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Cover: From an engraving by  
Jacques Callot

ACCORDING TO LUKE

"We are the pigs that have taken the devils from Jesus.  
We shall never be bacon to lay beside an egg."

Oh, you devils: look how the pigs are changed!

Cabboli dances, turning on his pink point.

Gabboli brings a napkin to the trough.

Brum-brum orates in periodic pig.

Cosh does leaps and somersaults pigs can't do.

At the back of the crowd they can see the butcher  
cover.

"I shall never be baked with an apple in my mouth,"

laughs Rego. Somber Flaggett has the idea

to run through the brook and up the goat path to the  
high place

and cast himself down. And Cabboli, Gabboli,

Brum-brum,

Cosh and Rego follow. Grand and strange,

the pigs come through the air like punctuation,

like heavy balloons, waving their little legs,

absurd mistakes. The devils go home angry;

the Gadarene crowd, frightened. The pigs remain.

Frank Dwyer

## DOWNRIVER, FOR JONAH

a crippled arm or leg even a  
 wooden life or  
 levee is less than a snag  
 buckled to the river  
 under thaw mudmonstrous spring  
 and sank when first  
           the pussy willows bloomed

like silted bones stirred up by flood  
 clavicles and ribs as stiff  
 as catfish whiskers

jonoah clings to the willow limb  
 floating down  
 willow that grew beside the barn  
 busted up like kindling tossed with straw

jonoah claws  
 nails broke, fingers bleeding on the bark  
 so raw and wet

foambrown water worms like rotten swamp-sopped roots  
 up his nostrils  
 rooting there behind his eyes

currents swirl between his dangled legs  
 and coil around his feet like snakes  
 he thinks he feels their split-end hairs  
 of tongues flicking at his calves

                  the river claims its  
                   whatever you claim to own  
           building banks and bottoms  
           where none can last, raking  
 turgid shoals and bars with  
   bones  
 & stones from washed out graveyards

so wide  
the river  
its flood banks unfamiliar  
cousin jason's house  
gone  
all those summer visits, like his cousin  
gone  
the river has moved all and anyone he ever knew  
downriver  
river now is mother, father, everything  
including god  
river       measures men and women by its  
bends                               warp  
                    make                               s  
us  
                    whole and human  
                    brave and old it  
breaks us down  
slowly down  
to black silt, white silt, bones  
river rises, falls  
cuts new channels for itself each spring  
but river never changes  
slowly  
downriver, for jonoah  
who will he be  
downriver  
where no one knows  
him, where he knows no one  
but river and this willow tree

Robert Litz

## TWO POEMS

### Unsolicited manuscripts

Traffic toward collection centers and return to their source in seasonal rhythms. They make patterns like snowflake crystals, the envelopes travelling back and forth along the radial arms.

In the post office they are judged by the ounce. So long as postage is paid, they share the bag with anything that weighs: obscene pictures, letter bombs, bills and the Sears Roebuck catalog.

Unsolicited manuscripts converge on editorial offices like application letters pouring into English Departments, like the jobless lining up outside the Division of Employment Security hoping for a want-ad or a check.

Nobody asked for them. Like beggars, they elicit pity, embarrassment and arrogance. They suggest a sea of frustration in the millions of houses where people dream. The typewriter noise of their dreaming arrives quietly on a reader's desk, silent, insistent, waiting for something useful to become, such as printed; waiting for someone to spend money on them, to multiply their waves.

Like the poor, unsolicited manuscripts produce no income for themselves. They do, however, produce income for others, whose wheels are turned by their flow. The poor support social workers, therapists, welfare agencies, charities, policemen, judges, and prison employees. Unsolicited manuscripts support office supply stores, paper factories, publishers, creative writing professors and literary agents.

A publisher can bring out an anthology of five thousand unsolicited manuscripts and sell it back to the authors, who will pay up to \$20 for a book containing words they have combined. The publisher will say he has selected each work from tens of thousands of rejects, and he might be telling the truth.

A literary agent will charge \$50 per story to tell authors why their unsolicited manuscripts don't sprout. A creative writing professor will collect tuition for the service of reading and damning unsolicited manuscripts. They are a great market for "how-to-write" books.

An editor, just by stealing paperclips from all the unsolicited manuscripts that pass through his hands, may stock his magazine, his office, himself and his friends with paperclips for the entire year.

Like the poor, unsolicited manuscripts are used and used; like the poor, they are eager to use each other and use buyers in the same way. Like the poor, they grow dogeared and bent with frequent handling, while their substance, if they have any, dies of neglect. Usually they fall and die in a desk drawer. You look at them with romantic indignation and learn, disappointed, that, like incontinent drunks asleep on dog-shit-spattered sidewalks, they are probably not worth saving.

Once in a while you hear about the success story, the Jackie Robinson of the unsolicited manuscript world, bought by the editor of *Playboy* from a totally unknown writer, who is thereby launched into fame and fortune within two years. Stories like this inspire the others to keep pecking. They hope it will happen to them: like the poor, hoping they will win the sweepstakes. It gives them a hobby less dangerous than making bombs. Their hope is a source of energy which can be converted to cash and used to build automated bathrooms.

Unsolicited manuscripts float over numbered highways like sperm cells. Except for birth-control companies, very few people want sperm cells either. Most of them will run down a thigh and smear on a blanket; they will be wiped off on a towel, dropped in a toilet bowl, killed by douches and creams. The ones that make it upstairs find nobody home. Or else they find a grim-faced IUD with arms folded, and a sign saying "We are overstocked." But, like sperm cells, no matter how many fail, the flow is not in the least deterred.

Unsolicited manuscripts and signals directed at the stars cannot logically expect to arrive anywhere. There is a slim probability at both ends, but the faces are not likely to be mutually revealed. The waves beep the fact of their being to an ear of the imagination. Should the ear also become a fact, the sender by that time would have been swept on to other dreams.

Unsolicited manuscripts amplify the rhythms of the brain. They spill into the mails like radio noise leaking into space: there is always the vision of a vast mind, conceived out of connected worlds.

### Subway Driver

From islands that strum the tropical surf  
poverty drove him north  
with a head full of stars.

After twenty years  
no turf but a project slum:  
garbage tumbling down the back stairs  
the stores all closed or caged  
stripped hulks of cars abandoned on the street.

The language of conquistadores  
still echoes in his mouth:  
“It’s the politicians, they strip the city bare.”

He rackets thru light-studded caves  
twenty years lurching side to side on the same tracks  
good at noting danger signs:  
    the slow clenched walk up the aisle  
    the glance like third-rail sparks.

Women warm and lift his sunflower smile,  
the sole adventure left of all his plans.  
They call his fat wife and hang up quick.

A portrait of his oldest daughter at nine  
admires his best pool shots in the cramped livingroom;  
his musician brother painted her.  
He died coughing and drooling codeine,  
scrawling couples in flames on the closet doors.



Her black hair flows into her hands  
the wrack of grown-up secrets  
already trapped in her eyes.

She used to squirm in her father's lap  
and beg him to give her twist-burns:  
"Betcha can't make me cry."  
Over and over he splashed her in the waves  
until she cried in terror of his love.

The day he beat her for wearing lipstick  
she never cried at all.

Inside the crashing ozone tunnels  
the chains between cars dangling swinging  
stations daily repeating themselves  
thru tides of people  
wrecked human forms asleep on a bench

The thought of her is a prayer mat of soft moss  
ringed by smooth white stones  
watered lightly, stalactites dripping dripping

No trains ram this tidewater cave  
no clock punches off the days.  
The islands chime  
like notes on the staff of dawn.

Stephen T. Butterfield

### THREE POEMS

#### After the Death That Couldn't Happen

You dream you're driving the ice road north, your  
truck

Half out of control. You come from a warm  
Country, here you can hardly see,  
And hardly care. Water  
Slops on the frozen lake, you think  
You've lost your memory. Wheels  
Spin in the dark, ice breaks, you jump (or fall)  
From the cab.

Did he fall before you, with you?  
Was he real at all? You don't know what to say.

Well, blood-kin die, they say, and friends  
And lovers. Waters  
Wash them out of memory.

Anyway you jump/are jumped.  
Nothing to spare you in this frozen clime.  
Not even your hands, flabby with loss  
Of memory.

The man who built the ice road said,  
"The longer you work with ice, the less you know."  
Three hundred miles due north, and every year  
The lakes thaw out, the portages get lost.  
Every year it's all to do again.

The old ones tell you how to stay alive.  
You jump/fall from the cab  
And find yourself in the arctic night alone,  
Only a book of matches in your shirt.  
At first you can't care. Never mind.

Get ashore. Roll in the snow to dry  
Your clothes. Build a fire. Make  
A fishing pole. Wait. Objects  
Will float to the top. A barrel of gas. A pack  
Of frozen chops. A mackinaw.  
You'll be grateful for these.  
When you can, you'll trace an SOS on snow.

### Huckleberry Mountain

Blue grouse lodged like a lump of bark  
Flat against tree, black hickory grain  
Going *whomp, whomp*. big pulsing gills,  
Beak closed, *whomp*.  
A drum in an old dream.

They were stoning the grouse. The leaves  
On the trail were bleached  
To stone. The grouse  
Dropped to a lower branch. Bored, they went on.

Air full of snow  
Stuck to the thundery bird. The stream  
Through trees was half  
In flow, half solid shine. Stones  
Flung to silence. Current. Gone.

**Above Snowline**

It's easy to live here in the high country,  
Especially in winter. My skin turns white.  
Sometimes I mistake my arm  
For a fold of snow, and the more snow I eat  
The more outside and in grow one.

Silence excites me.  
An avalanche can fall for an hour  
Without a sound, straight down the mountain wall.  
Animals are white shadows on the sun.

Wind works away. Snow streams  
And freezes like old glass on freezing air.  
Careful, careful, I break off one brittle sheet  
And hold it to my face. It is mirrored swords.

Spring is a brief, hard time. Every year  
I forget how hard it will be when people come.  
They are so beautiful, these northerners, with their  
    high  
Cheekbones and burnished skins. I think  
This time it will be different. Some one of them  
Will know our mountain ways.

Then I hear a man cry out,  
My handprint a pale brand over his face.  
How stupidly I bleed.

And they're gone.  
As always, winterbeaten trees  
Collapse like lightning on the lower slopes.  
I heal again.  
My ears are free of sound.

Joan Webber

### A WALK WITH VALLEJO IN PARIS

I am walking down Rue de la Paix on a Wednesday night in late August, a dusty night near the end of the month of Americans, a sad month when all the Parisians have fled south for their holiday, leaving only the tourists, and the shopkeepers, and the Algerians. It is a night when the heat of daylight somehow turns into the heat of midnight without ever passing through the liquids of dusk, a night of anger and nerves, and I am trying to decide where to get something to eat; at the soup kitchen near Place de la Republique where if I'm lucky and the lines aren't too long I can get a bowl of thin broth and a lecture on God in Arabic, le Dieu qui nous aime bien, or at the cafeteria of Cité Universitaire where the American students are generous, but where the guards usually chase me away. "Nous n'avons pas besoin d'un autre Americain sans portefeuille." We don't need another American without a wallet. So I opt for the relative safety of the Algerian soup line, though on the way I stop a man with a family to ask for money. Sometimes a man will feel generous in front of his wife and children, but this time the woman only clasps her pocketbook and he

says, "Je ne parle pas Anglais." I ask him again in French. "Je n'ai pas d'argent moi," he says. "And I don't speak English."

At Place de la Republique I discover that the thick double line extends around two solid blocks. There are so many Algerians without work in Paris that I won't be able to get inside the building until dawn. I am trying to decide what to do when suddenly I see Cesar Vallejo with his hands thrust into his pockets standing under a streetlamp. He nods to me. As I walk over to him I notice that his pants are patched with rags, there are deep holes in his shoes, and a single tear runs from his shoulder through the center of his shirt. He is so thin that I can see the post behind him by staring at his chest. "Come with me," he says. "I know a place where we can get some soup." And then: "I always feel sad for Americans when they're hungry. Everyone is desperate when they're poor, but Americans are pathetic."

We begin to walk and from then on Vallejo is always ahead of me. I have to hurry to stay with him like a small child trying to keep up with his father. Sometimes he stops abruptly to peer at something that interests him on the sidewalk. But where I see a weed he sees a muskrat; where I see a muskrat he sees the face of a woman. This doesn't seem to disturb him. "What matters is that we are both looking down," he says. "When you get lonely enough you'll see the face of a woman too."

While we walk his head is always on the ground, his hands are clenching and unclenching in his pockets. Sometimes he is silent for whole blocks, sometimes he talks to me. "There's a war going on," he says, "and I am always hungry. J'ai toujours faim. Siempre tengo hambre. Sometimes I think these are different things

and to tell the truth I am less frightened of hunger than of the Catholics in Spain. They're both murderers, but at least hunger rises out of your own belly to strangle you. It doesn't pretend to come from God. Other times I think they are the same."

Finally Vallejo stops in front of a crowded tenement. "You go in," he says, and disappears into a lamppost. "Vallejo!" But he is gone. So I go inside and knock on the first door I can find in the dark hallway. Soon a woman comes to answer. She is very ugly and thin, even thinner than I am, even thinner than Vallejo, though not so tall, and she is wearing a tattered pink housecoat soaked in sweat. When she sees me she begins to weep. She must think I am someone else because she insists that she's been waiting for me for so long, she didn't think I'd ever come, thank God I'm finally there, the children have been starving, the landlord has been threatening to throw them into the streets, and the children are so hungry, they haven't eaten in three days. And suddenly I see them behind her, a boy and a girl, tiny and naked, wrapped around their mother's legs, very frightened and excited. They are crying. At first I try to resist but the woman is persistent, she is dragging me into her apartment and soon the children have stopped crying, they are jumping on my lap, the woman is putting her arms around my neck, they are so happy I am there. And I am glad to be there. I hardly recognize myself and soon I am promising them everything; to bring food, to buy clothing, to pay the landlord, to find a job. And it is only later, when the children have gone to sleep and the woman takes off her housecoat that I see in her bruised body the eyes of Vallejo, the hungry eyes of Vallejo, and the sad face of the weeds, and the muskrats, and the war.

Edward Hirsch

## WHERE ROBERT BLY

I cycled down to the indigenous poet  
Who speaks his speak near *Lac Qui Parle*  
Near the end, like the rest of us, of the Sioux  
Trail, memorializing slaughter.

He is out, like the rest of us, hunting  
For what God is said to have abandoned,  
No help from Plato, Kant, or conscience;  
I wonder if he, too, has the map from *Texaco*?

I sink and rise through black river bottoms  
The Sioux abandoned, chilled by slung  
Clouds of fine baptismal fallings,  
To reach his wooded door of war-paint Red

Behind a yard of White's detritus: present-  
Day machines of wheel, metal canoe  
Turned fount for fallen wonder,  
A ball-peen rusted in the turn-around.

I see a living, safe within the southern glass,  
The walls are arranged, the table set;  
Past-living I see let loose to acid air.  
And I see, like the rest of us, he lives

Two lives. I uncontain myself  
On his grounds. The feeling  
Is as much of good as I can hope,  
Mingling my waters with those Dakota

Braves and this poet, friend, absent.  
I will hope that he has come out  
On some such day as this of mist,  
Made foreign to himself by house,  
And straddled history, unloosening, and pissed.

James Hiner



**POEM FOR MURAKAMI KIJO, 1865-1938**  
**A POET DEAFENED BY ILLNESS**

On shoji panels  
shape of a burgeoning moon.  
A woman's seed-sown  
belly gives up fruit.  
A Muse breath-swags his cradle.  
Son of heaven, he  
hears grasses sigh, sees  
the silken shape of wind, feels  
the wide pain sparrows  
sing in their falling,  
sounds that wound the world. The law  
he studied needed  
coarser hearing. See,  
he sits in Takasaki,  
a courthouse scribner,  
poverty's worms, snails  
burrowing down inner ear,  
mouths of ten offspring  
vast as the spread beaks  
of springtime uguisu.  
Always another  
hill of sorrow for  
assaulting. The smoked crackle  
of burning paper,

his house, possessions  
flaring like ascending sun,  
spin off, ashen, spent,

only his seeing  
eyes essential for hearing  
loss, for old tears wept.

All vicissitudes,  
fleas of existence, are scratched  
away in brushing

images in words  
scant as a new moon, profound  
as a jumping frog.

He hears the way wind  
brings a moment of moonlight  
to the hidden reed,

the way in a flash  
of lightning the white spider  
whiter is. Poets

may hear with ears stopped  
still, inexplicable song  
lute-strummed by a Muse.

Geraldine Clinton Little

**TWO POEMS****Joe Makes a Mistake and the  
Fat Woman Meets Molly Bloom**

He thought we were going to a movie like  
"Sinbad the Sailor"  
where this guy Ulysses throws a stake into a  
Cyclops' eye.

Instead, we got a beach and a boy whose  
words  
rolled over us like waves and that pale Jew  
Leo  
thinking from bar to bar of his wife lying in  
their bed.

Of her lover laying her down on a cliff.

I became a bird sailing over their bodies.  
Her dress was spread like a kite on the ground.  
I was a fly rubbing my legs on her arm,  
smooth as the marble flesh of David or

Apollo —  
the statues she so admired for their nakedness.

Molly, you behaved like a seagull stretching its  
wings.

A kite, the skirt of your dress,  
you stretched to the y of yes, I said, yes, yes.

**The Bat**

In the other room  
my baby fell  
into a curly sleep.  
One hand clawed the sheet.  
He dreamed of water  
and a quick escape.

I kept the bat that bumped  
through my window and crashed.  
My radar told me  
Wrong. Let it go.  
The bat's confusion is momentary.  
Yours is long.

But the bat's shape held me.  
Its flying membrane thin  
as foetal skin,  
and its claws, uncurling and curling.  
The same beat  
as newborn hands folding and unfolding  
when the mouth sucks teat.

In the other room  
my baby squeaked  
and lost his pacifier.  
It was then I grabbed  
the bat and squeezed.  
I felt its bones like wires  
twisting in my belly.  
Something turned and swam  
or flew from my womb.

Nelljean McConaghey

## HOLIDAY RAMBLE

(*Schooner*: origin uncertain: usually derived from a supposed New England verb, *scoon* or *scun*, 'to skim along on the water.')

My day off. I've kicked loose a rabbit  
up here in the burntland;  
he lurches away, not schooning.  
Can a rabbit be supposed to schoon?

Sharp by reputation,  
these Yankees are uncertain.  
Some for example schooned west —  
over the prairie! in wagons! —

deriving, usually, Dakota soil  
from rumor: "It's somewhere down there."  
— Reminds me of Daniel, an old shitkicker,  
used to be a town-fair boxer:

I drove him once to Canada. A rabbit hunt.  
Coming back, scooning or scunning  
(two inches of rain south of Montreal:  
"almost enough," he offered,

"to take a big drink standing up"),  
a customs man asked him where he was born.  
"Peru," he croaked; "Vermont," I added,  
to haul the officer's eyebrows down.

"Well," said Dan, "the next big town  
is Maine." — Wrong on all counts.  
A bird with his brains would go swimming.  
They say he made quite a punching bag.

No ambition. Poor old Dan.  
Won't work. His cock's as cold as frog-mouth.  
He don't schoon, I'd say, like he did;  
but this is getting out of hand ...

Another time he claimed  
that powdered ginger in scalded water,  
"if she'll skim her feet along the top of it,  
will take a baby off a girl."

Now *that* I hadn't heard. "And you,"  
he chuffed, "bragging you know such  
a lot! Us old fellas always could make do  
with what we had to hand." Not much:

rabbits for breakfast, hemlock to cut  
(the pine burnt away, the sugarwoods gone  
to bowling pins), fog schooning up  
from the sea "down there," wetting over the  
hay;

crop on crop of witchgrass and rock.  
Then Australia did you out of sheep,  
Argentina out of cattle. And corn?  
Who'd for money try to raise it here?

So you call on the town. Or sometimes lean  
on a shovel at the ski-lifts, stand and stare  
as loud young bunnies schoon weirdly up  
in skin-tight jackets, bright to wake your dead.

Sydney Lea

**TWO POEMS****The Sleeping Woman**

In the basket chair, in the dark,  
ticking slowly like a clock,  
spinning slowly like a world,  
I revolve past your sleep—  
dark window  
dark room  
dark window  
dark room—  
I ask where the sun is.

Each dark day suggests  
your darker line against the wall,  
muffled in quilts, a glacier of sheet,  
the shape of a mountain that never  
would be called **The Sleeping Woman**.

A trail outlines the long ridge of the mountain,  
a two-wheel track under foot  
but in the impossible distance—  
at the impossible height—  
a thin pale line, turning  
among buttes, turning  
and disappearing and turning  
and climbing and turning.

Around me are the hooves of slaughtered deer,  
traps set for coyotes,  
and grasshoppers going off like rattlesnakes.  
My head pounds with the altitude.  
My heart pounds.

I eat my snack where I can look both ways:  
into the hidden valley of beaver dams  
and white-faced cattle drifting  
through cloudy thickets of dreams,  
and out across the abyss,  
across the backs of hawks soaring  
in the ancient lake,  
across abandoned and terrifying mines  
to the remnant marsh, laced with channels,  
to the desert of cattle bones,  
to lake or mirage in the distance—  
ducks on the marsh, many fish,  
and even trumpeter swans.

Again the impossible trail,  
pale, intermittent,  
among rocks toward the snow,  
bears, puma, even  
rumors of big horn sheep.  
By the sun there is still  
an hour before turning back.

In the Heart of the Mountain,  
a glade fills with humming birds,  
a sound at my ear like a June bug,  
then a vision, blinking on and off,  
bright metallic green  
to show how wrong I can be.  
On. Off. There. Gone.  
A brook runs from the snow above.  
Everywhere the signs read:  
Beware. Beware.  
This Mountain is Delectable.



Tick. Tick.  
Dark window.  
Dark room.  
My eyes are better now.  
I see the sun in the heart of the mountain.  
tick  
tick  
dark  
dark

### The Woman Who Lives on the Corner

I have never seen the woman  
who lives on the corner,  
but I know her nightgowns  
by their seasons,  
by their color, weight and texture.

In winter a heavy flannel gown  
hangs on a hook by the closet door,  
a blue flowered gown  
with ruffles at collar and cuffs.  
Perhaps there is a ruffle at the hem,  
but the window sill blocks my view—  
three strides past the window  
and only a glance, a modest sort of glance.

In the first warm days of spring  
a nylon gown appears—also blue,  
full of shadows even as it hangs—  
four short steps?  
three slow?  
Then in early summer a short pink gown,  
black (lace?) at hem and neck.

I am in love with the woman  
on the corner, and my dreams  
are full of nightgowns that love me.  
Sometimes I think she signals me unseen,  
hanging one day a yellow,  
one day a white gown on the hook—  
I wonder what the signals mean?

Oh, woman on the corner,  
have you loved my packs  
that pass your window  
in three steps or four,  
my dress pack for books and papers,  
for my sort of lunch  
and my silver flask of good brandy?  
And my grubby pack for walks in the country,  
for fruit and cheese and bottles of dark beer?  
And my big pack for the trip to the laundry?  
You see, I make no secret  
of the meaning of my signs  
and that they say I love you.

Will yellow say, I know, my dear?  
Will white promise every day like new?  
Will both say, Come, share my gowns?

My love, I'll come.  
I'll bring my country pack  
and share my fruit, my cheese,  
and my bottles of dark beer.  
We'll vanish from the mirror  
on the closet door,  
sit cross-legged on the secret bed  
and feast, I in the yellow,  
you in the red: the world  
will wonder at the naked hook.

Daniel Curley

**THE OVERSEAS EXCHANGE...  
PACIFIC BELL SYSTEM**

Personal remarks are forbidden.

After the red light, the eye  
of the salamander, flicks on  
you have six seconds to answer.

You spend your shifts calling:

Tokyo, Manila, Hong Kong—these  
can be got by number,

the keys, rubbed scarab smooth,  
move under your hand docile as prayers.

Tahiti signs off at one a.m., a stutter  
of palm trees and lispings cicadas.

Cambodia is dead air.

Indonesia is a woman under water, mouthing  
air bubbles, the names of countrymen  
impossible to locate.

New Zealand laughs. It is not our policy  
to laugh back.

Vietnam is dead air. Do not  
turn around. Always face your lights.

The businessman in Houston needs Bangkok.

The woman with sixty-four quarters  
is desperate for Korea.

There is a code for everything. But if,  
on night duty, your headset

should curse and moan, sing Sayonara  
in the voice of a drunken sailor,

or rave like a madwoman in a phone booth  
sobbing, sonofabitch, sonofabitch ...

our regulations permit you to disconnect.

**Joyce Milton**

**J & Z**

The god of the Hebrews is bending over  
a miniaturized electronic complex  
of assorted transistors, solenoids and other  
neat switches known as History  
in which He is believed to have a hand,  
mumbling to Himself, "Damn...damn..."

His white-winged minions with oil-  
stains on their tertiaries and  
bandaids on their fingers look  
at each other bemused by these  
divine imprecations, go back to  
testing balky circuits and hypotheses.

Exasperated by too many false leads  
He finally smites the mess, swallows pride,  
and dials a Greek colleague and some-  
time collaborator, Zeus the Thunderer,  
condescending to ask for a loan of Hephaistos,  
Olympian mechanic helpful in pinches.

Not one to call Jehovah an out-and-out blunderer,  
Zeus listens, inhaling an unction of almond,  
then comments to Hera, his hand too lightly covering  
the receiver: "Gods who make covenants with men  
ought to have their heads examined."

Edmund Pennant

## MAINE

There is a skunk  
musk in the air.  
There is a light  
snow on the ground.  
The sky is dark  
cold April air.  
The old bathtub  
is on the lawn.  
I am in it  
(nude, in the tub,  
in hot water,  
carried from the  
kitchen in a  
clam-steaming pot).  
There are small stars  
distant lights  
(on the island  
across the bay).  
There is a fire  
in the fireplace.  
My towel warms  
there and a girl  
(in a red robe)  
waits there. I smell  
the smoke, mixing  
with the skunk musk.  
But I am here  
(up to my neck,  
my head is bathed  
in steam), smelling  
skunk musk, fire smoke.  
I stand and the  
steam rises with  
me (small stars

no longer clear,  
distant lights  
obscured). I pull  
the plug and the  
snow near the drain  
of the tub stains.

Brian Dibble

### APPREHENSION

an eight year old and the heifer  
stand in the clover, eye to eye,  
negotiating: her patient cud  
against his nervous arrow.

the mother look of the cow  
gleams at him, steady and moist,  
as big and dark as a target  
aimed at his heart.

and he might have shot her with rubber  
—except her chewing never stops  
and out of her lip a hairy stubble  
twitches, like broken shafts.

Phillip McCaffrey

**THE ORCHARD**

Benjamin

*Beniamino*

Halt!

The heavy Baldwins spilled on the barn floor

Dead weights falling

Bump

A head bodiless striking

Bump on the barn floor

Bruised.

Black arms leafless embracing black sky starless

Sister!

Ben!

When the blue wind sings from surfeit,

Exploded sundrops baited for a long hour of  
scytheblade.

The serpent that eats grass  
David and Benjamin  
Waiting for the calf to come bloody,  
Thick hands wrapped around the teats,  
The fist knots and pulls, throws milk spanging into the  
pail  
A hot froth smelling too strong of the animal.

Forty gallons, said the old man,  
Put your back into it, David!  
*Beniamino!*

Back into the orchard  
Out back, the cows swinging their dung-tangled tails,  
Milk smell blown away, the earth cooler, apples  
Frost-bitten, teeth freeze in the white meat,  
David thrusts out long leg between Ben's clumsy knees,  
The clownfool flies, tangled meat and bones, lies  
In the cowpie, staring. David laughs.  
Eat it!  
He holds his brother's head and will thrust his  
brother's  
Face into the dung.  
Bastard!  
What?  
Bastard!  
David laughs but frees Benjamin.

Cows divide among the trees.  
Ben!  
But it was not sister flying  
They had already seen her dead  
And only the voice echoed for Benjamin.

Was the girl's face framed in the bone and faded flesh  
Of mother?  
Emil, she said to the man  
Who looked and did not see his daughter.



No price for eggs, it's the gov'ment...  
 He shook his head to clear it of nonsense,  
 Price of chick mash all out of reason  
 But there's too much milk, Anna!  
 Emil?  
 Where are the boys?

*Beniamino*

*Il figlio prediletto...*

She had read it somewhere and said the syllables to  
 him  
 Making strange sounds in the softness of her throat  
 and  
 Breast where he rested, listening.

*Beniamino*

*Mio*

Now, he said, now.

Alone, his back against the gray scabs of apple bark  
 He listened to the half-dry grass tearing as the animals  
 Ripped it in steady destruction, busy-gutted making  
 milk.

Sister!

If he could will it  
 To be weed, wood or bark and pith of apple  
 To be tree  
 Not to be Benjamin

*Beniamino*

Now, he said, now.

An animal tossed up its heavy head,  
 Licked thick tongue over wet muzzle  
 And went split-footed to pasture.  
 It's cold, said the woman,  
 Early frost.  
 Emil?

Call the boys, he said,  
 And they came, each one dragging his own fragment  
 Of the ruined, broken day;

Benjamin with dung on his shirt,  
David laughing.  
Don't play the fool with your brother,  
Don't you know he's.....

What?

He strains to know.

Ben, go fetch...go fetch some apples.  
And to David, you remember sister?

Well, Ben, too...

What?

David hears voices

*Beniamino*

Sister!

The man wounds himself with nerved carelessness,  
Curses,  
Rotten blood, rotten!  
It flows from his hands, drips, stains the old floor,  
Runs with water in the sink and goes to ground, too.

He will not have it bound, they watch him bleed.

What do you all want?

He cries at them.

The woman calls them to table,  
They consume what remains of the day  
And then each submits in his way to night,  
The almost unnoticed agony of sleep,  
Their slow breathing death.

But the brothers wake suddenly.  
The old house creaks, is a vessel  
Adrift, driven rudderless by black winds.

David?

Ben?

Remember sister?

I'm cold, said Ben  
And he is shaking under blankets.  
David climbs into his bed,  
Sister was cold.

Hush, said David.

They warm together  
In the small house adrift  
In the enormous darkness.  
They listen to hear each other breathing.

Sister?

I can't hear sister, said Ben.

Hush!

Do you hear me, David!

Hush!

Ben! said David

Ben!

The house at night in the orchard,  
Dark among dead trees.

Peter W. Denzer

## VENICE: SUNDAY MORNING IN THE GESUATI

An old woman kisses God's toe and goes out.  
Bees drip from the mouth of a priest.  
Tiepolo's angels are flying somewhere  
above the scaffolding, but spring  
has slipped in from the Zattere.  
A freighter is moving up the channel.  
Coffee is being served at Nico's.

Three girls lean over the organ case to flirt  
with the young organist. God hears  
antiphonal laughter. He is here  
in the person, it may be, of an old priest  
who has been walking under the trees  
by San Agnese, and has come in  
to rest his feet. The girls please him.

They rise up the aisle afterward,  
momentary angels, graceful and smiling,  
stooping to hug a solemn, dressed-up child.  
Their love this morning is enough to cover  
organists, little boys, even God.  
They bob to Him, Lord of the year,  
who blesses and sends their blitheness into spring.

William Bridges

**TWO POEMS****Elm**

They have made their calculations.  
The thick ropes positioned  
in the branches, the saw  
man having nearly  
jawed his rough way through.  
I hold onto one rope pulling  
the elm from its natural leanings.  
And then the last crack  
at the trunk, the last  
wordy rattle of leaf, the last  
shady proposition falls toward us,  
out of itself, displaced by the air.  
The sky draws our eyes up around it.  
The old houses shudder  
and take a step closer.

### Buying the Color TV

It is dark in the store.  
Lined up on the walls  
the TV's preen,  
making their bright remarks.  
A salesman, adjusting his pitch,  
his thin pencil poised like a claw,  
interrupts them.

*Can he help me, sir?*

Yes. The word stumbles out  
like a fly drunk on summer,  
trapped in a stuffy house.

My questions buzz in the air.

*Yes they're practically free.*

*No they need no antennas, no plugs.*

*Yes they're powered by air.*

*Their lifetimes are guaranteed.*

I agree. The saleslip sticks  
to my fingers, won't come off.  
I drive home.

My living room grows smaller,  
the TV relaxed in the corner,  
fat and complacent, making  
its off-color jokes.

It tells me to sit in my chair.  
Then it locks my eyes into focus,  
tunes all interference out,  
grows addicted to the flicker  
of my face.

## THE TENTH MONTH

As if I wore a mask  
my voice is not my own  
and my breath breaks  
on my cheeks  
like the whine  
of wasps in wallboards.  
I have been unkempt  
so long  
I am beginning to look  
like myself,  
but I keep  
my arms crossed  
over my flat belly  
as if I had not lost  
the child.  
My breasts, pillows  
of milk, still fill.  
The older boy consoles me:  
"do you want me to drink  
from mommy's dress?"  
If my husband were here  
he would unfold my arms  
and put a book there  
turning the pages,  
but today my lap  
will be my book  
lying open in the shade.  
I smoothe the pages  
whispering to myself  
like a girl learning to read  
or a mother humming lullabies  
so deep in her throat  
only a nursing child could hear.

Steven Harvey

**CAT AS LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

Cats in various times and places  
have rearranged the world about them  
and gone about saying meow, miaow,  
niago, ariri, orare, and even  
the seven sacred names of God  
to any that would listen.  
But my cat moves quietly  
through the shelves and papers,  
in and out of physic and astronomy,  
speaking softly, whewell, whewell,  
and occasionally pronouncing, ohm,  
as he savours the riches of Liddell and Scott.  
Each night he measures light and dark,  
tries the sanctuaries of the word,  
urging me to contemplate anew  
the holy space where all the sciences  
and their names are freshly portioned out.

R. K. Meiners