

CONTENTS

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1 Jack Driscoll | <i>January: Hunting Ducks in the Dark</i> |
| 2 David Budbill | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 7 Burton Hatlen | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 8 Janis Lull | <i>The Answer, in Part</i> |
| 9 W. Lyon | <i>Knifethrower</i> |
| 10 Frederick Feirstein | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 14 Albert Goldbarth | <i>The Story of the Giant Panda</i> |
| 24 John Judson | <i>North of Athens</i> |
| 26 Lola Haskins | <i>A Note on the Acquisition by
American Medical Schools of
Skeletons from India</i> |
| 29 James Livingston | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 33 Karen Hodges | <i>Two Poems</i> |
| 34 Sue Sanial Elkind | <i>Battered</i> |
| 35 George Lang | <i>Tchewan-Geist</i> |
| 36 Anthony Sobin | <i>Fecund Poem</i> |
| 37 Henri R. Cole | <i>Mother's Dream</i> |
| 38 Joan Stone | <i>Drowning</i> |
| 39 Achy Obejas | <i>Come the Fox</i> |

*Cover: Robert Shetterly Jr.
Night Heron*

The Beloit Poetry Journal is indexed in *American Humanities Index* and *Index of American Periodical Verse*.

This issue is supported by a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines.

JANUARY: HUNTING DUCKS IN THE DARK

He finds the lake's blind side,
that shore where snow turns
from flightducks and settles

on frozen reeds. Here, out of season,
his ears swallow the last few seconds
of light. He sits still
all night in the thicket,
shifts only the hair inside his body
against the breeze. He knows, if he sleeps,
that one last bird will pass unnoticed
at the level of trees. So he pokes

the ash of his body, feels his trigger hand
straining in the draft of its sleeve.
The dog, waking
to that strange taste in her mouth,
is breaking through thin ice
to retrieve what has not yet been dropped
in the dark. He imagines

coming to his knees,
almost swings the twelve-gauge on the hinge
of his wrists and listens,
without decoy or duckcall,
for the heavy breathing of wings.

What he hears
is what he has always been sure of:
the eyes closing at zero degrees, the heat
being plucked from his body.

Jack Driscoll

TWO POEMS

Antoine on the Bowser Factory, Free Enterprise, Women, Love and Loneliness

November and a foot of snow.
 We've been skidding trees all day through the wet and cold.
 The working day is over, everyone is gone
 but Antoine and myself and Antoine still talking
 as he has been all afternoon
 as we sit in the cluttered truck changing rubber boots
 for leather ones.

Ah, David, ah'm gettin' sick a dis.
 Ah can't stand it too much longer.
 We got to open dat bowser factoree like we talk about.
 Make dem pussy wigs for da wimens.
 Red one, yellow ones, black kinky ones,
 red-white-an'-blue ones for da pa'tri'its . . .
 Dat be da t'ing!

In dis country, David, yew can't get ahead workin'out like
 dis.
 Yew got to go it on yer own, haf saum 'magination,
 be da boss, not just another sla'f like we be here day af'er
 day.
 Yew and me, David, put are money all tagetder open up
 dat factoree.
 We go 'raound fraum door to door, sell dem wigs,
 tell da wimens it be da latest t'ing.
 An' we be da fidders, yew and me!
 Saum job!

First place we go
 be to dat hippy girl live up a road from are place.
 Why,
 she be saumt'ing like you never see.
 Whan she caum over t'other day ta see da baby,
 whan she lean over coo I could see her tittys hangin' down
 loose
 so big dey weren't fid a sap buckit
 an' ah see her pussy too stickin' out her pants
 big a' witches broom. Oh! how I wish ah be
 dat littl' baby. Wall, by Jesus Christ,
 an ol' bauck gota stiff horn an' ah ain't be done yet!

Saints in da trees! What we do widout da wimens!
 Dis life ain't built for to live it all alone.
 Ah be forty-five, dat half a ninety, what ah'll never see,
 before ah find my wimens. An' all dem years ah livin' to
 mahse'f
 in dat tin can with nauthin' but my goddamn dawg.
 We ain't built ta live dat way.
 You got to haf saumbody be wit', saumbody talk to, cry
 wid',
 roll araound da bed, sid across da table from.
 You can't live touchin' nauthin' but a dawg.

Da Lord make plenty mistake whan he build dis place an' us
 is what ah t'ink, on'y yew don't tell da pries' ah say so,
 but one t'ing he got right was whan he made da wimens.
 David, yew know what I mean—how yer han' ache ta hold
 'er.

Dey be so differ'nt fraum da likes a hus.
 Like mah cat an' dawg what loves each odder an' don't
 fight
 only cuddle up and lick each odder all da time.

Wimens is good for da pecker an' da soul.
An' Mister, yew get 'em bot' 'n one
an' you got saumthin' better 'an da world.

Aow! all dis talkin' make me itch ta see her,
haf' saum tea an' touch 'er face
so why ah be here wid yew all da affernoon?
Good-bye. Ah see yew.

And he drove away, a cigaret
dangling from the corner of his mouth,
his arm out the window waving.

Abraham Washington Davis

I

A colonel in the Vermont Regiment brought him north to Burlington after the Civil War and named him Abraham Washington Davis. Davis was fifteen then and couldn't read a word. Eight years later he graduated from the University first in his class—an educated, liberated slave. He read Latin, Greek, knew the classics. After graduation he worked as schoolmaster over the hill from here in Craftsbury. Then in 1875 he came to Judevine to organize the church.

He was the only black man for fifty miles around and must have been a curiosity. Black people still are in this white place.

In 1877 he married Dora Glenn, a local girl. They had a little farm up behind the church.

A month or so after they were married Dora died in
childbirth,
the baby too. The two of them are buried side by side
in the cemetery by the church but nobody can remember
now
which grave is theirs, not even Laura Cate who knows more
about the cemeteries in this town than anyone alive.

Davis left not long after his wife and baby died
and nobody ever heard from him again.
There's a story goes around though that he never left
Vermont,
that he lived like a hermit in a shack, without any books,
up near Island Pond. People up that way, they say,
didn't even know he could read.

Edith claims that when he died the folks in Craftsbury
brought the body back to the Academy. She knows because
when she attended high school there in the nineteen-
twenties
it was his skeleton which hung from a metal pole
in the biology room. She knows, she says, because
it was a Negro's skull.

II

One of the ways we pass the time up here
is in that peculiar form of conversation
known as visiting. There is never a topic for the talk
and no one talks about what they've read or seen on the
T.V.
and almost no one ever offers an opinion or says what he or
she thinks
unless it is to voice a cliché about the government or welfare
or to say what they think about somebody; rather,
the words come out as stories from the past,

jokes and tales about people and events
 (which is why I write the way I do)
 and in this form there are ritualistic phrases
 which repeat themselves, as when Hiram
 refers to eating sponge cake as
 like walking through a thick fog with your mouth open;
 or they are phrases applied to attitudes or people such as
 burled up like a cat who's seen a fox,
 glad of spring as a phoebe in the sugarhouse,
 plain as a hare in a December without snow,
 fits like a glove on a rooster's foot,
 cold as a white black bird with four buckle galoshes,
 dumb as a frog,
 strong smelling as an old buck nigger.

When that last phrase rises and hangs in the air
 I am transported
 and I see Dora Glenn and the infant stir in their graves.
 I see the biology room, the skeleton and the pole
 and slowly, while I watch, the bones take flesh and form,
 his body reemerges. He is fully clothed, a suit and vest,
 high starched collar above wide tie,
 his intelligent, gentle face,
 the thin mustache, the short-cropped, tight-dark hair;
 lover, father, scholar, teacher, priest:
 vision of dignity—suspended from a pole.

I remember one time—no, many times,
 while working in the woods when things were tough and
 ugly
 and somebody said, "This ain't no work for a whiteman.
 We need a couple niggers."

Abraham Washington Davis suspended from a pole . . .
 twists and turns,
 rotates in the air.

David Budbill

TWO POEMS

For Michael

If I could
think in Hopi,
says Whorf, I
might see, not
you, Michael,
in your chair,
rocking, talking
of the "nuances
of the world,"
of a rare green,
made in Umbria,
sipping coffee.

Instead, I might
see sittingness
happen, to you.

The green, my
friend might be
painting itself,
the coffee, shall
we say, drifts
from the cup, and
somewhere, near
the chair, are two
lips, talking.

**In November the Mind Can
Touch Bottom**

In the end it is too much, and we
are glad when the pigweed flames
to purple, and the wild asters
wither and die at the hoar-frost's
touch. The sky at noon is bluer
and deeper than the eye can see.
Caught between window and screen,
the summer's flies crumble, and
in the cellar, the spiders dream
and drowse toward the long sleep.

Burton Hatlen

THE ANSWER, IN PART

The salt pond before sleep
Coiled with shining lengths of DNA
Like anchovies off Peru, like grunion:
Fishing, our different ways,

We hooked you. Then the net—
Culture's slow work—pulled
Through us like silk through spiders,
Without our intent.

You ask, being six,
"Why am I me?" and are caught,
Beached and particular child.

Janis Lull

KNIFETHROWER

each day we recede further into cliché or legend,
which at some point touch I am forever taut
and my skill honed and she is forever trusting,
piercingly lovely and we're carny so some will always
say my knives are wood or plastic or collapse
as they glide into paper-thin wood they're steel
fine steel I polish and sharpen every day,
and they don't collapse even after these years

people still whisper: she must really trust
him, and some times laugh: hope for her sake
they didn't fight today the movies' stock scene,
the camera close on eyes and hands
and the thrower always pent, the lady groping
breathlessly for courage if his hair is dyed,
his pants stuffed, his belly trussed
and his hand shaking you never see, and you never see
that she sees, or that her gown films
over a corset, her false curls gloss
over a sagging chin or see that he sees the camera
shows us young I taut she at risk

but I'm the one, I carry something heavier
than the case of knives, the board and props,
heavy enough to fail my heart or hand,
more dangerous than knives my own hand carries
the branching vein in her neck I've kissed nights
these thirty years and its own danger thrust
from her eyes I long ago decided
where the danger was, and who the inevitable victim

W. Lyon

TWO POEMS

Heliotropes

1. Travelers

Summer. Linda is in her ninth month
and the Earth is greener and more
abundant with orange and blue
wildflowers, cornfields, and cattle
than I've ever seen her. She
takes my right hand from the steering wheel
and I feel my baby thump in his space
capsule. "Zeaser," I tell him, "this
planet is alive
— everywhere."

2. Quartet

Linda's flowered print is wound
around a post of David's crib.
He arcs his arms, after nursing.
Outside a bluejay stands,
a sixteenth note, on a clothesline.
I play Kreisler's *Sicilienne*
for them, on the violin,
with the mute on.

3. At the Window

Linda pulls the blinds as if
she's opening a present.
The avenue is polished
for Saturday night. David
blinks at the geometries
he'll come to define. I kiss
his head — It's a crystal ball!

4. Timeless

Nightfall again, in the endless
night of David's first month.
He and his mother, asleep
in their rocker, are
a Madonna and Child.
I stretch out, content to watch
a couple in the tenement
across the garden
eat supper, their walls
in this light pea green:
background of a Titian portrait.
Except for the sounds of traffic,
we could be centuries old.

5. Nursing

Linda coos David's Hebrew name
and he responds
by shitting daffodils.
I curl up
jealous of both,
breastless,
nursing poems.

6. Dancin'

2 A.M. David can't sleep.
So Linda turns to a jazz
station on the radio,
leans David against her thighs,
plunks his sunhat on her head
and moves his arms like a flapper's.
That way they'll dance until dawn.

Sitting with David

1. Lies

David sits on my lap
as we look at the bright Spring
wash in the garden, the Greek white
tenements behind them, the black
birds on the branches a chord.
It is a lie my father
lies underground.

2. A Message

I click on the telephone
tape machine, hoping to get
a message from my father.
I let it run back for months.
At the end: only silence.

3. Still Life

With David on my lap, I watch
the traffic in Grand Union,
the fruits, meats disappearing . . .
When midnight finally comes,
the manager locks the gate.
Only the stock boy remains
counting the toll, watching for
movement in this fluorescent
still life.

4. At The Phonograph

David lies on his back
looking like both our fathers,
kicking his legs for me to
pick him up. He wants to touch
the source of the song about
love and death. I turn him
step after step to the
phonograph. When he gets there
the record ends, the needle
searching the empty black groove.

5. Separate

David squeezes my face
with the hate he needs
to separate, his arms weak
as my father's when he tried
to squeeze his buzzer for help.
If I would remember my
hate, I could let him go.

Frederick Feirstein

THE STORY OF THE GIANT PANDA**a wedding service in 9 parts****I.**

The story of the giant panda
begins with a deer. That's always
how it is really. I was in
Vermont. A leaf was five fingers,
a leaf was a hand on fire. Father
Armand David was in Peking. It
begins this way. You weren't there
then you were. I'd come
under dust from Texas,
indian paintbursh and bluebonnets.
They said: several li from the city,
in Nan Hai-tzu Imperial Park
:sacred animals. It was 1865. The
Rolling Stones and The Bee Gees shut up,
I tried my hand on you. Past midnight,
in the car's irrefusable brights.
My hand on fire. He climbed the fence,
confusing, I know. It
always is. You said, "But you don't need
an excuse." The other
side of the moon is dark, the
other side of the earth is China. Then
it was quiet. They
still themselves in the light. How they

step from nowhere, into nowhere,
 at night. His jaw filled with
 secular wonder and fell. Picked
 out from blankness, lifting its
 candelabrum
 a moment, golden. —A deer.

2.

And named Père David's Deer,
Elaphurus davidianus, yes, who
 pressed in shadow from
 sight of the Tartar guard, waited,
 watched his pear of breath
 unrind in the chill, then scaled
 their 45-mile wall. The facts
 are recorded, are not confusing:

*

bribed the keepers, cradled home
 "a pair of antlers. The following year
 obtained two skins" between
 the factual clarity though
 it rains "the first three
 living specimens did not survive
 the voyage . . . a graceful
 and sad-eyed deer, light tawny-brown,
 a mane on the neck" between the facts an
 oil on the waters "further specimens . . .
 studied . . . christened the species . . . the wall
 destroyed by floods in 1895 so that
 some of the deer were eaten by the starving population."
 I mean when we woke: Vermont
 a match struck in drizzle. Something
 about rejection, oil and water,
 something clean overnight in the
 waving of washed leaves,

laden, something, anything.
 "The Boxer Rebellion in 1900 was even more fatal.
 The rebels invaded the Emperor's grounds
 and slaughtered all the deer save
 one, the only survivor in all of China."
 but I don't want facts oh

*

you touched me, here
 and here. The day began. I want
 the unrecorded moment he
 saw, on behalf of his kind,
 their kind. And I can imagine his eyes
 like goblets of it. And see his hands invent
 a sign of a new service, trying
 to shape the immiscible moment,
 oil, water, wedded
 out of air to bring home. He didn't notice
 the cold, the clouds, the sun half a
 planet away in Vermont, just
 breathed a while and knew by
 breathing: he was, and they were, the first.
 It's confusing, I know.
 It was night.
 I mean a rainbow.

3.

I don't mean barnswallows
 making serration over the hay,
 though I could. I don't mean the narwhal,
 the milch-cow swinging her heavy suck,
 the mountain gorilla. This
 is the story that's
 The Old Story: I said I'd call.
 That simple. It needs
 inflating, compression, drama,

the Malay dragon twelve feet long
discovered 1910 its tongue at
work in a pig's bowel. This
is true. I did call. This is the
story between Vermont and Texas,
a wire humming, your finch
my roadrunner, song across America,
click, hello? Hello. No one believed
the okapi. It was a mule, it
was a horse, it was the natives'
darkheart babble. Bad connections,
sometimes. Rates go low
at eleven, the circuits must soften
near melting, from use. Huh what, you said,
what? It's confusing, I know.

To say it true over
that distance, always is. A shoulder
goes cold in a phone, a bed goes
colder, longer. It's hard. But
there *is* an okapi, of course, ahem, well
yes we never doubted. Every
day the Malay dragon is well-tuned
in the processed oils of goat and wild pig,
is lush in sun. This has nothing to do
with you, I suppose, not barnswallows,
no, or the freshwater dolphin.
You woke in Vermont. You answered.
I could mean anything,
peahen, diamondback, stoat.
Inflate with the ostrich. Inside me it
was an ostrich. Nothing to do
with the Abyssinian mountain nyala,
the water rat, the pragmatic
dragging of plow-gelding, hippopotamus,
dove or devil-panther? The

phone rings. It's confusing. But
 there are connections. — *What?*
 Connections. Snow-monkeys
 run through your talk.

4.

Father David's, again. That man!
 discovered the turquoise-faced
 red-bellied demon on Chinese vases,
 snubnosed, grinlipped
 :lived in the snows ("but
 monkeys don't live in the snow") of
 eastern Tibet, *Rhinopithecus*
roxellanae, at altitudes over
 10,000 feet! The cold
 in the air of Vermont made speech just
 scratches on glass. You called, you said come
 here again, the fall leaves coral the
 leaves red bangles the leaves pomegranate-meat /*how*
could it be/ and you said:

*

the water chevotrain, the Assam takin,
 the gerenuk, the kouprey and the dibatag,
 the gaur, the banteng, the langur and the wanderoo

*

—these, all, are real.

*

March 11, 1869, Szechwan,
 Father David to tea at a wealthy landowner's.
 This is the rare silk
 geisha scene with the sponges, and this
 a lacquer-box done from an infant skull, and
 perhaps you don't know of this creature
 whose skin is so
 striking on my wall, the giant panda.

5.

“ . . . and so solicit
 national aid, with not only hope
 of its forthcoming but
 with poignant recognition of the White
 House’s own original
 contribution to this situation when
 President Roosevelt’s Orient-adventuring
 sons Colonel Theodore and Kermit observed one
 adoze in the crown of a hollow pine and
 blammo. With finesse. It was a
 fatal salvo. This is not in any
 condemnation of their manly ways or
 pellmell rushing into the trigger’s
 easy squeeze, and surely their plump, stuffed skin knows
 the admirers it deserves now on
 display in Chicago—I hear an attendant is
 hired especially to chamois the glass’s
 fog of gasp on gasp—but even then in
 1929 it was nearly a species
 extinct, and further slaughter occurred
 in 1931, 1934, and last year. Many
 worthwhile causes gape, I know, their pockets
 daily before the governmental purse, and
 yet I trust the justice and urgency of this
 preservative mission will encourage
 contribution toward an expedition, later in this
 peaceful God’s year 1936, by William Harkness . . . ”

*

died suddenly in Shanghai before he had a chance

6.

What if it never rained,
 for weeks? Vermont, a humdrum
 scene with nannies cropping the backgrass,

dogs in heat-and-loll at blacktops'
 ditchy sides, that pecker making a maple make
 a sound grown beyond the grove. The way
 the moon is a yeast in your breasts. A rainbow,
 anyway, in drought,
 in darkness, arches
 inside if inside weather's right,
 ho-hum, an everyday story, my sweet
 old hat. That goony lovers' visage-scrunch,
 uh-huh, the sudden tendon-flex
 in hawk-wing, rat at the river-rushes,
 whisker antennae, caterpillar accordion,
 thunder, flame, yep that
 ol' rainbow inside.

7.

His widow

*/knew next to nothing about the animal**/and still less about China**/the most experienced of explorers had**failed for 70 years*

Ruth Harkness

*

Two weeks hadn't passed. He'd dreamed it, now it became her waking dream, and vegetation brushed her hips and at night now something off the grass or through the netting itched inflammatory between her legs, and that was all she had now and woke with it every morning and kept on. The cry, when it first came, she heard it inside her breasts, it was so human. Under a sun like a gong. A struck, ton, mandarin gong. And she lifted it out of the hollow tree, it was messy with softness and fright, some fur where the mess had caked. Maybe she kneeled. Or maybe was all business on the surface, orders to porters, the site on film from four exact angles and grasses forever in all four

backgrounds, I don't know. But in my account she "nursed it in her arms." *had failed for 70 years* Two weeks hadn't passed. The whole sky kneeling inside of what was otherwise all business. *called Mei-Mei and brought home alive* the

*

giant panda, no
 not the hammerhead shark it swims
 asleep, not the grackle, not the parlour gentleman
 the kiwi strutting, no this
 is the giant panda this is the
 story of the giant panda, not the bat's black
 scalloping, not the larger
 savannah elephant trumpeting,
 trumpeter swan or goose-calligraphy here
 on the sky's last page, no
 not the snail's lucent travel, someone
 yes, not the pony, okay, no gibbon,
 armadillo, wren, and said yes
 of course I'll marry you,
 yes, and yes

*

So this is the big time. I can say anything,
 anything and it fits. The crazy
 orangutan, the humpback whale.

8.

He: My grandmothers can't be present.
 For them, I want to say the Earth
 Is a circle. Grandma-Babushka,
 Grandma-Scrape-The-Chicken's-Gray-Leg,
 The Earth is a circle.

She: I once told children a red wool sock
 Could be a heart. And so I made my living.

Now, I want to say I'm wearing
 A red wool sock. I know you can't see it.
 I'm wearing a red wool sock.
 I'm making my living.

He: In Europe in the seventeenth-century
 Spaniards believed Jews had tails.
 They were wrong of course. But now
 I want to say that the brain
 And the skin come from the blastospore's
 Same layer. I've loved as an animal.
 I've thought with my flesh.

She: Emmanuel Swedenborg witnessed angels.
 They had a language, like ours, but
 Around ours. They wore raiment, they
 Used houses, like ours, but around ours.
 I said "children, an angel lives
 In my silver tape dispenser" and
 Pulled a tongue of tape. And Swedenborg
 Witnessed angels make love.
 Around us, all around us.

Both: The deer Père David found,
 Although extinct in its own home China,
 Was coddled at the Duke
 Of Bedford's Woburn Abbey
 From fifteen breeding survivors.
 250 now. Their antlers tatter the dark.

He: In archaeology, a layer of bones
 Will lay on a layer of bones.
 I've been in bed that way,
 In love, which also labels Time.
 The Earth is a circle. We are, like the Earth,
 Great holders of bones. I file mine
 Away in me, under your name.

She: You know they probe the brain
 Electrically, and nothing's forgotten.
 Everything we know, we save. I believe
 In the blastospore's gills.
 I believe there are wings in the marrow.
 My silver tape's tongue skreeks.
 A wild red thought can be an angel,
 And some are inside me, flying, and one
 I consign unto your keeping.

Both: I take you to be
 My fully-wedded
 Emu, kudu, cassowary, tapir, hoatzin and pangolin!

9.

—These, all, are real. Everything:
 true. —*What?* True. —*What?*
 True, though maybe confusing. Father
 Armand David raises his hands
 in benediction, us,
 the two-herd, always the first.
 Green-Leaf-In-The-Red-Leaf,
 Moon-Nipple, You. This is
 the ending of the story
 of the giant panda,
 Red-Leaf-In-The-Green-Leaf
 —*Who?* You. It's over.
 (The guests look up.)
 It ends this way,
 it's always beginning.

Albert Goldbarth

NORTH OF ATHENS

Edith Hamilton had been waiting for me
in her long cape
right there at the cross-roads.
I had memorized the riddle of the sphinx,
but she did not ask it, and so,
after a cordial greeting
and tea from a flask which her servant bore,
we were off, up the rocky road,
into the flat, unlying light.

Even at that height
Greece receded into the heroic,
and Edith said, "You will note
the Parthenon takes on a different slant.
It can't be judged until you see
the land arranged beyond it and above,
for the Greeks were not city planners
nor architects alone." And she was right.
I saw how the mountains were heightened
by the columns, and how design
was not embellishment.

After many hours
we came to a desert plain between mountains,
and the light, though it was still Greek,
dazzled even the smallest grain of sand.
She smiled then, and came to a stop,
and chanted in a tongue
which, though I had never heard, I understood,
"This is our place."

“What’s going on?” I asked,
my eyes filled with tears.
“Where are we?”
And she smiled her smile again,
unclasped her cape at the nape of her beautiful neck
and said to the servant in a full voice,
“Raise the tent and build a fire.
After that, you are free of all but my charity.”
And she turned to me as Hecuba once did toward home,
“You will have noticed,” she chanted in my Midwestern
tongue,
“that in the middle of the widest or swiftest rivers
nothing grows but a swimmer’s power.”
And she dusted my head with sand.

That was forty years ago,
the year she left Bryn Mawr,
the year my breath was born . . .
that old woman with the young girl’s eyes
and her dreams of olive trees and gardens.

John Judson

A NOTE ON THE ACQUISITION BY AMERICAN MEDICAL SCHOOLS OF SKELETONS FROM INDIA

Chicago (AP) The price (of skeletons) is down considerably from a year ago. The steeper price then was caused by an embargo, since lifted, on skeletons shipped out of India. "Right now we order from a Toronto supply firm" said Dr. Harry Monson, Professor of Anatomy at Illinois College of Medicine. "It's too expensive for us to clean bones and mount skeletons. In India they have an effective and cheap method."

1. The Husband

She's of some use, even so.
When she dies, I will sell her.
It is her bones they want
for their white gardens.
I have seen them, miles
of bodies in the sun
being cleaned to bone.
In the days, the buzzards
come, pick over their meals
like little men. By night,
the jackals. In a week
all is gone, and the free
bones wait with the wind
in their ribs. In a time
they are gathered. Then,
I do not know. Perhaps
they are pounded and sold
for cures. Perhaps they are
worshipped. It makes no matter.
When she dies, I will sell her
and she will feed me
yet again a little while.

2. The Dean

Dear Sirs:

Thank you for your shipment.
Our students unwrapped
their charges as carefully
as if they had been seashells
or old books, to crumble
to dust at their fingers.
We are grateful for the thirty
you sent and we believe
they will be happy. Each
has been given a name and
our students have already,
as your read this, begun
their study.

3. The Student

Veena, you stand small
and white before me,
your body made whole
with wires. Like a child,
I name your parts aloud:
This is your femur.
This your fibula.
And here, in your feet,
your phalanges, the
square pearls that made
your toes. And I name
the woman parts of you,
the small hips, the few
faint proportions that
tell me what you were.
But what is there here

to tell me of the way
you must have hunched
in the hot street, of
the places you must have
slept at night and,
towards the end, in
the day. And how
shall I know the children
you might have borne,
the white cloths you
wrapped them in when
they died. There is
nothing to tell me
Veena, nothing but the
name I give you, that
and the names that join
us with all men. So
I touch your arm
then I touch mine:
from shoulder to wrist
humerus, ulna, radius.
And I touch your leg
then I touch mine:
from thigh to foot
the prayer of the bones
femur fibula tibia
and I touch

4. The Husband

I have spent you already,
oh wife. The few coins
have passed through me
and left me empty.

Lola Haskins

TWO POEMS

Sevilla

In 1492, Spain pushed the last of her Moorish invaders from the southernmost provinces and in an attempt at greater unity, banished all who refused to accept the yoke of the Holy Roman Church.

—Catafalque, *A Concise History of Sefardism*

I force myself awake, and this century resumes. Although it's five hundred years, my father tells childhood stories of Sevilla as though it were his childhood he remembered. Five Centuries! and still he owns keys to the house on Calle Magdalena. In my dreams I am a saddle-maker; I work late into the night, the tools, my hands, and the leather becoming one: the zebra-skin riding saddle for Doña Ana, my hand worked pouches with the family name, Espinoza. Awake, I cling to absence; I smell my hands believing in the scent of hides and find only the faint sting of perspiration. Oh my fathers, in all your troubled wandering, did no land open before you like the plains of Andalucía, bright countryside of my dreams where I work leather, and the splash of the fountain in the courtyard cools, and sustains me.

A City and a Tower**for Pip and Linda Cole**

I left my father's house in a dry season.
Spring had passed without a flower when I came,
hungry and footsore, into that city.

I sat beneath a locust tree
and waited until an old woman came out
then called to her, asking the name of the place
and whether I might find work there.
She was old, and hard of hearing.
I repeated myself:

Old Woman! Again I ask what place is this?

Ay, she muttered, in such heat,
the very stones seem to sing to themselves.

I walked toward her: Not the stones, old mother!

What then, a spirit? Who hides when an old woman
approaches gathering sticks for a fire?

One who has watched the river horses of the Nile
play like children. One who has lifted stones
larger than you to seize the bees' wild honey!

Ay. Indeed. One who crouches rabbit-like in the earth
while he shouts of courage like a Pharaoh.
Show yourself if you are a man and not my heat-riddled
fantasy.

I took her hand. You are surely blind, old mother.

She brought me in to her house and offered me food.
Flat bread and lentil soup. There is work for everyone
who wants it, she said. In this city they are building
a tower to reach up to the floor of heaven.

In all the time since I left my father's house
I have not taken a single order, or worked a day
at anything except what I chose, but I am as strong
as I please to be. The foreman, Arphaxad, put me on
as apprentice to a mason with the eyes of a lizard.
On days when Arphaxad found fault with his work
we called him by his full name, Benjamin. On better days,
Benjie. Fourteen hours a day I mixed mortar
and carried stones and water, always watching to learn
what I could. Because I am not from here, the other
workers and bosses alike were careful to mispronounce
my name, and to avoid seeing me. These are fragile
creatures who live in cities. They have forgotten
that which is most important. We worked more than a
month
straight before we had a day off. This building,
to touch gods, was behind schedule!

There is a great furor when the king comes to visit.
He calls it his own, this building thousands
have pieced together, brick on stone,
but he always brings his women! and even Arphaxad,
the foreman of five-hundred workers—a man who bare-
hands
metal lying in the scorching sun, a man who walks, singing,
a hand-thick wooden beam ten stories above ground—
begins to stammer with such women around.
The others are as tongue-thick as he until the king
and his jewel-strapped harem have gone.
Then, they all become great lovers!

There is a woman living next to me,
wife to a merchant who travels. An evening when the owls
are silent, I listen as she sings,
preparing our meal together. Her breasts are moons
beneath silk, but it is years since I have held a woman.

Her hands are slim and long-fingered—and are adorned by hammered gold. In twilight, nothing is more remote than tomorrow. This tower will never reach the gods, I tell her, and she answers nothing. But even should men build such a tower, reaching up to the kitchens of heaven, men would remain as blind as ever. She answers that she can not see me. I take her without words, entering into her dream where no husband exists.

That evening the king slept, his women about him as bricks.

His guards about him did not disturb his dream of towers whose faces were clouds. There was no other dream for him but bricks. For all the prattle regarding choice such men are as driven as teams of oxen who may only turn from one furrowed row to the next.

In the morning, there were clouds, and in the nearly forgotten smell of rain, the work faltered, started up, faltered again. Not one there who could understand the speech of a single other. Arphaxad yelled orders in a language as antique as stone. Benjamin walked off a pilaster and clawed air twenty stories down, yelling murder! in perfectly declaimed Latin. The king's women argued in a hundred tongues, inmates in a sudden asylum; the unfaithful wife received a letter in Sanskrit from her travelling husband and decided she didn't like its sarcastic tone. The old woman's speech was unchanged, but not one of her poly-glot daughters could understand, and I returned, speechless, into the desert, which began to blossom.

James Livingston

TWO POEMS**Pandora's Box**

Inside you find an inky, insolent cat,
Its fur electric, tipped with points of light.
And other hallucinations which I think
It makes appear from in its eyes
(Moving as sleepers eyes do in a dream
To inner and not outer flow).
Inside you will find men and women too,
Or souls of men and women flying about.
They flail—some of them hand in hand—
From wall to wall, so longing to be free
And find their earthly forms,
Like small birds hostage in a tiger's cage.
And some of them, indeed, are badly bruised.

Black Snake in My Room

In my dream last night, I saw you as a snake—
Not someone else's idea of a snake,
But mine—which since you never knew I'll tell:
Slender and black it looped back on itself,
Just longer than a full-grown man is tall.
The neck was tapered down to something fine
And strong as braided steel, quick as a whip.
(There lay my fear, the quickness.) On this stalk
Its head bloomed like a subtle flower, swept
Back to the ample flanges of its jaws.
Unfeared, the intelligence of that head was quiet.

The eyes too, quiet. A quietness like the vigil
All day long of tribesmen on the plains
Poised on their spears. Wrapped in the keenness of their
sight.

Such bodies are, without the mind, all-wise.
And I sometimes am quiet in you like that,
Upon the pivot point of flow and strike.

Yet when I saw my child and mother exposed
In last night's dream to the blacksnake's lethal mouth,
To the poison of a thwarted strong desire,
I knew myself to be the black snake too,
Made hungry enough to feed upon itself.

Karen Hodges

BATTERED

The child slept
bent
like an arthritic finger.
Suddenly he screamed
half-awake, ran for help
only to be catapulted
into another nightmare
of beating fists
and kicking feet
that sent him tumbling.
He landed head first
battered, broken,
bent,
like a child asleep.

Sue Saniel Elkind

TCHEWAN-GEIST

In a train in the Abitibi, an Amerindian named Tom Brown told me in French that the *Capitachouane*, the river I was about to canoe down, meant *course-of-water-where-one-stops-for-tea*. For a hundred miles of river, camper's porridge and especially ceremonial tea, I believed him. Then . . .

Capitachouane, Saskatchewan: *tchewan* means river.

But *capita*- cuppa tea?

Like glaucotomous Tom Brown swore

in slurred sawmill French

in the wobbly and ammoniac bar-car?

I pictured his ponderously drunk bulk

punched over a pre-Columbian infusion,

gnat-ridden pause from knee-numbing hours down the river.

I wondered: could the next *tchewan* over

indeed be where trappers pass with ease in December,

all but a piss brown vein within the vein of white water turned to ice— an Amerindian kenning?

Algonquin or what not would then have words

for morning mist over water,

aura of the *Tchewan-Geist*

to whom we poor, upright, wide-eyed humans

in the smoky clearing on the shore

would smell metallic and sour,

agglutinations for concentric rings

beaten out by moths fallen on the smooth shoulder

of the *tchewan*, symmetry in the midst of plenty

which takes us all in like trouts.

But hadn't cunning Tom Brown smiled

then spoken normal English to his son,

the same urchin who'd sat sceptically

on the styrofoam ice-chest in front of the coke sign
watching us load the iron-horse
with our fiberglass birchbarks,
our nylon backpacks chock-full
of dehydrated fruit, glucose and peanut butter?

George Lang

FECUND POEM

Old photograph
Early farm

By the fence
female animals
swollen with milk

In the foreground two aunts
big round stomachs
pregnant and smiling

The flowers and
their flowers

Grandmother
holding Mother

wrapped in a hand towel
like a pitcher of milk

Anthony Sobin

MOTHER'S DREAM

Early her fifty-first birthday she woke
to check the tomato vine's swell through twine
and splints. The pull of ripe ones drew the stalk
beside her heels. In the dark, her palm could find

each knotted stem and twist it clean without
splitting the fruit's tender peel. She cradled them
like the weight of half a century. Her mouth,
drawn at the cusps, huddled near the bowl's rim.

When the sun rose, she drew her weight about her
and lifted from the bed like a strapping calf.
She brought a carpet to the garden air
and beat its oriental print, laughing

as her eye caught sight of the five tomatoes
ripe and rich on the shelf of the window.

Henri R. Cole

DROWNING

All children out of the water;
the shrill whistle;
along the shore they stand counted.
Lapping against the hard air,
small waves settle to glass.

We link hands, stretch a chain,
pulling across the taut water,
touch our way under,
feet stepping down the mud.
Our bodies drag a slow wake
hauling the silence behind us
like a long rope.

Out past our faces, through slick weeds,
we move, stirring the mud up,
toes digging under weeds like roots.
Out there a body pulls us down.

All children out of the water.
Sirens churn the fumbled air
and roll off with someone's son.
We count them lucky along the shore.

They begin to move out, bobbing,
floating away. I turn dreaming,
my back to the water, floating down
the dry sleep of the drowned.

Joan Stone

COME THE FOX

come the fox snake in the grass
in the bush running from the gun
gunshot gun of the moon's hunter
shouting fox fox running claws like
a knife like knives in the heart
of a woman woman breathing fox fox
in the ear of the moon running down
the hall up the seams of the jeans
of the cave where the claws and
hands have been moaning fox fox
in the fur wet eyes of the fox fox
muse of the moon of the hunter with
the gun gunshot gun woman running
from the gun gunshot gun from the
fox from the fate of the snake in
the grass in the bush down the path
up the hall of the seams spread
apart and the touch that screams
come the fox fox danger danger danger

Achy Obejas