

# BPJ

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60<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
CHAPBOOK

NEW WORK  
BY WINNERS OF  
THE CHAD WALSH PRIZE

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## **COVER**

**Karen Adrienne**, Pomegranates, charcoal drawings, 2007.

Drawing on title page also by Karen Adrienne.

**Mary Greene**, design

→

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

## **Poet's Forum**

We invite you to join the online conversation with *BPJ* poets on our Poet's Forum at [www.bpj.org](http://www.bpj.org). The participating poets for this issue are Jessica Goodfellow (June), Susan Tichy (July), and Karl Elder (August).

**CELEBRATING OUR SIXTIETH**  
**John Rosenwald and Lee Sharkey**

In 1950 Chad Walsh and Robert Glauber started a little poetry magazine. Marion and David Stocking, Chad's colleagues at Beloit College, soon joined the editorial staff and for many years sustained the journal, which moved with them to Maine when they retired in 1984. At the turn of the millennium, the *Beloit Poetry Journal* published a 400-page anthology, *A Fine Excess*, that showcased its contributions over a half century to contemporary literature.

Seven years earlier, Alison Walsh Sackett and Paul Sackett had approached the editors with an offer to establish in memory of her father the Chad Walsh Poetry Prize, to honor an outstanding poem or group of poems the *BPJ* had published the previous calendar year. At first the editorial board resisted singling out one poem for an all-or-nothing award, but Alison wisely insisted. And, in this vocation which ordinarily requires us to dole out much more rejection than acceptance, we have come to treasure being able each year to bestow upon a poet a significant gift—an acknowledgment of accomplishment and of devotion to the calling of poetry.

As the number of Walsh prize winners grew, we began to nurture the idea of gathering work by them into a single volume. And so we've chosen to celebrate our six decades of publishing poetry that matters with this chapbook of new work by sixteen of these poets—all except Patricia Goedicke, whose absence we feel both in this volume and in American letters more generally. True to our history, the gathering is varied and formally inventive. Collectively, the poems constitute the kind of far-ranging conversation that readers come to poetry to be moved and challenged by.

Over the years, the Walsh prize has gone to poets such as Albert Goldbarth, Susan Tichy, and Sherman Alexie, whom we had a history of publishing, and to others such as Jessica Goodfellow, Sam Reed, and—most recently—Onna Solomon, who were unknown to us until they sent us what became the prize-winning poem. As we like to say, we honor the poem and not the poet. Only at moments like this do we take the time to focus our attention on the writers as well as on their work. We celebrate the poets represented in this volume, and all the poets we have published over the decades, for their contributions to our literary and cultural life.

**SAM REED**

**Garden**

Do you see anyone. Where are you. Is there shade. Is a garden made for pleasure, and for whose, at whose pleasure. Brown ants on a white thorn. Slow birds in a tall sky. A purple staghorn cholla, less a plant than a tangled mass of ropes of half-dried meat. Don't move. Is that a rock. Where are we. Rising on the slopes around is an open grove. Mesquites stretched into wild postures of struggle as though they were being dragged back into the earth. Please. We should wait. There's just enough room. Under here. Are you thirsty. Would you. Again. The ants try the air with fastidious antennae. They pour up and out to the extremities of the cactus as if they were looking for a view. As if looking. Is a garden made for looking, and for what, and what then. When are you so stripped as when you hide. Come closer. Can you feel that. Can you feel this. Should we. We should—wait. What's coming. Is something coming. Faint glitters in the dirt. Vanished orioles and quail. If you ever show your back to a lion. If you run.

**MARY MOLINARY**  
**If we were birds once**

Then fold feather into ready ink  
Then a drowsy eye  
Then our inconsequential selves  
Then *bury them and keep quiet*  
Then elegy then apology then what will emerge  
Then what is possible resembles free fall or flight  
Then that any of this is possible dispels determinacy  
Then the hands gone then the thumbs can do no harm  
Then strands of continuities  
Then prehensile nostalgia  
Then what can it mean to be idiopathic & interstitial  
Then trade acquaintances & valuable objects  
Then *reason and the angel of militancy*  
Then the body executes itself  
Then take the wind in one mouth & expel it from the other  
Then the prohibition of scattered flower petals  
Then scatter them  
Then beckon with a wing  
Then the prohibition of scattered leaves  
Then scatter them

**MARY MOLINARY**

**Birds with seeds (possessions)**

When wren  
fly from a dying

mouth: erasure  
but never silence

wingbeat wingbeat  
(*pbruu pbruu*) plus

a clearing of tiny  
avian throats

(*trill-true-ee*) as  
they exit

quick-as-poems  
one-by-one

the sternum of  
the newly dead & take

their places  
in the hearts of sharp

skeletal trees  
or clamber onto air

currents they will  
ride like eloping lovers

When wren  
flee a dying mouth:

what's left is nest  
for lucky

passers-by  
during a sudden down-

pour who foldnuzzle  
into the shelteringmuzzle

while singing  
slightly off-

key like a self-  
portrait with possessions

The possessions are seeds

I have seen this twice

**MARY MOLINARY**

**Little known bird of the ribcage**

Either 2 birds crossed  
The blue air  
Just in front of you or

Missiles were prepared  
& placed on an X-marked border

Either a quiet morning marked  
By blossomings-out &  
Smallish vegetables or

The political prisoner  
Awakes in the same  
Cell with the same

First thought as yesterday

The cell we have in common  
The target we share  
What you believed once

Still holds: the body  
Free or imprisoned

Your bird is your secret  
A rod of carbon in an arc  
Of light infinitely

Before we were fossils  
We were merely  
Hungry & chattering  
Consequently

There is the body  
Free or imprisoned there is  
Justice or there is not

Prepare the cell we have in common  
Sing your secret bird to sleep

*The ribcage is a cage for this  
The ribcage is a fine cage for this  
Marked little bird of a heart*

**MARY MOLINARY**

**Burial of the new law / bird singing in moonlight**

Thus are there but so many bones in a foot or hand  
    Thus do they break in degrees  
        Thus did simple moonlight fuel paranoia  
            Thus were the wrong battles fought  
                Thus was commerce & trade  
                    Thus did we bury our shame shallow & our dead deep  
Thus did *torture* enter the common tongue & pop culture like a yawn  
    Thus was nevertheless a bird heard unseen in the weeping willow  
        Thus a cool breeze at precisely 9:22 p.m. on the 8th day  
            Thus did we number & count nouns & casualties  
                Thus will the unseen bird continue its song  
                    Thus will a new moon rise  
                        Thus will an unseen breeze  
                            Thus will the hand & foot  
                                Thus will the graves  
                                    Thus will the book

**JANET HOLMES**  
**Partly hidden poem**

The desert borders a sea blue as a hypertext link  
yellow-flowered flat-leaved nopal climb the small hills

the cholla balances its bloom at the tip of a thorned branch  
like a circus seal's red ball acting all dangerous

colors she mistook in the past for simple, here  
so sharp / she thinks Maybe I don't need glasses

She hears him rise and go to the kitchen  
slap of the screen door / a dog barking a ways off

*Perro semihundido* ascends  
where the path has abruptly become steep

The grasses bloomed and dry now in the fields  
olives and figs form in the trees still ripening

Of Goya's Black Paintings it is the gold one  
taken from his house, the door of his attic workroom

She hears birds chipping nonstop and people talking  
why is she here her senses redlining

Rough stones cemented together make a wall, a street  
He is wakened by the calls of turtledoves

She is wakened by the cries of peacocks  
He is wakened by church bells on the hour

No *pulpo* in the restaurants because of the truckers' strike  
No gasoline in the village pumps

She is wakened by the sound of a mosquito  
They climb to town for: internet connections, news, orange juice

The dog looks a little like Migi from across the way  
who hops as he runs

The SPF 70 makes her look sweaty  
Freckles from childhood reappear on her arms

She sees his hand tremble pouring coffee  
the movement intensely his / it endears him to her

A scrim of heat-haze softens the cityscape  
A discussion of cats called the rumpies (no tails)

and the stumpies (just stumps) on the Isle of Man  
The strike made the price of groceries rise 18%

with some items 200% over normal or unavailable  
He is wakened by a motorcycle

She notices she is noticing her affection for him  
*Enow*, enough: unexpected welling-up

The shopkeeper chases after her to present some sandalwood incense  
It isn't paradise because she can't get online, damn it

The whinny of horses / again, she didn't hear church bells  
all afternoon when before they were so disruptive

Really, she is meant to leave the house at 4 p.m.  
in a winter sunset among the white pines

and snow pocked by wild hooves the previous night  
check: hat check: sunglasses check: SPF 70 OK let's go

They watch a show called *Toros Para Todos*  
They study the aggressively scarlet bodies of English tourists

white crescents of breast-flesh in their cleavages  
someone telling the story of the six-fingered man

She is wakened by dogs whose barks rise into howling  
She is wakened by a vivid dream

The strikers suspend their strike to pursue negotiations  
petals from bougainvillea eddy in the street

They climb to town for: chocolate, brandy, soap  
A fox hunts nearby in the early morning

One thinks: *ritual drumming*; the other: *disco*  
They had already wakened when they heard it

The sheep rises and makes his way to the trough  
Yes, they had wakened. They were awake.

**ALBERT GOLDBARTH**

**The Clothes**

Now listen. Listen up! I want Estrella  
to come onstage with weeping all over her, every way  
except tears: I want the weeping scurrying  
inside her like bees in a rotted-out wall, or water  
welling up in the ground that the city authorities categorize  
as toxic: *that* kind of underground tears.  
And more *squirrels!* Hey, some shmuck-of-a-gofer not doing  
nothing—you! do you hear me, skinny?—get the squirrel man  
to come to the squirrel delivery door  
with a few more cages. Say sixteen. Augoosto:  
walk more like a robot. No . . . no . . . *there!*  
Maurice: I said mousse in your hair, but not a half-a-year  
of cow-gunk from the Ganges River. Estrella: . . . no, wait,  
Augoosto: clank clank clank! You got it,  
boobeleh, Mr. Method Actor? Good . . . good . . . hotsy totsy!  
Estrella, pull at your gorgeous hair  
like bell ropes in a tower  
of weeping—that would be . . . *emblematic!* I want  
to see your hands like rival suitors  
crawling up Rapunzel's tumbled-down ladders of tresses.  
No—no tears! You *be* the tears! Hey, you there  
by the strobe light—get that puffer squirrel, yeah,  
that one, good—and make him a little hat to wear  
from one of the paper cups at the water dispenser, okay?  
Yes, NOW; you're thinking, what, Christmas? One-two-NOW.  
Estrella, pinch yourself. That helps the look I'm going for.  
What, "where"? On your cheek, on that pillowy ass,  
who cares, it should show in your *eyes*, like doleful tenants  
looking out of your pupils and contemplating suicide.  
You want *me* to do it? I didn't think so. Agatha,  
you're the Designated Estrella Pincher whenever she waxes even  
*this* close to gleeful. Now we'll . . . oh great,  
stupid, you couldn't think to tie it onto his head  
with a string or a rubberband or something? Do I *have* to  
tell you *everything*? "Hi, I'm God, I just made you, now  
I want you to start to breathe. NO  
NOT THROUGH YOUR ASSHOLE STUPID!" . . . okay, see what I mean,  
be independent-minded a little, there with your squirrel friend.  
Ron, give strobe-light-boy here one of your chartreuse shoelaces  
for the squirrel cap, please. Estrella, I . . . Ron,  
I *said* "please." Okay. Good. Thank you. Look, I know



what I'm doing. I'd like you all on board with me,  
 a . . . "community." On the same page.  
 Listen, I'll tell you something . . . Augoosto, stop  
 with the Frankenstein clomp for a minute, I'm going to tell you  
 a story of how I got here, from when I was . . . oh, nineteen  
 about. In college. That summer, I stole clothes from the laundromats.  
 Don't laugh! It was easy. People would leave them  
 spinning all day in those tumblers that look like  
 astronaut training machines. They'd get a latté,  
 walk the pooch, whatever, leaving me, *me*  
 and their drying, aromatic, susceptible clothes. I said  
*don't laugh*. I'd sit there listening to the zipper-click, gallumphing  
 pursuit of a flock of chemise by a pair of painter's overalls,  
 I'd look at the lacy what-nots opening up  
 like delicate graceful lusty jellyfish: hoo-boy! But I don't mean  
 this casual thievery was sexual . . . I'd take a parka  
 as readily as a frothy thong. It wasn't economic:  
 I could afford clothes of my own. It was . . . well, how can a man  
 who has chatted with emirs and Pulitzer cockamamie writers  
 put it? . . . it was here a fluffing hoodie, there  
 a pair of jalapeño-and-sombrero-thematized boxers . . . and,  
 once I possessed them, I possessed the lives  
 behind them. I'd scoop them up with a true nonpartisan eagerness,  
 I was a Whitman, I was a libertarian, I . . . Maurice,  
 if I wanted you idly molding your gooey locks  
 into tiny prairie dogs popping out of your head  
 I'd have said so. All of you: quit your smirks! That childish snarky  
 pinpoint subcutaneous invidiousness will *not* do  
 this production a firefly-buttock's glimmer of good. Okay.  
 Are we quiet, comported adults now? Well, we'd better be,  
 you goosey palookas. Stow the squirrel in that gym bag for now.  
 Where was I? . . . Agatha, what?—for chrissake surely  
 you'll donate a stinking broken-down gym bag to the cause  
 of theatrical history. If there's even a *hint* of squirrel-doo  
 I'll buy you a new one, deal? Where was I? . . . okay. One day  
 I was at my hobby—not a "fetish," maybe a "compulsion"—and  
 after I'd snatched some jeans or a bra or who-knows now  
 a-hundred-and-ninety years later, I lifted a woman's jersey  
 out of that sweet warm lottery drum, a jersey, tattered and pink  
 in the way  
 that told you it must have been a cherry-red at some time,



long before the use, and the need for thrift, with grease stains on the front of it that would never erase completely if you laundered it against rocks in a village stream for decades, and I held it, I *imbibed* it, I was a vampire of its warmth, and I knew, I *knew* how the woman who owned it was a version of that pink: worn down from something louder and more attractive earlier. I *loved* her. I wanted to *be* her.

Then you know what?—you, by the rubber rocks, if I catch you rolling your heehaw eyes again while I’m talking, you’re never even serving fries in this city, got it?—anyway, you know what? I was right about her. I say that for sure because oh god suddenly there she was in the door, with a cop she’d brought, and I was caught *red-handed*. Agatha, what? Just say it, if you can mutter it to Maurice you can say it to me. What? Very funny, “pink-handed.” Now may I continue, klutzes and kvetchers? Thank you. I was caught, and the cop was breathing “jail time” all over the room, and I saw my tush in a downtown lock-up mildewing there for lack of friend and finance, and . . . you’ve heard of *inspiration*? Like a million little pickle-forks of lightning from the blue, it came to me, and I said to him, “Officer, I’m directing a school play. Really! I’m sorry! This is what we *do*, we need to understand a stranger’s life, and make it *real*,” boohoo, boofreakin’ hoo, etc. etc., and the woman *bought it*. The woman believed it! She what’s-the-word? She “interceded.” It worked. You know why it worked? Augoosto, clodhopper, put down your hand: this isn’t Blessed Sacrament second grade. You know why it worked? Because (and I hadn’t known myself until that moment) it was True! I *am* a Director, and this *is* What We Do! And you, my dears and doofuses, my mollycoddled darlings, you can stand there in your solipsism impatiently waiting for all of this foofoo jibberjabber to dribble and die, but I tell you there are nights I’ve walked the slipstream and the suckhole of the Sea of Doubt, I’ve gone down to the edge of the Fires, insomniac, crazy for wanting to know about life in its germ, in its animal howl, in its pitiful limited human warranty, and I’ve looked up to the gods we’ve speckled in burning and rumpus across the sky and I’ve *been* them for a drunk unsteady moment, I’ve seen the universe through their omnifaceted eyes, and I’ve looked downward into the Valley where the promise of dawn and the lingering fumes of rush hour traffic commingle, and here I’ve taken to myself the entire

→

wraparound scene of false teeth, gun oil, shining coins  
of orgasm as they're flipped through the body, cellphone zap,  
Talmudic esoterica, small used-up tubes of anal lube,  
our chopsticks and our logarithms,  
prom dress, breath mint, carbon footprint, taxidermied wolverine,  
kachina doll of the pollen spirits, mistress of contrition  
as well as queen of the midnight boogaloo club,  
our swarms of hopes as they glitter and either fail or catch  
and flame, our tiny turbocharged ambitions and our darkest  
nests of intertwining fears, I've taken it all to myself  
and been more than myself, or less than myself, directing  
the Heavens, directing the Pit, can we do something  
about these fucking squirrels in here, they're driving me crazy!  
Who requisitioned these fucking squirrels! Estrella,  
trust me: lighten up.

**SHERMAN ALEXIE**

**Rest Stop**

I pull off the freeway at 3 a.m.  
To urinate. It feels good to go  
In a dark nowhere, but then I realize,  
As my night vision comes into focus,

That I am pissing in the front yard  
Of a small church. Is this blasphemy?  
I'm sure it is. But worse, I notice  
The church is next to a gas station.

And there is a small house behind me,  
A playground to the left, and a grocery  
Store to my right. This is a little town  
And I'm pissing in the middle of it.

But I can't stop. I can only hope  
Everybody is asleep. I don't mean  
To insult this small town. I love  
Small towns. I was raised in small towns.

*Sleep, small town folks, please sleep.*  
But then I realize there is a large deer  
Standing on the front porch of the church.  
And another deer standing beneath a broken

Beer light on the gas station. And another  
Deer on the stoop of the house. And three  
Or four deer on the playground. And five  
Or six more on the road near my car. *Wow.*

I wonder if this is somehow a town populated  
Entirely by deer. What if these deer built  
The church and worship a deer, slaughtered  
By hunters, but who rose from the dead?

What if these deer built that gas station  
But fill the tanks with bark and seed?  
The deer, suddenly as bright and silent  
As the stars, stare at me. They can smell me,

My human stink, my piss, my predator breath.  
I am a dangerous stranger, but then, pop,  
A porch light snaps on, a front door opens,  
And a large human—male—steps out

Of the house. The deer startle and run.  
I zip up my pants and run with them.  
I can't keep up, of course. There's no way  
Any human can keep pace with a deer,

But then suddenly, I do. I run beside  
A deer that looks at me with such comic  
Surprise that I laugh and nearly fall,  
But no, I run and run and run and run.

**ONNA SOLOMON**  
**Wild Dogs of Santorini**

We're beaten  
even those who've seen some kindness  
  especially those  
beaten until we're wily  
hunched and sniffing  
  at each new hope  
to be nourished—  
  We learn late this generation  
there's no safe place—to be safe  
is not our right.  
  Wild dogs of Santorini  
like shadows along the steep white walls  
learn not to eat the meat men leave them  
in the square at night. Mornings  
  shop owners haul out of sight  
  what manged bodies remain.

**ONNA SOLOMON**  
**I Want to Tell You**

I want to tell you: *Be calm.*  
I want the world, the moment  
in which we conceive  
a person we will live for until we die,  
to be miraculous. Yes, miraculous, each  
concept a mind forms—to move is to seek,  
to seek takes desire and it is desire, it is  
desire moving us, each alone in this:  
your body fit into me. What shape

will the child make in me?  
I want it—this thought, *child*—to enter  
a house of music, a joyous, gentle home.  
It is a horrible place, this place  
where everyone lives.  
And we, you and I, eat it like quick  
dinners standing in the kitchen.

I want to tell you: *Pay attention. We must  
do this right.* And yet, and yet  
we make images of each other.  
Each pleasure, each grievance  
adds on to the last until no one  
stands before another person  
as they are in that moment, as shifting  
molecules, dying cells, changed  
vision, sense, size—all different, new.

We (not I, not you, but we together) have made  
an image of ourselves: we are lovers  
we are hurried we are creators we are  
articulate well-meaning fussing  
about cellulite and receding hairlines—  
I want to tell you: *We must let everything go.*  
*We must let go what we've conceived ourselves.*

**JESSICA GOODFELLOW**

**species: empty:**

If I mention “perpetual motion” I mean “a body leaning into the wind.”

When I say “endless” I’m thinking “if a species has a memory you are it.”

When I educate the air that I in patience wait for your return clearly I mean “the little yellow birds of your childhood have lit upon my center but you are not among them.”

For “absence” please substitute “finally the birds will have a word for chaos.”

For “empty” please hear “a chronospecies is a species which changes physically morphologically genetically and/or behaviorally over time on an evolutionary scale such that the originating species and the species it becomes could not be classified as the same species had they existed at the same point in time. . . .”

If I whisper “species” I mean “a fugue of bone and clock and wind.”

For “over time” please choose one of the following three: “through a revolving door,” “like a string of even numbers,” “like a string of even numbers caught in a revolving door.”

Please erase “an evolutionary scale” and insert a möbius strip.

When I falter over “could not be classified” it’s because I’m busy pasting our wedding photo over that part of the definition.

The problem with “had they existed” is that it suggests its opposite “had they not existed” the way that “memory” suggests “absence.”

When I repeat “the same point in time” I mean of course “may no longer be possible.”

I’m placing the last known strand of your hair down the center of this page.

If I howl pretend it’s a dial tone.

When I answer “No I’ve had no word” in every possible tense I mean it.

**JESSICA GOODFELLOW**

**clock: rules:**

- 4:00 Don't expect one moment to be the same as the last. Don't think they are continuous, like a string. Or riven, like a string.
- 5:00 Do not feed your clock. No matter how it begs. A clock does not need nourishment. Nor can you expect it to give nourishment.
- 6:00 A clock is not a dwelling. Nothing can live there, not even ~~memory~~ language, which tries to live everywhere.
- 7:15 Your clock has an entrance but no exit. In this way it is like a ~~fugue a mirror~~ your childhood home. Before it burned to the ground. And was all exit, empty orbital.
- 8:00 Remember a clock is a trap you enter willingly. Like a ~~shadow~~ marriage.
- 9:00 A ~~god~~ clock is not a ~~clock~~ god. Even if you don't believe in ~~god~~ clocks.
- 10:40 Your clock does not know how to ~~whisper~~ count.
- 11:29 Your clock does not have good hearing. It confuses many similar-sounding words, for instance: fog, fugue, fatigue.
- 12:37 Do not use an invisible clock. It will tell lies, like a visible clock, but you will not know it.
- 1:22 A clock is not ~~gravity~~ sacred. It will claim to be, but any thing that claims to be ~~gravity~~ sacred, isn't.
- 2:48 Your clock has deeply ingrained habits, such as turning clockwise, for example, or staying by your bedside. Don't confuse these habits with desire when in fact they are only habits.
- 3:21 What we call the face of the clock is not really a face. The hands are also not hands. We call the clock's components by body parts because we don't know the names for the parts of ~~chaos~~ desire.

**GLORI SIMMONS**

**Remorse**

That night, the woods were haunted chandeliers, *italicized*—

branches glass-gloved,  
needles sheerly thimble,

jarred in moonlight.

Captive,  
nature captivates

& those of us who stray      stray,  
touching the edges—

i.e.: it was their shape that drew me to this page, the crystal embrace  
of each pine finger's  
glistening, the inevitable shimmer

of melt's typography—  
a revelation

of what we already know.

This morning, a red fox darted across the pristine snow:

prick,  
blood,  
sheet.

Overhead, the alabaster spires began to break  
—no, that's not it—  
they dribbled sappy,  
snotty tears.

For days, I've wondered how  
—or if—  
to tell you.

**GLORI SIMMONS**

**Candor**

*from the notes of Madame Restell, 1878*

**TRADE**

Advertising is key: *I have something you need.*

I thin the edges so to speak,

meet demand with supply, fill orders, trade that

for this: *female derangement's panacea* at Greenwich 148.

In this case, less is more.

**RED**

Mercy alone is no motive. I work for red velvet

& a washbasin that is more than pannier.

Gravid, a girl with a familiar accent asks: *What can be done?*

There are no words for red that do not connote blood.

A narcissistic color, it sees itself in everything.

**REAL ESTATE (I)**

The old parlor game—Marooned on Manhattan Island,  
what would I bring? My ledger, my curatives & schemes.

A Plan B. Women ordering from the menu directly.

Certainly, no more physicians, father-types, or masked men.

Over time I've noticed: it's most often the prostitute who pays.

**A WORD TO THE OPPOSITION**

Minister, what's so delicate about the swinging door,  
its ragtag, tenemental ins and outs?

So much birth attracts flies—like flame to kerosene.

All born, there would never have been enough Beethovens  
to drown out the ruckus.

**WHALE BONE**

Whale fat, melted down, burns our lamps & the women  
given their bones. We knit them into our hair,

weave them through our ribs like Peterborough baskets.

In torture, the body contains both crime & punishment.

Needlework's answer to knitting booties: a stab in the dark.

**REAL ESTATE (II)**

Marooned on Manhattan Island, what would I bring?  
Born thirsty, I'd bring water. I like the current flowing  
Uptown & can hold my head high  
above the Pecksniffian stink. If required, Minister,  
I will unlock my ledger, name names.

**FOR CAROLINE**

Of all my critics, I hoped you would finally understand.  
I told only sugar pill lies, what they wanted to hear—  
Mother Love's invention. You are mistaken  
to say I do not love children: think of all the daughters I have saved  
from their mothers. If I didn't do it for you, then for whom?

**FROM THE TOMBS**

I spun misfortune into gold, was called Angel  
of the Second Chance. My reward: a moustache  
inked beneath my nose, bat wings pinned upon my back.  
Now this trickery: a limestone cell & early retirement.  
What worried you more? What I took or what I gave?

**REAL ESTATE (III)**

Who could have foreseen the destitute row  
where I first weeded out the kin would grow so  
monumental—& then fall?  
From my midwifery, I leave Carrie a house she can sell  
for a litter's future & for myself a bath the length of my limbs.

**BATH**

Consider this my letter of resignation.  
A girl in a sanguine mood once told me:  
*There was no one but myself to hold my head under the water.*  
Who has not taken life into her own hands, pinched her cheeks  
to create a blush? Other words for float—

unfasten,

drift.

**LUCIA PERILLO**

**Hokkaidō**

War Emblem, the famous stallion,  
will not mount a female rump  
on the island of Hokkaidō  
in a pasture near the sea.  
It is hard to imagine anyone not being overcome  
by the sight of two dozen mares  
surrounded by volcanoes (is the problem  
that the metaphors are too direct?) and yet  
War Emblem is still not in the mood.

A thousand years ago the courtesan Shikibu  
wrote a thousand poems to her lover,  
the references to sex made tasteful through concision  
and the image of their kimonos intertwined.  
Either her heart was broken or it was full,  
either way required some terse phrases to the moon.

Was that all it was? Dumb animal hunger?  
All those years when I thought I was making Art  
out of The One Important Thing?  
And how to apologize now for my lack of adequate concision?  
Once I was so full of juice and certain of its unending.

**KURT LELAND**

**The Temptation of St. Anthony (1552–53)**

*after Paolo Veronese*

Titian is master here? I'm tired of hearing it.  
He's filled the palaces and chapels of Venice.  
Even I have to admit his palette, brushwork  
rivet the gaze with a brilliance more than mortal.  
But watch me do better. Take his famous altar,  
*St. Peter the Martyr*—I'll paint St. Anthony.

See, the bell in the corner shows it's Anthony.  
Look how I make his arthritic hand reach for it,  
eluding his grasp. A quarter turn has altered  
the old man's sprawl, stolen from Titian. Let Venice  
marvel at my foreshortening. He stares in mortal  
terror at the woman in gold: the devil's work,

which he knows by the clawlike fingernails she works  
into his left hand. She lifts it (poor Anthony)  
to her one bare breast—marmoreal, immortal  
as any on a Titian Venus. They'll all want it  
on their walls: Counts, princes, cardinals of Venice  
love the erotic, especially on altars.

A nude, bearded, curly-locked brute further alters  
the scene, torso dominating, as in a work  
of Michelangelo. *Such violence!* Venice  
will say as this young hellion strikes St. Anthony  
with the severed leg of a goat. Or maybe it's  
attached to a shoved-aside Pan-like immortal:

Pagan giving way to Christian immorality.  
But the masterstroke's depicting on an altar  
this crushed, crumpled bible. The old man clutches it,  
trying to hold his place. It's Titian and his works.  
And I'm that virile youth beating St. Anthony,  
every arm muscle straining to prove to Venice

I'm not merely his successor. There's nothing nice  
between rivals. I vie for immortality  
and money. And the saints I paint, like Anthony,  
are pieces I've played in a game of altering  
the city-state's taste. Even when I'm busy, work  
feels easy, I keep that goat-hoofed cudgel raised. It's

my brush, Titian. Venice may still love your altar.  
Pray as you might, like helpless St. Anthony, it  
does nothing. I deal a mortal blow with every work.

## JOHN HODGEN

### Bootleg

It's a song called "Silver Mantis" that T Bone Burnett sings  
on an old bootleg Bob Dylan CD from a Rolling Thunder Revue concert  
down in Fort Worth, Texas, over thirty years ago. In the song,  
which tells the tale of a lowly servant a thousand years ago  
who saves the daughter of a Japanese warlord from a kidnapping,  
but who then is thrown into the dungeon because the warlord is jealous  
and enraged,  
Burnett makes a mistake, a minor one, simply transposing the name of  
the servant  
for the name of the princess (the rough equivalent of a Shakespearean  
actress saying  
"O Juliet, Juliet, wherefore art thou Juliet?"). And to the casual listener,  
or the uninitiated,  
or the drunk or lazy, the moment in the song might go completely  
unnoticed, no harm done  
either way, but to the devotee, the sentimental, or the lowly servants  
among us  
(who are always in danger of being thrown into dungeons by our own  
rough equivalents  
of warlords, jealous and enraged), it makes us love the song even more.

I say maybe T Bone was a little drunk or a little lazy that day.  
Or maybe he was caught up in his own moment, maybe playing before  
the largest crowd  
of his life because Dylan had loved the song too and had asked him to  
join the revue  
(although even Dylan himself made a mistake, introducing the song with  
the wrong title  
and mispronouncing the name of the Japanese princess).  
Or maybe T Bone just knew somehow, like some silver mantis in his heart,  
what all artists know over time, that art is one endless mistake after  
another,  
that architects sometimes make intentional mistakes, turning the last  
piece of tile  
upside down in the floor of ten thousand tiles to show no pride before the  
face of the Lord,  
that the part of the song where the singer loses control is the heart's true  
song,  
the essence of all that is holy in love, that lovers when they freely exchange  
their hearts

→

with the other exchange their names as well, that they know in the room  
they make  
of their love that each name is sacred and the same, that Romeo is Juliet  
and Juliet is Romeo,  
that the heart of a lowly servant can be the heart of a princess, that there's  
no mistake about it,  
that love may be the greatest mistake of them all, that love is the rough  
equivalent,  
the bootleg version of the perfect song of our lives.

**JOHN HODGEN**

**Look, Look**

In the grainy news footage an old woman in a bathing suit standing on a beach.

Overweight. Heavysset. Seen from behind. Suit too small. European. Not the way an old woman should be seen, we say. We look anyway, first with disdain, then dollops of pity, in the way we have come to look.

We say *Cover yourself. You are no longer young.* We say the world is always looking

at our bottoms. We consume her, spit her out, the woman and the others looking out

at the ocean. Then we see it too, what has them up looking, what they must have seen

first as cloudbank horizon, until they saw it truly, until it rushed at them spitting,

*tsunami, tsunami*, the god of a wave that was coming to kill them.

The image turns over like a bird in a loop, like a photograph tumbling all night underwater,

then come to the light, this old woman on a beach. She is all the old women we have seen

and forgotten, like paintings we have passed on our way to the other, aunts who have died,

Mother Courage, Käthe Kollwitz, relatives distant as trees overseas. But she does not turn,

the woman on the beach, nor do the others. They look at the wave, sun-filled, that is coming

to eat them, bigger, whiter than anything they've ever seen. They do not run, not yet, caught

in the web of their looking, the way shepherds must have looked at the angels above them,

struck dumb, agog, the way we all look sometimes at the world that loves us and kills us,

the world that bamboozles, flimflams, Dick and Janes us again and again, crying Look, Look,

this world that keeps coming, this world we behold even to the cup of our deaths overflowing

and still never fully believe, this fleshy, ancient, crepuscular world, this old woman on a beach

who turns, opens her arms, runs to us screaming, asking nothing but all of our love.

**ROBERT CHUTE**

**The Idea of Order on the First Day of Winter**

The sun's rays might be x-rays  
and Bill's pine plantation crystalline.  
With longest shadows of the year  
the solstice sun slants through  
pines planted in right angle rows.  
On the angled path I'm skiing  
order and disorder alternate as,  
right and left, trees like soldiers  
assembling fall in line, as suddenly  
fall out, become a crowd again.

Now I'm passing English orchards  
on a train. D'Arcy Thompson reads  
from his book *Growth and Form*.  
He sees the unintentional  
collineations of the trees  
as, sleepless in rented rooms, we find  
crisscross lines emerging  
from wallpaper designs.

We see what we're prepared to see.  
Fibonacci's spirit flickers  
through the trees and we find magic  
in the spiral tessellation  
of the pinecone—but red squirrels  
that flow like rusty current, tree  
to tree, have deconstructed cones  
into arrays of scales that play  
atonal music on the crusted snow.

In the open field I look back  
on ordinary woods while, high along  
the ridge top, tangled, bare, disorderly  
deciduous trees dissect a cloudless  
winter sunset: neurons in brain sections  
silver-stained. Nature's deceptive best,  
nature deceptively meaningless.

**MARY LEADER**

**To Gaze Is To Think**

Wait long enough, and a pattern emerges: the same  
Series of light and dark bands that Young saw.

Nothing but moving patterns of intensities: bright  
Here, brighter there, dim elsewhere;

Imposed; the sunny mist, the luminous gloom  
Of Pluto; even as when I fix my attention

On a white house or a gray bare hill or rather  
On a long ridge that runs out of sight each way

How often I want the German *unübersetzbar*  
(Untranslatable). The rays long-pale slanting-

Late, conveying loss, nostalgia, an end to  
Things (untranslatable). I well know it.

And the face overspread with light, with swimming  
Phantom light overspread but rimmed and circled

By a silver thread. The pretended sight-sensation  
(Translatable) whether visible or invisible

(Untranslatable): how often I want its intensity;  
And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast;

And the sun thick whirling explosive; and  
Van Gogh's starry night squeezed into fine tendrils

Of optical fiber, and then perceptual light  
From monitor screen, this fair luminous mist,

This beautiful and beauty-making power, light,  
And light's effluence, cloud at once and shower;

The use of thin washes applied with a brush  
Or thick slabs of paint laid on with a spatula

Or multiple planes of transparent and opaque rock  
Color: the velvety whites, the shining blacks,

MARY LEADER

The ambivalent grays, the ghostly undulations;  
Light's valleys and hills. A smile, as foreign to,

As detached from the gloom of countenance, as any  
I have seen. A small spot of light travels

Slowly and sadly along the top, when all  
Below has been dark with the storm. Stupor.

Brow-hanging, shoe-contemplative, strange.  
No matter what great distance we measure for any

Voyage of light, to itself it covers no distance  
At all. The 30,000 feet from Everest's peak

To sea level, the 3,000 trillion miles  
From the red star Betelgeuse to Earth, the twelve inches

That light covers in a nanosecond; all are  
One and the same to a traveler on laudanum

Or a photon, who sees the universe approach. At the speed  
Of light, at that critical speed, all lengths

Contract to zero, and the traveler sees an infinitely  
Thin cosmos. I drink fears like wormwood,

Smell cement of rain and cloth. And what is  
Succession with inter-space in the undivided  
Indivisible duration? The traveler and  
The traveled differ only in their wavelengths,

Wavelengths the distance between consecutive crests.  
What is a moment? This I will say: Some

Were brilliant beyond belief, as when the last  
Log before dawn would spark into my mania.

**KARL ELDER**

**Ode in the Key of O**

Kudos unto the code and to the mind  
behind the hand that moved not out of need  
but what must be acknowledged as a thought  
nonpareil—stone turned wheel no exception—  
the crude scrawl (in ashes, sand, and soil  
with stick or staff) that which it did not know  
to call symbol, yet would bring to recall  
the awe uttered as O on the rounded  
mouth below the eyes of one fixed upon  
the moon's shape, if not in worship, wonder.

Yea, as if a remnant of gods gone ghost  
gleaned from the air by the hand of a mime,  
like approximation of perfection,  
that diminutive orb wholly without  
substance rolled from the tongue, made corporal  
by yet another eidolon, the line—  
call it divine insight when the pupil  
of the mind's eye eclipses iris to  
highlight, through swift abstraction, the concrete.

Ought it then not be, after the grand span  
of five hundred generations, given  
the cuneiform-like illusion of form  
born of the fact of annularity,  
our alacrity to the degree it  
has not atrophied to hilarity  
at the writ of the clock is—while more  
minute each minute—worthy, too, of praise?

For value in its purest form is less  
a matter of matter than the marriage  
of light and shade, their interdependency  
in the sense, say, male and female were one  
from the beginning—no little arrow  
on the O of that embryo, no foe,  
target, cross, or stickman Atlas below.

Lo, behold: lift like Sol's soul *o* from *god*  
there's no g. d. (or even dad gummed) thing  
to which we cling if not—à la lingua  
franca more so than the thing itself, life  
buoy or lasso—awe, the ineffable  
grasped as we're pulled, gasping, through h. to o.

Thus, as it's said, at the apogee of one's  
gestation there is the crowning; there is  
as well the splash, and there is the circle  
of attendants, the cry, the swaddling,  
the mother's embrace, infant to her breast.

Yet, life is birth's twist: in time time doesn't  
exist, birth flanked by nothing of the past,  
no word of the future when, alas, love's  
orismo's most fierce in fear of life's loss.

O, of the holes in the whole of our knowledge  
we say miracle, though the miracle,  
mother of miracles, is we say it.

As for love's spell—phallic *l*, mellow *o*  
vis-à-vis Eve's cleft *v v*. snake eye *e*—

is it not awe to which we owe our awe?

**MARGARET AHO**  
**At 95 she says the word**

for shy

is *scheu*, a lovely mule,

& slips her hammertoes in this scuff-

syllable—Ed Sullivan's pronunciation for the *really big*;

germane, because she says the word for awe

is also *scheu* . . .

so

two mules:

sterile? useful? should I bracket, brace

myself? This show goes round & round, chafes out a rasping

*scheu* . . . *scheu* . . . from the grind, awful from the

groove of her shuffle devotion heard

for the first time

mid-

step off-

stage [here] I hear [her] word

for word but mum speechless no logo-gasm no maxim

rising from the rut: just slow slog steps : *minne-*

*singers* just the flesh of her

foot raying

out

**MARGARET AHO**

**Outside**

the high whine of

saplings—bound to be skinned, to be guileless

laminae. *He was sheathed in a skin*

*of lucent finger-*

*nail. Adam? Isaac? [Nail it: the need to be*

*right] The Book of Brightness?*

At the horizon, a tree branches out from east

to west—ten fingers, ten emanations.

*Who can tell me today is not*

*the last day?*

The candle is lit:

your face, mother,

with its bruise below your right eye.

**MARGARET AHO**  
**Even my weak eyes**

can spot the darkly elevated . . .  
something smudged & blurry, there on stilts  
among the needled limbs, behind the scrim of trembling yellow  
aspen in this dusk: a hutch, a  
crib for *chi-*  
*roptera*  
    . . . *bat is good medicine, is . . .* [this from the mouth of . . . ]

Back up this  
era that opts for x's. Sign here. Solve for . . . See how we hang by our  
heels, gravid with slapdash  
exequies?  
    . . . *rebirth* [the budding . . . ] & already hard-  
wired  
for reverb, repeat, solely the sound of our own . . .  
    . . . *sole mammal*  
*capable of . . .*  
    skin-foil? skin-extension? where then is the limit  
of the body, stretched out in . . .  
    . . . *flight, true flight*

In this twilight  
    [remorph . . . remorse . . . ] can you see something  
volar  
volant: palm & sole pinned?

**MARGARET AHO**

**About**

the ablaut your mules make

[shy shoe show . . .]

about turns

about plodding to the point of

obsessive

about rounds, sibilant

about post-shh

about vowel-play, leeway, full of give . . .

about latitude

**MARGARET AHO**

**Recite her stretch-**

step

her stubbed-out hemmed-in walker-wrestled *s'nuff* . . .

*'nuff* . . . her soundtrack's recurring

contraction that only grows

more inexact like

this x

brought to her lips in the dark

after the day's [*immer schon*]: always already &

[*ungebund*]: coming unstitched, see? close

your eyes *now* can you hear?

almost mantic: her

mules

her leather flappers

**SUSAN TICHY**

**A Ghost**

of rock, deceptively whole  
as a wave is whole

at the moment  
of its breaking

'dark with an excess of light'  
above the trees

stopped in the meadow  
'fingering the white quartz

which seamed the granite boulders'  
an accurate guide

to conduct among the snows  
ravens drift

across the ridge-top dog  
or coyote barks in the trees

and 'properly used  
danger can have an important meaning'

clear as a stone  
on paper 'the pen

should walk slowly  
over the ground'

—a task too easily mastered  
at altitude

this dead bristlecone, far ridge  
quarreling across my line of sight

their 'dark tint passing tenderly'  
to boot-on-rock, to stonecrop

a noise half brook, half silence  
in the scree flights of fish

in the limestone, pace  
of thought from steep

to steep a pipit  
flies straight up with its wings still, held

by wind  
'and with reference to breathing

I do not say what  
it is for'

backwards as forwards  
long slopes of debris

'rest your hand on a book  
so to hold the pen long'

'dressing the action in gallant attire'  
(one hat, searched for

on the second day)  
the grieving bring a photograph

'made chocolate sherbet  
in the summer snow'

not *summer* snow but *summit* snow  
not *summit snow* but *summit*

—it's a verb  
trail worn into the white rock

'one had to cross an expanse of sea'  
spatter of rain and a gull feather

caught in my jacket zipper  
it's far from home and I

surveying distances  
'as if they were your whole estate'

say 'jumped from the top of a cattle car  
with his clarinet under his arm'

say 'swam into tarns  
to fetch out water lilies'

and there, 'just  
where the curve of the petal turns to light'

say 'bloom of the scarlet dye  
on shining linen' strata

of 'utterly harsh and horrible colour'  
strata of 'delicate pen lines' mere

requiring in crossed branches  
bound at the root

a wind is captured, illustrated  
by 'syllable of a stammerer'

a stumbler stumbling  
up hill from the trail

a stone in the bristlecone  
—someone has visited—

'guarding the frontier  
of heaven and earth'

elk scat here  
in the aplily ants

keep rearranging  
the ashes

improbable slip  
masquerading

as possible granite  
drifting across basalt

(my footprints drying behind me)  
rolling on landwave

rock-drunk  
sprawled where a siskin

talks in the undertow  
'to pause within a hair's breadth

of any appointed mark'  
and see

nothing a kestrel

hangs where east meets west  
the ridge

in both directions  
concealing force

and 'no series  
without a snap somewhere'