

THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL
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PRIORITY

The Main thing is do y
love him that's the
main thing

 i say

 cuz if y love him
that's the main thing. That's what
we always say

 eh

 Mother? The main
thing's are you
happy that's the main
thing i always say cuz if he
hasn't made y happy better find another
way while yr still young and have yr health

 Yes

we know y
love him he's made y
happy anyone can tell But about his
idea

 and the

Money

 we were wondering

well

the MAIN

 THING

 IS

 will it sell?

Margery Dorfmeister

THE UNICORN

If I've been lucky to see it in later years
Floating across some landscape in a dream,
I've my sister to thank. She never spoke of it
After that first time, but that was enough.
I was dead asleep. She came into my room
And shook me awake, saying she'd seen it.
(I was five, she eleven: fifty years ago,
Yet I still see the face I woke startled to
Glowing like a lone figure lit up onstage.)
Seen what? I asked her, sitting up afraid.
The unicorn! Her eyes shone. The unicorn!
She'd seen it below her window, by the pond—
As white and delicate, she said, as an egg.
(Mother and Father slept at the other end
Of the hall, where the house bordered the road;
Our rooms were in the back, above the garden.)
I must have looked bewildered; she went on.
She'd been awakened by a sound of tapping
That seemed outside the house, yet inside too.
She got up, went to her window and opened it,
Hugging herself against the cool Spring air.
Leaning out, she cried aloud to see it:
Moon-drenched, single-horned, in slow ballet,
The unicorn moved below from window to window
Tapping on glass as if to be let in:
It lowered its head outside each room and set
Its great horn to rest against the panes, then
With unnatural touch lifted it and let it fall:
The sounds were notes the influence of the moon
Seemed to make visible, single silver coins
To purchase something yet to be disclosed.
Here my sister cried out,

stopping the unicorn.

He looked up and saw her, his animal-eyes
And her girl-eyes meeting in that halflight.
I knew from what my sister said, from the way
She said it, that such meeting of eyes was a special
Kind of knowing, a knowing both were meant for
And I should witness. He looked up, she down:
The air between them was a stairs, and what
Bright traffickings, could we have seen!

Then he
Whirled backwards, all silent, and stepped or glided
(My sister said his moves were never clearly
This or that, but mixes of all moves)
Over to the old stone-encircled pond,
From which the fish had gone. Now it became
A center for him, a dark hub to hold him
In, as he did what he came for, or what
My sister thought he came for. What he did
Was dance. The garden was his stage. The pond
What he wove his moves, and himself, around.
It was a dance in ankle-deep moonlight,
Moonlight so thick upon the ground it seemed
The unicorn took care to move just so,
Fearing to displace the milky stuff.
He went round. He went round and made a world
Unto himself. He wove bright circles that night,
Circles within circles, and circles counter.
Where he went, weaving, the moonlight went,
Clung to his back like a load, a light performer.
And the horn, the starward horn, was as a rod,
Something straight to chastize all that roundness.
It divided the white air like a knife

Pulling through silk, but here the magic moonsilk
Healed itself behind the pulling blade.
If dance has tone as words and music do,
The tone of this dance flirted, yes and no;
Now sweet, a sliding through a fey medium,
Now muscled press against heavy air.
Nor did it change back and forth but was
Two in one, a simple melody spread
Into boughs, a skater on mirror-ice.
What was this dance so North and South?
Was it a wildness trimmed with ceremony
Or a ceremony rouged with wildness?
It seemed a measure formal yet hot, a kind
Of formal fire.

My sister told all this
In broken glimpses, pictures vague and loose,
Impressions wavering like underwater leaves,
As if the dance had witched her into dream.
But one moment she remembered well:
The unicorn rose on two legs, like one of us,
And slow-spun himself around the pond,
Impossibly erect, his forehooves raised
In ambiguous elevation, a white gesture.
The gesture made a center for the garden;
It gathered the garden to itself, held it
As if to kiss it somehow into meaning:
The pond a center for the unicorn,
The unicorn a center for the garden,
My sister a dream-center for my night.
She said the dance seemed something meant
for her
And her alone, like words whispered in an ear,
Yet seemed somehow equally impersonal,

An impulse sent blindly from out a void
And destined before morning to recede.
It was then, his hooves high in the air,
The unicorn opened his mouth as if to speak
Or sing. My sister never knew: no sound
Came. But he held his mouth open like that
All the while he moved through his rehearsal
Of zero, moonzero. He made a procession
Of himself, a procession in its own track,
Eating itself up, or renewing itself
Or both.

Then it happened; I screamed. In
my sleep.

My sister thought it was the unicorn—
His mouth was open, a voice was on the air.
Soon the illusion broke. She heard me cry
And turned, startled, only to turn back and see
The unicorn gone, the moonlawn shadowed
By the long shadow of a growing cloud.
My sister said she shivered then, either
From cold air or thinking on that image:
His mouth open, and dumb, my voice afloat
And bodiless, something looking for a home.
She said I seemed to cry out on its behalf
Or it drew out my cry, with open mouth.
Whichever, things coming together that way
Frightened her, and so she turned and ran
Into my room, waking me, her face on fire
With that cool fire the unicorn had burned
Across the night. It burns across me now
When I think of it. It burned across her then
And for years afterwards. She didn't say so
But she didn't have to: the moves that moonbeast

Signed with his body on the air that night,
Like some bright power signing all its names,
Had been a promise made for her to see,
A promise hard to keep, yet impossible
Not to: I mean, there will be such burning
Though the air seem cold.

 Anyway, she woke me
And that's where I began. No, I won't say
My sister told it to me just that way.
The years have done something to the story.
She gave me seeds. Hard, white seeds. Gave them
In the middle of the night. I was the soil.
I'm still the soil. The story is flowers.
And the flowers are white, like something bled.
I think the moon draws the blood down like that,
Back into the roots of things, and they go white
Like the unicorn. Men faint under the moon.
My dreams have gotten whiter through the years.
I'll see the unicorn against that white
One day, or not see him, snow on snow.

Philip Dacey

THREE POEMS**Asthma**

rattle the drums
and blow short bursts
on the horns.
I like the noise,
feed on confusion and doubt.
when you've almost forgotten
the sound of a clear sigh
I'm there to remind you.
I bring the sudden change,
the quick charge of winter.
the brittle branches of my fingers
scrape across your body
whenever the wind blows.
I'll steal away your lungs,
breathe with them
at my own slow pace.
show that you fear me
and I'll grow like a weed,
a long white worm of breath
and coiling air.
I'm always hungry:
I'll kiss your children
on the mouth
when the sun goes down.

I pile up your chest
with stones and dirt,
change your dreams of the past
into doubts about tomorrow.
run to the telephone, mother,
hide in clouds of steam
with your children. hide in bottles
of tiny pills. I'm here,
never farther from you
than your own doubt.
you can't run away,
I've got you chained to the air.
there is no flight
except into the sea
blowing softly all around us.

Advice

"there will be three times,"
he said to me, wisdom growing
like hair from his ears,
fingers framing me
as if they held a glass,
"three times when you'll weep,
grind fist into palm, squeeze your
bony knees together as you display
your family around the table
like watches. the first time,
when, passing to me the mashed potatoes,
you recognize there in the bowl
my steaming, buttered death.

the second, when you see your own
final hours begin slowly inside you
like a bicycle race,
blossom like a red-bud tree.
the last hurts most, claims more:
when you watch your own son living always,
mowing down women as if they were weeds,
growing plump in a spring sun."

Flying, Six Months Pregnant

men in white coats,
agents of a mysterious foreign power,
have stencilled this shell
with the words "Frontier Airlines."
we leave the egg of earth
in a wave of winds and cold
I feel deep in my womb.
I feel like I could
swallow the world today.
we're sealed off from water,
brown air. Harry's fallen asleep,
gin sloshing in his belly, sterile.
how he hurts me sometimes!
my belly is taut
against the surgical white
of my dress, my breasts are swollen,
I feel like a queen, a flower,
swell like the evening sun,
like a smooth lung.
closing my eyes now, leaping away

from the tired metal and tired men,
I swell and burst into fluffs of white
above the Rockies,
three miles above Denver.
smoking petals float in search of
new earth, men hung like stallions.
this will be a new start.
my dress balloons around me,
I'm a damp mushroom.
a sweaty farmer pauses
beside his great silo,
dark stains on the visor of his cap,
water dripping from his hair like the rain.
he smiles as he looks up my dress.
he won't be disappointed.
I tumble and glide over his fields
while the neat lawns of Pueblo, Colorado,
bleed green light into the evening.
so long, Harry.

David Citino

FIVE GRUMBLES

from the song-poems of Francois Mouton

1. The Forswearing Of Women

You roisterers with your codpieces full
as new wineskins, on your tooting way
to the darker entrance in the dark doorway,
drop off a book or two at my place,
some scholarly tome on yellowed vellum
uncared-for under its dust like a beggar's grave,
for I will become a doctor, treating those men
frostbitten by coy looks, flamed by unwashed
cunts,

and never again think of a pink thigh —no,
no, get that thing out of my little song!

There are volumes done in leather fit for a
cuirass,
on anything possible —the comparative lengths
of moles' whiskers, why the stars do not burn
holes in the night sky, how to count
the sands of the beach on your fingertips.
And I will study these in a solitary light,
with thoughts turning in my head like well-oiled
axles

until I drop, like a bookmark, in sleep
—and will wake in the morning reddened by
the antiquated pressure of pince-nez!

2. The Curse On Collectors

Bagh! Why do they pester me, these debt-
hounds,
these ones who suckled at two swollen money-
pouches?
Do they think I can speak to my pockets as a
baker
to his loaves, and watch them rise in the sun?
Here, check my purse with your crow's-eyes,
it's empty, it's no more than an 80-year-old-fool
wheezing on bought women. Well I'm busy now,
I'm going to open my drowsy eyes lash by lash
and cannot be disturbed. Go knock at a door
that has a knocker, and secret *it* in your fist.

And if you whine at my window once more, I
swear
the coins you seek so assiduously will be pounded
into your eyes for inspection, and weigh you
down
as is the custom for corpses. The gold-dust you
want,
it will collect on your shoulders as the common
dust
coats figurines, and will afford you that much
joy.

There are bars of silver to be impressed with
your seal
when you topple from your servant-polished
carriages
teeth-first. And you will not collect another ring
without its knuckle, grinding into your bulged
cheeks!

3. The Exorcism Of Rule

Now I don't want to sound complaining again,
but
there is a certain officer of the guard in this town
whose one wish is to see my neck dye the dirty
napkin
lining his wicker basket. If I spit,
I've assaulted a priest. If I assault a priest,
Lord forbid my theorizing, I've sodomize-raped
a whole orphanage. Every time he sees me
it's the day for using the left nostril only
and there I am with my illegal right. Is it any
wonder
I've been moved to making love with his wife?
So now I'm in the granary basement, shivering
among the sacks with my only friends for two
days
the rats. We all have our cats to hide from.
I've paid my last coin, the good one
to pass any alchemist's test, to the old witch-
woman
for a slogan that will work this time. So now
I charge you, fat-assed and basset-jowled
guardian of public safety, to leave my skin
whole.
May your farts propel you across the
embankments
to wreak your next vigil on eels and toads!

4. The Rue Of Mortal Ills

So now I'm spastic: my brow squints with the
fervor
of a dog digging for fleas. You remember my
eyesight,
my friends, that could pick out a crab
in a lady's bush across town —now I'm lucky
to spot the lady. Meat could roast
on my forehead. About the phlegm,
and the rheum, those nasty muds of the flesh,
the less said the better. And my body confuses
direction: my prick won't leap up, my food
won't stay down. Tell me, is it fair?

What I need is a wench with a body so fine
it will serve as a whetstone to hone the edge
of my vision on —that will keep me
looking clear! Yes, and she will fetch wine
home in a bottle cooled overnight
on the stream-bottom: balm
against fevered foreheads. What she will cook,
her exquisite nut-stuffed partridge, will
stay down; what leaps up —wow! Meanwhile,
my throat is sore as I sing this. Tell me, is it fair?

5. The Leave-Taking

Yes, we have come on hard times in this city.
Just yesterday I saw a cart of peas trundle by
—they were apples! The cart had three wheels on
and one chopped into a wooden leg for its
driver.

There's a lady I know, she runs her business at
night
and last week lost her pay when the expected
cock
slipped into her was a knife —now she's sewn
shut,
she's sharpened her teeth to be daggers. I want
to go
someplace so peaceful, so plenteous —ah, but
if we write it in such times, it will never come
true!

I'm going to the hills for awhile, I hear
you can spear down game there with a toothpick,
and if you leave the door unlatched your only
skulking in
will be the night air's, not a chill air, it curls
on your chest like a kitten. If you pluck a pear
from its branch, another fills its place like drops
of water, no end to them, from a pipe-leak.
Rain drums stones, and all the air makes music.
And one can find women there who —ah, but
if I write what I know of, you'll crowd out there
too!

Translated by Albert Goldbarth

MY LAST MEETING WITH KAFKA

He had a wilder look than usual.
He had been waiting there three years.
"Well, Franz," I began
He jumped up, slammed the door
and dragged me to his table.
I bought him a drink
but he didn't touch it.
He spoke in lightning,
despising my shirt.
How many nights in a row
had I stayed awake?
"None," I confessed,
and he grabbed me by my feet and started
shaking.
"Laughter," "Sun" and two "Who cares?" fell
out
onto the floor.
Smelling of garlic
he thrust his chin at me
and ground his heel into my logic.
Had I rented the black room? he shouted,
turned in my money and my name?
I explained that I had changed my mind
and wanted my family back.
He threw them at me,
bruising my wife's left thigh,
and spit in my tea. His
mouth's dark tunnel burned my eyes.
I bowed and left
and wished him death and fame.

Christopher Fahy

**FREDERICKS HOSPITAL, 1855,
ANNOTATIONS FROM A LIFE OF KIERKEGAARD**

*Everything is symbol; I myself am a
myth about myself, for is it not as a myth
that I hasten to this meeting.*

—from *Diary of a Seducer*

1.

Before dawn, you wake in a room
grown suddenly tighter.
Faint blisters of light have
begun to surface on the walls.
Bones of frost are needled on the windows.
You cough into the bowl
that waits beside your bed.
You think: Somewhere, in the streets beyond,
hump backed, spindly,
shoes whittled with age,
straw flesh leaking from his coat,
a man pokes his way towards the park.
Sometimes the light from a girl's window
branches out above him.
He cannot see her ploughed face,
nor enter the dim alleys of her voice.
The air's shallow, The hounds slurr.
The town bells are hoarse with rust.
Beyond him are always the taunts of children.
His trousers fit so poorly
he keeps tugging the folds
caught between his cheeks.

This afternoon he will study the girls
in Fredericksburg Park,
their clean, hard breasts
tucked neatly into their stiff dresses.
He closes his eyes for a moment, and listens—

a voice, a girl's he repeats, darkens.

That does not matter now,
the moon is carefully distant.

The cry of the screech-owl shrinks.

There, against a tree,
a peat-cutter is dead drunk,
his eyes grown wooden,
legs spread, the bulge of his sex
drooping like a bag of fish.

In one part of the wood the elms sicken,
their bad parts burnt or plastered.

There, he listens to the usual drunks
and though he does not see them, he knows
their faces are moulded chunks of bread,

that insects burrow into the
sweat stains in their shirts,

and he knows too, the rapist in their story—
alone, waiting, the bottoms of his thighs
sticking to a leather seat.

In one corner is a barrel packed with herring.

In the next room

where a young woman has hanged herself
several nights before he has
uncorked several jars of a strong
disinfectant on account of the smell.

2.

In the *Garden of the Dead* when he kneels
the dark has knelt down beside him.

Absence eats at the leaves like moths.

Once more, the wind against him
has taken the cold shape of a girl—

he can see her face now,

ridged as deeply as bark—

Somewhere, their lives have parted
like eyelids which have opened.

In her voice, as shadowless as an owl's,
were distances too far to test the truth of.

Beyond him, the shadows are tiny as pelts.

Stars are turning pale.

Kneeling at the grave of a stranger
the man stares dumbly and
shrunken as an embryo chicken.

He hardly notices, to his right,
lovers humped like snails in the grass.
He wants to know what distances these stones
mark, what winds they lean against.
His bones are loose, his heart wax.

His tongue sticks to his jaw.

In this near dawn, where he chooses once
more to begin, he wants to know
the heart's uncertain myth
about itself, some human shape
unborn inside the stone.

This is a dream which changes nothing.

All night the bones of rabbits
caught blindly on these thorns
have thought the dark was flesh.

You think: if only those small deaths
were the least difficult to understand,
if only the dark were ours,
but the dark is too much of its own—
what we require is the voice of the hawk
whose wings are nailed now
against this dawn sky,

whose bones shift in the body of this dream,
who knows the singleness of things;
those bones of the brush singing in the light,
those barren branches that graph our sky,
reveal the careless dictions of our dark

Richard Jackson

NUN TROUBLE

(for Sister Marita Denise)

i've run into nun trouble—
that one weekend in the blizzard when i had to stay over
(the man i bought rum-flavored little cigars and blueberry
tipalets,
a tall thin man with monstrous hands and a mustache
who kept—especially a gray one, methusaleh—cats,
the man with a taste for baroque music, byzantine art,
caribbean ethnography, the west indies, and the pennsyl-
vania dutch,
a conscientious objector and utopian planner who settled for
being a sunday school teacher

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or that one whole year when between eleven and midnight
the guy across the street knocked on the window and came
in for a cup of bouillon or an orange and sat down at the
kitchen table to mull over the day
(the 20-year-old boy i thought of as my little brother but
sometimes as a oneday lover,
a curlilocks italian who wore his black hair long and parted
in the middle and tied down with a leather thong,
who brought me red and green candles at christmas and three
stolen bricks,
read spanish poetry, spoke a broken puerto rican dialect,
and played volleyball in the alley with the neighborhood
kids,
a freaky college senior who came down morton street from
the library or from work at a children's home or from a
committee meeting for head-start or from draft counseling
or from a drug abuse clinic when half the houselights were
out,
who flirted with me and señora fontanez and laughed himself
silly when he won an assistantship with the department of
sociology and refused his papa's million-dollar business

i was older than both of them and feel older yet
here on a saturday morning at five below zero° in st. mary's
convent

(bob),
bill)
homesick
for building a zany snowman
or bike riding during football season

when i think back —

the saturday nights at neshaminy mall with my two roommates,
movies and popcorn,
scented candles for our apartment,
strawbridge & clothier dresses,
hairdriers, am-fm radios, typewriters,
or dates with a driver ed teacher, a railroad worker, the
holden caulfield of the high school faculty, an accordianist,
a seventh-grade english teacher who spent the summer
doing construction work, a would-be geneticist who went
on the payroll for ninth grade biology for an occupational

deferment and introduced me to a gravedigger, and an
air force sergeant,
new york theatre tickets,
the shore,
the philadelphia red garter for banjo music, beer, and peanuts,
a ski trip,
booze parties,
memorial day and fourth of july picnics,
or over and over the saturday nights at neshaminy mall with
my two roommates,
coffee and dunkin donuts

(diane,
les)
homesick
(john, art, steve, ivan, dave, billy, jeff)
for my '68 opel kadett, free evenings and weekends
and a carpayment/apartmentrent/electricandphonebills/grocery-
list flattened paycheck

here on a saturday morning—garbage out, laundry done,
floor mopped—at st. mary's convent

wanting back everything that never did the trick
(my shelves and shelves of paperbacks,
a reupholstered rocker, a pole lamp, a hassock,
tv, the new york times book review, bus and train timetables,
reproductions of van gogh, picasso, braque,
kenya carvings,
bongos, a recorder, a fife,
stereo tapes and lp albums of the new world symphony, folk,
and hardrock,
menthol cigarettes,
hot lapsang souchong tea)
when i was left to myself
(myself,
myself)
heartsick
after the door was shut and the dishes washed and the sofa
pillows plumped back up
i've run into nun trouble
here at st. mary's convent after six months—

poverty, chastity, obedience
(good god, i)
will not?
(but cannot gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles)
must lay treasures up?
(where rust and moth consume)
like a camel through a needle's eye
i've run into nun trouble—
the dullwitted farmboy puts his hand to the plow and looks back
and martha fusses around her pots

Sister M. Pamela Smith, SS.C.M.

"I'LL MEET YOU BY JESUS"

*A group of poems for
The Johns Hopkins Hospital**

Little Homily

Two small boys, tall enough only
to touch the marble feet, in the lonely
dusk of "evening hours" feel them over,
the little one asks the other,
 "No nails?"

Two storeys up, the gentle Jesus-hippie
smiles too high for either one to see.
Even the hands welcoming are over their heads;
"Come unto me" lettered, they cannot read;
 their hands find holes.
 No nails.

*The Broadway (main) entrance to Johns Hopkins Hospital is dominated by a huge statue of Jesus, in a rotunda. People who need to meet someone in a place no one can miss say "I'll meet you by Jesus."

De Contemptu Mundi

We walk, a fearful procession of pain, I hold
his hospital shirt by the back. He clutches his
 pole,
rocking the glucose bottle. I do as I'm told,
but what is the color of shock, when he's black,
 who'll
understand if he faints, — how'll I get him back
 up?
I look into eyes where fever's fuse burns hot:
"Stand straight" — I keep encouraging — "Don't
 slack up,

that's fine, keep going. I know you haven't been
out

of bed before, but better for you if you've walked.
There — that's like a soldier. Good! How would
you like

to be a soldier?" I stop. Lips swollen, ash chalked
over the purple shape, "Yes." "Yes, Mr. Wright,

you'd make a good soldier." The thirteenth
century drums

"Hora novissima, tempora pessima sunt
vigilemus" — but we watch a world ending in
bombs.

Our vigil of prayer for this world seems a
worthless stunt.

Chapped lips move, into this morning's praise:
"You the best nurse here never nobody else
want to wait on you help you." What he says
discounts the centuries' fingers feeling the
present's pulse.

Hot Closet

In the stifling supply room I read and re-read
each label,

looking for swabs, while a nursing aide stands by
reading her own black needs, and all I am able
to say in this breathless box is, "Hot today,"
while her dark eyes burn with a darker fire from
the rubble

of the ghetto alley, "And it will get hotter and
hotter till they
never wake up some morning — all that rubble

of wickedness burnt in the burned-out world,
not knowing
whatever happened to them. Every day gets
worse.”

I slide my finger under the swabs and get going
away from her, anywhere — chapter and verse
of the last things in my ears burning and echoing
the mad truth of the prophets. She speaks no
curse.

Wherever I hurry my haste sets a hot wind
blowing.

Triumphal Entry

Dried-out palms are knotted over her bed,
where mortal poison yellows her eyes.
Her husband smooths the smooth white spread.
“Don’t give no trouble. Don’t trouble them
none,” he says,
“I’ll be getting back to my work.” Going is no
surprise.

“This our hospital. We all come here. All
our children born here.” Squeezed between
the oxygen tanks and the sour cream wall
I count her occasional breathing from being to
been.

Her eyes, half open, stare at a world she has
never seen.

Sara deFord

SNOW FALLS ON FLOWERS

SNOW SNOW

I've never seen so much snow:
 forest and field and farm souffled in snow,
 Snyder's Funeral Home like a huge wedding cake;
 pink roses, blue delphiniums wearing white
 bonnets;
 all of us white-veiled by the blizzard
 that Valentine's Day you married Death.

Maybelle. Wild cousin. Ripe sixteen.
 Bride. I caught your bouquet.

What I mean is: I had already memorized you:
 That summer you were fourteen and I was twelve
 you pendulumed back and forth in that swing,
 back and forth before me, like a hypnotist:
 your lacquered lashes swooping up and down
 up and down over those chicory blue eyes, like
 bird wings your amber mane galloping
 that cologne swarming that pout like a
 pink ladyslipper those breasts brimming
 in that thin blouse like two dollops of ice cream
 in a glass bowl those consonant knees
 those assonant toes that sassy butt
 flash! that pout opening: "Apples peaches
 pumpkin
 pie Screw a hundred boys before I die!"

You were a hive of rhymed couplets
which I memorized—easily!

Those hot nights I couldn't sleep, I'd scoop
your glamour into myself as one scoops ice cream
into a bowl. I'd heap your libido into myself
as one heaps fresh fruits into a basket.

All fall, all winter, in dreary school,
I'd chant to myself: *Apples peaches pumpkin
pie* And my listening vulva would blossom
like an orchid.

Oh, label me Lesbian if Lesbian means
learning to love myself through first
loving you.

snow snow snow
Snyder's Funeral Home a huge wedding cake
pink roses blue delphiniums wearing white
bonnets
all of us veiled by that blizzard
that Valentine's Day you married Death.

" . . . kept fast company . . . caught a bad
disease . . . What did I tell you? . . .
died a dog's death." prick prick prick prick
my mother vaccinated me.

It didn't *take*, Maybelle.
I went right on swiping you.
With sheer concentration, I'd inhale you
through all my senses puff out my pencil-
proportions with orbs of voluptuous pink
warm my ice-blue eyes to sapphire and drape
them with movie-star fringes. Then, wandering

through the house, I'd meet in a mirror that
puny pastel girl. *The mirror lied.*

I'd recoil into my chrysalis, where the moist
yearning would ferment once more:
Apples peaches pumpkin pie—
and I'd pump pump pump pump that skimmed-
milk
girl into Creamy Fifteen.
It was easy.

Then tolling across my mother's face came
the worry my father slipped into a sigh:
"My! the image of Maybelle!"

Beautiful bride, I caught your bouquet:
Always in Summer, I turn cold:
Snow falls on all the flowers.

Karen Snow

TWO POEMS**Cymbidiums**

How many times she tossed her hair back:
'Oh, I want it all!' she'd say, and look so exquisite
She won us all. Deep in us, the cynic ice
Would crack: sweet water sweetening our cold.

Oh, she was blessed.
Legs lithe as saplings, and a grace in moving.
Leopard,
Water leaping dappled, shot with sun,
A brightness.

Easy as breath, she took from us
Snips of our lives: a velvet square, quaint calico,
Fine linen from a lady-friend, the brusques of
corduroy and tweed.
She had it sewn: a coat of colors.
The youngest were lace at the hem.

Nights, in that house above the bay,
She paced the tiger rugs,
Barefoot, sleeves billowing,
Cymbidiums like creamy wings to cool her face.

The girls who swept would find them,
Bruised,
Most exquisitely bitten.

Apocalypse Giraffe

Horned head, golden,
Neckpole stretching twenty feet,
The whole of him sprayed catastrophe yellow,
He tops the trees on gentle Chapin Street.

First Wednesday of the month, at noon,
He blows his horns: four horns for the earth's
four corners,
The angels straining,
Four for the beast winds kept from us
By angels' arms.

"This has been a test," our radio confirms.
"If this had been an actual alert,
You would have been instructed where to turn
In your area."

Late June. At five o'clock,
The air goes saffron, panic's in the elms.
Horns, and the angels straining. Fiends
Break from them and shriek for us.

We go down.
These limestone walls have held seventy years.
For nerve, we take cinnamon muffins, breathing
sweet steam,
Most blessedly prosaic.

A great wind beats our house, the horns contend.
There's nowhere to turn in our area,
So we eat muffins, and wait it out.

My son is three, and mad for animals.
Each time we pass the pole on Chapin Street,
He yells "Giraffe!"
He wants to honk its horns,
He wants to feed it cinnamon muffins.

Judith Kotary

TWO POEMS

Royal Flush

I'm concerned with risings, fast
 Getaways that resolve themselves
 In leisurely perk-jerkings, accepted

Pecking orders, berry-picking—
 The almost bombastic get-out
 That justifies itself by working:

I like the way a cock pheasant
 Caught napping in a woodlot's corner will
 Decide against the $360 \times N$ to the n th power

Number of lateral egresses from a well
 Swung shotgun's version of infinity
 And flush straight up, breaking his way to

Height, wrecking a shaft of the understory
 Warblers might have taken yellow delight in
 Frittering flycatching prissy ditties from—

Accelerating in gaudy kuk-yukking cry
 Straight up, up out of the last
 Frozen moment of utter discombobulation, till

Topping the trees
 He brakes, backflips
 And cuts flat-out for heavy cover—

As if the scratchfeed back of the barn,
 Roadgrit, drainage ditch, and
 Dickcisselling alfalfa never were.

Bees and Spiders

I've been around—especially around here
For some time now—and so feel qualified
To say that your common bumblebee,

Too common around here this morning
Anyway, is certainly not a solipsist:
One minute they're playing rings to

My head's saturn, and the next cutting
Didoes over in the cattails and pickerelweed—
Then they'll swing back

By in squadrons of parabolic bee-line
As if I were more like a target than
A race-marker, and flirt up on the hill

Under the big white pines to mess around
With the pine spiderwort and bunchberry.
Unlike the spiders, that are known

To work themselves into cramped toolshed
Corners and to web-up quixotically in
The plop-zone of outhouse holes, the bees

Get out and bother things, not a little like
People hell-bent to broaden themselves;
Just yesterday they were taking

A ground-sessioning orgy of flamboyant-
hackled butterflies for flowers: it was a riot.
I've never seen a spider do that.

Jerald Bullis

OPENING DAY

The surface crumpled like inoculation scars
where gamefish rose to larvae.

While my father scraped our fly rods' rusted
ferrules,

I riffled a deck of negatives and prints
developed from spools of film he'd sent me
after the Invasion of Normandy.

I drew out the flawed one—my father
"boarding a troop train for the Channel"
his note keyed to the photo said;
though what I couldn't understand had begun
at the bottom and spread to his hands
posed on the shoulders of infantrymates.

When I asked if the film or lens could explain
whiteness threatening his medals
I had pinned that morning to my jacket,
he clamped the print in our tackle box
and said the blankness was only
brakesteam. Then waded across upstream

to sieve for hatch
we could copy with hackle and thread.

He left me companions lapsed into blackness
in the negative I held.

When he called over it was hellgrammites
current routed from nesting stones, I looked up
from siliconging our buoyant lines in time
to see him pour out the larvae cupped in his
 hands
and trick from the cold depth between us
a pickerel marked with chains.

All afternoon our double-taper lines
unrolled to soft tautness behind us, paused,
then flowed outward on forearm strokes
so the fanwings and surface bugs we tied
settled in the current above the pool.
In the last light we reached our limit.

Quickly pliers, hooked knives, and scalers
cantilevered on trays.
To prove nothing was lost
of what he'd taught me two years before,
I opened each pickerel like an envelope
from gills to anal fin,
under water, Dark as the shining medals
in my negative, swim bladders
twitched and popped against my wrists like
 surface lures.

I gave my father a signal then
to see through the lens of a darkening pool
roe swarming toward us like brakesteam.

Thomas Reiter

BOOKS IN BRIEF

TURTLE ISLAND. Gary Snyder. *New Directions*. \$1.95 paper, \$6.75 cloth. This book projects the image of an absolutely healthy, absolutely sane, humorous, harmonious man and his family, living in a right relationship to the planet, and flourishing, and proving the possibility of it all by his songs. If enough of us can gain from such examples the confidence in the rightness of this way, then perhaps there's hope for us. In this volume are 58 new poems. Some are songs of celebration—of rain and soaped skin and whales and wild mushrooms: "Taste all, and hand the knowledge down." And some are the satiric poems and the quiet shockers that confront the grim facts of what we are doing to ourselves and our land. At the end, for the record, are some of the prose pieces that have run out ahead of the book and become something like folklore, such as the widely-circulated "Four Changes" and "Energy Is Eternal Delight." But there is very little polemic in the volume; it is brimming with songs, poems, patterns, including some real beauties, such as "Bedrock" and "The Hudsonian Curlew"; some fine visionary poems, such as "The Call of the Wild" and "The Jemez Pueblo Ring"; and some gorgeous canticles, as "The Egg" and "The Bath."

SOMEDAY, MAYBE. William Stafford. Harper & Row. \$5.95. Quiet as they are, these are intensely dramatic poems. Something strange and unexpected happens to the reader as he reads. He moves off the page-end with a new relationship to the world. Stafford has a spell-binding way of sharing the quality of his imagination. In "A Little Gift," for instance:

Fur came near, night inside it,
 four legs at a time, when the circus
 walked off the train. From cage to cage
 we carried night back to the cats and poured
 it into their eyes, from ours. They
 lapped steadily, and the sponge of their feet
 swelled into the ground. Even today

I keep that gift: I let any next thing fold
 quietly into the blackness that leads
 all the way inward from the hole in my eye.
 The 22 poems in "Wind World," the central section of this volume, create and share with the enthralled reader an intense imaginative consciousness that owes much to what we know of native American poetry. But these are not imitation Indian poems, though they may superficially seem so, by sharing the same pulse of awareness of man's interrelationship with the rest of the universe.

When the earth doesn't shake, when the sky
 is still, we feel something under the earth:
 a shock of steadiness.

There's a fine phrase for Stafford's new poems:
 "a shock of steadiness."

Two new volumes by *Albert Goldbarth*: **OPTICKS**. Seven Woods Press. \$3.75 paper. **JAN. 31**. *Doubleday*. \$2.95 paper, \$5.95 cloth. These volumes don't begin to represent the volume of Goldbarth's work. Anyone who reads in little magazines has discovered the astonishing fertility of his imagination, his brilliance particularly in long poems and groups of poems. These two volumes bring together two tightly-integrated cycles. **OPTICKS** is a wild romp in and out of the *glass* sections of a good many galleries, museums, and libraries, dancing from one voice to another, one verse form to another, and topping these pyrotechnics with a smashing conclusion designed to tie a knot in the reviewer's tongue. It works. **JAN. 31** is radically different. It's Goldbarth's tape for the turn of the year — fifty or so loosely related poems that move through a metaphorical winter. These are strong steely poems, individually and as a group. They slide an icy hand down between your shoulder blades and defy your shudder. At the end of the book the hand and the reader's back are the same temperature. A wry release. Goldbarth is a poet of great power, and this is an important book. A sort of survival manual, in its own way.