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"A Woman from Israel" (front and back): composition,  
**Sigalit Banai**; photograph, **Micha Simhon**, 2006  
**Mary Greene**, design

→

An arrow at the bottom of a page  
means no stanza break.

**WILLIAM WRIGHT**

**Peach Trees, Suffused with Pesticides**

Hummingbirds stop  
to bathe in the creases of leaves  
where each least grass spider  
has left the husk of its body.  
The sky ravel in the throat

when ends of limbs tremble, unlatch their petals  
to a distant sea of hands:

the body  
cannot scrub it out, this lack  
of stain, emptiness gathering.

**MIA NUSSBAUM**

**[The Chapter of the Rending in Sunder]**

And then I began my habit  
of walking at night  
to get rid of the strings,  
witherings. The Lord revealed to me  
that I am full of birds  
turned smoke and hookèd strings.  
I say to the Lord, Lord take  
a string. I have named it  
mesas ringed with beeswax wicks,  
footsteps sowing up my stairs,  
tambourines in trees.  
Then a tedious, gruesome miracle  
unfolds, for the Lord takes  
the string and what attends it.  
Walking over a grate  
there is the sound of the grate.  
Margarita Mondays mean exactly  
that. I say, how could I eat?  
I ate. And how can I sleep? I shake.  
The Lord says, look at the branches,  
how they braid over graves.  
And the Lord says, look at the HandiMart,  
a bright, ordered box.  
They have their grief, the people there.  
Now the tableaux mass color, now the tableaux  
fall down. I say wet pavement keep on  
holding me up. Wet pavement hold me  
up. Now the fetishes crumble,  
now the meteors cup. The Lord says,  
I meant of it a blessing. And I say,  
I made of it a curse.  
The Lord says, sound of roots,  
sound of shoots, sound of  
asphalt, sound of cars.  
I say, I am walked into  
deeps. Here are the jewelthreads  
and throbbings that I need  
to leave. The Lord says, chomp  
and be chewed, alleluia. Sever  
and stitch, alleluia. Exceedingly,  
the Lord says, *bar; barr; barrr.*

→

**MIA NUSSBAUM**

I say snowfield? Snowfield?  
Piñon roasting? Chaparral?  
The Lord says, is what you want  
the terrible free? And I say  
to the Lord, Lord speak.  
And the Lord says, sound of earth in orbit,  
its muffled, its four-chambered beat.

**KEITH CARTWRIGHT**  
**Rumors of Discontent**

*The crimes contemplated should be atoned for precisely as though those crimes had been attempted and consummated. Fearful and terrible examples should be made, and if need be, the faggot and flame should be brought into requisition to show these deluded maniacs the fierceness and the vigor, the swiftness and completeness of the white man's vengeance.*

—The *Clarksville* [Tennessee] *Gazette*, December, 1856

By the levee

                  where steamboats dock for lading,  
three Committee of Safety members  
question the pilot.

                  He speaks  
of demonic signs charcoaled on burlap,  
maps with stars constellating  
certain forges' stashed weaponry. The dry  
goods proprietor nods,

                                  tugging at the skin  
over the Adam's apple.

                  Names wheel  
their heads like uncorked ether: *Gabriel, Nat,*  
*Toussaint*, as dust billows from horses past  
the *T* in three directions.

Down in the dirt  
basement of a Dover freeman's smithy  
a woman and six men trace the sign  
that brought them there, lines breaking  
to points

                  suffused with saints:  
Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
bless this blade with the blood it's drawn.  
They lean low by candlelight, plot  
each angle crossing

                                  in a guinea hen's blood.  
She rings the smallest iron bell  
and the men are horses  
of the living god.

**MARK W. FRY**  
**Concatenation**

Just as there are words for what  
there are no words for, horses  
pound riderless

up slopes  
to reach the crest no longer horse  
but nags of dissembling smoke,  
many hands high,  
drifting to kiss the surface  
of irrigation ponds

where blackened coots  
bob the light chop.  
How swiftly the familiar is queered.

Like this man  
who wakes in a state recalling  
locations of lost objects and surges  
about his house reclaiming,  
only to kneel  
beside the dryer linked

to all he ever lost.  
The black sock  
fished with a wire sits

crumpled in his hand like a word  
for the start to the end  
of his undoing.

**STEVE WILSON**  
**Extravagance**

*for Robert Creeley*

Like a numbing thumb,  
the moment dulls until it tastes  
complicity. Of worry

then the crawling gnaw—to eat and eat is all,  
is all. I've stored long  
loss upon some kitchen shelf.

A jar that rounds along  
the night. Worry words: that works  
us sure, the way

a nightbird sures—through shadow sures  
its call. At least  
this once. This one, at last.

**CLARE ROSSINI**

**Girl with Hair Tangled in Rose Bush**

She is running into the night over which a half-moon presides,  
Chopped off, it seems, by some

Insensible hand—  
Running from the “seekers,” as the boys are called in this game,

Now making her way toward the iron trellis on which clammers  
The bush, an autumnal mess of yellowing

Leaves and thorns, this bush  
The oldest living thing in the neighborhood, the most green of heart.

And she, stumbling through the trellis's  
Rusted flanks, a bit of cake in her hand, grabbed to be feasted on

While she lies in hiding,  
In her privacy's sweet dark, when the fine strands of her hair,

The soft, out-spreading strands of her hair,  
Catch on the bush and scramble among tiny thorns, every animal

Move of her  
Causing a tearing pain

And she wails  
From the shock of it, the bush

Enthralled with her, numb leaves and crotchety vines alive  
With girlness.

And now the boys come running  
Back to the patio ringed with torches, where the parents stand

In circles, sipping glasses of wine, “Come quick!” the boys shouting,  
“She's caught,” flames from the torches

Smoking and rearing toward the sky. And she, her cake in the dirt,  
The musk of dying

**CLARE ROSSINI**

Roses in her hair,  
Is learning from the bush to stand quite still, to look  
The wounded moon in the eye.

**CLARE ROSSINI**  
**These Passing Venial Wonders**

Let us speak of the summer night,  
Warm as a wave on one of the midwest's dying lakes,

So that the sign, tubed and red in the window of Nicky's Gas 'n Goods—  
*Open*—

Sinks into my eye as I drive by, tripping the neural  
Goat-paths to the brain.

As the car speeds on toward the town's  
Ragged perimeter, where corn, husk-prim, full of itself, noses up

Toward the spare-change moon,  
Some nook of my gray matter opens, spews a rememberer's feast

Of Nicky's cornucopic shelves, the stern boxed mixes  
(Cakes in waiting, helpers of meat)

Side-by-side with tin-colored bags of snacks, some twisted and looped,  
Knobby with salt, others

Cast into rounds so consistent  
A god might look askance on creatures whose ambitions divine

Such deep-fried geometries, while in their refrigerated keep,  
Bottles of juice bead with dew, their labels conjuring

No less than utopia, tropical isles, or in the case of the cola *Vavoom*  
The power released when that same dubious god

Tossed the universe out and, as if to a many-petalled peony, said  
*Open*—

Meanwhile, back at Nick's, the cashier-boy checks his watch. Time  
To lock the till, sweep the floor, and

(He's a god, too) flick off the forests  
Of fluorescents, the boxes and cans all at once winked out, the  
tropical isles

Going dark,  
And dark, the utopias.

**HEATHER MAKI**

**Scotch in a Bottle of Fruit Juice on a Plane**

When my father was a boy his four sisters  
chased him around the house, but at any given moment  
one of them was probably abstaining from the game, in her room  
looking at pictures of Elvis. Outside, a dog  
was working at the plastic cup that he thought he could either kill  
or surprise. Everyone listened while the door opened and my  
father's father, dusted with sawdust, home from the sawmill,  
expected dinner. After dinner everyone went to bed  
except my father's father, downstairs making noise.  
I suppose the light on the porch was like honey  
and the dark under doorframes like slate. My father's  
father found shadows in places the rest of them did not.  
I do not know where he slept. After dinner, everyone went to bed  
except my father's father, and as for him I do not know where he slept.

**HEATHER MAKI**  
**A Story About Things**

To be required to dust  
furniture and books and appliances,  
the contours of them conjuring  
not memory

but silence;  
to be instructed

to become, if not a part of them,  
then *in conversation*—  
a strange bedside lamp I have hated  
since childhood  
and yet from which  
I could not turn away:

no switch: who invented such a thing—  
the atrocity of a brass lamp's body  
sensing the human touch  
and giving light  
spontaneously, easily, as though

to touch and to see were equal halves  
of the same original act:

I pretend so hard, I am the sun.

**BRIAN TEARE**

**As That Which Is Above Everything Else**

*We have established that all things were created  
and are supported through the . . . omnipotence of this spirit.  
And so it would be extremely contrary to claim that it does  
not dominate what it has created, that . . . just the entirely  
irrational, unstructured chaos of chance . . . controls what it has created.*  
—St. Anselm, *Monologion*

For a long while  
all that was visible seemed connected.

Not in the way, after morning fog, pale  
lilac smog pitted altitude

against clarity and hills' rims' raptors plummeted  
to prey, no : to stand

afield was not to fear being  
seized, ensanguined in shadow & wingspan above

a hovering, a viewpoint  
without pity, no :

~

BRIAN TEARE

in a field of vision  
whose vanishing point tethered things together,

point of view equaled measures  
of music, 4/4 :

grey blue water | white boat high white  
sail tight life vest

brown hair black grebe's  
orange eyes shore sand | bottle dirt path :

sunlight  
a slur over it all, the score marked

*piano* because vision is  
a quieter art—

~

**BRIAN TEARE**

& safety a lie

I told myself  
because if point of view seemed

coherent, if it was beautiful  
to organize the world through metaphor, what held me

to myself was wanting  
meaning, suffering

detachment's inability to sustain itself  
without consequence. Or :

how Latinate, my abstractions! No  
it no longer seems great

devastation

~

**BRIAN TEARE**

that *to be* is bred into matter

the way a tree will heal over  
barbed wire pressed against bark or Emerson

got rid of Christ  
no body no passion no middle

man to God a heresy  
without suffering

to tether together the things geese on the lake seem  
less, or

slower O

~

**BRIAN TEARE**

guesswork—  
is it time

again  
to know so little?      that I remember

soul            as cusp      mountains      I headed toward  
across coastal plain

—or as interior

a lover so inside me  
what stirred            I'd never felt

—that I remember    this way    the soul's

errand  
is it something      about distance

~



**BRIAN TEARE**

as it gathers heft    falls    —soul    finally something

about weather

proximity    distance diminishing    & my love's back's span

his upper lip

spangled with sweat

—salt    salt    salt    all

the bright day    beside him

I am so free    I swear I feel I wear    a weight

a gold leash!

**MARTIN STEINGESSER**  
**14 Florence Street**

This snow—the snowflakes,  
moments. Why not? Each star

like every other, no two alike.  
Today, I drove by the house

ice and snow held us  
our first winter.

Did I ever say  
how it lives in me, an ice palace

warm in the belly of those nights—  
dark soups we spooned each other.

Snow palace, ice house, like the one  
Pasternak dreamed in candlelight, Lara

and Zhivago, Zhivago  
writing poem after poem,

our pages fragile stars  
we hold, breathing over.

L. K. HOLT

Male-to-Female (1)

Doctor gives her the analogy of sex-change as a sea voyage  
(so camp). She must set sail from her old house of god  
that doesn't want her now (despite its unmarried men in dresses

and Christ as exquisite *garçon fatal*, more Mary than a mary  
could hope for). So there is the man she was, tanning  
on a deck chair in the sun. She can consider him

at a distance already, see him proffer his unrequested body  
to the higher authority (He who must be wearing a little black  
dress-sense of comedy). Halfway there his heart sinks irretrievably,

his face posthumously burning. To the other side of the world  
one is cast not called. At the railing is the woman she is,  
beguiling under parasol, stealing looks at her breasts

but passing successfully still. The sails clouding, man-o'-war birds  
arrowing as the New World appears apparitionally. The émigrés  
clap their hands above their heads: a flock of jewelled seabirds

or a long prayer unwound. The dead man is disembarked first  
through the fog. Captain approaches her (with Doctor's lovely  
bone structure) and says: *his body is entrusted to you, m'lady.*

**L. K. HOLT**

**Male-to-Female (2)**

Centuries after Galen, her penis finally unblooms on the inside,  
a timid resurrection of space that tried to mend like a sore  
until she taught the flesh what is right, the good Christian

she might've—. The orchidectomy was a deflowering of sorts,  
a relic of woman was found, always so, almost petrified.  
She learned not to hold her breasts possessively.

The pain of mother in labor and baby cruelly worlded—  
combined. To flesh out the sentient dress that always hung,  
perfect-postured, just out of the mirror's line of sight,

the shrinks wanted her to write an autobiography.  
She gave them the authoritative biography of a man who died  
from a chronic lack of inside. Like an angel she delivered him from.

**GARY FINCKE**

**The Prophecies of Mathematics**

Not even his wife wanted to listen  
To Francis Galton explain that prayer made  
No difference, that insurance companies  
Knew the facts of longevity, and there  
Was no adjustment for people who prayed  
And the various buildings they lived in.  
Not even, but he said it anyway—  
The pious live no longer than the bad.  
It's always this way with Jeremiahs.  
In the prophecies of mathematics  
Are equations for hours in the sun,  
Alcohol in the blood, early marriage.  
There, among the numbers, lies the total  
Of the truth of ourselves, and I admit  
I've counted the daily steps from my house  
To my office through six possible routes;  
I've counted the frequency of letters,  
Rooting for underdogs like *b* and *k*  
To outdo their predicted sums of use.

Trivial? Stupid? I estimated  
The minutes, once, until the end of school,  
Wrote seventy-five thousand, six hundred,  
In my September notebook and followed  
The lurch of each long minute on the clock  
For three periods of world history,  
Latin, and plane geometry until  
I rejoined the classroom of common sense,  
Abandoning the women who number  
The knocks on a door to seven, the breaths  
Before starting their cars to six, knowing  
Nothing about the habits of Galton,  
Who kept track of boredom by numbering  
The small fidgets of a congregation,  
Who counted the brush strokes as his portrait  
Was painted, who evaluated place,  
At last, by the beauty of its women,  
Selecting London like a pageant judge,  
Leaving it to us to tally the days  
Till what's longed for may or may not arrive,

→

GARY FINCKE

Keeping calendars of Xs that end,  
Each time, on the eve of possible joy  
Like a merciless cliffhanger for faith.

**GARY FINCKE**  
**Weighing the World**

*Dying, Henry Cavendish, the reclusive scientist, ordered his servants from the room because he had "something to think about."*

—Clifford Pickover, *Strange Brains and Genius*

Begin with Cavendish proving that water  
Wasn't the element the world thought it was.  
Follow that with his silence, how frightening  
All women were, so unbearable to glimpse  
He left notes for his housekeeper, constructing  
A second staircase for her exclusive use.

Such seclusion is its own education,  
The bookishness of silence teaching, subject  
By subject, what haunts sufficiently to say.  
An example? Cavendish, so mute, would weigh  
The world by calculating its density,  
Sending his proof to ordinary people  
Who had learned the density of feigned friendships,  
To weigh anger, disinterest, and disdain.

Now imagine Cavendish, one afternoon,  
Paused at the base of the housekeeper's staircase,  
That woman on errands he's put in writing.  
Certain of her absence, he begins to climb,  
Reaches the second floor to stand on a spot  
So strange he hears the light in a foreign tongue.  
Then think of the scenario for descent,  
The choice, if he lingers, of her stairs or his.

Improbable? Once, during a reception,  
I spent an hour alone in an upstairs room  
Where I'd carried two glasses of chardonnay  
Like a husband. There were books and photographs,  
A bed perfectly made by the housekeeper  
My university gives its president.

I sat on the one shadowed chair where his wife  
Would examine herself, perhaps, before sleep,  
The house beneath me so dense with my colleagues  
It grew gravity that kept me from rising.

→

GARY FINCKE

Eleven sets of footsteps passed in the hall;  
Each time a toilet flushed and water ran  
Before they reversed direction like sentries.

Sitting there, I had something to think about,  
How all those guests would honor the promises  
They'd spoken to leave solitude to others.  
At last, I calculated the weight of lies  
I needed to carry downstairs. I finished  
That wine and placed both glasses on the table  
Beside the hardbound stories of Henry James.

Regaining my feet was as hard as rising  
After a week of flu. *There*, I thought, *like that*,  
Hand on the polished railing and then, three steps  
From the foot of the stairs, letting go, prepared.

**DANNYE ROMINE POWELL**  
**Loss Considers the Idea of Bliss**

He's not exactly opposed to it,  
as he would be opposed to grime, say,  
or certain kinds of odors. It's more a matter  
of weight, he supposes, or timing. Something less  
sublime, less fleshy, would suit him better.  
He thinks of the windy give in every given,  
the corpulent hope now decomposing,  
John Hinckley's mom, before switching on the TV,  
happy at her ironing.

**DANNYE ROMINE POWELL**  
**Loss Received a Letter Once**

on ruled paper, scrawled, from a woman  
who knew his parents in their youth,  
her words a lit path through thickets of old  
confusions. He'd open it and the photo  
always fell out—him and his silly-proud grin,  
lofting a toy boat, his mother in khaki  
shorts and knit shirt. He'd hold  
a magnifying glass to study her hand  
and how it lingered on his shoulder. He lost  
the letter, of course—maybe it landed in the trash  
by mistake, maybe he stashed it in a book. He looks  
for it still, its choppy, blue lake of regret,  
the little boat bobbling to a distant shore.

**ALBERT GOLDBARTH**

**The Craft Lecture to the Creative Writers  
of the Low-residency Program at Yadda Yadda University,  
with a Late Assist from Wallace Stevens,  
Robert Frost, Maxine Kumin, Sir Thomas Browne, and  
Allusion to the Title of an Early Book of Jorie Graham's**

*Neoglyphea neocaledonica—nicknamed the “Jurassic shrimp”—  
was known only from 50-million-year-old fossils until a living  
specimen turned up in [2006].*

*—New Scientist*

The Earth was writing: the Earth had penmanship.  
That was my dream. I remember so little of it. I know  
that hyenas and, after, pincer-beetles  
had made a great clean whiteness, made a bone frond  
ten feet long or more, of a giraffe's neck—and by this  
I could see that the Earth was practicing cursives.  
But the rest of it? . . . a fizzle, another adventure  
gathering think-dust on a back shelf  
at the lost & found. I tell you,  
keep a dream journal. Read, of course: read wide  
and deep. Revise. Be open. And keep  
a dream journal, and keep it  
handy, and keep it a continent of vacant clay  
that requires your staked-out cities. It was dawn,  
or almost-dawn, it was the hind tit of night.  
My father was telling me . . . what? A stick of wisdom  
from his pocket package of gum? a joke? a picture of what  
it's like to be the new guy at the daily meeting of dead men  
and to have to admit you're still addicted  
to living? . . . he was telling me . . . but then it was moss,  
and then it was a molecular architectural sketch of moss,  
and then it was nothing. Keep a dream journal.  
Keep it a vast and empty snow  
that requires your skitter of tracks: your alphabet. Be rapid  
and accurate. Audubon needed to work his birds  
immediately onto a page, if the color were going to be true  
to the throbbing picante of life, for if he waited . . . the viridian,  
the flame-blue, all of the telegraphed dabs of ruby among the saffron tufts  
or even the definition under coal-fleck gray,  
would drain away with the blood,  
the now; so keep a dream journal. Keep it adhesive,  
awaiting the touch of a flange of the dream,  
a fin, a nylon, a bee of the dream

→

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

to innocently nuzzle against the stickiness  
and be fastened. Otherwise every new awaking  
is an alzheimer's of the preceding eight hours,  
their civilizations' temples and faro palaces get buried  
under jungle vine and tundra grass  
and the vortex of worry and passion that constitute ongoing life;  
and the nightly hundred roanokes,  
the thousand amelia earharts . . . only crumbs  
a fresh day brushes off into oblivion. This is my shtick  
and my stump-speech exhortation to you, delivered in spittle  
and neural knotways: keep a dream journal.  
Research. Hobnob ["network"] ["shmooze around"].  
And keep a dream journal, and keep it  
open expectantly at your bedside, in the battle against ephemerality.  
Lordy what did *these* notes once suggest as a promise—*Pizza to Priesthood*,  
another, *Kowtowing in Cowtown*. Now they may as well be the nodes  
and the squirms and the toadstool caps of Easter Island script,  
they may as well be the impossible fogbound news  
that once—but *really*, it couldn't be, *could* it?—  
we walked on the moon. It was the ink of night,  
the ebony ceiling of night, and my mother was saying  
we can witness the internal undoing  
of sixteenth-century oil paintings sometimes on an annual basis  
—sometimes even daily, as a face is increasingly veiled  
in an ever-finer mesh of subtle chemical degrading; for example,  
the face of the infant Christ becomes a bag, a net bag  
with a rosebud pout of a closure, that dangles from Mary's arm as she  
sits surrounded by shepherds. . . . My *mother*  
said that? Well, no. She said that she was dead,  
somewhere inside my head, but speaking with the soft eyes  
and the wry tilt of a parakeet (from my childhood? *that* one?)  
lecturing on the passing of all things earthly, and she told me  
to tell you to keep a dream journal, to keep it  
for her, so she would have a place to land  
after flying all night until sunrise. Save the mothers:  
keep a dream journal. Save the ancient sky observatories  
from sinking under carpets of creeper and kudzu.  
A few of them rise up on their own and wink  
in the sun for a moment—Atlantis of course is frequently  
coquettish that way—but cities and even dynasties  
are no more stable than gleam in an eye; and, as we know,

→

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

our own childhoods can't be fully dredged to the surface light  
by the derring-do of the surest divers, so even if it's the nearest  
wad of bar receipts or burger-blearied napkins, I adjure you  
to note there mightily (and accurately), oh I adjure you  
to keep a dream journal, I claim you as duly deputized  
into that order. And when the curator lifted the jar with the thing  
inside that looked like a shrunken, salted  
catcher's-mitt-with-a-rat-tail-wrapped-as-elegantly-as-one-  
of-Cleopatra's-silver-armlets-around-it . . . that  
was a save, a dream journal, so was the jar  
with the thing that looked like a star from a child's picture book  
(only fallen to earth, so dwindled in size of course, but glorified  
in falling, the way that Icarus was, or Satan). These  
have been lost: Etruscan; Borneo's Kelabit megalith writing;  
and a thousand of others of what were "living tongues"  
and had the living day on their muscular, moist, exploratory tips  
—their braggadocio: gone, their adulatory paeans to their gods,  
and their most sniveling whinings: ditto, their chanties  
and lullabies and war cries and whatever was their oh-oh-oh  
of flesh-on-flesh and sexual dew: all, gone.  
How many species gone?—a footprint of some dinosaurs could serve  
as a hotel wading pool, while others could fit in a plover's egg,  
and all of them: gone. A spatula and a glove  
are lost, were dropped by the space shuttle crew, and now  
the one is almost grabbing hold of the other, forever, up there  
in some mystery orbit. "Prosopagnosia": tragic  
inability to recognize faces: after a virus  
caused an inflammation in her temporal lobe, one mother of four  
"can't recognize the faces of her children, her husband,  
or even herself." And what I said in 1975 to make Sylvia  
weep so?—gone. All of my past lives—gone, the one  
in which I slew the enemy host,  
the one in which I wore a porkpie hat  
and mooched off relatives—gone, the pogroms of time  
have made a thinning silt of these. And your innocence?—lost.  
(I think I saw it looking like the star in a children's picture book,  
but cinders now.) And any reclamation of these  
would be a marvel worthy of a dream journal. There are blazons  
to be notched on the trail going back. If you see my mother or father  
in *your* dreams, write them down—be gentle, as they would be  
with you—and then check the identification bands I've cinched

→

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

in one of my dreams around their wrists, and give me a call  
to tell me how far they've traveled. These have been found:  
The earliest dental work from the Americas,  
4,500 years old—these teeth the color by now  
of supermarket curry, that were ground down so  
that they could be mounted with panther or wolf teeth.  
Water on Mars. Rivets from the *Titanic*. A face  
that was drawn in a cave on calcite 27,000 years ago.  
Numerous pieces of chicken from the uterus  
of a fifty-year-old woman in Finland (she believed that  
“they would grow into a baby”). DNA, farmed from the tooth  
of a Neanderthal child discovered in a Belgian cave.  
Your high school yearbook. Something under the bed  
that doesn't require detailing here, except to point out  
water on Mars was far more likely. All of these  
instances of conservancy score an *oh wow* on the aura-meter.  
Reclaim the forsaken. Work, of course, on your resumé,  
on keepin' up, on gettin' down—and think of Viktor Sarianidi:  
“No one believed that anyone lived here until I came!”;  
(*here* being the harsh steppe-desert land of what today  
is Turkmenistan) and yes, in fact “Most scholars had thought  
that such sophisticated settlements hadn't taken root  
in the region until 1,000 years later or more” than Sarianidi proved;  
but he had a dream; and he spent thirty years at digs where sometimes  
plagues of locusts “filled the trenches faster  
than they could be shoveled”; still, he shoveled; in heat  
that shovel-whacked straight back at him, and under the threat  
of occupying military forces, he chiseled determinedly; and now  
indeed we have this further feather in the cap  
of our human accomplishments, and from its smallest  
artifacts—a silver clothing pin in the shape of a camel  
(the point ascending from one of its humps), a three-inch sturgeon  
shaped of bronze (with a comical face that could pass  
for a parrot's)—we can move up to the scale  
of the central citadel and its towers, here in the town of Gonur  
from 4,000 years in our past, its orchard canals  
with glacier-fed water, its gold and ivory trade routes,  
and its elaborate graves complete with wheeled carts  
to roll in service along the avenues of the afterlife,  
and from these we can move to a world implied beyond  
the physical evidence: of theology and metallurgical expertise,

→

ALBERT GOLDBARTH

and the agri-lore for lentil and barley, and gender roles,  
and the philosophical bullshit-swapping late into the night:  
as amazing as water on Mars: another, earlier Earth  
inside the earth: another planet really, only  
cognate with ours: and the everyday carnelian brooches  
and lapis lazuli figures of somebody's version of Irving  
and Fannie Goldbarth is entered now in this registry that keeps  
it all from going up with the kindling: hoe,  
I tell you, the rows of your dream journal. Just the other day I heard  
someone say "hooliganism," someone said "prie dieu," they  
grabbed these words by the collar just as they were about to fall  
off the edge of the map of the recognizable universe. Keep  
your own preserve, and keep it pluripotent. Husband  
its brawn. What *did* it mean when I dreamed  
of a sexy new cop for a TV show, named Rachel Profiling?  
—Keep a dream journal. Obviously Proust did  
in between the lecture circuit and the interviews: a folio-dimensioned,  
moleskin-bound affair with gilt-and-deckled edges.  
Dickinson's: straight, square, satin black; when she was done  
for the day with her letters to public relations agencies,  
she would add to its pages by the light of a single candle  
as alabaster and gently numinous as an Easter lily. Famously,  
Bukowski's was a bright pink, with a rainbow appliqué  
on top and a teensie heart-shaped lock to keep it private.  
Keep it. Daily attend to it. We are as butter  
under the summer sun. The only emperor *is*  
the emperor of ice cream. Tempus fugit. The woods  
are lovely, dark and deep. I tell you *all* of our residency  
is low residency. Our ground time here will be brief.  
We start with "eros," but add a single final "ion" and  
we're crumbling away at the continental rim. I tell you  
nothing is more dust than a mountain, no matter  
its seemingly imperturbable bulk. Therefore  
it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness,  
and have our light in ashes. Hail, rust. Hello  
to the waves of video blahblahblah erasing history.  
When my colleague Don the Shakespeare expert retires  
he will not be replaced. *Shakespeare*: not replaced. Now  
he will wither at the petal, he will feel the ravening worm  
in the very kernel. Last night my childhood knocked  
for attention against the inside of my cranium,

→

**ALBERT GOLDBARTH**

a ten-year-old boy and a hazy duo behind him looking  
as if he could never grow up to fail or disappoint,  
I heard them say that memory is holy, and nothing  
—not the son or the Son or the sun overhead itself—is eternal.  
Keep a dream journal.

**JENEVA STONE**  
**In the Sun-drenched Room**

I remember in that sun-drenched room more  
than the room itself

more than I can know or spare

submitting like I did  
willing girl willing particularization

what stays cannot let go

surrender might seem  
eternity a kind of unwilled

I submit I am salt  
left in the sun-drenched room I remember

spared fading keeps vivid hues

let go and walk away  
what stays spares more than I

remember in the sun-drenched room

be the sun's bright salt  
for I remember a willing girl

**JENEVA STONE**

**Red**

The situation rich in detail. Broad through the palm or pad and pronounced knuckles. Music inflates me slowly and entrances him. Things are said like figurines laid out upon a shelf to view. Carefully I tend to the wiry hair of his shoulders and the display of his torso. All this drama and the wolf slips out the back sniffing his way to higher ground. Love is a mirror that reflects only one face. How will I know you in the afterlife. Aphorisms like mosaic tile irregularly shaped. The wolf may not have thoughts only the impulse to strike or run. Having touched every secret place in him I claim to know though I do not.

Satisfaction a refined sugar and not an acquired taste. That the wolf prefers darkness is a truth so obvious and yet irregularly shaped. I retrace his intentions through every footpath in the overgrown garden. All this drama and I would touch that place behind his ear with my tongue one more time. The tips of his claws on the bare skin of my back. Does the wolf crave sweetness or secrecy? Or the simple necessity of salt and blood?

**JENEVA STONE**

**Meditation on a Broken Child, var. 3**

*Engine against th'Almighty*

—G. Herbert

afraid enter th' unknown  
this country has no end

no thoughts transpose

where am I to begin  
against what engine race

my pilgrimage

I own the clothes I wear  
that crack against the cold

my soul is blood

and breaks in half my breath  
returns to me his birth

what tune is this

blue and clean somewhere  
a prayer begins to spark

I paraphrase

crumbled words are scattered  
what voice is near or clear

**MARION K. STOCKING**

**BOOKS IN BRIEF: Where Are We Now? (2)**

The more I enjoyed pigeonholing poems in my last review as primarily “linguistic engines” or “repositories of felt experience” the more I came to recognize that those poems that engage and delight and move me are simultaneously two-dimensional configurations of variously-spaced alphabetical symbols and multidimensional enrichments of my intellectual and emotional life. Despite Larkin’s claim that “Form means nothing to me” and Williams’s notion of a poem as “a machine made of words,” a poet can deliver felt experiences only in so far as the linguistic engine carries them. In this review I wish to explore three new books by poets the *BPJ* has published in recent years that exemplify three very different ways in which poetry’s linguistic engine can enact felt experience.

**Janice N. Harrington’s *Even the Hollow My Body Made Is Gone*** (Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2007, 92 pp, \$15.50 paper) is certainly a “repository of felt experience”—a spell of memory against the disappearance of a world. Harrington presents elegy in its primary function of perpetuating what was beloved and lost, in this case “family history, Southern rural culture, history, folklore, the labor that makes a life.” “What Was There” conjures up the sacred specificities of this culture, refusing their abstraction to the generic. It begins its catalogue:

Pine, catalpa, pin oak, persimmon,  
but not tree.

Hummingbird, hoot owl, martin, crow,  
but not bird.

and proceeds in this prosodic ritual to the following stanza:

My mother running away at fifteen,  
my grandmother lifting a truck to save a life,  
an uncle at Pearl Harbor, Webster sitting  
at the back of the bus when he looked as white  
as they did, but not stories.

The expanding progression transforms what might have been nostalgia into art. It rides the *this, this, this, but not that* rhetorical structure into the deeper world of place, of family, and of race.

Mourning is implicit in these elegies, however joyously they perpetuate their memories in song: “Even the cast-iron skillet sang / of grease, and heat, and bloodied meat, / summoned the

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

reaching flame, / gladsome despite its heavy skin”—suggesting metonymy more than prosopopeia. Among the singing lines of this poem (“Hands washed in a pan of well water sing / of soul and soap and splash and splintery light”) are snatches of hymns and children’s game songs. “Revival” enacts the walk home after a church meeting, the mother “humming and holding / her Bible more firmly than an axe handle”:

while the night begins its long sermon,  
and the miles go by, and the miles go by.  
If an owl calls from that darkness,  
then someone will die. If a hound keens  
one long, longing vowel, they will shudder.  
If a star plummets, that too will have meaning.  
This is faith, the road that takes them home.

The ritual structure of folk songs and wisdom takes on new life in Harrington’s musical rendering. Read this passage aloud; feel the singing in the lines, each rocking on its caesura, and hear the clear assonance of *night, miles, by, miles, by*, up to *die*. *Shudder* resonates with *plummets*. “One long, longing vowel” is the onomatopoeia Harrington speaks as her own language. The vocabulary and syntax, straightforward yet rich and lush, convey a world of black southern girlhood that those who don’t know directly can enter vicariously. The intensely realized memories, overlaid by occasional dark images, reverberate with meaning that seems clear but defies paraphrase.

In the book’s final section, as the family moves North, memory of what has been left behind remains focused on a personal and collective past even as it encounters such parallel worlds as “pilgrims casting garlands into the Ganges” and “dark matter in the galactic halo.” Of these she claims ironically that a “colored woman cannot sing” in an elegant performance of the rhetorical device called apophasis, in which the author declares she will not do something, all the while eloquently doing it. In “Benham’s Disc,” the penultimate poem, Harrington claims the whole globe and, indeed, the universe as her subject. That disc, in case you didn’t know, is a children’s toy in black and white which, when spun, produces arcs of color.

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

■ Ahsahta Press used to publish only poetry of America's West, but under Janet Holmes's direction it has expanded to produce handsome volumes of broader scope. The one that has most deeply engaged me is **Susan Tichy's *Bone Pagoda*** (Boise, ID, 2007, 102 pp, \$16 paper). The publisher enclosed with the review copy five pages of Tichy's explanation of her life in relation to her poetry, extremely valuable for the layers it adds to my reading of the appropriately difficult verse that enacts this personal and yet commonplace encounter with war. I could wish that the material had been included in the book as an introduction, yet to have done so would emphasize too strongly the autobiographical element of the volume. I would be foolish to try to better Tichy's own words, so will rely on them and on the good notes in her appendix as I proceed. Here is the opening paragraph in her "Author's Statement":

In the realm of history, *Bone Pagoda* takes its title from an ossuary on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border, where the bones of 3000 massacre victims are preserved. In the realm of metaphor, it honors the first and final location of every war: the body. These poems are a journey through "Vietnam"—the country, the war, and the moral catastrophe signified by this word in American memory. They are also a formal investigation of how language behaves under pressure, poetic and political.

Tichy dedicates *Bone Pagoda* to her husband, Michael O'Hanlon, who served with the River Assault Force in the Mekong Delta in 1968–69, and died in a mountain climbing accident in 2002. In her marriage she learned what the war had been for him, and the poetry gains concrete authority from his experience. Strong poems about war often come decades after wars end, when poets have finally wrested from their psyches a way to speak of their experience and when history has provided its perspectives. *Bone Pagoda* is a collection of such poems.

The outer form Tichy has chosen, two-line stanzas and occasional single lines, allows her a wide range of rhythmic variations and the option of solo lines for heightened emphasis. Much of the dramatic effect is in these varied rhythms, which accommodate free use of mosaic, collage, quotations truncated or expanded, incremental repetition, sudden swerves, fluid rhyme,

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and multiple meanings. Evocative clarity of verse such as Harrington's seems incompatible with Tichy's moral and aesthetic universe, but the search for meaning continues, even within the structural "illusion of simplicity." Tichy writes of her form's "potential for multiple readings and recombinations, uncertain transitions and stopping points," which belie its "visual serenity." I would value hearing her read the poems aloud, how she projects the various voices, the unpredictable rhymes, the wavering in the many either/or constructions, all of which are essential to the complex of meanings that unfolds within the non-linear chronology of the volume.

Within this non-linear structure, *Bone Pagoda* suggests the growth of the poet from idealistic teen-aged activist to scholar of the war, to wife of one who could represent what it actually did to him, and finally to war-zone witness three decades later. As a fourteen-year-old Tichy became deeply committed to the anti-war movement. "Versari" may be read as enacting in a "tangled stutter" her efforts to write about it then through false starts ("her anger no / Her fear no"), images that fuse the war with the act of writing ("A grammar is a gun," "Her own blood and black paint / Down to the size of a comma"), quotations from an interrogation manual ("To begin interrogation / Wrap your subject in barbed wire"), obsessive repetitions ("Begin again // . . . Begin again"), and compressed syntax ("a // Raw war every daily lies"). Much of the book's first section, "Desk and Chair," lays out the struggles of a responsive and responsible young poet "Trying to paint a gun," discovering the need to break received forms as "poems turn unbeseemingly // Traditional," unable to find consolation in poetry though "They say that art consoles."

The second half of this passionate, unillusioned book centers more directly on Tichy's accompanying her husband on a return trip to Vietnam in 1998. One nine-part sequence, ambiguously titled "Blazon," articulates the poet's mature impression of that war (and by extension all war) and of "how language behaves under pressure." One section begins "Liberal lyric dies here." Twisting from self-reflective composition to reportage to eloquent sarcasm to literary allusion, the poet grapples with the unwitting collusion of poets, including herself, in the imperialist enterprise, in the erotics of violence. Here's the third section, complete:

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

A genre devoted to praise or blame  
Satiric or descriptive

Much claimed, little done  
But catalogue anatomy

A rocket went through his neck, or  
A rocket went through his sternum

In amorous armorial  
His hair hand or cheeky wit

Left behind on the battlefield  
Try bracelet of bright hair, or ears

If *timor mortis conturbat me*  
An outward soul, more useful now

Than rhyme

In this passage literary phrases weave into a catalogue of body parts (in which “cheeky wit” is suddenly no longer a metaphor). Consider “amorous armorial,” which suggests the erotic perversion of this violence. Its juxtaposition of eros and an idealized heraldic warrior culture strikes with bitter irony at the poem’s title, “Blazon.” “Bracelet of bright hair” and “*timor mortis conturbat me*” bring Donne and Dunbar down to the body with Forché. Tichy’s reading of world literature becomes one of her strategies for conveying “the true size of the 20th century and the vast, shifting nature of political insight in poetry.” In section after section of this poem she insistently and bitterly challenges herself and other poets to watch, to see with “an outward soul” so that we “get it right.” I know no other poetry so rigorous in disciplining its language, its syntax, its very music to honor “the first and final location of every war: the body.”

■

**Jessica Goodfellow** has a background in mathematics, and *A Pilgrim’s Guide to Chaos in the Heartland* (Manchester, NH: Frost Heaves Press, 2006, 47 pp, \$10 paper) is a “repository of felt experience” only if I consider, as I do, a vigorous intellectual life as “felt experience.” Goodfellow has translated to an

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only apparently less political landscape the philosophical implications of Susan Tichy's encounter with war. If your stereotype of a mathematician is someone who believes in a universe of incontrovertible answers ("a one-size-fits-all god"), you need this book. Here's a stanza from "Advanced Alchemy":

Now it's called Superstring Theory,  
parts more perfect than the whole.  
*Because relativity and quantum mechanics  
can't both be right.*  
*Because particle theory only works  
when we pretend gravity doesn't exist.*  
which only children can do  
with both elegance and aplomb,  
their bodies airborne as electrons.

The poet plays scientific quotation against the imaginative leap to the complex metaphor of childhood, the last two lines making a rhythmic music: "elegance and aplomb . . . airborne as electrons"—a third rhythm for the three voices of the stanza.

Not that the speaker of these poems remains abstract or invisible, or immune to the incommensurabilities within contemporary physics and mathematics. Consider "How to Recognize Your Own Shadow," which begins:

My husband and I agree  
on almost nothing. I told him  
I would write this  
in a poem. He said  
I shouldn't.  
Which was the correct response.

Then follows an unpunctuated prose poem that complicates this equivocal relationship into an observation of four turtles, after which this:

People wonder why we stay  
together. Only with myself  
do I disagree more than I do  
with him. I think the same  
is true for my husband.  
He says *It isn't*.

The chapbook contains fifteen poems, many deliciously memorable and laced with a logician's sense of humor, but the one with most "elegance and aplomb" is (in my doubtless biased

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opinion) the title poem, which this magazine was honored to publish in our Summer 2004 issue (the full text is available online at [www.bpj.org](http://www.bpj.org)), and for which we awarded Goodfellow our Chad Walsh Prize for that year. I am rarely given the opportunity to write about the poems we publish in the *BPJ*, so I am not going to let this one pass me by.

“A Pilgrim’s Guide . . .” describes a six-part adventure, counterpointing a narrative of a mother and son on a road trip near the prairie epicenter of the nation (using “the atlas as an *I Ching*, a rune”) with an irregular accelerating accretion of random numbers popping in and out of words. When I first read this text I was spellbound by the imaginative impact of its aleatory prosody. When I heard it read to an enthralled editorial board by two of our editors, one interpolating the numbers as in a Philip Glass opera, I knew we would have to publish it, though I sympathized with eye-readers who would not get the cumulative impact of the counterpointed voices. Reading the poem more carefully in the context of the volume, I was able to keep the narrative clearly in mind and be moved by the relationship of the mother and son, with its implied complex back-story. From section one:

My son wants a tumbleweed for a pet,  
now one is buckled in the back seat.  
What a clever boy, choosing to love  
a thing already dead and rootless.

Here’s what the text looks like by section five:

Left, r9ight, straight—  
each cros5sroad seems mome9ntous  
yet insignificant. I 69572  
have lon4g since lost  
3360699 the at5las, let go fistfu3ls  
of yarrow sticks7 out the wi6ndow  
of the8 rental car, like dan54delion  
dander in the dry w2ind, cosmic 5116877121  
03101ray flux, lig04ht  
radiating from som8ething trap6ped.

It is easy to get carried along in the intellectual drama of a traveler living in the world of today’s mathematics and physics. Listening to the “linguistic engine” of the random numbers as they stutter into the narrative is true delight (as is, by the way, the art of the book’s design, with the Flammarion woodcut on

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

the cover illustrating a false concept of medieval cosmology, and cover and title page subtly wallpapered with random numbers). But more important is to hear the human voices of mother and son as they navigate this tornado of randomness, to enter these two very different human consciousnesses. In “Advanced Alchemy” a son asks, “Which do you like better, / the letter Q or a fish?” The poem ends:

Some nights the universe hums a tune  
and we do not know the words.  
Some of us sing along anyway.  
“Q Q Q,” we chirp.  
Murmur, “Fish fish fish.”

These poems reject the folly of desiring an absolute truth, an end as “dull as a solved equation.” By time the reader reaches the final section of “A Pilgrim’s Voyage. . .” the page has become a field of random numbers. Looking closely, we find five words scattered among them. I’ll not spoil your surprise at discovering them for yourself (in the chapbook or online) and enjoying their reconciliation of the mathematical, the narrative, and the aesthetic dimensions of this amazing poem.

■

Here we have three poets in three different aesthetic and moral universes. The “linguistic engines” in their work arise from profoundly different experiences that have shaped their emotional and intellectual lives. Each of the books I have discussed here enacts a worldview true to this complex moment of history and to its own artistic integrity. Dr. Johnson in the 18th century introduced the notion of the two poles of metaphor as *tenor* (the “meaning”) and *vehicle* (the words that convey it)—I am always tempted to visualize the tenor in Wagner’s *Lohengrin* conveyed onstage by the magical swan. And I’m now tempted to describe the relationship of “felt experience” to “linguistic engine” as tenor to vehicle—not as two poles of contemporary poetry but as mutually interdependent. The swan without the tenor is just a bird; together the effect is magic.