first base
a billy goat fouls the infield grass.

3.

My boyhood home is where the Moose meet.
Only the bar is open at Brown's Hotel.

Mary, the girl I married, then lost,
sells scrapbooks at the Ben Franklin store.

4.

This last train to Minneapolis
sports a roaming eye that can drive men wild.

Prairie stars. Full moon drifting to sea.
Night birds, find me a new place to stand.

Dave Etter

ZAP! ZAP!

“Nothing I like better than killing Cong,”
said General X,
Swiveling his chair,
Puffing a cigar,
“Glad you were there to see.”

Zap! Zap!

The whirly bird dips and dives
Towards a white jag of smoke
Arrowing the dark green jungle.
“Let’s go!” shouts General X.
The bird swoops, loosening its bowels
In dry droppings of clustering fish
Spinning and splitting below.
Thundering jets of black and orange
Rain jellied fire; razor-finned fish
Spawn in the underbrush, burst into needles
Shredding leaf and flesh
In the fire-hung forest.

In the distance peasants stoop
Rice shoots in hand.

Two shadows slip the jungle
Scurry a clearing
Toward a tangle of trees.
“Down! Down!” shouts General X.

The bird dives.
General X, strapped to the bird,
Strains in the doorway, gripping his gun.
A shuddering hammer spurts leaden seed
Into the damp jungle.
The bird circles.
A hut appears.

“Let’s go!” shouts General X.
The bird whirls and swoops.
A long-drawn, stammering clatter
Splinters the earth,
Punches through bamboo and thatch,
Shivering the hut.
The bird circles.

In the distance the peasants stand
Rice shoots in hand.

Below a black figure with two red flags
Begs of the bird, red flags waving.
“Let’s get this one,” shouts General X.
The bird drops and settles.
Tiger suits leap at the prey,
Retrieve the catch,
And the bird flies home.

General X is pleased with his prize
And props its jaw for a better look.
A sixteen-year face stares at the general
With stone cold fire.
“Take care of this baby ; I want him alive,”
Says General X. “Peasants!” he snorts,
Flipping a thumb towards a bulge of bullets
Below the black jacket wet with blood
From the flags of the prisoner’s hands.

Now General X is a gutsy man,
A sunburnt, fiftyish fighting man,
Fearless and leathery,
Strapped to a bird,
Zapping the enemy—

With a hundred and eighty American millions
Stoking the home fires, minting the bread,

Plying a product of skyscraping billions,
With tons of jelly that flares in the skin,
Tanks of gas and poison spray,
Silver fish pregnant with needles,
Whirling birds deadly as insects
Sped from a country whose god is on coins.

—zapping a trickle of land
Against boys in black
Nine thousand miles from golden America

O land of palm, olive and light,
Will all your soap wash the wound
Of the boy staring at General X
With stone cold eyes?
Will it wash the red flags of his hands?
Or those of General X?
Or yours?
Or mine?

“Nothing I like better than killing Cong,”
Said General X.
And silent applause shattered a nation.
Zap! Zap!

Samuel Weiss

MARDI GRAS

down
night's jumble of song
clown
hops
brilliantly light
white face
breakup
monotonize bumble of noise
kidshouting
at black alleys
music
crumbles
in tossed salad lights
this king of laughter
this
rolling
laughing
balancing
teetering
fidgeting
sobbing
almostman

Ottone M. Riccio

TWO POEMS**Notes from Underground**

They have locked me here since friday night.
There is little privacy and no flowers.
Bring me some rain if you can.

The blue and white backs of women
disappear briefly for open toilets.
The halls are wide all right.
At one end there is an exhibit—art.
Kindergarten. "A large grackle with worm on grass".

Grass.

Has the grass changed much ?

They feed us but the windows are wired.
The world I lately know is inside, crushed white.

Here is one who talks to herself and bums
cigarettes from me all day and a beauty
who will not talk. And here is one and here
is one. Here is one

saying to herself, who are these ?
I already knew pain was not anonymous
and that no man is singled out for eden.

My fingers ache to succeed on the piano.
Then, just then, these are persons
I have lived with all my life.
There is no word for them. Hands.

Why did you lead me here ?
There isn't a thing on the walls.
At night when I don't think of you
I go to the Louvre or Rome

and steal Rembrandts and Davids
 but stealing gives no pleasure
 like the rare gratuitous gift.

And finally will you listen to this?

The elegant poplar can be downed
 by one hurricane and a deified mountain
 erupt; some hummingbirds may exchange
 speed for higher flight; the sun
 be dionysian.

When you do not come, or leave . . .
 (by the way I prefer tamarisk to chrysanthemums.
 Poor, poor Medea.)

Why does the scholar athenian sneer
 at the spartan seeking knowledge
 and the rich canaanite refuse
 the tired egyptian room?

Because you show me nothing
 I have to give

let me go,
 a peasant with his only possessions,
 his talisman — love, and the bright world
 that sticks like a burr.

Monk's Girl in Two Perspectives

I'd rather tell this standing up
 by the window. The wind
 how it roars tonight. Out there
 in the dark *he* waits impatiently.
 Don't repeat this to anyone. I'd die.

My apprentice eyes; these long thin arms
loose by my side, these bones — a man
couldn't have anything else to remember me by —
even this flat little voice.

He was much older. After it was done

I went to the window. The trees
were dark and great along the path. There was a
moon.

I was naked then and stood just like this,
my arms wrapped about me, wrapped around
what was beautiful outside and in myself

in the cold and stranger's room. On a desk
was a typewriter, a copy of *Villon*.

The plaza lights swam near. I could almost
touch them and the scent of wet grass.

I felt as though a sad and thoughtful ghost

twenty centuries old had something to say.

Afterwards

a girl ought never to cry I suppose.

But it was not for shame or fear. Perhaps I was
too thin or the shadow of a tree or the cry
a mad blind king once made when he hugged

his daughter in the snow. "Why" . . . ?

But he lay on the bed and never spoke a word.

He stared at the ceiling. He lay

basking in the moonlit glory of his body.

So I dressed myself and came away without a word.

Shreela Ray

SHEMA!

(For Ruben Cohen)

Once

I pulled a weed and discovered
it was a plum tree.

My grandfather, watching from his window,
smiled and nodded.

Now the old man is dead
(except in mirrors). He was a Jew from Russia,
I am a blacksmith there. Here I peddle
rags and iron, *old rags a-lion*,
crying Zion! Zion! Zion!

I watched him die.

A glass of tea fell from his hand,
staining the bedsheets,
while I and a shadow squatted in the doorway
singing to the stranger in grandfather's bed.

L. G. Corey

SONATA

Years ago, played in a forest, on
An old yellow keyboard, the sonata
Told me some sorrows of myself. Then,
The drench of the day's rain ran,
And the sweet fern tasted. The air
Was heavy with mid-summer, and I cared.

Now the sonata has an even measure.
It is suburb, and I have tamed it.

My mind has named its name. And I sit
In rooms, older by some three children,
A wife, and three university degrees.
My books are green, and the lamps gold.

Beethoven is order, and rightly so.
But a suburb is not enough to give
For a forest. That day, the piano
Rang the morning through the trees.
I heard tall music and angels
Gone wild among the uncombed branches.

Arnold Kenseth

THREE SILVER BIRCH TREES

A vacant moment
is suddenly filled
with three silver birch trees.

Instead of happiness
I see
my dead father
and the shadow of a cloud
moving slowly across the lawn.

I shiver:
it should be possible
to live in one's village
and to travel the earth,
it should not be necessary
to die
quicker than trees.

Anthony Edkins