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Correction: In the *Contents* of Vol. 31, No. 1 (Fall, 1980) the name of Barbara E. Thomson was misspelled. We regret the error and ask that indexers please make the correction.

EDWARD HOPPER'S WOMAN

There is Hopper's woman.
She stands naked
looking out the huge window,
flooded with godawful light,
raped by brushstroke,
her thighs muscular, taut and white.
She has no place to go,
and her jaw is squared.
Her red mouth
tells very little in the way of stories,
her lips smeary, stifled
and worn.
Beside the cloister-like bed
she stands perfectly still.
She will never go anywhere,
her black high heeled shoes
carefully fallen beside the bed.
Her lax stomach leans forward.

The thighs—
they are not even hers,
like a cry escaped and not
belonging anywhere.
They bulge heavy, just hiding
the crotch of the silhouette.
It's like the only secret Hopper knew
in that sunlight,
how she could leap
out into anywhere if she chose,
but she stands quite willing
and not quite sure,
to let the brush
paint her down.

Fleda Brown Jackson

THREE POEMS

After Williams

As the platform at South Ferry
Comes out, yellow and metal colored,
And doesn't quite touch, she steps
Over the gap to stand beside

The old straw seats,
Dressed in white, dressed pure white,
With a small bouquet
In the heat, smells of ozone
As the doors between the cars
Slam aimlessly
Back and forth, back and forth.

The Mona Lisa

for Lawrence Durrell

Her lovers fish, and she an otter, blessed
To swim as gently as a feather bathes
In air, through pools and streams. The fishes rest,
The water shivers as she passes: waves
Transmit the feel of her, and, passing fish,
Combine the touch of fur and scales, then break
Against the shore. She stops; a lover's wish
Of darting to her fails— his motion makes
A pulse of water, which, caressing her,
Returns— and even her reflected touch
Is so delightful fishes cannot stir.
And then she hungers— otters being such
That fish are food, one trout was picked— her mate,
And, with a wistful smile, she slowly ate.

To Voluptuous Plumpness

Give me the red fat-mark—
The rub of belly-roll on belt-buckle.
Give me the worn-out insides of pant-legs, the awkward
walk,
Give me the adipose tissue, that lipid layer,
Give me fat soluble vitamins
Give me Reubens' kind of girls
And damn America, for feeding them fat on hamburgers
Instead of Parisian eclairs, Yorkshire pudding,
And dark Czech beer.

Theodore Rosenberg

DISTURBANCE ON THE BLOCK

her husband is sulking in his chair.
he just lost a race and his back is hurting .
he is building a giant sulk
one to win a prize in Readers Digest .
she is yelling at him from the kitchen :
I suppose because i said ' No ' last night
you' ll sit and brood in that chair all day !
but he is silent , he's building a sulk
that G. M. would be proud of !
the sulk is creating enormous psychic waves
beating shores in the neighborhood .
cars are stopping , traffic is momentarily snarled,
the dog on the block cannot get to his hydrant,
and women frantically, unsuccessfully
tug wash from a line ; the mailman is looking
at his watch and he mumbles : It should pass
in an hour ! sitting on the curb, motionless ,
he knows her husband is sulking in his chair !

Harland Ristau

THE WALNUT TREE: on turning thirty*for Glenn***1**

The first thick-aired evening
of April. Dusk
in a low draft. In the backyard
you ask if I'm scared
of ageing. (The air

starts, then stalls
like a breath.) Sparrows
fill the pause, their walnut tree
taking darkness
into the hard heart

of its limbs. By the time
I try to answer, the tree
has gathered all the lost
layers of day
across its high girth.

2

Late afternoon, and my father
fastened every button of our coats
and folded down our hats, and
led us onto the snowy road.
We walked a mile for milk and food,
a school day given
over to head-high drifts

and bad wind. The road
dipped at the Pascack culvert.
We stopped, and
looked up the stiff stream
into the forest. I

remember how the wind
hurtled a raw thing through us,
old and undone, how

that night
my younger brother and I
took it into bed.

3

Two dreams merge: my father
on his side, the clear tubes
tangled over the sheets

and flesh, blood-
filled vials taped to the mortar
wall. He looks
at me. My mother nods,
meaning *talk*, and
when I open my mouth

he is two years dead. The family
priest takes me
to the plank cabin on parish property
where Mrs. McCloud's son
opened his father with a twelve-gauge.

We have taken her back
to the scene, she needs combs
and underwear. When
she pushes open the door
a four-foot circle of blood
clots the bed,
the air. There

is the hell
of never dreaming. But this other,
to grow old,
never waking from your dreams . . .

4

It happens in late spring,
the grass rippling
in sunlight, the ballplayers animate
and glistening. A single thundercloud
builds around the sun
until the long field is fired

with shafts. I stand
sweating and fit,
watching the shirtless
players, when
like an old wind, something shifts,
and I am thinking,
these too, all of them,
soon.

5

I climb the walnut tree.
I am darkness, its deepest center.
I am these stories. Look
at me, each story
laying itself down, heavy,
like the autumn fruit
of this tree. Mrs. McCloud
lies in the asylum bed,
smiling, drunk
on forgetting. My father,
drunk on glucose and nurses. They
are as safe as these
ballplayers laying themselves down
on the grass, as safe

as my brother,
eighteen years ago, pressed
sleeping against my back

in a darkness
where black limbs fork from the heart.

Kevin Clark

WILLIAM BRONK TO THE MUSE

There are writing desks where poems
roll in like breakers, unstoppable.
The poet tans, riding the waves
and eyeing women. In winter
he hangs on or lets the big rains blow him down.

I do not ask this travel folder.
Here the water's slow,
washing the shallows with so slight
a surge one hardly knows
it's moving. Only this, goddess:

give me a moment when the fish
leaps clear, when the drops of water
freeze as they fall off him.
Let him hover like a fish a long instant
of his strangeness, hover, then go home.

Gary Lane

MOUSING

Henry used to set the traps, but now it's come to me.
I remember when we first moved in some forty years ago.
I woke up and Henry wasn't there. I switched on the
kitchen
light and there sat my new husband with a dead mouse in
one
hand, and the other over his eyes. He said it was onion
from
the sandwich he'd made, and I played along. There'd be
times
when I'd tease him, times when just living would put us
low;
I'd lay my hand on his, and say, Now, Henry, it's not as
if
we were mice.

It's the way the traps break their necks that gets you;
the eyes open wide, but not surprised, like the way old
people
look when they forget what they're talking about. I don't
set
traps on Sundays or holidays. Thanksgiving and
Christmas
I make up a little platter of assorted cheeses and you can
bet
there's a high old time behind those walls for awhile.
Some nights,
I can almost hear Henry giving me the horselaugh.

It's harder now because I can't fix on his face. I can hear
his voice, but it's gotten where I have to pull out a
picture.

I use peanut butter, smooth, not too much, and I change
it once
a week. I set the traps with a hard trigger.

James Yates

SEVERAL MINUTES IN THE LIFE OF (DRY CLEANER)

He hears, registers, the thud of parkas
and the swish of cottons dropped down tin chutes,
then leaves it mix with the muzak.

*The hood of a junked car floats ashore,
jostles against a river bank.*

His thumb depresses a valve
and the mist darkens a grass stain
then a dirty cuff.

*Rain dampens an abandoned
baseball field.*

He passes the tank that holds yesterday's solvent.
Two weeks ago a pipe snapped
and the used solvent—
like coal dust and coffee grounds mixed into kerosene—
gushed forth.

*A horse urinates
onto a straw covered floor.
Steam rises.*

Kevin Fenton

WE DO IT ALOFT

on the hood of a moving vehicle
in the right lane
your back gleaming
with paint chips
my waffle bottom
sneakers
gripping the windshield.
at intersections
our skin glows yellow
then red

later:
the phone booth
by the liquor store.
white and yellow pages
flutter
like grackles.
what is that pounding
as the change drops?
pelvis
on Bell plastic

supper: sprawled
across the counter at burger king
I cradle your head near the condiments
you hold the pickle
then the lettuce

the moon rises behind the bowling alley
we spin on polished wood
the pins fall
and fall again

midnight: cold outside the Exxon station
we sway
on the premium pump
tomorrow: the ice machine

Beth Kalikoff

EXPERIENCE, THE SEA

I call it

an experience
the sea would envy
to move my fingers over you—
no stones were ever
worn so smooth
nor left so warmed
for an easy tide
it washes deep and green and there is no end
to the swelling
and the swelling
rocks me like a sea-plant
as my life comes a fusion
with the weeds
around your stones

J. Barnes Sprague

TWO POEMS

Letting the Poem Go

From the very first,
from the hard buds of silence
you unfold cautious leaves.

You think you've learned to hold them,
but they still tremble in the stir of air.

Do not bruise with voice
the green branchwork,
the delicate web

or even say you heard the water
breathe, the whisper of stems
parting.

Falling

they stain the water,
clenched pigments
diffuse,

 fall away
in rusty circles,
 in murmurs,

in the odor of tannin,
decaying mud
 by shady river pools—

treefrogs
 breathe it in,
exhale
exquisite syllables.

Protective Coloration

My hair is plain brown,
maybe the color of clay dirt,
a sorrel horse,
pine-needles in the ground after the first rain;
eyes no-color, the underbelly of a dark day—
I could hide out in stagnant water,
sagebrush,
for that matter asphalt
if only my eyes showed.

Sometimes I paint myself
to resemble another animal.

If you've been a country girl
you may know this game:
walk down the highway any night,
best in summer,
best when the moon is full mad silver
unless you like stars
washes of stars
drifts of ash,
knife points—

the object is this:
every sense coiled tight,
nerves sticking out all over,
so you hear the car in time—
before the headlights hit
you hit the ditch,
roll into brackens, brittle grass,
standing water. Sometimes
there's a fence.
You breathe dust in cover
and watch the quick gust of light,

sense capsuled, mysterious life
rushing warm
oblivious to the watcher
in the wide arc of night.

You find yourself hunter
more than hunted, although the nature of your prey
is not immediately evident. Is it
dust in your nose, the bright sting of rocks
gouging your palm? Or only moonlight
a silver scum on everything but you
in your safe cave of shadows?

In the faint trace of exhaust fumes
you scent life: you track it
in hiss of tires
power-thrust,
dopplered roar of engine,
assertion
recedes instantly.
Immaculate life,
immune,
that close
distant
as the slash of stars.

But there are stirrings here,
things rustle in the dry leaves,
silent wings overhead.

I am alive as any animal.

In a crowd of strangers
I disappear easily.

Judith Shears

FATHER PERNIN IN SECLUSION, 1874

Pernin: write those things which you have seen, the power
of the fire, the deaths of men, the forest exploding,
The earth turned enemy to life. Produce your labors, your
works, your words and patience:

Remember you are fallen, that you offend, that you merit
Christ's hatred, the sword, the blood you've tasted.

Pernin: do not question who is worthy to open this book,

Who will reflect upon the fire which burned your skin,
destroyed your house, your peace, your church, your
city of souls;

Do not question, Pernin, who is worthy to lament our dead,
who shall read your words

And plague his nightmare eyes with fire, with the tearing of
the terrified, with the pale horses drowning

In the river, with the moon of blood, with the death-glutted
water.

Pernin: did the trumpets blow while you buried yourself in
the river, flailing? Did the star Wormwood fall
Unnoticed upon the river? Did that bitterness past tasting
take those who drowned?

The city is fallen; the fourth vial is opened and poured on
the sun that men should be scorched with fire;

And Allelulia, for true and righteous are all his judgments

Though Pernin would dissent. And the word of God is
clothed in blood, and the birds are called to fly to
heaven

That they may eat the flesh of captains and mighty men, of
horses and their riders.

Pernin: seal not the prophecies of the fire. He is worthy who
has fallen, who has endured falling,

Who in this city fell or who, in reading this, remembers.

It was a country dense with forest, diversified by valleys
overgrown with cedar, sandy hills
Covered with evergreens, large tracts of oak, maple, ash,
elm, and beech. The year was dry;
Farmers, driven from their fields of dying corn, enlarged
their clearings, cut and burned the undergrowth and
trees.

The railroad advanced steadily by axe and fire. Ascending
Streams for trout and deer, hunters, Indians, the ruined
farmlands, kindled large fires to steer away the
wolves.

For weeks before the conflagration the woods moaned; the
cracklings of a tongue of flame
Dashed in and out among the trees, leaving them unscathed
but devouring the dry leaves. The swaying branches
Announced the rising wind. The owls grew silent, the wolves
moved on.

At the time of the catastrophe, our church at Peshtigo lay
unfinished, surrounded by lime heaps
And marble dust, emptied of pews and altar. I told the
people we'd hold no mass,
And notified the Catholics of Cedar River I would spend
Sunday among them. I left Peshtigo
For the Menominee wharf to take passage on the *Dunlap*.

The temperature was low, the sky obscured by smoke no
wind dispelled. The *Dunlap* stood, invisible,
Off-shore, too wary to approach. Thus, towards nightfall, I
returned, prepared an altar
In my own house and placed the tabernacle there. Next
afternoon, leaving for Marinette to chant prayers,
My departure was strongly opposed by my parish. Vague
fears

Haunted them, nor was I free from this unusual feeling—
more an impression than a conviction.
Thus I found myself at Peshtigo Sunday evening where,
according to all plans,
Projects, and calculations (exclusive of God's) I should not
have been. The afternoon passed in complete
Inactivity. I remained prey to indefinable
Apprehensions, apprehensions contradicted by reason which
assured me of no more cause for fear
Than we had had for eight or fifteen days before. Indeed,
less: for the Company
Had placed sentinels and hogsheads of water throughout the
town; and we took comfort and felt our safety.
In the world beyond my house, as if to breed anxiety,
All contributed to my fear, and to my reasoned defense from
fear. Thick smoke darkened the sky. A silence,
Mysteriously serene, presaged neither storm nor fair
weather. My dog ate well.
Outside the presbytery, children thronged, bent on
amusement, laughing in most perfect indifference
Before nature. How powerful our spirits are! that, in smoke,
Heat, the disappearance of the sun, we seek our joys and
business, not without reflection, carelessness,
But with a purpose unendowed with the necessity of death.
My lost children,
Aborted from the mother World in the streets of Peshtigo,
did I let you die at your play, while I,
Cozened by your pleasures, thought of my safety? Forgive
me.

A distant roaring announced, somewhere, a commotion of
the elements. My vague fears, my listlessness,
Vanished and another habit took possession of my mind: fly
to the river.
Henceforth, this ruled my thought unaccompanied by fear or
perplexity. I turned my horse, Simon, free
In the street and set about digging a trench in my garden.
Though the earth was easy to work, my task proved tedious.
Each new breath was poison, yet I gasped and dug
While the crimson reflection gathered intensity. Between the
strokes of my pick,
I heard the muttered thunder growing more distinct. I
inhaled the poison, and dug. Amid the silence
And stupor of the village, human voices began to sound.
A neighboring American family served tea to friends. The
bright tearoom overlooked my garden,
And I heard them, amused by my labors, By nine, this
foolish company dispersed.
Mrs. Tyler approached: a priest, it seems, makes an
impression even on the tea-drinking Protestants.
I advised a retreat to the river. Her family lived.
Some two hundred railroad men had arrived that morning;
their revelling at the tavern had disrupted mass,
Yet, these hours later, they lounged still on the veranda,
drinking, wrestling, blaspheming.
They noticed nothing. When I fled at the moment the storm
burst forth, the wind impelled me toward this house.
A silence now reigned within, as if reason had been restored.

Without a word or shout, they entered, closed the doors as if
to bar death out—a moment later, the inn
Was swept away. Nothing remains, no bone or shoe, no sign
of heaven's loss, or man's.

In my trench I placed my trunks, my books, the church
ornaments, and I covered the whole with a foot of
sand.

It was time to think of the Blessed Sacrament, the object
Of all objects to a priest. Hastening to the chamber housing
the tabernacle, I dropped the key.

With no time to stoop for a key, I caught up the tabernacle
with its contents,

And placed it in my wagon. I returned to seek the chalice
when a bright cloud of sparks detonated

First in one room and then the next. The atmosphere
exploded.

I closed the door to my home for the last time, leaving my
lamps lit, poor mimics of the general fire.

I grieved, for a moment, for my house and for my jay who
beat against his cage bars.

Indeed, this childish frame of mind kept up my courage,
veiled me from simple horrors—the hot falling ashes,

The deepening red, my dog's flight under the porch where
he burned.

Thus I abandoned my home and set forth, dragging my
wagon. I had barely touched the gate when the wind,
Now a hurricane of charged gas and fire, struck and swept
gate and fencing into space.

"The road is open," I thought, that hymn slipping into my
mind like a cool lake wind; "we have only to start."

I had delayed too long. To keep my feet, my hold on the
dray,

The tabernacle in its place—all were God's work. To reach
the river, even unburdened, was more than many
Achieved. The air hung with burning poison, whipped full of
sand, sparks, smoke and fire.

I could not see to distinguish the road or my parishioners
though pedestrians crowded the way
And wagons crushed against each other in the general flight.

A thousand discordant, deafening noises rose together:
horses' neighing, falling chimneys, the crash
Of uprooted trees, the roaring and whistling of the
hurricane, the fire's crackling—

All sounds save that of the human voice. Struck dumb,
people jostled together without exchanging a word,
Look or counsel. We are saved together; each is lost alone.

With my first steps into the street, the wind overturned and
dragged me with the wagon. I fell on a corpse.

Further on I met my horse, Simon. Whether he recognized
me I cannot say,

But while I struggled to my feet, I felt his head leaning on
my shoulder. His limbs trembled frightfully.

I called his name, motioned him to follow me; he would not
move.

He was found, the next afternoon, partly consumed by fire,
in the same sad place, loyal or paralyzed.

The houses by the river were on fire. The wind blew flames
and cinders directly

Into the water. No longer safe on this shore, I resolved to
cross though the bridge was already burning.

The bridge, flaming against the night, was crushed with
women, children,

Men, vehicles, and cattle, all pushing east or west to their
dream of safety. I joined them, stupidly
Content to reach the eastern shore where the factory burned
and threatened to collapse.

I meant, still pulling my dray, to descend to the river where
the shore was low and the water shallow.

Impossible: the saw mill and store, between which I must
pass,

Were engaged by fire. The flames from each joined across
the road. To pass meant instant death. I was thus
obliged

To ascend above the dam where the water bed gradually
attained great depth.

I pushed my wagon in stream. Henceforth, I looked to
saving my life. The whirlwind revolved, sweeping up
Smoke and dust. This cleared our view. I saw the banks
spread wide

With people, motionless as statues, some with eyes staring,
upturned to Heaven, their tongues protruding.

The greater number seemed oblivious of safety; they stared
out, imagining,

As many afterwards acknowledged, that the end of the world
had come. They had no fate, no salvation,

No reprieve, but mute submission, and the final doubts of
God.

(At seminary, in a calmer world, among men of my own
nation, we young acolytes, eager

For intellectual praise, for an imprimatur all our own, for
God's deep love

Of reason—eager for all these, we scoffed at the village père
who prayed above an infant's bier, and said,

"God needs your child in heaven's choir." He would not
dispute with us,

Would not recant. "Consolation is as it fits our understanding," he said, and left us to our tomes
While he endeavored to enter the mother's grief. Now, I
stood at the river bank
And wondered how the old man died, was thankful for his
experience and that he need not witness this.
What shall God answer to those who live, I thought. What
answer, God?)

Without a word—my flight had left me breathless and the
blasting storm prevented speech—I pushed the people
Standing on either side of me into the water. At the same
moment, I heard
Splashing; those along the banks followed my example. The
time had come; the heat was unendurable.
Ten o'clock: we entered the river. Flames darted over our
heads.

Only by throwing water constantly over our faces, and
beating the stream with our burning hands
Did we keep the flames at bay. Some hundreds learned to
shrink their wills, their aspirations,
To this fending off of fire that fell like rain about our heads.
Hundreds gave their souls to their moving hands.
This was my old priest's salvation; it fit our understanding
That if the world would burn, we, Noah-like, would build
an ark of water to launch above the flames, and live.
This was, in this new world, our sense of congregation, of
Christian action, of God's
Gift of reason tested in the crucible wherein we chose our
torments in the river, pain: not death.
How dark the shadows were, the cries for help, the
lamentations.

Clothing and quilts had been, to save them, thrown into the
river. I caught some and with them covered the heads
Of some leaning against or clinging to me. These wraps
dried instantly and kindled

Whenever we ceased sprinkling them. The revolving of
opposing winds cleared once again the atmosphere;
The river, brighter than by day, displayed its grim spectacle:

Heads rising above the water level, some covered, some
bare, countless hands flailing at the churning stream.
To the right or left, I saw nothing but flames. Above my
head, as far as the eye

Could reach into space, alas! too brilliantly lit, nothing but
volumes of flame covered the firmament.

Ashore, the multitudes strove piteously for the water.

One of that number reached the bank, leading one child and
pressing another to her breast. She had swaddled
The child, evidently in haste, in a roll of disordered linen.

Opening

These wraps to look on her child, she found it gone, slipped
from her grasp. I hold in my mind her look of stupor,
Of desolation as she strove through the crowd, intent on
drowning.

Because the wind's violence abated over the water, I
endeavored to speak, to calm her, suggesting
That her child had been found and saved. She would not
look in my direction, her shame shone
Like a beacon in the river. She stood motionless, her eyes
fixed on the opposite shore. I soon lost
Sight of her; I have learned she succeeded in drowning
herself.

Even misfortune ends. After four hours, the sprinkling of
our heads proved needless. I pulled myself to shore
And was seized by the chill. A young man cloaked me in a
charred blanket. I warmed my feet
In the hot sand, dried my socks and shoes, ignored the
heaps of men scattered across the iron barrel hoops
Hurled from the collapsing factory. How many were dead,
How many insensible or recovering on the warm beach I
cannot say; I suffered too much
To attend to them. My eyes caused me acute pain; despite
the constant sprinkling, I
(And others who had sought to witness the conflagration and
not merely suffer it) had damaged them.
Each thought of himself. At last, day broke. I was perfectly
blind.

Three days later, my swollen eyes relieved, I returned to
Peshtigo. Of the houses, gardens, fences
I had looked upon as my village, nothing remained. Tree
trunks were reduced to ash.
All around the trunks, I perceived deep holes—the sockets
where the roots had burned and led the fire
underground.
My house I found by virtue of the shovel handle, half-
burned

I had left in my trench. My linen, unearthed, crumpled in
my hands. The crystal, crucifixes, silver—
All were melted. My dog's remains indicated where my
porch had been. A father
Searched for his missing children. He spoke a moment,
complaining that the vile wind had swept away their
bones.
Twenty bodies, the top ones burned, were drawn from the
village well.

The tabernacle was recovered. I found the consecrated Host
intact, the ciborium whole
And perfectly preserved. I understood that, outside our
parish, this accident
Betokens grace, a miracle of preservation. Yet in the street
before my house—my very house—
A man who had been engaged in the construction of our
church
Was found, knife in hand, with his throat cut. His two
children lay beside him, similarly saved from the fire.
Further off, the mother lay, less fortunate. I do not
speculate who died first,
What wish fell from any lip, what Abraham the father saw
wielding the knife in bitter sacrifice.
It is I who taught him Abraham, I who taught his children.
I did not teach them how to live through fire. Many, I
learned, survived by throwing themselves in furrows.
The fire, spreading through the air like locusts, passed some
height above the prostrate victims.
When it fell upon an object, it burned downwards to earth,
through tree trunks, houses, the telegraph, fences:
Thus any standing man perished; the prone man, I
learned, survives.

Peter Stambler

ISLAND

Fifty years ago a trapper's daughter
spent her fourteenth winter alone.
The next year she bundled herself
in her snowy furs and pulled by the wolves
she had tamed in her loneliness
crossed the ice.
Her appearance was legend.

We look for the telltale smoke
nothing, not even the glinting belly
of a canoe on shore, but when we drop
down the first thing we see is the rock
where the two of them stand waving.

Our island is behind us
bathed in ordinary light. Where
the marsh ends someone has left a canoe
perhaps a village farther on, something
that does not require the trees
to conform to our first view of them,
generations of initials, clasped hands,
shapes of recent bodies reclining in the moss.

The loons are visiting their summer haunt.
Each night they take part of it back,
loon field, loon landing, lodge of the loons!
Wind, the lack of a rosy dusk, our clanging
selves recapture it each morning.
In the other life loons are silent,
gray, bobbing in the tide of a southern harbor.

We know every tree on the horizon. Here,
wasps start up from rotting logs, the beaver
have eaten half way through a spruce
too far from shore. In the evening
we see her tracks, the white runners of the sled
sliding along the surface of the lake.

Maxine Scates

KNOT

The tongue of the rebel god is the anaconda,
so says the tribal legend, cut from his mouth
before words that carried secrets
which make gods gods could rise
to the ears of men. These
silent knots, a latitude of jewels,
are one elaborate thought of death,
made for nothing but to kill
and sleep their swallowed lumps
to the next hunger. Having said this,
the high-priest's own tongue is cut out,
for of such silences is silence made,
and earthworms.

Ricardo Pau-Llosa

THE GHOST

It must have been July:
I remember unrolling
a snapped-in-half dud firecracker
down to the print of Japanese newspapers,
the language of asterisks and pound signs,
black sparkles on yellow paper.

July is wheat, ripening in Indiana.

My mother, harried nurse
with a child and a half-waxed floor,
answered the phone, hurried me out
to our black Chevy and slipped the clutch
so fast we stopped before we'd started.

When we arrived, her mother told:
How a grain auger jammed with abundance,
how Grandfather crawled down from the seat,
knelt, reached, tangled,
was caught.

He called, bleeding.

(Acres of wheat-heads nodded around him;
the whole herd of Guernseys waded deep in the creek
for the coolest drink;
barn swallows spun overhead
and turned their trivial voices
home to nest)

He pulled from his overall pocket
the small shining wrench he kept handy,
pounded with that at his wrist
and surrendered the hand.

We stayed for a week.
Mother changed his dressings;

I stood and watched,
daydreaming Roman candles.

Meanwhile, he slept little,
maddened by the finger-ghost,
opening and closing beyond bandages,
where nothing was.

Harold Wiley

FOUR POEMS

Balm

Salmon fishermen used to urinate on their hands,
warm streams soothing cracked skin.

Now they use Bag Balm,
ointment farmers rub
on cows' swollen udders.

A green can sits in every seiner
along the Aleutians,
balsam fusing with diesel, brine:

In Oregon, Nebraska, Iowa,
beasts of the fields lick salt,
chew kelp mixed with their feed
and the sea flows into milk.

Maps

We haven't been anywhere in years
so we open the atlas pausing
over cities we might walk through.
As you brush the pages you say
think of a map for the blind,
skin would get wet
when it felt the Mississippi or cold
on the Matterhorn.

My hand twitches over the continent
as if it were a ouija board, landing
in a country of white stucco,
lemon trees, convents
converted to hotels.
I remember each guest slept
in a chamber once meant for penitence.
Who thought of the accumulation
of sins, those bare knees on the floor?
Not I, lying beside a man who stayed for years
a memory below my skin
like a country under tracing paper,
his outline clear but lacking
depth or color. I touched him
where the sun darkened his arm,
running my finger down the lines
of his left palm through his future
looking for myself

but I wake up
feeling guilty because I haven't told you
that part of my life, the first half
filled with foreign names and the idea
that if I'd wanted I could have gone
off on other journeys any time
but didn't, that what I had made were not failures

but mistakes, correctable
like the cartographer's spelling.

I lean across the couch to whisper to you.
You sleep, your head thrown back
looking old, so old I think
you might have lied about your age
until I see the yellowed atlas,
its outdated boundaries of half the world
and realize how much time has passed.
I close my eyes to touch you.

The Hunt

Stroking the pelt on the wall,
black tail, black stripe along the spine,
hairs drifting into my fingers,
I think of you shooting the buck
then scaring off three deer beside it.
You left the head in the moss
eyes black and glassy.

Last night I went back to find it.
The jaw softened and spoke
but soil absorbed its words.
What I held was your head
hollowed in the tundra air.
I knew I would leave my body
next to yours.

Turning in sleep
I saw the deer stand up again
sheathed in sunlight as you shouted.
Lifting their heads in the wind
they blinked, their eyes not quite believing.

On The Tundra: *Ursus*

We saw the sow and her cub
running along the cliff away from the sound
of the outboard and slept badly
thinking of the gun that jammed,
the wife who had to shoot
to save her husband,
the crewman who came back from a walk,
left eye bleeding, right arm bitten off.

But we needed deer meat,
carried our rifles across grass
worn through by years of paws.
On the path lay pebbles bears shit out
months ago eating an otter, seal.

Wind stripped us down to our walking scent,
strong as the ocean, a texture
to our flesh only their teeth could know.
I imagined them watching,
eyes powerful as our scopes.
Ahead, the cliff, cormorants
shrieking up and down its face.

We walked all afternoon.
The trails stopped without warning
in clumps of spruce as though
at the end of a long walk
the animals turned into trees.

Helena Minton

THE LOBSTERMAN'S DEATH

He sways in his own ropes
beneath the moon. One arm is lifted
by the water's pulse and turns
and falls.

His boat drifts in.

Crabs slide across the flat kelp fronds.
They find the flesh.
The soul, like a silver bubble, parts the lips
to rise.

Wind thrashes in pines and cedars.
But here, all is languorous.
His body moves in opalescent strides
as if he were a creature of the moon adorned
with silver crabs
and pale, smooth whelks.

He walks
into a ravishment of light, glitters
and goes out.

A woman opens up her door
at dawn
when eiders fly in off the outer rocks,
skim down and cut low copper wakes.

The wind brings in a sharp salt smell.
She sets a pan of crabs to cool
and sitting on the granite step,
with a small, serrated knife,
selects a crab,
pries off the stubborn carapace
and cracks the claws.

Susan Hand Shetterly

TWO POEMS**A Routine Surgical Procedure***for Dave, dying in April*

They say you have a lucky
melanoma.

It grows in neat little sacs:

on your back where the fellows
in the locker room noticed it
after Athens High beat Albany
one night in '69;

in your gut, fortunate
in the Coast Guard where all
the best surgeons are free;

in your lung halfway through
law school (the Lady blindfolded);

and hidden in your head,
at the base of your skull
where it's easiest to get to.

Yesterday, they put a thin tube
to shunt fluid, a routine surgical
procedure. Hearing you were coming along
nicely tonight, I drank White Russians
with your folks at the Link Forge,
after sauerbraten and wiener schnitzel
with good red cabbage.

Letter Written in Darkness

I don't know where to mail this—
Dante's Wood of the Suicides, perhaps.
A shade in a bright blue uniform
might find your thorn bush out,
break one off, free your bleeding voice
to answer when you read my words:
Answer me! How dared you kill my son?
Waste all those months I carried you
curled safe inside my heavy body.
All those nights I felt you quicken
like another heartbeat growing insistent
toward daylight, waking me to lie there
throbbing with two hearts. Did you owe
me nothing for nights I spent beside
your bed? My heart stopping every other
beat with fear. For pain and fever
I tried to alleviate with potions,
cloths wrung out in water cool as taps
could run. Nothing for favorite meals?
A chocolate cake with clowns on your
birthday, and long pants because you
wanted them so. And what about those
nights when you stayed out too late
in cars, and I lay wondering where
my other heartbeat was, if safe—
and curled to sleep only when your key
turned in the door. How dared you waste
my grandchildren? Make them only thorns
to scratch across my flesh, leave scars
to last as long as I shall lie awake
feeling two hearts beat, muffled against
a pillowcase with poppies bright as blood.

Bettie Sellers

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Ted Hughes, *Moortown* (Harper & Row, 1979, 183 pp., \$10.95 hardbound). Here are four books in one, three of them of importance in the developing oeuvre of one of the most powerful poets in our language. The first (the "Moortown" section) materializes the cattle, the sheep, the men of the bleak farm and forces us, half-reluctant but literally spell-bound, to participate in the earthy, violent rituals of farm life: the dehorning, the birthing, the drenching, and the many musclings. One of the strongest poems, with more energy than in any two dozen assorted review copies combined, is "Tractor." In this group every word is wrenched out of its old lexical lethargy into new life. The second section is twenty-one lyrics on "Prometheus on His Crag." Hughes' Prometheus is a distinguished addition to the literature of the archetype. He is an existentialist hero, like the Orestes of *The Flies*. He is an imaginative, aware, questioning intelligence, poised between mortality and immortality. He is a savior. The third section, rather pretentiously entitled "Earth-Numb," is a mixed bag. Among the group rather too modestly entitled "Orts" are some splendid poems, such as "Buzz in the Window." But the fourth group, a bestiary "Adam and the Sacred Nine" seems to me strained into sentimentality, pushing "significance" into innocent creatures.

The same problem dogs the latest Hughes book produced in partnership with Leonard Baskin: *Under the North Star* (Viking, 1981, 47 pp., \$14.95 hardbound). Baskin's full-page full-color portraits of northern beasts are mostly pretty, sometimes (I hate to say it) cute. The powerful dramatic language of *Season Songs* is missing. Instead, in a wolverine poem we get "gleeful evil," "wild laugh," "merry tales," and "loping along."

Hayden Carruth, *Brothers, I Loved You All* (Sheep Meadow Press, distributed by Horizon, 1978, 100 pp., \$8.95 cloth, \$3.95 paper). Carruth is one of that small group of major contemporaries—along with Kinnell, Snyder, Ammons—from whom we draw sustenance. These are the nourishing poets, drawing up the elements we need from their roots deep underground. The images of health are the natural symbols: the call of "The Loon on Forrester's Pond" seems "the real and only sanity to me." In "When the Howitzers Began" the fish "darted downward" only to be

stunned and again
stunned
and again and
again stunned, until their
lives loosened, spreading
a darker darkness
over the river.

Carruth combines this simplicity and eloquence of image with a craft equal to the vision. The nineteen quatrains of his "Essay on Love" combine in their delicate and elegant meter a naturalist's acuity of observation with the lover's acknowledgement of the pain that is inseparable from the beauty of our natural world. The poet as maker—of firewood, of quatrains, of love—creates the order that gives meaning. This splendid poem is in the high tradition of the romantic ode, exploring, as Geoffrey Hartman puts it, "the transition from self-consciousness to imagination," and achieving "that transition while exploring it (and so proving it still possible)."

James Dickey, *The Strength of Fields* (Doubleday, 1979, 86 pp., \$6.00 hardbound). Although there is some strained and long-winded work in this volume, there are also some wonderfully funny and eloquent poems. Several of the poems of war reminiscence recreate pockets of comic sanity in the cosmic craziness of war. Consider the poem of flight-sleep called "Camden Town" and the post-war fellowship of "The Rain Guitar." After this forties poem and the sixties poem, read the gorgeously defiant portrait of the poet in the eighties: "False Youth: Autumn: Clothes of the Age," a two-page epiphany story that suggests what we might enjoy if Dickey gave his story-telling muse freer access to his poetry.

Anthony Hecht, *The Venetian Vespers* (Atheneum, 1979, 92 pp., \$10.00 cloth, \$4.95 paper). The greater part of this volume is a rapier-dissection of a hostile and ludicrous society. Hecht's command of the traditional weapons of the poet is dazzling. But in the masterwork of this volume, the eponymous poem at its heart, we become so absorbed in the life we are sharing that we lose sight of the craft that is entralling us. Here the target of the poet's verbal weaponry is his own history, which he wryly and candidly dissects. At the end, in a vision of the Venetian evening sky, "I look and look./ As though I could be saved simply by looking," and, having disarmed his reader altogether, lays down his own weapon in a gesture of utter self-abnegation. Saved he is, surely, not so much by the looking (though the power of vision is a redeeming resource throughout the poem) as by a compassion profound enough to redeem even his self-contempt and an art high enough to transform it. "The Venetian Vespers" is a quiet triumph.

Three Gems

Gogisgi/Carroll Arnett, *South Line* (Elizabeth Press, 1979, 46 pp., \$12.00 boards, \$5.00 paper). These are pure lyrics: each one a song acting out its narrative, as in dance. The power of implication that makes the last lines of the ballad "Edward" so resonant to the imagination is the kind of power these poems conjure. The "subject" is mostly Indian experience. The true subject is usually national, often global, sometimes cosmic.

Federico Garcia Lorca, *The Cricket Sings*, translated ingeniously by Will Kirkland, illustrated brilliantly by Maria Horvath (New Directions, 1980, 64 pp., \$4.95 paper). Incredibly, this is the first translation of these great little poem/songs. The production is perfect, with the Spanish and English on facing pages. A child could almost learn English (or Spanish) from them.

(Canta, ranita,	(Sing little froggy
en tu choza	in your shady
de sombra.)	shanty.)

These should be ordered by the dozen and stockpiled as gifts for all children and poets, no age limit at either end.

Perhaps it would be well to allot *two* copies for each child, for although the book seems extraordinarily well-made, stitched, on heavy cream stock, it might well be loved to death and need replacing.

Wendell Berry, *A Part* (North Point Press, 850 Talbot Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94706; 1980, 96 pp., \$12.50 cloth, \$6.00 paper). If you're going to own only one Berry book, make it this one. Although (like the Gogisgi and Lorca volumes) small enough for a jeans pocket, it is rich with variety and contains some of this poet's best work. There's a spooky narrative, "Creation Myth" (don't be put off by the title; it's more a lyric yarn); there are crisp epigrams, such as "Now": "I used to wish for a breakthrough./ Now I worry about what into." There are three dozen or so memorable lyrics; there are translations from Ronsard, as fresh as Kentucky. And, speaking of course of Kentucky, there are four longer poems about that land, analogous to Carruth's "Vermont" in *Brothers* Also (like the Gogisgi and Lorca volumes) this book is beautifully made.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Press and New Directions and North Point for such quality in selection, editing, and production.

M.K.S.

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