

**THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL**  
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## IN CALIFORNIA

On a large map he has marked  
the arrival of birds,  
the progression of threads  
in the fabric.

    In a large box  
he has stored the sounds,  
the rattle of china and glassware.  
To be a hermit, he thinks,  
to drink tea from a single cup.

The Pacific, he thinks, is his bowl,  
closeness is bread from the fingertips.  
He thinks not of women  
nor intercourse, active and passive.  
He thinks not of mountains  
where farmers have fired the undergrowth,  
dug trenches to contain the brilliance.

The world of ideas is a fire  
he thinks. The migration of deer  
a mystery.

    He knows the mutations of clouds,  
but sees in those accidents  
patterns wherein a texture like hair  
means a person he will never meet.

John Enright

**BURNT FLESH**

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

**1.**

High among the boughs of the oak the breezes  
Falter, shaking light from the leaves. The minutes,  
Tense with white sun, fall: It is time, the breeze is  
Shaking the time down,

I turn slowly and face the tethered ram.  
He shies from my hand, hesitates and quivers  
Glancing aside, now takes three clumsy steps  
Backwards to the rope's end.

Our eyes meet, strangely, warm. His quivering  
Is not unlike my own. Beyond the tree,  
Back from the painted wall, the women's chanting  
Washes the altar stones,

And at the wall six men with basins wait.  
I touch the ram's brow, pressing both palms  
Firmly between his horns: he stiffens and shudders  
But stands. The chants cease.

The men move forward quickly with the knife,  
Circling the ram, placing the basins. Now  
The knife is passed to me and they back away.  
The sun whines on the blade,

He wheels, and I twist with him toward the tree  
My hip to his shoulder—I wrench his horn backward  
Exposing the silver throat, and drag the blade  
Through to the bright vein.

I raise the head by the horns toward each man,  
Filling the basins. Slowly the dark blood  
Flows to the greater dark of depth and stillness.  
The chanting begins again.

## 2.

Flames unfold delicate as petals  
Curling yellow and black  
Into the raw smoke's enormous belly  
Curling into the night's flesh folding red

The fire's roots twist  
Deep into layers of flesh and fat  
Among ribs winding deep into the stones

Blood trickles like sweat over the stones  
Conveys fire  
Darker than the dark stones gleaming  
Conveys fire along the dry ground

Large birds wait at the far edge of light  
And the powerful darkness shudders and stalls  
Pawing the stones

The circle of our swaying widens  
Moaning swells the smoke rising  
The circle of our swaying closes again

She falls rolling slowly  
Dragging her hair through blood  
Rises toward the fire  
Her thighs smeared with light  
Arms straining upward glistening  
Her mouth shaping awful silences

Fire licks our throats moaning  
Singes our eyelids crying  
Darkens our faces moaning  
Takes up our cries in its gnarled fingers

Light trickles  
Over foreheads dark as stone  
Into our eyes

Fire stands in each eye swaying  
Like a great solitary tree

And wheels of smoke  
Roll wildly down the night  
Light rolls over our faces  
Crushes our voices on the dark stones

Flames unfold like flowers among our bones  
Scorching our bones  
Curling sharply into our flesh  
Petals like polished blades turning  
Brightly into our blood  
Clicking against our breath

Fat sizzles and sputters on the stones

We sway like trees of fire our arms  
Great boughs of flame swaying  
Over the long dry ground  
Blood swaying high in the dark wind  
Fire's hooves beating along our black bones  
Dark wings beating at our faces  
Talons hooking into our eyes

The fire consumes our cries  
Curls back its lips and bares its teeth  
Screaming against our blood

Sheets of blood  
Billow and fall from the wind  
Over the charred bones  
Hands and lips and eyes smeared  
Sticky with salt darkness

And the birds rise  
Churning the smoke with huge wings  
Trailing shreds of blood from their crooked beaks

Our blood consumes the fire  
Swallows the moaning crying fire  
And now our blood darkens humming  
Shudders and darkens

Our blood consumes all the fire  
And moves like a shadow under the skin

Wheels of smoke roll over the stones  
Away over the long dry ground

And the wind moves in robes of folded shadow  
Shaking withered cries from the air like dust

Over the dry ground

The enormous flanks of the wind quiver  
The night shudders and stands still

### 3.

Shall he who stares at the sun have light? Shall he—  
Cowering in darkness, crouching in caves of fear  
Counting his hours like money — shall he be heir?  
Let his eyes melt, his lips crumble. This shall not be.

Your flesh is dark with death, but in it is  
Ages of light, a seed that glows and yearns:  
The force of that seed's promise shall split your bones  
And be your son's, and countless sons' of his,

But flesh is death, your best hopes thoroughly  
cursed —

The cores of enormous stones are not as dark  
As men who know what yardstick meets their work—  
Measure the depths of a dead vein's shrivelled thirst,

Teach flesh's utter darkness to your heirs,  
The deaths in each desire each son will try:

For of a surety these men shall be  
A stranger in a land that is not theirs.

Your seed must wait: till evil's fullest shout  
Summons a nation to judge the ruined land —  
The judgment forging murder in each man's hands,  
Winds clashing like polished shields within and  
without

And the clangor of swords entering every room —  
Each heart a hoof pounding across parched land,  
Men running and falling—they beg and cut off their  
hands

But light shall speak: the merciless seed shall bloom.

Yet, light must wait, a stranger in the earth  
That came to men from death by unknown roads  
And stays, forcing its strange and distant word,  
Concealed till fertile time reveals its truth.

Horrors of dark shall weigh upon each son  
Gathering heavy as flesh around the seed;  
But he must walk the road toward what he said  
Passing the wreckage of things not yet begun,

Past broken swords, past bones, past shining walls  
Beyond prediction, deep in the prophet's eye —  
*Now, out of thine own bowels, history  
Proceeds from death to life: the infant crawls  
Lurching from death to life, and steadily  
The generations move death's boundary.*

Paul Smyth

**THE ACTION OF THERAPY****1.**

After the whirlwind when all things  
were blown out of their courses  
In the fiery gust,  
After the whirlwind when all beams were crossed  
And passionate love confused,  
Its clear path lost,  
Where nothing fused,  
But all was burned and forced,  
The psyche nearly cracked  
Under the blast,  
After the earthquake passed —

How did it happen  
That cool eyes looked out  
On darkness and the storm  
And cut the ties  
That meant chaos and harm  
So that true mysteries  
Might act and charm  
The haunted spirit back  
To its own realm ?

What did the angel do  
To make all levels straight  
Within that sheaf  
Of troubled sense and fear,  
Set every beam on its own path  
At last untangled,  
Singular and bright,  
So that nothing was lost,  
No slightest hope  
Was blurred by childish grief

Outside its scope,  
But all was still and clear,  
So still and bright  
No galaxy of stars  
Could shine more absolute  
On winter night ?

## 2.

I watched the psychic surgeon  
Stern, skilled, adroit,  
Cut deep into the heart,  
And yet not hurt.

I watched it happen —  
Old failures, old obsessions  
Cut away  
So blood could flow  
A clear course through  
Choked arteries again.  
There was no pain.  
My eyes, wide open,  
Watched every move  
In absolute surrender  
To superior power.  
I saw it happen  
In one luminous hour  
(No anesthetic given),  
An act of extreme grace  
And sovereign love.  
From Hell I entered Heaven  
And bowed my head,  
Where nothing had been suffered,  
But all given.

## 3.

Simple acceptance  
Of things as they are.  
Finished, that strained arc,  
Leap of the salmon upstream,  
Climbing waterfalls,  
Sublimation  
Of one death or another,  
The cruel ascension  
Towards loss.

Now things as they are —  
Spring of the fern as it uncoils,  
Brute rock broken  
To show the matrix,  
Light-shot February skies —  
All, all have been given  
After the whirlwind.

This is no repetition  
Of unresolved attachments,  
And deprivations,  
No turn of the old wheel.  
It is altogether new.

## 4.

In the terrifying whirlwind  
When the mother is resurrected  
(How many times, angelic doctor,  
How many times ?)  
Every defence against grief goes.

There is no future,  
Only excruciating repetition  
Of the unburied past.

For the last time  
I was torn to pieces  
By my mother's anguish,  
Unattainable goddess  
Whose compassionate eyes  
Understood me so well —  
And took my heart.

I do not have to love you  
As I loved her,  
To be devastated, but,  
Angel and surgeon of the psyche,  
I am free to love you now  
Outside all the myths,  
The confused dreams,  
Beyond all the barriers  
In the warm natural light  
Of simple day.  
I am allowed to give you  
Unstrained, flowing,  
Wise-infant  
To wise-mother love.

You broke the spell,  
You with your whippets around you  
Like some lady in a tapestry  
Said to the unicorn,  
"If the child needs the mother,  
The mother needs the child."  
So be it.

5.

In middle age we starve  
For ascension,  
Look back to childhood teachers  
But have outgrown them.  
Mature love needs new channels.  
How long has it been —  
What starving years ? —  
Since I was permitted  
To cherish wisdom ?

I bend tenderly  
Toward the young  
With open heart and hands.  
I share in a great love  
With my equal.  
Every day I learn better  
About how to give  
And how to receive love.  
But there is still the need  
To be filial toward someone,  
To be devoted,  
Humble and enlightened.  
I need to remain teachable  
For one who can teach me.

With you all green things flourish,  
All flowers may be freely given,  
All fears can be expressed,  
No childish need is sneered at,  
No adult gift unrecognized.

Speak to me  
Of the communion of saints  
On earth.

## 6.

Light cannot be described,  
Is nothing in itself,  
Transforms all it touches.  
The flower becomes transparent flame.  
A plain white wall  
Is marbled by flowing water,  
And in the soul's realm  
Light defines feeling,  
Makes distinctions.

In the light  
Of this penetrating mind,  
Vivid response,  
Total awareness,  
I find myself  
In a new landscape—  
(Still, it was dear to my mother,  
As I suddenly remember)  
Fra Angelico's Paradise  
Where souls, released at last,  
Dance together  
On the simple grass.

Look, there is an owl in the tree.  
A fling of lambs in February snow.  
There is a donkey waving her long ears.  
There is a child  
With flowers in her hands.

There is a continuum  
(Those garlands of joined dancers)  
Of redemptive love.

I'll keep it  
For a million years.

May Sarton

## ONE PACIFIC ISLAND

Around Peleliu  
napalm-jelly drops  
on Bloody Nose Ridge,  
stirs an offshore wind,  
blows burnt hair, old  
fish, seepingsore smell  
of the dead across the water.  
Eyes and ears strain  
their circular patrol  
through hot monotony,  
through death, alive in air  
to surface undercurrents  
and disarm the next explosion.

"Mine off the starboard bow!"  
The ship swings, alarm  
blaring battle stations,  
flank speed kicks a wake  
splitting water into knots.

The headless son of Nippon,  
bloated rounder than a rice-  
stuffed Buddha or a mine,  
floats on the blue ground-  
swells' rolling mirror.  
Shredded skin strings out  
like the fringe on a scarf,  
waving water from his neck;  
his outstretched arms rise  
and fall, moving slow  
shadows along his ribs;  
the sun through a light, reflective  
motion lifts his bobbing

body, that huge fatigue-  
drenched bumble bee,  
on staggering wings  
into blind flight.

A thirty caliber machine-  
gun is chosen to sink  
the menace of false alarm:  
well-oiled chatter splashes  
into body splat;  
bloat groans through a sieve;  
small crabs panic.  
Their new plateau has risen  
to the shock of lead and steel.  
Impact quakes their cushion.  
They flurry into exodus  
out and back to sand.

He floats a little lower  
now, but still he floats;  
crabs were not his only  
issue; the dead cannot  
be killed. Our ship retreats;  
his rolled puttees unravel  
water, heavy pennants  
trailing into tails of kelp.  
Hull down, distance fades.  
Only time sinks where bullets  
tear their ragged hole  
behind the eyes.

**John Platt**

**HOLDING**

Black steel nets hold up  
A bloody sun struggling  
Still in John Marin's water-  
Color of the Brooklyn Bridge  
(1922).

Intractable, it comes through  
Bars the bridge drew over it  
And through the paint, raging  
Out of the bridge into  
The room, like a lion set  
Among ladies. I cannot think  
That sun; it breaks away  
Like a small vessel deep  
In the brain.

Yet the eye can  
Hold it. That dark purse  
Pulses, beats faster than wings  
Over the paper, takes sun  
Into the reticule of sight,  
And almost fifty years mesh  
Without sound, with no more  
Pain than a young girl holding  
Old lace over fresh breasts.

**Robert S. Knapp**

**BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER**

This time we stayed right side up  
and when the dust and my local area map  
defected to the top of the cockpit  
where the pilot's half met mine  
I knew we were going to do it the hard way,  
over the edge of a circle  
I had already drawn, in my mind.

Seventeen years ahead of time  
a locust missing one purple wing  
danced at my eyes as if it were alive,  
and the earth coming up behind  
was touched with blood  
the negative G's rushed to my head  
in spite of the hold I had on myself  
and I saw the crown of the pilot's helmet  
in front of my radar panel  
wagging me to join him  
in the mouth of that sounding fish  
that was spitting up our weight  
until close to some boundary of control  
my arms went past his to an obscene salute  
and jackass pleasure  
rode into the stomach of our fear  
until we were looking straight down  
the air cleared of our foolishness  
at the hook of Cape Cod,  
its earth green coming back  
from the locust in my boot's dust,  
and the only sound was the altimeter's  
second hand whipping the short one  
toward zero

when I heard him curse  
and there were two of us again  
watching the roads yield to intersections  
and then to cars—

Because I thought by the nose tuck  
and the silence we had it made,  
but he pulled us out  
less than a mile above the ground,  
flying by feel and damning the instruments  
that said we were too low,  
pulled the blood to our feet  
and my head tight into the radar hood  
where I fought the darkness of my relief,  
pulled the sun back into place  
so the sky broke from earth to blue  
on either side of the afterburner's crash,  
and he cursed again to round it out,  
to mark how close we had come  
from how far.

**Paul Witherington**

## TWO POEMS

## City Intersection

The two kids  
jumped her: she  
has cashed her check  
was pushing her way  
to the grocer.  
Her pickup cart  
dangled behind  
like a hurt  
birdcage. She was  
whispering: bread  
fruit (if it's cheap)—  
then her head  
cracked the sidewalk,  
her hand twisted  
pain from her throat,  
and fear-crusting  
faces of boys  
stared her down

for a moment.  
They fled on her moan  
Later she tried  
and tried to say  
how it happened  
but every word was *why*.  
And the kids  
in the alley stared  
at the loot:  
keys, beads, weird  
junk, and clean  
flat dollars—enough  
for movies, pizza, subways  
a long thin knife  
and glue on their  
shut mouths.

**Observation Only**

Josef

Albers once said,  
"Listen. A true painter  
paints because he has no  
time not

to paint."

At eighty-two,  
for the print-maker's show,  
he taught the computer  
advanced

technique:  
in automated  
engraving mill — a line  
of tooled precision which he named  
"Embossed

Linear

Construction 2-

A" perhaps to say now  
"The art of making reaffirms  
the will

to live."

**Sister Maura**

## TWO POEMS

20

### Afterglow

"I keep wondering what you do  
with your anger," he said.

On the couch, she smiled.  
"Anger? I have no anger."

He sighed.  
She was a Garbo-woman, but small;  
a *femme fatale*, one would guess at a glance,  
yet she was a recluse,  
orphan and exile, the daughter (she claimed)  
of a raped nun who had died  
giving birth in a prison camp.  
He tried again:  
"You have been coming to me

KAREN SNOW

three times a week for nearly two years,  
not like a patient with complaints,  
but like a charming guest, a Scheherazade,  
spellbinding me with your fantasies,  
paying a high fee out of a modest inheritance,  
yet asking nothing in return.”

She shrugged.  
She was wearing a violet sweater,  
beige skirt, sandals.  
Sometimes she wore a pale green sweater,  
sometimes a blue one.  
Never jewelry or cosmetics.  
Just the clean pastel austerity.

“You’ve given so much,” he said.  
“I’ve given so little.  
I fear such Sweetness.”

“These have been the happiest hours  
of my life. Your Listening has been  
your Giving.”

"I might believe that  
if the burden of phobias  
you brought into treatment  
had been removed—or even diminished."

She smiled at the ceiling.  
"You've eased me through a long  
convalescence from Christianity . . .  
and turned me towards Zen."

"Nonsense. You did that by yourself.  
I'm no guru, nor do I wish to be one.  
I'm just a man whose job is to help  
release animal and infantile feelings.  
I hate to think that when you leave  
this room today, you'll retreat  
to that garret to continue living  
like a caged bird."

"The sky outside my window  
is full of free birds."

He sighed again.

"I wonder, too, why you are choosing  
this particular time to terminate treatment  
—if, perhaps, a feeling towards me—  
just a simple human feeling—  
is about to come into the open?"

He was thinking of those women  
who wept, or caressed the psychiatrist,  
or stripped, or wrote him poems,  
(He was, they invariably moaned,  
too handsome for this job.) . . .  
and of those other women  
who, after a polite exit,  
started stalking . . . or bled  
. . . or chose sleeping pills . . .  
or slashed wrists.

"You still have ten minutes—  
in which to tell me—or show me—  
how you *really* feel."

She placed her hands on her cheeks.

“Don’t be afraid.  
Just feel free to do—  
what you want to do . . .”

Slowly, she sat up.

He leaned forward.

She stood.

He stood . . . opened his arms.

She looked at him.

He smiled.

She turned away.  
“Goodbye,” she said, “and thank you.”

The next week,  
a new patient,  
in the midst of his third session,

stopped talking, scowled,  
covered his eyes, and said: "Gosh. I forgot what I was going  
to say. All of a sudden, I get this  
far-fetched fantasy. Why, it's silly."

"Here, nothing is silly.  
What is this fantasy?"

"Why, I see—or I imagine I see—  
in your lap—this beautiful blonde girl  
—in lavender sweater—light-colored  
skirt—sandals."

A month later,  
another patient,  
an older woman who had been coming  
to him for years, faltered in her usual chatter. "That's odd.  
I keep seeing—flashing bright as  
lightning—this very lovely blonde  
cuddling in your lap. She's wearing a  
lilac-colored sweater and—why, she's

the pretty girl I used to see in your  
waiting room—the one I was so jealous of!”

The psychiatrist bought a new couch . . .  
had the room re-painted and re-carpeted.

“I keep having this dream,” mused  
another patient . . . “about a beautiful  
blonde girl in your lap—your daughter,  
it could be—dressed in a sort of orchid  
top and a fawn skirt and—”

That was five years ago.

The psychiatrist has moved across the country.  
Still, from time to time, a patient in his care  
catches that same image.

Once it came as “a pale golden kitten  
in a lavender sweater, purring, in your lap . . .”  
once, as “a baby girl in a violet sweater  
and crocheted sandals . . .”  
uttered, in those cases, with a laugh of delight,

and clinging like a caul  
to the first infantile fantasies . . . .  
It comes most often, though,  
to a patient later in therapy,  
on the verge of erotic fantasies,  
when it is tossed into their midst  
like a bride's bouquet.

### Apples

"Let me take you away  
from all this," he said.

From *this*?  
She was a slight waif,  
on scholarship from Appalachia,  
living on apples

in an attic . . .  
writing poems.

He was a portly professor,  
freshly bereaved, allotting himself  
belated pleasures on his parents' nest egg  
. . . like writing a novel.  
"In chapter one," he said,  
"I introduce you as 'Sphinx,'  
barefoot . . . too poor to own  
even a dulcimer."

"Lord."  
She smiled seeming to listen  
less to him than to the  
seventeen-year cidadas.

By autumn  
he yearned to rescue her from  
anemia and shyness and superstitions.

In winter,  
she wished at times to rest him

from lugging his heavy hopes around.

In spring,  
they married.

“Travel,”  
he said, “is what you need.”  
Slung with cameras, tape recorders,  
and transistor radios, surrounded with  
lummo-luggage, sweating and smiling,  
he looked like a big-game hunter.

In planes . . . in restaurants . . .  
in theatres . . . in shops . . .  
she sprouted phobias.  
“I think I have radar,” she whispered.

“Cocktails will help. Drink up.”  
All over Europe, all over Asia  
he hauled her, passive as a papoose  
. . . festooning her with Hindemith and  
Picasso and Kabuki and Suzuki

until she was strangled in the  
tickertape of privileges.  
*Travel?* she sighed,  
and spelled it T R A V A I L.

“What you need is a good tranquilizer,”  
he said.

When this laid her libido limp,

he said,  
“A psychiatrist is what you need.”

Thus, the therapy:

In London: “Professor, I’m afraid  
you’ve caught yourself a pretty little  
man-hater.”

In Paris: “. . . an American neurosis.”

In Tokyo: “Sir, are you asking me—ha!  
to make a fat vessel for your fat needs  
. . . out of this—ha! . . . this *divining rod?*”

In Washington: “. . . an awful lot of  
early denial of oral needs.”

In a Swiss chalet,  
when she started to smile again,

he thought:  
She needs a baby.

He gave her a whooping  
cross-eyed daughter,  
and while he was hustling  
the madonna and child onto kodachrome,  
he added a thin, allergic son.

He grew thicker.

She, thinner.

The babies bawled.

“Have some steak.  
Get it down with wine.”

She nibbled apples.

The tots wailed.

He pumped out novels, lavishly.

One sold.

“No matter: Ahead of my Time.”

He published privately.

Custodian to the clutter,  
she wrote not one poem.

Years  
they drifted . . .  
his statements . . . her silences  
. . . daft daughter . . . bewildered son . . .  
stuck one to the other by the thorns of  
his optimism.

He grew so padded  
and so florid of jowl  
that his tie looked like  
a tourniquet;

she, so wilted  
that she looked crucified.

Brother and sister jangled.

"Lord."

He covered the moan  
with the buzz of his typewriter.

*Lord Lord*

It sounded to him  
like the seventeen-year cicada,  
returned.

He turned up the hi-fi.

Fat sister thwacked down  
frail brother's paper airplane.  
His fey gaze filled the house.

*Lord Lord*

"What this family needs  
is a smasher of a vacation."

He shuffled through sheaves  
of brochures . . .

Lord Lord

phoned his broker,  
phoned the airlines.

The plane crashed on a mountainside.

She woke through mists  
remembering "Too poor to  
own even a dulcimer . . ."

*Too rich.*

She walked away  
from generous death  
towards an apple tree  
and stood barefoot  
on holy ground.

**Karen Snow**

## SONNY LISTON

Until prison chained him to rewards:  
three squares and his own cot,  
he remembered squirrel meat mixed with grits,  
Daddy's snarling whip, a dozen wet mouths  
sucking on bones and sad, slurred words  
Mama dished out in the shack.

Stoop work, stoop sex, stupid, cold  
January snow like clumped cotton  
but paying nothing for its crop.  
Heat the bugs and fever brought,  
the heavy sky in a burlap sack.

Then jail, doing time inside the whale  
that eats poor boys.

He grew up grizzled as a bear  
trained to dance and grab the till.

Big, bad champ who barely scrawled his name,  
heavyweight knuckles contracted to the ring  
where big bears win  
far from ticks in the dingy beds,  
the cornpone bowls of Arkansas.

Dreams of okra, hills of chard,  
sun, a golden glove laid the punches hard  
in an undercutting time  
which slammed him to the ropes,  
last chance arena, the enduring K.O.

Colette Inez

## PEANUTBUTTER JELLY SANDWICH POEM

November 19, 1970, 8:30 a.m., standing in the unemployment line waiting to file my weekly claim, I get a momentarily exact fix on my locus in time: I am aged 40 years 6 months 19 days, now 2 months 5 days after being fired from my job, 1 month 6 days before Christmas, 2 months 10 days before they tried to foreclose the mortgage, 2 months 12 days before finding another job, 14 places from the head of the line, and 6 hours after eating the biggest brightest crunchiest stickiest peanutbutter jelly sandwich in the whole wide world. I am also the tallest person in the room.

It was Like i said this understand to no one in particular between gles  
feeling it probably wouldn't 15 minutes since the last one you know, work

because the mistake beginners make is trying so accidentally unmaking it heh heh

said fuck it went out to the b-i-g (already a little bit, though unnoticed)

w-h-i-t-e (chuckle) coolwhite R\*E\*F\*R\*I\*G\*E\*R\*A\*T\*O\*R

made myself the w-o-r-l-d-'s b-i-g-g-e-s-t t-a-l-l-e-s-t l-u-s-c-i-o-u-s-e

ha ha ho ho hoo hoo hee hee (zot i was one!)

two-century peanutbutter jelly sand christ can't you see me doing my thing with a God

damned peanutbutterjelly sand be cause I'd stopped doing the (Hoo Boy!)

beginner's mistake heard my voice (my god) from fivehundredseventyeightbillion

light years out (w-a-y o-u-t t-h-e-r-e) saying Loudly

(and quite distinct) "W-H-O C-A-R-E-S?" wich it is all about

Having lost my momentarily exact fix on my locus in time, I find myself face to face with a strange and hostile lady who has just asked me if I have actively sought work the past week, as instructed when I filed my original claim. How can I tell her I have eaten of the world's biggest and best peanutbutterjelly sandwich, which was s-o-o-o-o g-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-d I just had to get back into it for a moment? How can I tell her how much peanutbutter jelly \$58.20 a week will buy? I look black at her stonily, shift my eyes, and silently count the tile joints in the floor.

n-g-e-s-t p-e-a-n-u-t b-u-  
-o-l-t-s-e  
Peanutbutterjelly is better than booze!  
Run and tell your friends the news:  
It can be whatever you choose;  
Peanutbutterjelly just can't lose;  
Peanutbutterjelly is the thing to do!  
Cheap to make and fun to chew,  
Full of vitamins, proteins, too,  
Peanutbutterjelly is good for you,  
t-t-e-r-j-e-l-l-y s-a-n-d-w-i-c-h

Cyril A. Dostal

**LEARNING TO BE STRANGE IN A SMALL TOWN**

1.

What if someone gives you a word  
and the word gets around  
and then other words, night after night  
are thrown from the same passing car,

daring you to violate again  
the dark rule of sleep?  
This what you are thinking,  
alone in your driveway. It's after

midnight, you have no business  
standing here, just a dim light  
from the kitchen — an eye on you —  
keeping you fearless. You are thinking

no one anymore has any business  
by himself, or can go out to hear  
the changing edges of the wind, or watch  
one by one the lights go off in houses,

without being strange. Say you made it known  
you had always been interested in  
how the darkness gets larger  
in your own town. Who would understand?

## 2.

There is a night bug out for a walk,  
it has tucked-in its head and legs  
and stopped moving because of you.  
It senses the humanity in your foot.

It's afraid. It has that look people have  
who've been caught being ugly —  
you hear it say  
"Who are you to catch me like this?"

It waits. You step back to let it pass,  
this odd creature that hates your permission.  
It has a hard, blue shell.  
When it moves, an impression of shoulders held back.

## 3.

If neighbors have seen you, you decide  
to tell them you were out  
becoming a word they had hardly formed,  
just to please them.

And what they heard was not wind  
in the trees, rather your fingers  
rummaging in old, dry tobacco.  
They will know what you mean.

But everything is so silent, even the bug  
is gone, off into a world perhaps  
where it has friends and a nickname.  
Your imagination is the only sure thing

behind those windows. Stop worrying.  
Choose the most interesting word you can live with.  
Stick it on your forehead, publish it in  
the local paper. Say you will not let it down.

**Stephen Dunn**

## MILLSTONE GRIT

1.

Rain in the wind  
sweeping against the window-panes  
as I write —tall houses of grey stone—  
the three children coming down the brass slide  
laughing, running round to the metal steps,  
standing at the bottom  
cold in my levi-jacket and grey poncho  
I want to tell you they're fine, the children,  
adjusting to the new environment  
want to share both the anxiety and joy,  
miss you, knowing the impossibility of ever communicating anything  
it's so irrevocable. Over to my left the turquoise mini,  
behind, above the stream that flows black and cold between black trees

a blue electric train with blue and off-white coaches  
hisses past. The wind is icy —snow—  
and in a few days it'll be Christmas  
our last in Lima, sunbathing and swimming,  
for on the last day of the year  
we're sailing with the evening tide to the Caribbean and . . .  
the children in their blue Marks & Spencer's coats  
coming down the slide —snow in the wind,  
the stream over stones, the impossibility  
—block after cement block of niches, rectangular hives,  
and the coffin-bearers staggering and sweating in black suits,  
the mason cementing it in, no room for your words:

*“you were to me the blue dusk and the smell of summer,  
music that seemed to come from nowhere  
only the scene through which we moved our racing days.”*

I turned, left, hurried through the dusty streets to the car  
and never went back.

Cold hands clutch mine, I open the car-doors,  
black seats and warm inside, I accelerate out, skid on cinders,  
full-throttle in third up the grey hill in wintry dusk.

2.

Consciousness of your absence is constant,  
bathing the children and wanting to tell you how domestic I've become,  
the questions the girls ask me; their directness and unsentimentality.

One night, tucked in, her hair gold on the pillow:

where is mummy buried?      Jane

—copper-red hair, eyes squinting weakly:

is she buried on the beach?      Punta Hermosa

the sands strewn with starfish, shells and jellyfish,

a school of mackerel out in the ocean.

*On the beach.* I'd have liked to answer yes. But it doesn't matter.

You always knew that. She knew it.

Was it only six weeks ago I had my last swim there

over to the rocks, through the breakers, fish jumping,

and back to the children on the sand? Later we climbed the cliffs

and walked along the sandy headland, saw six black porpoise fishing in the bay,

Freyja was walking in front,

long blonde hair almost *her* colour, violet eyes intense,

suntanned swimmer's thighs.

I was alive again, looking for talismen to ward off the evil-eye,

a vivid sense of the casual imminence of . . . .  
the rasp of breath, a hacksaw cough  
sweat cold on her shoulders, face turned to the dawn,  
jaw dropped. I shook her by the shoulders,  
and Michi, you were standing by the side of the bed.  
Good. That you should see and know and remember,  
I have never lied to you. And won't.  
Outside it is mild after two weeks of snow and ice,  
a winter sky, rain in the air, I draw the green curtains,  
the girls watching television downstairs,  
and I suppose Patrick too in the Ferndown bungalow  
—pines at the back and broken forest  
heath. When we arrived still Autumn  
leaves red and russet flying in the wind  
and the squirrels scuttling up branches  
cones scattered in the old gorse and turf,  
and the children frightened on the edge of trees,  
by rain  
    the newness . . . .

3.

My daughter wakes up at night with god knows what dreams and images,  
comes to my room, snuggles in beside me, it's cold  
and I haven't the heart to take her back. She is like her mother must have been at six  
years old.

The nights are the worst unless numbed with liquor  
—the little chapel in the clinic, her body laid out on a slab,  
face wrinkled, jaw dropped,  
shock or surprise, and her hair had lost its gloss  
(don't ever tell me the dead or death have peace or beauty)  
purple blotches over her upper chest and shoulders,  
the woman I'd made love to four hours earlier,  
my dried sperm still in her dead vagina,  
dry-throated I touched her hair, face, but had to leave,  
the body dead is a husk, a shell on the shore,  
beyond contamination.

Again in the bare room  
adjacent to an annex piled up with lavatory-bowls,  
wreaths of carnation and rose, a queer smell faintly of shit,  
and through the window of the coffin

face older, a cut above the top of the black dress  
cold . . . .

Take nothing, you are nothing, a shell on the shore.  
Never to see your children grown-up, your corpse in the place you'd come to dislike,  
invulnerable, yet so vulnerable before the morbid or disturbed eyes,  
but did anything matter to the flesh *now*.

4.

Walking along the path  
the brook twisting between trees below,  
up the bank of frozen mud, gnarled roots  
to the pond grey with thick ice  
white lines of skates traced across,  
redfaced families on the ice  
—no one has painted winter more vividly than Breughel  
his cold lime-green smudges in the snow  
the black-wrapped figures and trees spidery in the distance.  
Our fingers were numb, cheeks flushed,  
below, Sheffield in the hollow of the hills  
anaesthetised by unyielding winter,

the ruins of the 18th-century dam, the first steel-factory, a print of the Industrial  
 Revolution.

I followed you —slim and self-assured in anorak and grey slacks  
 vaulting the gate— the children strung out in ragged file  
 red hair

blonde

and Patrick with my parents

on the edge of pine woods, in the central-heated television room  
 all these families this sunday afternoon warm domestic units, fathers smoking pipes,  
 skating on the ice.

Slopes where you toboggan

snow mottled by grass.

Cold and no woman

the children motherless

and tuesday morning six weeks ago

out of the yellow VW into that room with mirrors,

I see you, Freyja, naked —long blonde hair, small breasts, suntanned legs with  
 swimmer's thighs,

our laughter, lovemaking dissolving tension.

We showered, I washed my hair

and in your serious Nordic way you told me to take care, planned a trip to . . .  
Reykjavik,  
made love again, you straddling me, your hair tickling my mouth,  
that morning a talisman against bad luck,  
courage to face . . . anxiety, a sense of death, the smell of it in my nostrils  
yet once

her parchment face, dropped jaw and transfixed eyes, the changed-skin,  
the struggle in my mind, then flashing off.  
Through the skeletal trees

along the promenade

the wind blowing, sky china-blue and the sea, the sea again, pounding the wall,  
the children and I doing the things she and I had planned for twelve months  
—it's the moment that matters, the rest is nostalgia,  
coming back to sunday tea, blood warmed from the walk.

5.

One afternoon, less than a week afterwards,  
I drove your blue triumph sports-car  
and with the children on your knees  
or cramped in behind our seats

we roared out to Chorrillos  
and up the winding cliff-road  
to the monument from the war with Chile,  
the brownish hills and grey ocean, sunset,  
fishing boats below us round the quay,  
the puce skyscrapers of Lima merging  
into low cloud and mist, the bay  
—strangely I felt exultant; exhilaration  
at being alive, beside you,  
the kids, and driving the powerful car  
—the dead are dead are dead are nothing  
though images like grit still irritate the eyes.

6.

We climbed up rocks alongside the fall —moss, sound of falling water—  
into the copse, climbing steeply,  
the triangle of wood, its apex, the wind blustery, whipping and bending the trees  
so Jane was scared of their whine, the twisting snakes of branches,  
then onto a platform of perfect lawn at the edge of the stream,  
sheep at irregular heights, still and crinkled grey.

Beyond the moor above Ilkley, a blurred checker of red roofs and millstone,  
the Pennines, ridges and humps dissolving in cloud,  
Alan pointing out the old Roman road across the dales  
rusty bracken and olive crowberry.

Wind in our faces, two slim figures —orange raincoat and blue windjammer on the  
skyline,

Nan and Kate above us, plodding along the ridge, the opening to a Hardy novel,  
and the descent down the paved-path to the water-pump.

Wordsworth country, plans to hike in the lakes, following his walks,  
reading the relevant sections from *The Prelude*;

then drove back to the grey-stone house for scones, garlick-sausage, cherry cake;  
drank in some pub, I read poems, Kate was sick with an enteritis  
—there's never a single moment's pause, each shift has its harmony,  
each sudden change its rhythm, a bend in the river, cataracts and rapids,  
an occasional ox-bow.

Next day along the River Wharf

flowing somewhat swollen beneath the stone bridge towards the North Sea,  
the children paddling in the shallows,  
we skimmed pebbles across the water to the dead tree,  
watching the dance and fluency over the rapids, hoping to spot a kingfisher in the  
willows,

poetry and prosody, still searching, and the children down the slide,  
on the swings, the weather warm as Spring, no wind.

50

7.

Driving back in sunday traffic, following the Wharf,  
the line of hills and amber sun clarifying each tree along the ridge,  
trying to find the motorway out of Leeds before dark  
and a steady seventy behind dipped lights,  
orange glitter of Barnsley and Rotherham through thin mist,  
the kids munching sweets, I was happy, lost in the technicalities of driving  
at speed on smooth asphalt; images back behind the eyes,  
the harmony, the rhythm, distances linked  
    two months before 8000 miles away  
    linked a curve on some graph,  
    in the shadow of bare hills scabbed with shanties,  
    All Saints Day  
    cars knotted and entwined up narrow streets  
    with stalls selling liquor pastries skewered meat,  
    my senses alert, detached through drugs,  
    voluptuous bodies, women with cinnamon-scented and honey-coloured skin,

DAVID TIPTON

carrying flowers, an aroma of spices and incense,  
the muddled funerals;  
rejected the perfunctory priest who approached our half-circle,  
and pall-bearers hiked it on their shoulders,  
staggering and sweating half-a-mile between honeycombs  
no grass, builders' rubble scattered over baked mud,  
block after block to *El Abundio A28*;  
the mason inserted it into the arched black-niche,  
20 minutes watched him slap and trowel the fresh cement  
and seal up the slab neatly,  
carve her name upon it, no poetry;  
I stood smoking a cigarette, yellow bile in my mouth,  
turned quickly away, left, left, never went back.

8.

“Cold tongue  
of the little tyger  
his banging kisses  
—I love you and miss you”  
in a letter.

I never saw it that way, Blake's tyger,  
imagination and energy, perhaps, the forests of night,  
    warm tongue  
    that tuesday  
    a black comb  
    and mirrors round and level with the bed  
    aquiline nose   squarish head,  
the first German girl I'd . . . or put it another way,  
you efficiently handling your yellow VW  
    —I treat a car cavalierly—  
you taking off your glasses to kiss, cold tongue,  
    after a lecture on Byron  
in the blue sports, blonde hair in my mouth  
    sperm in yours,  
you did it beautifully,  
    still hungover from red wine, each hangover  
    a taste of death  
nearer by an inch, a year,  
    two days before she died . . . did she whiff its stale breath,  
    know it within her?

I don't think so;  
 search in the last two photos —red sweater and black leather skirt,  
 above the river and emerald ferns, the white pebbles,  
 hills of shale, ruins with fragile skeletons, dead hair—  
     she looks sick  
 sitting on the stone bench cut like a niche into the wall above lines of surf,  
 with the three children, she doesn't look . . . but did she have a sense of . . .  
 or did I destroy her cell by cell with my insensitivity,  
 blindness to . . . that tightness in her chest unhappiness . . .  
 no, that's irrational . . . yet wondered if those red blotches  
 that gasping for breath were like drowning or suffocation,  
 was there some failure of relationship?  
     I cannot blame myself,  
     nor for you, Freyja, my love.

9.

We were flying in a small aeroplane  
 a two-seater prop towards the vermilion and saffron sunset,  
 in a dream of perfect love . . .  
 yes, those lines from *Epipsychidion*:

"A ship is floating in the harbour now . . .  
 say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?"  
 but was Shelley wrong, did Byron have more . . .  
     yet he died before middle-age  
 the same age thirty six as . . . . . my age now?

Sheffield darkens, I dreamt she was alive, I close the green curtains  
 planning to read this city's history, take trips,  
 finish projects, make it . . .  
 make it in spite of the knife's edge  
 —the dead are dead are nothing,  
 the moment matters, the rest's nostalgia.

#### 10.

Walking along the waterfront in bright sun,  
 the *Lord Nelson* and *Sailors Arms*,  
 the *Gulf Seal* out of Galveston Texas, docked,  
 Patrick scared by the bang of its rocket, a cold wind  
 and shingle bit of beach, the estuary and island beyond  
 —I should have stroked your hair

touched your eyelids, outlined the contours of your face,  
tracing the line of nose and chin, cherished your hands  
small with bitten nails, listened to your talk,  
plumbed a line more deeply into your mind.

Sunday morning and we drove on to Canford Cliffs,  
down to the promenade, the sea rolling in against the wall  
—a photograph three days before  
with you wearing a blue and green *chaleca*  
in a stone alcove above the Pacific,  
the children around you. A little sad,  
thinner in the face, and strangely innocent.

Back at the bungalow, lunch-time, sunday or monday,  
we watch a grey squirrel eating bread beneath the firs at the end of the garden,  
later the New Forest, sodden underfoot, pungent and humid,  
the Rufus Stone where Tyrrel fired that cynical arrow 900 years ago  
—how soon one forgets, I forget,  
and the children. When we arrived after a fast drive south,  
the Thames flooded at Lechlade,  
Patch in blue jumper dimpled and laughing,

white-blonde hair delighted to see us; their  
adaptability and resilience.

I took a photo of the girls wading in the stream  
beneath the bridge, the sparkle of mild sun,  
then strolled along the rutted path down the dale,  
climbed up the ridge, down, scaled boulders of millstone-grit,  
she began to cry walking back towards the turquoise mini  
—they miss you, the girls, I miss you,  
nothing is quite the same and will not be, ever.

11.

Driving across the Lincolnshire wolds  
headlights undipped, beamed towards the spectral trees  
yellow cats' eyes guiding the wheel,  
a fox caught, the grass verge as I swing the corner  
and a rabbit hopping across white tarmac  
    we'd waited till her sister went to bed  
    fucked naked on the carpet  
    and I'd left after a midnight search  
    for a petrol-station open in the port.

Thought of you, our early-morning partings 16 years ago  
walking or cycling home, sadly, a sense of freedom  
Radio 1 on in the car, the glow of a cigarette, no one else on the road,  
Gainsboro, Bawtry sleeping, a pallid world.

Taking strength from her body  
wondered if you'd have needed this with such urgency  
sex. How much you wanted England.

You'd have understood, you knew me, that restless need for movement  
driving too fast, forcing an issue through, as if time were short  
and it is. Hurrying things along, superstitious or obsessed by ritual,  
avoiding the dark shadows of the swamp —“the moment counts—”  
coming over the rise of motorway, lights of Sheffield a flickering network,  
and I knew you'd have understood that.

12.

With an ordnance-survey map you planned it  
and after a late breakfast of bacon and eggs  
we set out in three cars, yellow, turquoise and navy;  
parked mine in mud at the first dam,  
water torrenting down white, the roar of this engineered cascade

—“made out with a girl one night on the grass in front of it,  
yes, it was summer, but still quite cool.”

Six miles up the Derwent River system we begin the walk  
along the creek, over the millstone bridge,  
Jane’s hair is burnished copper above her black plastic raincoat.  
Last night went to a party, missed match-of-the-day on TV,  
failed to kidnap one of the married-women,  
and later, playing Bob Dylan, dreaming of Nantucket Island Tucson and Santa Barbara  
—I am free, yet not free.

Out on my own in front . . . the absolute absurdity of her dying  
—that cafe above the bay in warm sun where we drank whiskey through the afternoon,  
I couldn’t believe it, and we drove on to the beach  
where the young men and their girls playing pelota  
were beautiful. I shambled along, scuffing the sand over my black-leather shoes,  
a sense of unreality, the smell of the sea, sun and the sound of surf,  
no words of consolation and solace had meaning.  
Act V Scene 2, the VC10 flying over sierra, the islands of the Spanish Main,  
coming in to land in rain and darkness

safely, the runway in mist, held tears hurting the eyes, the children sleeping on rugs  
in the back of the station-wagon.

Now scattered out along the hillside  
while I scale the serrated parapet of the second dam,  
the water in the reservoir rippling in the breeze,  
DN describing a journey from bar to bar in Andalucia  
a bullfight in Ronda, planning to visit Spain for the wine-festival,  
my brother and I doing a three-quarter movement with a chunk of turf  
that disintegrates into black loam.

**David Tipton**

## COMING DOWN MONADNOC

### The Drunk Descending

I'm running down,  
 rocks obese as credit unions,  
 hemlocks jabbing with loose fists —  
 their ankles turn like mine  
 in this tipsy topsoil.

You're 'the one who stands alone,'  
 Monadnoc. A little wine and sun and look at you.  
 Twirling tamaracks like maypoles,  
 dancing and frisking — you're a sight  
 as bloodshot as mine.

But here's the spring.  
 The place is mobbed mosquitoes gunning.  
 'Gentlemen: I have no quarrel with you.'  
 Ah, but the wingèd suckers draw on me,  
 gaggles of slugs and slaps  
 and when my head clears

two palms beat like a heart with water.  
 They come on again,  
 sweethearts in feathers and boas this time,  
 and I peel one's culottes:  
 tongue up one's ear and spit one dizzy:

but there are so many.  
 Throw up the gouts of hopeless water  
 submerged in their warm petticoats,  
 give up for a while . . .  
 kisses and blood in my ears,  
 an ancient sleep chuckles.

**At the Peak**

Sunned and winded: the place for erection  
of flags: for the Indian lay  
to touch Spirit: I see some girls.  
Toes in a rainwater catch, they're twaddling,

and I am a choir of the most high  
lust, chest and seraphic locks  
bare to the sun. The girls  
leave. I take to the shade

and try bread and chianti  
with the massed rock and sky.  
I am the peak now: the night will bend to me:  
until some birds drawing a circle

below, higher and embracing the peak:  
three redtail hawks rounding the sky out,  
their dances are rings out of sight —  
and I'm a man drinking again

with dashes and ellipses of dragonflies and honeybees.  
The peak infolds its other sounds.  
Sanguine voices in the rocks'  
jugular, feel the pulse, hear them and see them —

a couple of boys! Redfaced and wet  
from the climb. They spot me; they want a drink.  
Their eyes keep saying: You go down first.  
The night won't be the same. I leave.

**Sleeping It Off**

Awake suddenly as voltage.

The motel is squealing  
past trucks like swine,

I'm running down.

The dark spits anthers  
and stigmas of mosquitoes.  
Heat turns like a great wheel.

I saw the hemlocks now  
not green but a screech of yellow,  
flames soared up the mountain,  
their beaks swallowing boughs whole:

in a stretched belly of smoke I lay  
blinking my eyes to change things.

The trees were black as women  
dazed and silent.

Mosquitoes close in now,  
to save me? load me in the trucks' vans,  
dropping back off to sleep

in pieces, semi-divine,  
shutting my eyes to sleep it off

but roaring down to a hundred cities  
that turn and moan  
like sovereign women bedridden —

my palps go for the throat  
of their terminal illnesses.

Edward McCorie

**EARLY LOVE**

First the lamb comes  
from that distance, his stench  
moves first unknown to us, and  
the darkness in his wool unknown.  
As if we were first-born  
the lamb comes first  
before his odor.

What's the lamb next, the near  
lamb, his wool-smell burning?  
What's the lamb next? Not  
the lion? The lion's gone  
ranging our flesh. Animals  
gather for what's next  
if not the lion. Sparrows  
and insects in the grass  
wait for that new arrival.  
The zebra's flung over this land,  
his stripes cast, the zebra  
next over, in animal eyes.

There are no people yet, the lion  
gone, the zebra in a flash, the latter  
hooves struck down, through our sight,  
though we are not yet human, all  
these eyes fevered, after the zebra,  
his swift passage, and delight.  
The zebra becomes either his stripes  
in the distance, or the animal  
next to him in flight. Animals gather  
in our animal eyes, without people  
yet, in names they forget without  
people yet, the lion ranging.

These are flesh, these fish  
under the skin, these fish next

because things are forgotten,  
these fish before us, and their  
skin white, if we betray them  
this late in the day, the sun  
going down us, like the lion range  
this single evening, December  
when the zebra hoofs brightened  
the grass, with no people before  
these fish forgotten with names.  
Wish there were people, already  
wish we live after one kiss,  
and I could speak our names now,  
and you speak us, wish us already.

The full body, in his wings,  
still poised in his thunder,  
these bird wings brush us,  
fire our bodies like a god  
between us. If we were yet.  
And we tremble like the body  
disturbed by its own wings,  
not any person yet, neither  
you nor me yet; yet we are  
touched by the fierce wings  
of the bird poised, between us:  
his bones would break in our  
hands too eager, to crush,  
and his body thrown down  
as if wings betrayed, like  
the fish white, thunderous,  
in some future passion. No,  
not yet our persons, not even  
quite human, neither of us,  
but *his* still, full body,  
and the desire of his wings  
upon us, on his each side, on  
our bellies his brief, fluttering

love. Just so: we don't go  
blind to that passionate body  
still, and see wings only. Our  
eyes close at night, not  
gently as once unknown love.

For just now, I'd let us:  
be forgotten like the name  
of this passion: the lion ranges  
our flesh out, when the zebra's  
striped throughout the grassland,  
in the animal witness of sparrows  
and insects, and their eyes looking  
only like animals, who never  
know their own sex, as ours is:  
for persons are born now. Fear  
gives us new enemies, the fish,  
turned under like seeds, weave  
beneath us. What will grow  
next after the lamb come  
too near us? Rather the bird  
unknown between us still, wings  
kissing his body, tender to bellies.  
Better nothing so open as wings  
could open us. This air moving,  
our breath in one kiss only. The  
body's repose before us, better  
nothing than this greeting; only  
the lion rages our flesh: we won't  
deny his pleasure of us. Too much  
known among us: the fish betrayed  
with the body of wings, the long  
past zebra scores flesh. All past  
love does us. The animal brilliant  
between us, and the bird veiled  
still in wings, and this praise  
of the lion's range. And arrival.

Warren Fine

## THE NAPKIN

No one knows where it came. The napkin.  
It cleaned the furnace. We thanked it.  
It rested. We washed it. It cleaned  
The dryer. The washer. We bleached it.  
It rested. It cleaned the floors. They  
Shone. It cleaned the windows. They  
Sparkled. We gave it a box. It rested.  
We gave it a fork. It cleaned it.  
We gave it a spoon. It cleaned it.  
It dusted the cobwebs. We gave it  
Spiders. It ate them. We dirtied the steps.  
It cleaned them. We gave it wax.  
It polished the floors. We told it to rest.  
It polished the stove. We stole the wax.  
It washed the sink. We dyed it. It grew.  
We put it outside. It painted the house.  
We cut it in strips. It mowed the lawn.  
We bought it a hammock. It sang  
Lullabies. We went on vacation.  
It cut down the trees. We tied it in knots.  
It ate the grass. It turned green.  
We began to mow it. It drank the gas.  
We set it on fire. It crawled on the porch.  
We squirted the hose. It cried in Greek.  
We gave it a shovel. It dug a ditch.  
We gave it turnips. It turned into dust.  
We planted corn. It grew. We ate pop corn  
And choked. No one could ever speak  
After that. We turned into air  
In Nebraska. This is why there is a town  
No one can see in the middle of fields  
South of Grand Island where everyone  
Knows the meaning of love. I alone  
Am escaped to tell each of you this.  
This is how you know that desolate  
Bareness of Prairies that sound  
Like napkins polishing bones.

**John McKernan**

It is fitting that the collected poems of *Charles Olson*, apart from the Maximus series, should be gathered into a gargantuan volume, **ARCHAEOLOGIST OF MORNING**. *Cape Goliard/Grossman* have produced a beautiful quarto (1970. Hardbound, \$12.95); its only flaw an absence of pagination.

Olson disciples can almost hear their master in two publications, both transcribed from tapes made during Olson's visit to Beloit College in 1968. Informally called "The Beloits" Olson's contribution to the Lectureship in Modern Poetry is a mixture of prose theory and illustration from his own poetry, both old and new, under the title **POETRY AND TRUTH** (*Four Seasons Foundation*. 1971. Paper, \$2.50). Olson also talked informally and at length about Black Mountain College. A transcription of this tape is printed in **MAPS**, No. 4 (*Shippensburg State College, Shippensburg, Pa.*, 17257. \$2.50). The whole issue is by and about Olson, and was guest edited by George F. Butterick, who also transcribed and edited the Beloit lectures.

A fascinating and beautiful volume is **TING: THE CALDRON: CHINESE ART AND IDENTITY IN SAN FRANCISCO** (*Glide Urban Center*. 330 Ellis St., S.F. 94102. 1970. \$3.50). **TING** presents a broad spectrum of life and culture in transition, from autobiography to an account of Tai Chi Chuan, a traditional form of exercise. Gary Snyder's translation of Han Shuan's "Cold Mountain Poems" is included, along with the original, and the volume is handsomely illustrated with photographs, calligraphy, and reproductions of paintings.

*Erica Jong* is a young, refreshing poet. The title poem of her first volume, **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES** (*Holt, Rinehart and Winston*. Paper, \$2.95; cloth, \$5.95) is her complete poem, for it combines into a long, funny, but touching sequence her favorite themes: food, the body, sex and poetry. This volume contains the obligatory Plath poem, the obligatory explicit sex poem (hers funnier than most), but now that these are out of the way Erica Jong can concentrate on developing her own voice and view. We

find it in many poems in this volume — most of all in the scrumptious title poem—and we welcome it.

**REGARDING WAVE.** *Gary Snyder. New Directions. \$4.75 cloth. \$1.75 paper.*

Here is song after song of praise — every line a miracle of how bright the tarnished old English language is when called to the service of absolutely fresh perception, each separate sense sharp, unjaded, going out and into the sources, the clear running streams, with joy and humor. Snyder's poems usually spring from clearly identified spots of space in time, often bear a date-line or a note of the town or island or ranch of origin. But the heart of the poem is often the awareness of how far these dimensions extend. In "Shark Meat," after an account, in sharp detail, of the occasion of the killing and cutting-up of the shark:

Sweet miso sauce on a big boiled cube  
as I lift a flake

to my lips,

Miles of water, Black current,  
Thousands of days

recrossing his own paths  
to tangle our net

to be part of  
this loom.

For all the sensitive participation in oriental consciousness, Snyder remains very close to the main current of American writing, as it flows through Thoreau and Melville, in this acute awareness of topography and the loom of time.

There is much laughter in this book—the laughter of abundant well-being (as in "Why I Laugh When Kai Cries"), the bitter laughter of the satirist who sees the incongruities by which a desperate society lays waste to itself and to innocent others ("In the Night, Friend," and the crisp, devastating "The Trade"), and some wonderfully joyously funny poems, such as "Kyoto Born in Spring Song," "To Fire," and — a favorite — "Long Hair."

This is really a remarkable book, a treasure. The poems sing with clarity, dance with health. They create their own tradition.

**MAPS.** *Howard McCord. Kayak. \$1.50 paper.*

McCord is one of the young poets profoundly influenced by Gary Snyder, and it is a great tribute to him that one can read his book without uneasiness just after reading Snyder's. McCord's poems have their own voice, their own kind of humor. The whole volume is good and should go through many printings. And some of the poems in it are really unforgettable—"Listening to Maps," for one, "The Bear that Came to the Wedding," "Reptiles," "Four Birds," and "The Poet's Regiment," to name some others. McCord's genius is comic. Fortunately, he can laugh at his own weakness for long (and foreign) words. It's a weakness he shares with distinguished predecessors, and it's the only weakness I noticed in this really marvelous little volume.

**FINDINGS.** *Wendell Berry. The Prairie Press. \$4.50.*

A handsome job of bookmaking, **FINDINGS** is an uneven volume of poems. Berry is a farmer-poet-ecologist-prophet whose ideas and values we anchor to. As poet Berry excels when he can anchor his statement to a particular. When he states directly, his voice cracks with vehemence. When he writes of his grandfather, the details sing and evoke love.

**TO SEE, TO TAKE.** *Mona Van Duyn. Atheneum. \$3.95.*

We rejoice that so good a book won the National Book Award for poetry. Miss Van Duyn's poetry is wide-ranging in form and theme, graceful, funny. She looks straight at the object, and through the object to the reader. What she sees is not what we have seen, but will, many thanks to her vision.

**UPLANDS.** *A. R. Ammons. Norton. \$5.00 cloth. \$1.95 paper.***BRIEFINGS.** *A. R. Ammons. Norton. \$6.00 cloth. \$1.95 paper.*

No contemporary poet excels Ammons in his understanding of the concepts that emerge from contemporary science, particularly geology, astronomy and physics, or at least in his ability to embody that understanding in experience. "Corson's Inlet" is one

of the great poems of our age because of its perfect elucidation of indeterminacy as the scientist understands it. The poems of the two new volumes are often informed with comparable insight, though they are uneven, and neither contains anything to equal "Corson's Inlet." **UPLANDS** is the better of the two, and some of the poems in it, like "Conserving the Magnitude of Uselessness," are major, haunting statements. **BRIEFINGS**, as the subtitle asserts, consists of "poems small and easy," shorter pieces of the last several years. They are a pleasure to read, yet less important and memorable than those in **UPLANDS**.

**TREE MEDITATION AND OTHERS.** *Alan Stevens. Swallow. \$5.*

An absorbing book, hard to put down. Alan Stevens is a poet of the outdoors. Out of meticulous observation he builds a quiet intensity that makes, as he puts it, the objects he sees become subjects. Trees in particular fascinate him, and us, as a cottonwood in the title poem, and Sitka spruce in "The Green Cape, with Voices," a long, greatly green depiction of rain forest, punctuated marvellously by New York City voices, mostly anti-tree, taken from an article in **LOOK**. A book to reread.

**THE BOOK OF NIGHTMARES.** *Galway Kinnell. Houghton Mifflin. \$4.50 cloth. \$2.95 paper.*

It is a brave poet who prefixes a 75-page poem with an epigraph from Rilke: "this is beyond description." "This" is "death, the whole of death,— even before life's begun,/ to hold it also gently, and be good." Kinnell moves courageously into this nightmare world and brings its bloody flowers tenderly out into the light of language. The poet, "under the Sign/ of the Bear, who flounders through chaos/ in his starry blubber" recognizes the impossibility of his quest:

*you will feel all your bones  
break  
over the holy waters you will never drink.*

Recurring images of icy obliterating zero chill this poem (which, like "Song of Myself," is many

poems). The passage through chaos is often squalid and smells bad, as fear smells bad. Why should we follow this poet into his private bad dreams of eviscerating chickens, of necrophiliac crab-lice? Small reason, if the whole poem were like the section "The Dead Shall Be Raised Incorruptible," which is not rescued from banality even by the wry spirit of Villon. But the dull passages of the poem often turn out to be veins, carrying the tired language back to the heart, where the healthy muscle sends it out again in arterial bursts. In these pulsing passages we know, as we have always known of Kinnell, that we are with one of the major modern poets.

Only when the vision of the "holy waters" rises straight up from the fire in the flesh does Kinnell give us the poetry that transforms our experience as it illuminates his. Here, in the main pulse of this rich and potent volume, we share the sacramental inter-relatedness of father and his child dying into life, of the eater and the eaten, the bear and the flower, of the sleeper with the dead whose shoes he wears, whose mattress he weights. Consider, for example, the passage that begins like this:

Of that time in a Southern jail,  
 when the sheriff, as he cursed me  
 and spat, took my hand in his hand, rocked  
 from the pulps the whorls  
 and tented archways into the tabooed realm,  
     that underlife  
 where the canaries of the blood are singing,  
     pressed  
 the flesh-flowers  
 into the dirty book of the  
 police-blotter, afterwards what I remembered  
     most  
 was the care, the almost loving  
 animal gentleness of his hand on my hand.

In this section and what follows, and over and over and over in this certainly major work, Kinnell succeeds in drawing the reader "beyond description" into that clearing in the forest of the night where the bear and the sheriff and the child and the reader meet—and perhaps find they can laugh.