

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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GLASS SONG

When I look anywhere but
at you the fear gets me
that I am becoming clear
as one of those pieces
of plate glass men carry
in jokes or that I saw
for myself yesterday though
it was only big enough for
a bathroom window and the man
carrying it had a suit on but
the glass he held between his
hands and that at first I didn't see
so I didn't know why he held his
hands that way suddenly flashed
when he turned the corner
catching the sun in his arms.

Paul Lunde

COYOTE TANTRAS

CXXXVIII

Coyote'd slept six months,
 spent springmorn rising
 from his dust-bed,
 shook himself off,
 ate a dogwood blossom,

listened to the crows 'cr'awk, cr'awk'
 rubbed himself with mint
 to keep away flies,
 stuck his snout in the creek

"Just like an old lush," he grinned,
 "ain't never UP till I had that first drink!"

CXXIX

Old-bear-with-broken-teeth

& Coyote

lie a-listen

to

howling chainsaw in the distance—

broken-neck crunch

cut the motor,

(Coyote's covered ears)

dead red-

wood,

spine-stem snap

Bear's

lost bark.

CXL

Coyote watches
a long freight
pull away in
Wyoming snow
and disappear in
a long black cloud.

Laramie. Cody.
Jackson Hole.

Bad weather
clear to Chicago.

Coyote shudders,
blue-faced, paws
a-pocket,
old.

CXLI

Coyote crossed the Big Knife,
Heart,
and Cannonball
rivers,
route of the bison,
to the Bad Lands grave
of Crazy Horse

“Remember this place,” Great Ki-o-T Old Man
had said
“It is the one secret kept from the White Man
“Only the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe among men
know where we stand
“Kiote, owl, and crow guard his sleep”

CXLVIII

Polecat Cottoneva Creekdance,
mosquito-twitch alba mist
the thickness of a hummingbird's tongue,
riverbank risen
Coyote
blunders forth,
tragic foot
carved on tragic foot,
plunderer,
that he may yet
lie beneath the rose

Barry Gifford

THE COWBOY'S VERSION

he wore a checked shirt

the men in the bar looked up
and down

as he drank a coors

he said adolf coors was murdered
in 1959 or 60. I remember I was
in colorado
at the time

something about a skeleton
in a creekbed
wearing a signet ring

(and recalled then seven slim deer
that same morning
their beaded black muzzles
in the fog as he awoke beer drunk
in a car at the side of the road

Down the mountain the coors brewery
waiting for work)

still making beer
said someone

also a golden, colorado waitress in the car
allowing his fingers
that night as the news came on
of the death of adolf coors

the cowboy later dreamt

dreams of succeeding
at her crimson mouth

and grew thoughtful in bars

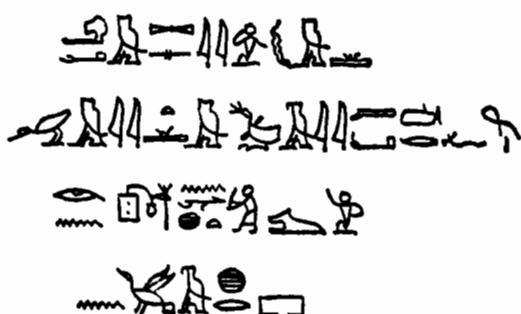
Harley Elliott

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The originals of the following poems (or translations, or imitations) date back to Dynasty XX of the New Kingdom of ancient Egypt, or to about 1100-1200 B.C. They survive on a papyrus (Chester Beatty I) apparently written at Thebes and now in the British Museum. They are love songs and form part of a small body of such lyrics—no more than sixty, and several of these too fragmentary to translate—which after three millennia still provide a fleeting glimpse of what it felt like to live then. And the feelings were not so very different at that: the tone of the love songs generally is idyllic or romantic, or as with those that follow, bawdy and full of sexual innuendo. In attempting to recreate them in English I have always tried to remember that they first of all must be poems.

The originals of these are written in hieratic, the cursive form of hieroglyphic, and better adapted to the use of a reed pen on papyrus but less pleasing to our eye, I think, than the hieroglyphs (into which the Egyptologist first transcribes his hieratic text when translating). Both transcription and translation of the pieces that follow derive from a photo-facsimile of the hieratic.

John L. Foster



**FROM THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN
OF PAPYRUS CHESTER BEATTY I
(recto, i-vi)**

**Here begin Some Rather Lively Lines,
found in a Book of Writings, copied
by Nakht-Sobek, Scribe
in the City of the Dead**

1.

Aim him straight at the house of your reticent lady ;
storm, full cargo and sail, her true love's nest.
(O throw the temple gates of her wide,
his mistress readies for sacrifice!)

Fill her, with singing, with hurrying dances,
wines, strong ale . . . (her Western places!) . . .
Waylay propriety. They pay reward :
finish her off in the night!

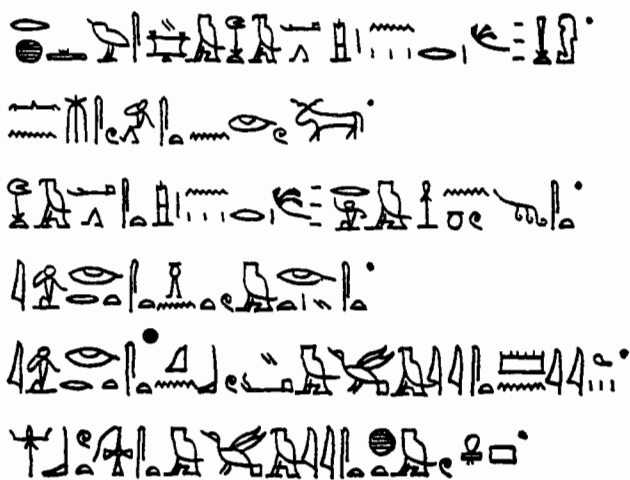
Thus will you hear her hushed saying,
"Have me . . . close in your arms.
Even when dawn breaks in on tomorrow,
let them be under me still."

2.

Send him back hard by your lady's small window,
 (she is alone now, there is no other)
Stuff yourself full in her banquet hall!
 Then though bedrock be shaken sky high,
Though very heaven break down in the stormwind,
 he shall not (lovely lady) be moved.

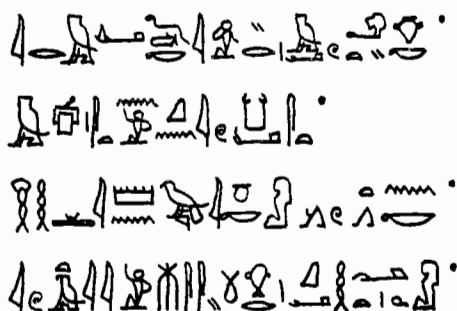
Lo where she comes to you, bright with her
 thousand pleasures!
 Fragrance spreads like a floodtide
Drowning the eyes, and the head whirls.
 Unable the poor fool before her.

Ah! this is the hand of Our Golden Lady!—
 She gives the girl as your due
That you keep to your service in Her Holy Name,
 able anon, old pecker, to say
You've had the world in your time.



3.

How clever my love with a lasso—
 she'll never need a kept bull!
 She lets fly the rope at me
 (from her dark hair),
 Draws me in with her comehither eyes,
 wrestles me down between her bent thighs,
 Branding me hers with her burning seal.
 (Cowgirl, the fire from those thighs!)



4.

Why, just now, must you question your heart?

Is it really the time for discussion?

To her, say I,

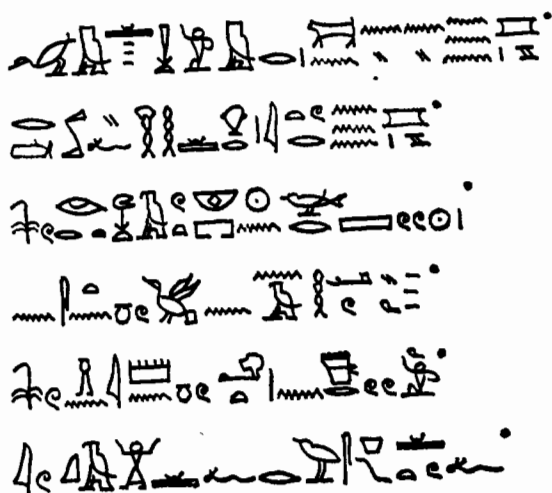
take her tight in your arms!

For god's sake, sweet man,

it's me coming at you,

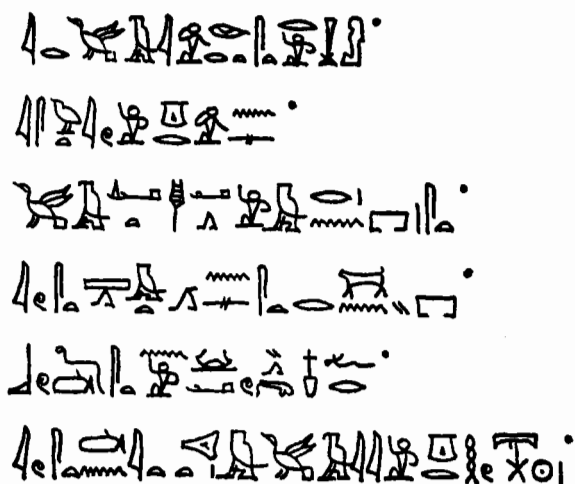
My tunic

loose at the shoulder!



5.

I found my love by the secret canal,
 feet dangling down in the water.
 He had made a hushed cell in the thicket, for worship,
 to dedicate this day
 To holy elevation of the flesh.
 He brings to light what is hidden
 (breast and thigh go bare, go bare),
 Now, raised on high toward his altar, exalted,
 Ah! . . .
 A tall man is more than his shoulders!



6.

Ho, what she's done to me—that girl!
 And I'm to grin and just bear it?
 Letting me stand there huge in her door
 while she goes catfoot inside.
 Not even a word: "Have a quiet walk home!"
 (dear god give me relief)
 Stopping her ears the whole damned night
 and me only whispering, "Share!"

John L. Foster

**THREE TRANSLATIONS
BY THOMAS FITZSIMMONS**

Tyranny

1.

Under the cliff air
Ran like water
Shadows were distinct in light
And fleece floated
The camera so perfectly focused
That the touch of fleece and the cool moss
Cool on the forehead
Crossed vision spectrum in
Memory twisted like rainbow
Three men on three horses
Come softly this way
Soldiers
Franco's soldiers

A song yes there was a song
Deep in the loudspeaker lustrous soprano
On off a song and
Suddenly birds leap high
Under the soaring cliff
Air smooth as unrolled film
Only hoofs
Come and go
Between our hearts and the screen
(entre la y calor)
Echoing
When the cold air enters our bodies
Spain at dawn
Disappears.

2.

Pure as a madman gone crazy
Obscene as a saint thick
Beyond recall
Colder than crystal
Baffling as father to son
Son to father
More priceless often than eyes is
History

Bad conscience chooses a back road always.
Is night's task

Ours
Merely to bet
Endlessly crouching
Shrinking
Flutter patter threading fears
Shadow light shadow again?

Fumbling through a bushy hedge
fingers and fingernails seek sounds
Jubilee Julay
Who was it

A girl fallen innocently asleep
All over piano keys
Body ringing final consonance.

Lines in my lower lip
Stains and freckles holes
All over

3.

White paper. Paper white bloodless. In a vast
room of frosted glass I stand naked. Naked lover
and friends each sweats blue juice bathed in dizzy
artificial light dragging faint shadow

If at least our bodies were too transparent for them
to see the musicians behind the glass. Into the light-
clapped roundroom music from everywhere flows in
colorless scentless streams condemning our girls

Seeming to fall they start to dance eyeless like
jewels without lips twinkle twinkling they dance
Harlem Nocturn black voice of no male no female
black voice dull worn voice sings dizzy darkness
thickens but I am paper white no face burning red
coals no reconciliation with the dark torturers the
gray glass that stares shines in their busy sighs "a
blue tune"

4.

Dreams end in a rustle audience
impatient for the curtain to rise
Rising with the tide small world mine
Inflated to the limit

Fanfare

In clear consciousness
Trusting my sweat and blood to words
Against silence finally here
I say Tyranny
Tyranny comes

Silence

Orchestra long finished playing
Audience holds the breath
That one in the center
Woman who reigns over all this
In whom the evanescent future waits
Singer our singer
But she does not sing
Lo her dress is withered she

Opens her mouth closes it and
With a scream no one hears
Falls

Please Silence Calm down Listen
Tyranny is coming there it is

In daylight gentler than night into
A present dimmer than dream that
Sings the woman comes
And your voice dies
Her throat is more fragile than a whisper
Delicate ears hair always protected now
Given to the wind but unchanged when she sings
And your voice dies
Never sing to the sea never
to the sky
swifter than speed
Tyranny comes to soil tree and water
Tremble before it
Aim at its eyes
Tyranny comes sings the woman
And your voice does

**Re-made from the Japanese
of Hiroshi Iwata**

The Breeding of Poisonous Worms

on the four and a half mats of the room
our only room our home
my mother starts fussing around
now that you've been able to get
a job I can raise silk worms
again after thirty years
chops up something green
into a basket its a shame
we haven't got mulberry leaves
but I've saved the eggs
late autumn eggs from
the year you were born takes
a bunch of sandy nits from the old
trunk carefully puts them in the basket
then squats there in front of it
now that you've finally found a job
silk worms again think of it
for the first time in thirty years
in the morning leaving I look at them
grubby in the basket no change nothing
don't worry they'll hatch soon
and as I come in that night from work
almost it won't be long now so
I try to be nice sure mom they'll
hatch tomorrow try to sleep
now but she just sits watching
like she's set for the night I
sleep dream of an ochre lane
under a brutal midsummer sun
and two long rows of mulberry trees
burning wild dead worms

falling soft plopping on the road
under the flaring trees millions
millions and millions of worms
in the morning leaving I look no
change but now they smell stink
like they're beginning to rot but
you'll see today they'll hatch we'll
be busy better buy some mulberry
leaves on your way back some
where my feet stop and I lean
against some sooty tree on a grimy
Industrial Avenue what the hell's
going on seventy years old and
still obsessed with a handful
of land lost so long ago mulberry
growing land hers ours nothing
but a fantasy in a grey head old but
my fantasy new of tractors on the land
is it her land they need does my
dream need hers begin there no
matter tonight I'll make her
sleep tell her a story of a fine new
collective far away in Russia
and while she sleeps her dreams
I'll dump those illusion breeding
worms into the nearest canal
on the way home I get some greens
and when I reach the door I freeze
sure now that the damn things
have hatched are in there right now
eating my mother a soft slithering
munching tide of worms nibbling
at her swallowing digesting I

rush in she smiles see see
they're alive and brings the basket
already some have crawled out to
wriggle around on the mats
brown an inch long crawling
across the floor inchworms no
no same mud brown skin but
different antenna mutations maybe
of a thirty year obsession but they
look like those poisonous near-eastern
worms that feed on desert plants I
stiffen imagining the feel of them but
now I've got to tell her I choke
it out the revolution's dead here
mother revolutions are only for
far away places desert places and these
things aren't silkworms I've never seen
silkworms like these but as she
comes closer I can see worms in her
hair on her shoulders and she smiles
yes there's one on her face revolution
what revolution has your dream come
back don't worry chop some greens
you'll feel better I just stand there
no words already can feel them
crawling onto my bare toes but my legs
won't move and I take the green stuff
hands like claws and began tearing it
tearing

**Re-made from the Japanese
of Yoshio Kuroda**

SARAH WAITING

(from THISTLES AND THORNS: Lyrics of Abraham and Sarah)

I wake with grey light tickling my fingertips.
Plucking a tentative measure on my lyre
I whisper shiny breaths: they leave my lips
And flutter hesitantly, a glimmering choir
On wings as tense and fragile as a wish,
Thin notes that hover on the chilly air
And dart about my hands and wrists — then vanish
Quick as a starglint into my thick, black hair.
My tingling fingers stroke an overture,
Then I free whole hosts of wings on a skirling song—
They flutter everywhere, they stream out the door
Climbing the waking air in a brilliant throng,
A flourish of shining wings, rising away,
Dazzling the misty oak, dazzling the day.

Driving his goats before him up the hill
The old man, Hamor, walks beneath the oak.
He stops to rest. He waits, just stands there, still.
A light breeze stirs his beard and faded cloak.
I think today Abraham will return,
He has been gone nine days, he said a week
Would bring him to the truth that he must learn.
When he stood and turned to go I could not speak,
I did not sob nor smile. There was nothing to do.
And is he now, among the trees and stones
Of distant hills, keeping his rendezvous
With that most timid wisdom of his bones?
Or does he wait, like Hamor, day after day
With something in his eyes he cannot say?

A wish came, frail, like a cobweb bright with dew
Spanning a narrow stream from bush to reed,
A bright design, letting cool sunlight through,
Keeping a pin-point glitter in each bead.
But slow water shadowed darkly under it,
Sliding across a mossy granite shelf:
I shuddered for the rare, the delicate.
Freed by that fear, the image moved by itself,
No more possessed by me — a hairy, fat
Black spider moved, dropped on her sticky thread,
Down toward the water, down toward a skimming gnat,
And waited there, and captured it, and fed.
When she climbed back up, her business nimbly done,
The web hung grey and sagging in the sun.

I hear the women laughing near the well.
Their voices and the clink of earthenware
Probe my quiet morning. I suppose they tell
What tribes arrived in Bethel, of bargains there,
They call their children back. I sit inside
Half-envying them who have so much to do —
Without a maid, each must herself decide
Which cheese to trade for wine, which goat or ewe
For kettles, lamp-oil, spices, fruits, and dyes.
There's Timna's voice. She's scolding her second son.
Has he climbed the rocks again? He always cries
When his mother scolds, to hide what he has done —
Now Timna's gentle laugh. I cannot tell.
Perhaps it's only that. Perhaps he fell.

When I reach toward him in the dark he understands.
He turns toward me, and he holds me very hard.
Then one hand clenches my wrist, the other kneads
My hipbone — oh, I groan for pleasure's blood
And love his straining weight upon my breast,
Upon my thighs, his undulating weight,
And feel his muscles flex and flinch and press
My aching ribs: I hold his shoulders tight
And love those lips that bruise my throat and eyes—
His arms draw taut beneath my back, I know
By floods of thunder through my flesh and his
That the shuddering cliffs of darkness crumble now—
His cries ignite my smothered blood's empire,
Twisting like lightning down through gales of fire.

The hush again. By the door this time. I kneel,
The empty waterjug before my knees,
And feel the slanting sunlight's tense appeal
And answer with my hands: I stroke and squeeze,
Restate this jug's rough contours—shaped from clay
By these same hands by last year's anxious sun
By this same need—I ache to sob or pray,
But what this hushed light wants cannot be done
Nor changed by crippled breath.

The hush goes stale,
The edges of light's presence curl to the floor.
Shall yet another chance to answer fail?
I grip the jug, tipping it toward the door,
Catching the slanting sunlight unaware.
The jug fills up with silent sunlit air.

At Haran we laughed together, evenings we sat
Whispering in Tereh's garden. But what survives
Of his delight and gladness — of any of that?
God's promise bent his dreams and bent our lives,
Now Abraham is changed, and I think he will
Care less and less for gladness and for me.
He has lain his heart and days on God's cold anvil
And slowly God beats out a destiny:
That ring has echoed through Egypt's wilderness,
Through deserts and Canaan's plains. And in the end
Will life be glad again, or cold and bloodless?
The stuff that's hammered does not comprehend,
We walk, we camp awhile, we walk away.
And Abraham builds altars. And we pray.

This pot has boiling vegetables in it.
The water froths, they dive and rise and churn.
Pale parsnips slide and spin. Sliced mushrooms flit
And dart sideways, then feint and quickly turn.
I'm studying each vegetable's malaise
Sitting before this hearth, before this pot,
With vegetables the object of my gaze
And vegetables sole subject of my thought.
Parsley sprigs whirl wild as windtorn boughs
But carrots reel, lopsided and forlorn,
And here the fat white onion bobs and sloughs
Amid the ebullience of kernel corn —
My dark omniscience rules this roiling pot,
Each vegetable a steward of my thought.

This is the dusk, and now the thin light slips
Outside, leaving all things within the tent
Bewildered, as when strange sighs escape my lips
And I stand dumbly wondering what they meant.
Darkness drifts to the corners, gathering
Huge silences that wait in shifting tiers.
This is the dusk, the hour when everything
Seems lost in a private grief. I strain my ears
For what small whisper vanished light might make
But no sound comes, no rustle, no murmur, no hint
Of what was felt. I turn toward the table, take
A dangerous step and quickly strike the flint:
The lampwick sputters, exhales its burnt-oil scent,
Then clouds of shadowed light patrol the tent.

I wait beside the hearth for Abraham.
A cricket screams a faltering lament.
Yes, summertime is gone. I think I am
About to weep. Another year is spent,
The night air settles down vacant and numb,
I sit alone, listening, trying to gauge
I wring my hands. I am thirty years of age.

He will climb the ridge, and stand upon its rim
Viewing the plain of Moreh, the highwalled town
With its torchlit gates—and there to the east the dim
Secluded glimmer. He smiles and begins down,
He strides through the chilly night, he strides past
the gates,
He hurries toward his tent where Sarah waits.

Paul Smyth

LA PESADILLA

That enraged and frightened woman of Goya
I can feel the perspiration of fear under
Her forty year old armpits I can taste
The sour saliva from the tongue of the bull on which
She is riding feel his wet nostrils hear her
Shrill screaming

And what is there to do about it?

Her naked thighs where her dress has come apart
Are not attractive

Nor the teeth in her wide mouth

She is not the least attractive

The mindless bull plunging her forward
Does not care where he is taking her

Once when she was young

She was beautiful

He came to her

Disguised as a prince with the

Rose colored gifts of promises

Once when she was young they made long journeys
together

Through imaginary countries that now have come to
this

She cannot stop him

And she does not want to

And she can think of nothing else to do

Gerda Penfold

TWO POEMS**When Sleep Separates Us**

each dreams of his lost people
pink plastic figures uncurl
from scallop and oyster shells
they weave a ballet of Atlantis

we reach out to grasp their presence
to hold them close
to hear their forgiveness
water flows through our fingers
light under our eyelids

we wake to strangers
bleeding in a bed of broken shells
sea-stains on our faces
returns of time

- chorus of
gulls: strike the surface
seize the shelled thing
break it on rock
swallow food whole
- chorus of
snails: creep into flesh
many of us can feed
on one who is dying
keep the floor clean
- chorus of
angels: god is undulation of plankton and stars
god is millions of eating
moving rock
god neither mourns nor remembers
- chorus of
men: whales lift their enormous heads
ships break into their mouths
many brave goods are sacrificed
the ocean is conquered
- chorus of
women: see how the water is alive with light
children are round tanned fruit
jewelry of shells at our ears and throats
- recitation of
poets: the drowning make syllables of love
hear the waves lull I and thou
neither past nor future
is
the weeds spread
stroke the nerves now

Routes of the First Space Explorers

It came by registered mail this morning in the form of an astronomical map with treasure buried under the Pleiades. I rubbed a little of its dust on my hands and around my eyes for luck. My family noticed an immediate improvement, but I didn't care, for at last I possessed the ancient secret of immobility. Packing my books and papers, I found a tiny snake between A and AA which I hastily stuffed into my mouth before anyone could take it from me. It tasted of incense.

Star light, star bright . . .

Nothing will be gained by wishing. Look, I'm tired. We just can't go on this way.

What's the matter

This morning my mother hid my conversion unit. Obviously she was trying to prevent our meeting.

She disapproves.

She says you're a zero. Maybe if you'd try to make something of yourself.

I've told you over and over that I can't get out of this glacier. Only an albino Eskimo brandishing a knife made of whale phallus and driving a team of thirteen white huskies can set me free.

Thank heavens you've finally revealed the truth! Communication is the only really important thing.

*Now you've helped me to help you regain your
half of the kingdom and the hand of the youngest
princess.*

Which hand?

rehabilitation by atomic fire

Goddess of Mystical Light

where are my celestial sneakers?	oil
meditate	lemon
exercise	astral herbs

earth is fixed on nothing

moon around it

riding dead

a skin

 a fingernail

 discarded hair

incredible blue the color of earth

moon a metal mask reflects

the fire that put its eyes out once

earth is marked by continents and clouds

its atmosphere

 a softened heart

its time

 conjecture

moon roasts on a spit

earth a round candle dipped in day night day

shaken by galactic music

earth and moon convene

glasses of white wine touch lip to lip

toasting the future

void a void a void a void a void a void a void
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**AND THE MORNING AND THE EVENING WERE
 THE FIRST DAY**

Toward evening we go outside
 to name the constellations.
 Lying on our backs in lawn chairs.
 Not knowing how many summers
 each of us lives.
 Among lit cigarettes, fireflies,
 headlights circling the lake,
 and neon signs advertising eating places.
 A few stars falling,
 but most of them standing still,
 allowing us to draw the lines that give them
 connection.
 Ursa Major. Cassiopeia. Andromeda. Triangulum.
 Perseus. Lyra.

Dolores Stewart

TWO POEMS

That Close

It rains hard rain the President's
lips collect it from the pane
as he welcomes moon rocks
voices dry boots

my eyes open against rain

I drink silence it tastes cool
it tastes crystal it embosses a boot
on the gold coin in my forehead
a flag opens

the moon has come that close

I listen to the earth
brush pollen from my knees
lift jewelweeds grown chest-high
to see sky on wet myrtle

no wind on the moon

here, tongues protrude between
stones oaks may be yanked up
wings hang earth's soft dough
sticks to my fingers

the moon is behind the rain

translucent stalks break
through tar mantises devour
foam on grass a crane vomits
gravel behind a hill

on the moon it is still

Myself as a Harbor

Heads rested on the rail
as the Pope in full panoply
was lowered into the sea
feet first in a plastic bag
when the inverted question mark
that supported him
hung again in its superior position
when the last miters had fallen
and lay like lobster claws
along the length of the quay
when lace rejoined spume
and red taffeta capes wrapped
around masts of untenanted sloops
as though the sky
had been nailed to a cross
and the bleeding sun were about to
walk on water when gulls
skimmed the sea
for foul fish that surfaced
and bishops naked now
I reached for a hand darling
I breathed collecting six on my lap
where they crawled or paused
on the edge waving a digit
until gulls snatched them up
one by one
to crack on the breakers
snapping at fragments of meat
that sprayed in every direction
and I left without lovers
sawed my west pier at the knee
from an outlook on the hill

wax tears fell continually
collecting in slippery deposits
until my emptied cranium
bumped down the incline
still the sun glazed thistles
on my breasts and belly
and a steamer or two entered my harbor
releasing sailors who tied
my limp neck cords
and fastened a sail over them
one can depend on seamen
monastic insular far-sighted
specialists in the anatomy of departure
they continue to bump hulls
against weathered thighs

Carolyn Stoloff