

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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**THE TABLE IS THE DAY
ARRANGED**

I understand my father.
Eating these foreign delicacies,
placing them on the table
in their own implicit order,
I can dig it.
Fishing the rare herring in wine
from out of crowded shops,
buying the tomatoes, onions, olives
I am performing the same
transmutation.
I am desperate, this morning,
to get things right.

I am putting faith in
my father's magic,
not remembering if it worked
for him.

I am experiencing the love of
things in their place:
onions sliced thinly, and salted
till they sweat, laid on
the tomatoes, ringing the cut
fish.

Alex Silberman

UPI TELEPHOTO

Now, the impact is gone.

But, somewhere down in St. Louis, Mo.,
Stands an outhouse.

An unwanted privy.

Wealthy neighbors in the fashionable section,
Calling it 'unsightly' and 'offensive
to the sensibilities.'

Years ago, when I was young,
Never a day went by that I wasn't
Thankful for, well . . .

Trying to restore a historic home in
St. Louis, the Hanley House,
To its original condition:
Authenticity offends.

Sixty-five years old seems
Pretty authentic to me, and
When she said, 'There is no place
in a neighborhood of this type
for an outside privy.' . . .

Well,

Anthony P. Jarzombek

SOME VERY OLD FAMILIES

The death watch beetles of York Minster
are conservative.

Experts claim that those who eat oak
remain in oak.

The dynasty in the Northeast Master Beam
are descended from a hard-shelled yeoman
who came in the original tree
from a grove near Whitby.

Whether or not there is intercourse between
the Northeast Master Beam
and the First Maple Lintel
has not been explored beyond gossip.
The Lintel family are said
to remain in maple.

Genealogists think a Master Beam Romeo
and a Lintel Juliet
might produce a strain
worthy of yew or blackthorn,
or an immigrant from the tribe
that chews the work of Herr Riemenschneider
could start a Renaissance.

Carlin Aden

**THE TRAVEL AGENCY ASSUMES
NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR LOSSES**

1.

Safari is not for everyone
announced the biggest-mouthed Bwana
in our group, dousing himself
with Bug-Off.

So our driver Koske
would say "Gentleness is everything,"
while the Land Rover bounced across
the red-ochre plains, cameras talking
click language,

the black rhinos
grunting to water buffalo that
gentleness is all, "It's becoming."

2.

If money could buy time back, The Mouth
would be hunting with Teddy instead of
sporting a Leica round his red neck.

"Mais la gentillesse, c'est tout,"
said storks haughty before hoopoe,
vulture, and guinea fowl, recalling
their Grand Tour.

Africa disarms:
we learned he'd never fired a gun—
not in wrenching control of American,
nor driving United to the wall. (Liar?)

"La politesse, aussi," by rote
the whydah-bird recited.

3.

When Bwana saw unicorn, Koske told him they were only oryx; but that night, naked in living dark, he smelled an orange moon splinter through acacia trees.

"Gently," they told browsing giraffes, "for our thorns have tender shapes."

His banter with the porters about a piece of this tourist trade formed against our will pictures of how Bwana teases a conglomerate together, the broken gnu sighing "Gently does it," to a lion tearing away hind quarters.

4.

The day Saidi served tomato sandwiches and tea where we'd climbed up to the edge of Ngurdoto Crater, The Man hushed over that vast purple pasture and thought he recognized Eden,

not hearing an impala—"My sires, oh my sires, did you have to?"—being finished-off by cheetahs—"Why me?"

5.

In the tent camp, roped and signed
DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS, Bwana
crossed the barrier by himself,
fists loaded with a hand-out for

one crazy elephant sucking up salt
our Agency had spread.

I didn't see
(was turned to take tomato seeds from
my partial) when we lost him

in much
the same way, I dread, as once he had
amalgamated Amalgamated.

William McLaughlin

THREE POEMS

News from The Front

The eleven o'clock news.
A reporter points out that the back
Of this Private's head has been shot away.
He describes the plastic plate,
Which is temporary,
Then breaks into the interview saying,
"These doctors saved your life,
You must be grateful."

The soldier scans the undamaged front,
Checks his foxholes of memory,
Happens on the shin of a girl,
The words 'take care,'
Back home,
Back where . . .

He confuses grateful with his bed,
Tomorrow's mail,
And knows he must be.

"Yes," he says, "I'm grateful."
And we are grateful.
Ungrateful is the enemy.

Escape Act

Ladies and gentlemen,
Quiet please, I have one last . . .
Observe . . . a halo of quivering knives,
Twelve tongues shivering
In a dream of her hair.

And now, chained in tiger skin,
You, sir, in the first row, check please.
Lunatic tight, good, and now she is
Gently lowered into boiling
Time's up. I will taste to be sure.
Yes, the soup's ready.
Observe, the empty skin,
One vicious little claw,
But no sign of cat lady.

And now, our grand finale.
Nailed to her bed of spikes,
Double locked in this burning jail . . .
Ladies and gentlemen,
If you'll allow me one last kiss . . .
Applause, the catching of breath
As cat lady goes up in flames.

We're half way home
By the time the smoke clears,

Old trickster thinking:
She needs me,
That last kiss,
The key honeyed to my tongue.
What's a lady without knives?
And I always help in the kitchen.

Old magician keeps track of her lives,
Holds her warm coat of sleep,
Lives for her disappearing.

The Underminers

It began with flowers, the sweet stems of grass,
Childlike fists of dirt, a cheer
For a broken root, stones
Wiggling like teeth.

Before too long they could sit
On its edge and look into it.

Neighbors thought, 'How sweet.
Like a children's story, clothed rabbits
In their five room burrow,
Sturdy little tables, pictures on the dirt walls,
Snug winters, soon a family.'

But it became wider,
Like a bruise, and deeper,
And it was dirty.

"They must be stopped," worms said,
"That hideous hole, snake pit."
People couldn't sleep. It was like a bad dream,
Watching all night for devils
Or Chinamen.

Houses began to wilt,
Their roofs sinking like old cheeks.
Dogs and cats started acting funny.
It didn't rain for a week,
And so finally the mayor
Perched on the edge,
Rattled his crisp wings
And shouted, "Hey, down there.
What in the hell do you think you're doing?"
"Undermining," they lied.
"What for?" he asked.
"An old potato, a lost rib,
Something solid to build on,"
They replied.

Norman Klein

IOWA GOTHIC

for Danny and Eleanor Aker

Outside Room 2 of the Hotel Tipton
in Tipton Iowa, (which has the richest
black earth in the state) a man
shuffles to a stop. He is breathing
heavily, for he has just climbed
two flights of stairs.
He is old. I can tell.
Like in the black and white
mystery movies, the listener
who is never seen, whose identity
no one in Hollywood knows:
the lonely one, poised always
over a tarnished ring of keys.

The wide floor-boards are squeaking,
and I am two flights up and two
blocks south of the Utopia Nursing Home,
in Room 2 of the Hotel Tipton,
home of three retired farmers
who have sold their used Fords.
It is 8:10 in the morning
the day before Easter, and
though I intend no symbol,
I am writing in red ink.

The wide floor-boards squeak
as he goes up the hall a few paces . . .
And the calendar above my desk
has a picture in full color
of a young man in a panama hat who
is taking a picture in full sunlight
of his blond wife and their two children.
She has her white arms draped like lace
about her son and her blond daughter.
The family is, I can tell,
All Iowa,
All Midwest,
All Big Ten,
and part German.
The calendar is a gift of Fred Wilbur,
Life Insurance & Real Estate.

The hall is quiet now,
but he is only a few paces north,
looking back. I can tell.
I am listening hard for his board-squeaks.
So hard I can hear my heart.
So hard I can hear silver church bells
in Fred Wilbur's pocket.
I am also listening to traffic pass

the Utopia Nursing Home,
and to Iowa's rich black earth.

And I cannot write him checks
to pass under the door as my fathers did.
I can talk to him only by long distance telephone
or in short hand-written letters,
concise yet strained in the platitudes each of us
demands,
for Tipton and I have never openly thought of doors,
only of our right to separation,
nor have we questioned how many pieces of silver
Fred Wilbur bought himself for.
We have more roots than one in ideas of New
England,
where you are always polite and you don't talk to
strangers,
where you name the guilt of your age Pleasant Acres
or Maud's Nursing Home,
where the earth is as rocky as fists of hard-earned
money,
and hearts are boulders in a glacial field,
granite and large enough to hide behind.

And so I write him this poem in the only ink that
I have.

This poem that began with a wry smile,
that seeds a darkness as rich as that black earth
he had harrowed with his life,
that is as real as the root of my tongue
or the mud on his shoes,
that is open and extended as my hand.

John Judson

TWO POEMS**The Thoreau Pencil**

“Thoreau’s father was a pencil manufacturer, and young David Henry improved the Thoreau pencil in several important ways.”

Arnold Biella

I am not writing with it
 right now you can't buy one
 for ready money
 anymore but
 I dream dream of it
 (who has not)
 the steely graphite
 at the center
 rock-dark
 black-night-lake-surface-dark
 inscribing scribing
 the wood around the outside
 a fir-tree a birch-tree
 —I don't know the details—
 pared down to size
 what characters it must write
 what clean old nineteenth century
 hieroglyphs
 pebbles from the shore of Walden pond
 (beyond the trailer park)
 nut shells mosquitoes wings
 tangled branches intricate
 and indiscreet
 “to glorify God and enjoy him forever”

they say Thoreau could pick up twelve
Thoreau pencils at a time
without looking
like picking up a year all at once
in a minute

The Electric Vase

—for Jean Kennard

I am an *electric* vase.
When you plug me in,
I keep your roses warm and fat,
no matter how old they get.

I keep your daffodils alive and blinking
when their petals should be sinking.

No one has invented me yet
(but there are florists in London and Toronto
and in Rome and Juneau
who dream of me at night).

(There is a little man in Prague
working on a thermostat.)

(Someone is writing a treatise in Vladivostock.)

I glow in the dark.

Sandra M. Gilbert

A STRATEGY

Hear my honing and whetting of the blade.
From somewhere
there on the hill
where nightlight and shadow and coat blur
in the shriek of silver wind at timberedge,
his eyes, mongoloid, intelligent, patient,
follow me;
his tongue moves caressing his snout;
he howls a hymn of need of me,
thinking,
"I have you, my lovely, if I am a little careful."
Looking up to where the trees
seem colonnades of buildings in the night,
knowing how certain he feels there,
I work to kill him, honing, whetting
a blade that already can slash the wind
without sound or sorrow.
"Work, my lovely. Tire in your dying light,"
he thinks, shifting a paw forward;
frightened and glad of his confident appetite,
I keep awake honing and whetting.
When pain is ground from the blade I ready
the scene,
instinct and will married at my fingertips:
he will find only the smell of me, strong,
and a strip of fat on the tip of the blade;
no need to be cunning, he will suppose:
"I knew, my lovely, you were always mine";
he will taste the fat, licking it, and not feel
his tongue passing over the blade like the wind;
he will know the blood and taste deeper,

urging, "I knew how it would be, my lovely.
More. More."

The afterhurt will go concealed in his wildness,
even when he flails the inside of his mouth
with red, ragged ribbons of tongue;
he will consume himself in heat in the cold,
believing, "Mine to devour, my lovely.
When I saw you from the screaming pillars on the
hill,
saw you were of age and fatted and lost
in thought
scraping on a harmless stick,
I knew I would have you, my fodder, my lovely."

Cruel
my honing and whetting, my strategy?
Still he lives with the feel of a fang
popping my jugular, my blood
streaming
against his tongue,
a trickle of it growing sticky
in a corner of his mouth
where drops of foam are freezing on the hairs.

Alan Shucard

PARCELS FROM HOME: Three Excerpts**Positive Millstones**

No risks. No risks at all
—only the crossbow, abacus, usury,
and the wily Macedonian wedge
(put to good use by Bronco Nagurski
and Yalies with quilted cocks);
not the *moon*, surely?

Why, back then
the invention of gunpowder
was as grisly to them
as the aerosol bomb is to us
and everyone had the sense to foresee
that mousetraps would, eventually,
fall into the hands of the Inquisition.

They didn't care then;
they can't afford to now.

Horizon has slipped
rare Spanish Fly,
all the way from Cathay,
into our jellied consommé
and we bray; Titanic's curse
or Titania's, Horizon always
arises with us in her eyes.

Who *will* be the first
to plant spikes in those craters
and cover them over with papier mâché?
There's not a sage alive who can bear to resist
the thought of a succulent Snipe fillet.

20 July 1969—Sunday

after Armstrong's great leap
forward; a "positive milestone"
in the history of human inquiry

Autograph Hound

Like Schleimann,
who scratched no one's back but his own,
I found tonight a mouse turd amid
the venerable mounds of my poesy.

The lights were out when I left the office.
No cheese, certainly; no cuisine at all,
only the murk in my trench mug.

I can only infer, therefore,
those adorable gestures left by the shy,
moved, as it were,
to express themselves on the sly
in tokens of rude felicity.
But does he, I wonder, wear glasses,
eat carrots, can he read in the dark?
Are his ears red from sensing these lines?

There's no reason to doubt impetuous praise.
And I'm not embarrassed to say
I take pride in this turd, this canned applause,
this urgent reward for the role I unwittingly play
on the rodent's road to poiesis. Besides, it's a great
relief
to know my audience grows so.

And then, we'll probably meet some day.
 I'll instantly put him at ease. We'll smoke,
 who knows, cite ourselves obliquely
 and laugh. And, of course, if he asked
 I'd give him my autograph.

20 July 1969—Sunday

no mention of life on the moon;
 cluttered rooms are still the best
 place for explorers; apropos of
 my first fan letter to WTS after
 his reading at UNM in 1963—his
 reaction

Less Than We Bargained For

To die statuesque
 for sentiment
 in a village square,

limestone, sun
 hewn by bare knuckles
 in well-phrased,
 older worlds . . .

In those days, death
was a gesture
 of gentility, good breeding,
 better than widows
 or wheat.

Nowadays, to die
 means to malfunction
 and we tend to resent
 shoddy goods.

26 July 1969—Saturday

after viewing a frank but
strangely romantic swindle
entitled "The Pride and the
Passion"; you can't transplant
a Purple Heart; yet it's usually
fatal to reject it

Vincent Barrett Price

THREE POEMS**Arcadia**

Back in the war, when meat was rationed
we kept rabbits out in the backyard
far enough away so we wouldn't smell them
but still we treated them about like pets
except for eating them.

We killed them clean, no blood or fuss
a sharp blow to the skull or sometimes two.
Cleaning them of course was a little messy
but still the skins were white and very soft.
I made some into muffs.

That's why it's hard to figure out
what that dream was all about
or what white rabbits had to do
with that black man that looked like you.

The way the dream went, William, was like this:
a bunch of friends of mine were at a farmhouse
out in the country, and we heard this noise
a sort of random thumping from the yard.
They asked me what it was.
I told them rabbits
thumping the fieldmice
standing on one foot, flattening them with the other—
they did it all the time.

The people said they'd like to see that thing
and so we all walked out into the half-light
watching the rabbits as they thumped around
and pretty soon we started out ourselves
and thumped some on our own.
And then we started
thumping the rabbits
standing on one foot, flattening them with the other—
it was a lot of fun.

By now our feet were flat like skis
from crotch to toe enormous Z's
bony powerful and spare
pelted with white rabbit's hair
and every buck I'd smash with mine
I'd feel the shock go up my spine.

It finally woke me up. I lay there wondering
but soon I drifted off to sleep again
seeing that party at your place last Easter
hearing the throb of music and the laughter
the beat that I couldn't dance to.

The people finally left, and from the door
I turned to see him coming down the stairs
holding a wooden flute, and halfway down
he stopped and looked across at me and raised
the flute to his lips and played on it.

Oh William
was it you?
He looked like Pan
I was sure his thighs were rough with shaggy hair
some sort of jungle stalked me from that stair
God, William
is it true
dreams make the man?

The Last Eureka

I have deciphered Linear A.

In my winedark unfathomable bathtub
 or while bestriding like a colossus
 my everflowing cloaca maxima
 or brushing from between my cavities
 the relics of Odysseus' crew
 I have meditated masturbated mastered
 the Secret of the Past.

Epigraphy paleography graffiti
 scarred stone, the lacerated clay
 skins flayed from unborn lambs
 crushed reeds encode
 a mummied past that begs our question.
 All inscription
 undeciphered mocks our humanism
 deciphered mocks it more.
 (Sappho in strips
 wrapped a grinning mummy grinning still.)

I have perfected my transliteration.

On transparent squares of pine pulp dabbled
 red yellow brown earth colors to earth men
 I now bequeath the ultimate translation
 of those ten thousand tablets.
 [All texts read the same.]

THE MOVING FINGER WRITES
 THE SLASHED WRIST BLEEDS

[Before men learned to write they lived forever
in caves and glades beside their human fires.
Hieroglyphics tombed the stiff Egyptians
Ashurbanipal was cuneiformed, the Greeks
impaled on Aristotle, Rome declined
beneath the weight of Gibbon.
History is their epitaph, this poem mine.]

THE FINGER WRITES
UNTIL THE BLOOD RUNS OUT
SUBMERGING
IN THE UNFATHOMABLE EARTH
MERGING
INTO THE WINEDARK PAST

Samothrace

This man I lived with
back in graduate school
had a replica of the Winged Victory
submerged in the toilet tank.
He stated
it kept him regular.

And sure enough
I get this funny feeling
whenever I lecture
on the uses of the past.

Ann Deagon

SEVEN HOSPITAL POEMS**Tools**

No one speaks of the Craftsman tools
He polishes in his surgeon's shop.
Sander? Saber saw?
What crowbar will he lean on
To pry this hollow hip
Out of its socket?

I see the bone man smile
Like a Sears ad, big face and open collar,
Arms hairy among chips
And bonedust. His fingers
Confide in the ground steel
Of the knife.

Adultery

White and red. The bone curves
Voluptuous in his professional
Eye. Launcelot of calcium. Casanova
With auxiliary tools.
I pay this cool hand
To visit the sweet
Blood of my blood, bone
Of my bone while I am absent.
I foresee the event:
The big man swaggers in
Loosening her garments,
Fondling the most private turns
And crevasses.

Woman,
You have reason to wonder
At my complicity.

Flight

Done. Strung with ropes. Wired up,
A bi-plane banking and looping
Over a cornfield.

I watch
Calm as a farmboy
To see if the bragging pilot
Will nick a windmill and burn
In the alfalfa.

Cleaning the Fish

A fish flat on a board.
Gills heave on this slab,
Sour work for a fishwife.

Itch

Ripped off the tape
To expose an ecstasy of itching.
Oh, the deep indulgence
Of scratching, the tender skin
Crying for more, even as it
Breaks and bleeds. Pleasure

Beyond the most exquisite eating
Or drinking, beyond
A naked dive into the cold
Water of a quarry.
Rub against the sheets, massage
With hospital lotion,
Scratch.
Dig in to the knuckles. Pain
And pleasure like love
In the sweet briar. More,
The skin cries, More.

The big handed lover
Neglected to write this spasm
On the chart. The itch
Has given my body
Back to me.

Horsemanship

Vertical. Moving again
Down the corridor I wave
To all the poor cripples.
Showing off. Placing a crutch
On the foot pedal, I catch
The water cooler at the top
Of its arc, then wipe my mouth
On my shoulder, glancing
Back, signalling the other cattle
To follow through the break
I have discovered in the electric
Fence. At the end of my trip,
I sit cocky as a cowboy
Astride a porcelain horse.

Steel and Bone

One day I may go with hardly a limp.
Still, the steel squeaks and sighs
Against the bone. A horseshoe
Nailed to a tree and overgrown
By bark. Planted, it will
In time grow steel ankles, steel
Elbows, steel balls. A heaviness
Already troubles the joints of my tongue.
I will race my daughters again
But I carry a cold sound
In my hip pocket.

Conrad Hilberry

THE AMAZON

This is a myth utterly conceived by males—
One day the grown boy will meet the Amazon,
A handsome girl enlarging before him,
The whole world suddenly getting out of hand,
The secret pituitary code mastered,
The entire adaptive situation altered.
Who will curl in under his powerful arms,
Whose eyes will meet the eyes upon his chest?
The boy considers desperate measures:
The girl should wear a capstone on her head,
Giving some great, harsh ceiling to her sex,
A caryatid set upon a porch
Where men discuss the matters of the world.
But the girl keeps growing and disrobing,

Threat, seduction, in an hyperactive loom—
Could God, the Man himself, now stunt her growth?
The boy cannot accept supportive role,
His ego delicate as the sperm he bears.
The woman who wears the tight, applied myth
Undresses forever and still must grow—
The girl studied the arts of reduction,
But the woman pushed her head against the sky.
It was only when remembering boyhood
The man could ever put a stop to it,
The time before the ground was strewn with fetishes—
An early morning glow just to seeing,
No thought of would be, preponderate—
The girl stroked him, a tassel in the wind,
No sacked cities yet, ruins to contemplate—
The girl washed her stockings in the river,
The boy dropped the stone carried in his hand,
His body like a lovely, lidless eye.

Charles Edward Eaton

SKY TALK

In upper seas along earth's south,
 Cetus swims, a fire-whale headed east.
 In upper seas along earth's north,
 Draco swims, fire-dragon headed west.

Constellations, Homer says, the Lord of skies creates,
 Portents for mariners. Upon marked stars
 Aratus, poet also, calculates,
 For compass, sky-snakes and Leviathans, declaring,
 North by west, the dragon, south by east, the whale.
 Acknowledging Aratus, one Saul Paul
 Recalled Aratus' words to praise Heaven's Lord
 "In whom we live and move and have our being."
 What we discern may most portend our faring.

Sea-faring, count it loss
 To lose last rope's end to an eyeless surf.
 But rope's end still in reach may still firm-hawser
 whales and dragons.
 Always within earth's skies but newer come to sky-
 mapped figurations
 Stands mark for mariners, halter for whales and
 dragons, high seas'
 Anchor-sign.
 Among old stars new eyes discern
 A cross.

Jeremy Ingalls

METAMORPHOSIS OF A SONNET BY GÓNGORA

1.

Infiere, de los achaques de la vejez, cercano el fin, a
que católico se alienta.

En este occidental, en este, oh Licio,
climatérico lustro de tu vida,
todo mal afirmado pie es caída,
toda fácil caída es precipicio

¿Caduca el paso? Ilústrese el jüicio.
Desatándose va la tierra unida;
¿qué prudencia del polvo prevenida
la rüina aguardó del edificio?

La piel, no sólo, sierpe venenosa,
mas con la piel los años se desnuda,
y el hombre, no. ¡Ciego discurso humano!

¡Oh aquel dichoso, que la poderosa
porción depuesta en una piedra muda,
la leve da al zafiro soberano!

(1623)

2.

He can tell, from the infirmities of old age, that death is coming on, but he is heartened by his religion.

Oh Licio, this is the western setting, this is the lustrous climacteric of your life; where every uncertain step becomes a fall, and every easy fall precipitous.

Your step is failing? See the light! All this earth has lost coherence, disintegrates. And what prudent man, inside the edifice, sees falling dust, and waits for more to fall?

The envenomed serpent sheds not only his skin— with each dry cloak he takes off years; and man cannot. Oh these blind human decisions of ours!

Only he
who leaves behind the heavy part of life on some mute rock, is happy. Then he gives his light to the center of a great sapphire!

3.

Northern California/Thanksgiving 1970

Walking the edges of the rain-soaked cliffs
in the rain. Caught in a little coastal town for three
days,
waking early to the sound of rain, reading Spanish
poetry,
staying in this old hotel on the continent's western
edge.

Vapor. We could hear the earth below us
over the edge, crumbling and falling, vapor rising,
the hundred foot high earth sodden and shifting;
knots of earth untying. There was

a cliff side rail way fallen into disuse,
the winding cliff's edge like a great snake shifting
in its wet sleep. We do not know why.

Huge rocks lying at the shore for centuries. If we
rest there,
will they hold us and draw in our heat and like the
sun
setting behind the clouds, turn to bright red, glowing
jewels?

Reginald Gibbons

TODAY

together
we shoveled out
our 40 feet of driveway
under

a foot of snow.

We loved the little
crisis of it

loved

& let it show.

Tonight

we sat & read.

You're

still sitting on the couch

with Creeley's

ISLAND.

It will
hurt where I wd never
have you hurt.
I read

Williams:

ASPHODEL, THAT GREENY FLOWER

& it hurt too
because it didn't
come from me

for you.

I almost think to
type it out
& call it mine.

But no.

They say
it is supposed to snow.

MY ROOSEVELT COUPÉ

Coax it, clutch it, kick it
in the gas was every dawn's
scenario.

Then off it bucked,
backfiring down the block to show
it minded.

Each fender gleamed
a different hue of blue.
Each hubcap chose
its hill to spin freewheeling
into traffic.

I fretted like a spouse
through chills and overboiling,
jacked my weekly flats
and stuffed the spavined seats
with rags.

Leaking, the radiator
healed with swigs of Rinso,
brake fluid and rainwater.

Simonized,
the hood stuck out like a tramp
in a tux.

All trips were dares.
Journeys were sagas.

From Norfolk
to New York and back,
I burned eleven quarts
of oil, seven fuses
and the horn.

One headlight
dimmed with cataracts.

The other
funneled me one-eyed
through darker darks than darkness . . .
O my Roosevelt coupé, my first,
my Chevrolet of many scars
and heart attacks, where are you
now?

Manhandled, you'd refuse
to budge.

Stickshifted
into low, you'd enigmatically
reverse.

Sold finally
for scrap, you waited on your treads
while I pocketed thirty
pieces of unsilver and slunk
away—Wild Buck Hazo
abandoning his first and favorite
mount, unwilling to malingering
long enough to hear
the bullet he could never fire.

Samuel Hazo

**WHY DIDN'T ANYONE TELL
HESTER PRYNNE?**

Pity him up to his waist in middle age,
neither celibate nor pervert in ceramics, only ultimate
with a finger caught in the clay cookie jar.

Leading her under the slatted moonlight
of palm trees, opening, shutting,
like a nervous venetian blind —
he said shyly,

“Have you ever done this before?”

She said, “No,”
curling her toes expectantly into the sand.
God sighed relief through his grey beard.

I don't know what happened to him. But she went
home,
a smug pendulum of skirts, to inform her husband,
who had angelic nightmares ever after,
“Gabriel told me to.”

Karen Swenson

OBSERVATION REPORT

On the morning of November 20, 1957,
Clara Connelley, passenger in an automobile
driven by _____, was fatally injured
in a one-car accident on Highway 13 fifteen
miles south of Waukon.

That's Highway 76 now.
And it's not all that's changed.

Sugar beets are white!
It came as something of a surprise.
Artichokes as common as cabbages.

There lay Clara very white and still.

The ancient Egyptians painted prisoners
Yellow. Birds were blue and green.
Water was blue. Men and women were painted red.
Men redder than women.

Munkacsy was, as a boy, dissatisfied
With the representations of Christ
That he saw. They seemed:
"Effeminate personifications
of too much humility."

He wished to paint:

“Such a man as could be
severe to the wrong-doer
even while he was forgiving
and tender to the repentant.”

Verdad no pintura

So why does his Christ before Pilate stand
Like a sugar beet on an oriental carpet
common as an artichoke?

The Pharaoh's artist would have made
Christ yellow surrounded by red women
and redder men.

So Clara does not lie white and still
like a cauliflower.

She lies like Clara white and still.

Verdad no pintura

Face-down in a ditch by the side of the road
She should have floated face-up in a sea
Of dusty grass and gravel. Borne by the mists
That sweep the morning to the island shelves
High above the Mississippi— there, white as
A beet, to stand among the red pine and the
redder sumach.

Grotesque. Ghostly.
Like Christ before Pilate.

She should have.

But when I thought about the whiteness
of the Sugar Beets

I couldn't allow that.

Richard Steele