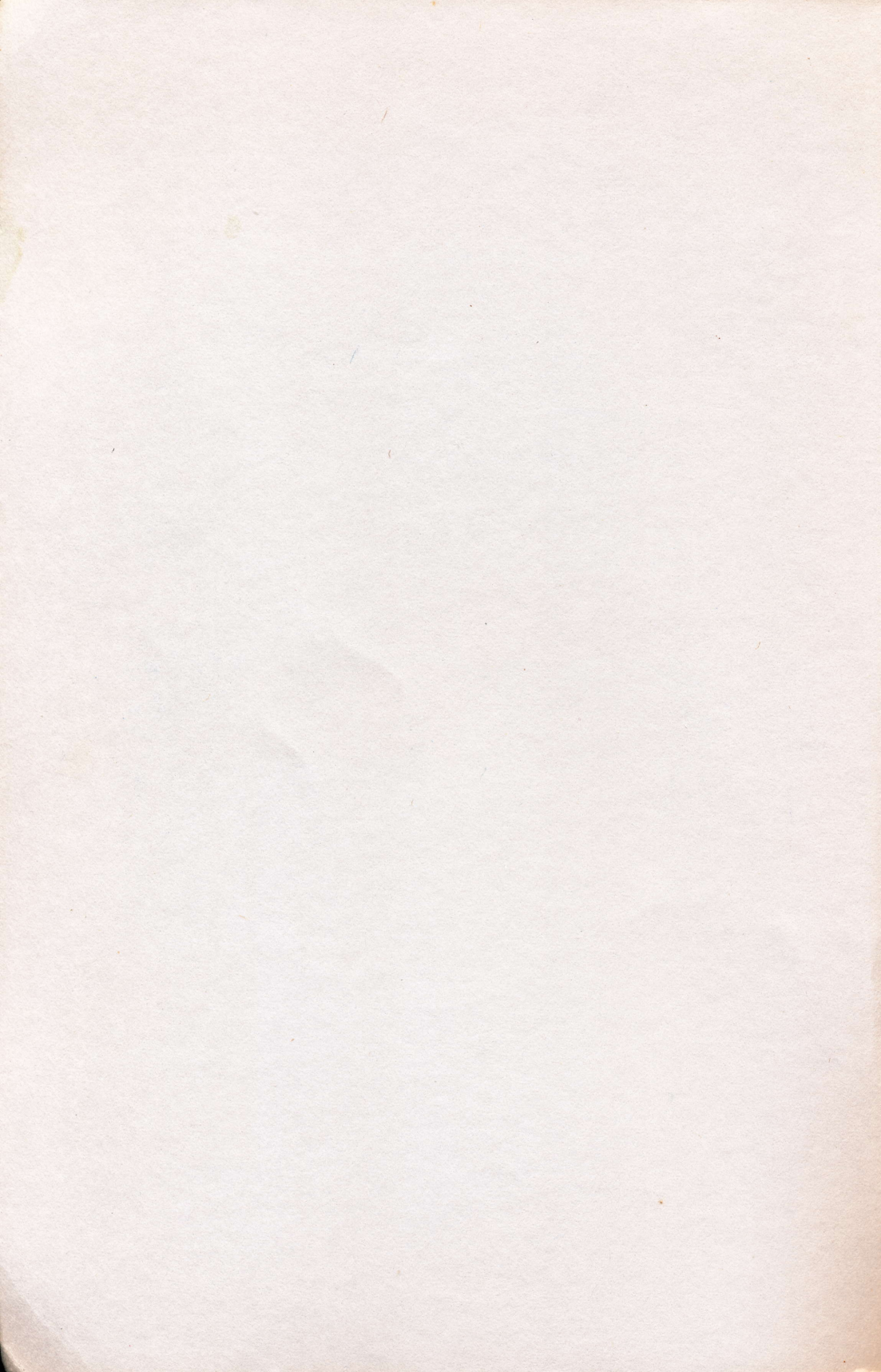




CONFLUENCE

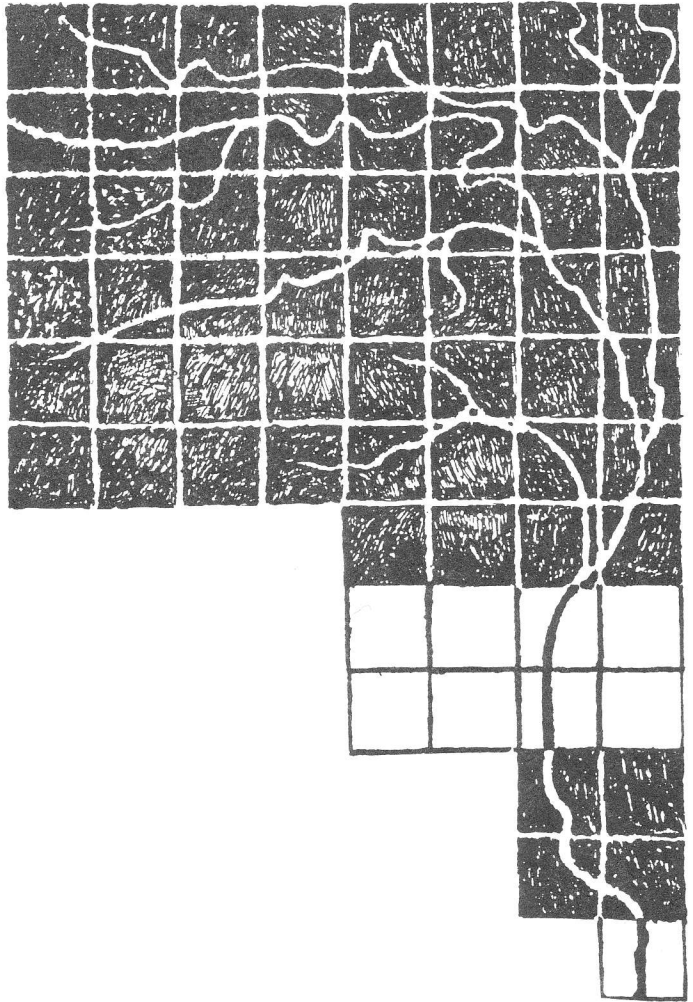
Contemporary Kansas Poetry
Edited by Denise Low





CONFLUENCE:

Contemporary Kansas Poetry



Edited by DENISE LOW

COTTONWOOD 31-32

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COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE welcomes submissions of fiction, poetry, graphics, photography, translations, reviews of small press literature, and articles on the arts from both local and national writers and artists. Poetry submissions should be limited to the five best. We cannot return submissions which do not include a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Since COTTONWOOD has no regular source of funding, we depend heavily on the interest and support of our subscribers. Issues appear tri-quarterly at \$3.50 per issue or \$9.00 for a three-issue subscription. Although issues are sometimes irregular, three issues are guaranteed per subscription. Subscriptions and submissions should be directed to:

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for Victor Contoski:

teacher, colleague, friend

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Stephen Bunch: "The Objects" in TELLUS, "Lamb's Quarter" in 30 KANSAS POETS, "Harsh Climate" and "Dog Days" in VANDERBILT REVIEW.

William Burroughs: Excerpts from THE PLACE OF DEAD ROADS are reprinted with permission from Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Scott Cairns: "Living with the Deaf" and "Taking Off Our Clothes" in FINDING THE BROKEN MAN (Window Press), "Waking Here" in QUARTERLY WEST and "Waking in the Borrowed House" in TEXAS REVIEW.

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Harley Elliott: "The Secret Lover in the Laundromat" in THE SECRET LOVER POEMS (Emerald City Press); "Mountain Men of America" and "The Back Roads Tour" in DARKNESS AT EACH ELBOW (Hanging Loose Press); "Photograph of My Grandparents on Their Wedding Day" in ALL BEAUTYFULL & FOOLISH SOULS (Crossing Press).

David Ewick: "The Grocer and the Rat" in KANSAS ENGLISH.

Louis Forster: "Losing the Game" in NAKED MAN.

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Michael Heffernan: "Fourteen Sentences at Midwinter" and "Ten Past Eleven in TO THE WREAKERS OF HAVOC (Georgia University Press), "4th of July" and "Daffodils" in THE CRY OF OLIVER HARDY (University of Georgia Press).

Steven Hind: "Baling After the Flood," "Three Days on the Prairie" and "Requiem for Gene Autry" in FAMILIAR GROUND (Cottonwood Review Press).

Jonathan Holden: "How To Throw Apples" and "Losers" in POETRY, "Washing My Son" in KANSAS QUARTERLY, "Hitting Against Mike Cutler" in DESIGN FOR A HOUSE (University of Missouri Press).

Diane Hueter: "the dreamers," "just before sleep" and "Journeys" in KANSAS: JUST BEFORE SLEEP (Cottonwood Review Press), "Drought" in IOWA WOMAN REVIEW.

Kenneth Irby: "The Grasslands of North America," "Homage to Coleman Hawkins," "the waltz in APPALACHIA," and "The Place of the Lord of the Soil" in CATALPA (Tansy Press).

Michael L. Johnson: "For Aunt Bill, Who Sends Me Newspaper Clippings" and "Bible Bookstore" in THE UNICORN CAPTURED (Cottonwood Review Press), "Dry Season: A Sort of Love Letter" in DRY SEASON (Cottonwood Review Press), "Late September" in 30 KANSAS POETS (Cottonwood Review Press).

Denise Low: "Small Town Landscape" in MID-AMERICAN REVIEW, "Mother's Day Drive" in FOCUS MIDWEST, "Towards Topeka" and "West" in INSCAPE, "Flint Hills" in ABRAXAS, "Place" in TOUCHSTONE.

Marilyn Mann: "Into the Camera" in KANSAS WOMEN WRITERS (Cottonwood Review Press).

Elizabeth Mayer: "Love in the Middle Ages," "The Fencing Lesson" and "Why I Am Going Back to New England" in MIKROKOSMOS.

John Moritz: Selections from "Hart Crane" in HART CRANE (Zelot Press); "Beginning with a Line by Robert Duncan" appeared as a broadside, published by Helen Kelly; "Vinland Cemetery, Douglas, County" in AUX-ARCS.

W.R. Moses: "Pleasant Interval, Kansas, July 19" in MID-AMERICAN REVIEW, "Salute" and "Big Dam" in PASSAGE (Wesleyan University Press) and "Turtle-Back" in KANSAS QUARTERLY.

Michael Paul Novak: "English 101--The State Prison" and "Wife, Swimming" in LEAVENWORTH POEMS (BookMark Press), "A Telegram from Interpol" and "Advice for People with Licenses" in SAILING BY THE WHIRLPOOL (BookMark Press).

S. Emanuela O'Malley: "False Prophet" and "Corn Harvest," in KANSAS QUARTERLY and "Talisman for a Teacher" in COMMONWEAL.

Tom Page: "DEIN IST MEIN GANZES HERZ" in FLATROCK JOURNAL, "The Wichita Cuts" in NORTH DAKOTA QUARTERLY, "Thunderhead" in DREAM OF THE HIGHWAY (West End Press).

Cynthia S. Pederson: "Aunt Eva," "Grandma Lucy" and "Starlings" in SPOKEN ACROSS A DISTANCE (Woodley Memorial Press).

Antonia Quintana Pigno: "The Miracle of Santuario" in EL FUEGO DE ATZLAN.

Philip M. Royster: "What It Is" in JOURNAL OF ETHNIC STUDIES and "Grandma's House" in KANSAS QUARTERLY.

Lynn Shoemaker: "Icicles" in HANDS (Lynx House Press).

Anita Skeen: "The Poet in the Back Seat" in NIMROD, "White Creek" in COTTONWOOD REVIEW, "My Younger Brother Sits Playing Hard Rock" in 30 KANSAS POETS (Cottonwood Review Press).

Michael Smetzer: "Late-Night Cafe in Missouri" in POETRY NOW, "Report to the Air" in HANGING LOOSE, "The Milk House" in TEL-LUS, "End of Winter" in COTTONWOOD REVIEW, "Prairie Summer" in LITTLE BALKANS REVIEW.

A.G. Sobin: "Propping Up Bodies To Fool the Indians," "The Calculation," and "The Museum, The Hands" in THE SUNDAY NATURALIST (Ohio University Press).

Theodora Todd: "Sometimes" in MIKROKOSMOS, "Thunderstorm Season" in CHOWDER REVIEW.

Patricia Traxler: "Why She Waits" in KANSAS QUARTERLY, "The Roomer" and "Death and the Red-Haired Man" in THE GLASS WOMAN (Hanging Loose Press).

Chuck Wagner: "Sleeping Alone" in COTTONWOOD REVIEW.

George Wedge: "A Silence Above the Radishes" in KANSAS QUARTERLY.

Philip Wedge: "A Catechism and a Prayer" in KANSAS QUARTERLY.

Edgar Wolfe: "Inventory" and "Miracle" in 30 KANSAS POETS (Cottonwood Review Press).

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PREFACE

This anthology is a successor to 30 Kansas Poets, published by Cottonwood Review Press. In the five years since the first anthology was compiled, nearly a third of the original poets have moved out of state. And many new writers have appeared. The original intention of this series was to keep an informal census of this flux--to collect under one cover poets who reside in the state during a set time span. This explains the absence of William Stafford and others often associated with the state.

So this volume contains a new cast, with the exception of twenty persistent souls. I reviewed new material for all twenty and sometimes chose completely new selections.

Another luxury of redoing this project was the opportunity to repair previous sins of omission. Michael Paul Novak, Jeanine Hathaway, Tom Page, and Michael Smetzer are established writers I was able to include this round.

Newcomers of particular interest are William Burroughs, from New York, Tangiers, and St. Louis; G. Barnes, from Hong Kong; Patricia Traxler, from California; Scott Cairns, from Bowling Green and Oregon; Matthew Frazel, from Chicago; Philip Royster, from Chicago; Erleen Christensen, from Nebraska; Chuck Wagner, from St. Louis; Lynn Shoemaker, from the Dakotas and New York. New writers--who have lived in Kansas but only recently have begun to publish poetry--include Jane Hoskinson, Elizabeth Mayer, Stanley Lombardo, Jim Miley, George Wedge, Cynthia Pederson, Tom Averill, and Melanie Farley.

I reviewed books and submissions from January through July of this year. Already, two poets, Michael Smetzer and Diane Hueter, have moved. Undoubtedly, others will follow.

My standards for inclusion in this book were as catholic as possible: competence and vividness. I expected the writers to be established, to have previous publications. Over half of these writers have published books of poetry.

Within this range of people, great diversity exists. But I do have a few conclusions. There are a lot of poets in a state of modest population. Also, though many of the poets have academic training, this has not standardized language or subjects. The work is of consistent quality and still individual. Especially varied is the form--surrealist prose poems to rhymes.

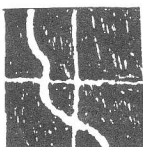
One thread that is inevitable in these poems is the presence of landscape, but it appears in many forms. I have chosen a fresh water word, at the general suggestion of John Moritz, to title this collection as a recognition of nature and natural processes. Many Kansas towns began between confluences of rivers: in Kansas folklore, this triangle of land is safe from tornadoes.

I had many schemes for ordering of the poets. I had wanted to sort them by river systems or types of poetry or towns or birth signs. Finally, I capitulated to democratic, utilitarian alphabetization. Geographic locales within Kansas seem to have no bearing on poets' verse, the Arkansas and Kaw rivers are too crowded for reasonably even distribution, and I had incomplete biographical data. Each poet's work stands on its own.

I am grateful to the poets for contributing their work. In addition, I appreciate the help of many friends during the long summer and the task of editing this book: Erleen Christensen, Diane Hueter, and Tamara Dubin (all of Cottonwood Press), G. Barnes, Miriam Hoelter, Karen Warner, Evy Gershon, and my family of dear, patient men.

And finally, a special thank you to the University of Kansas Department of English for paying to have the issue typed.

Denise Low
Cottonwood Press, 1983





Tom Averill

A PROPOSAL

Think about where you really come from.
If this place is not yours by now,
You are lost.
Go home.
Aren't you tired of looking at land that
Doesn't become you? Getting to know people
You'll never really know?
Aren't you tired of trips north or south or
East or west to the folks? Think about
The stench of bus stations,
The tardiness of trains,
All those insecure airplanes,
The buzz in your head after a 12-hour car trip.

Here's a proposal:
The government pays you to go home.
You and thousands like you pack up and leave,
Happy never to move again.
Imagine it:
You are surrounded by your
Grade-school friends. Your parents and
Grandparents live next door, surrounded by
Their grade-school friends.
You walk to work like you used to walk to school,
Knowing all the shortcuts.
The three-legged dog is down the block,
The hot-rodding teenager is up the street.
The tether ball champ still lives catty-corner,
And you still can't stand him. Neighbors
Hand you cookies, invite you in to play,
Tell you about how you used to be.
Stories stick to people forever.
Everything around you is home.

Hey listen:
If you don't like it you can just pack up and leave!

ON GRANDMA LAYTON'S REFRIGERATOR EXCESS CAT--A SUGAR BLUES

I am the refrigerator cat you try not to see.
I celebrate all your seasons, hoarding
Your smiling candy pumpkins,
Your sweet Easter eggs,
Your Russell Stovers awarded on
Your anniversary. My fur is as white and fragrant as
Your Christmas corsage, as coarse as
Your sweetened coconut, as cold as
Holiday snow. My tongue is the glazed
New Year's ham. In this refrigerator
My whiskers are always touching,
Touching, touching.

I am your excess.
I slice open your hot dogs,
I eat your red salmon,
I lick the cream you spill
Reaching drunkenly for the Seven-up.
I break your eggs and sit in the whites,
Dreaming of meringue. My neck bow is
Pulled taffy.

I am ravaging your refrigerator,
Sacrificing myself gluttonously to all
Your occasions. I am
Your secret sweetheart,
Your coldest storage. I am
Surrounded by little Valentine hearts.
They say:

COAX ME
TRUE BLUE
I'LL TRY
NOT NOW
OH NO!

G. Barnes

HEARING HER HEART

My daughter, bless her,
is fascinated by her heart--she
talks about it all the time.
No. Not all the time--at striking times
she brings it up, her heart.

She'll skip around the house
in time to music
holding her high hem,
halt at my elbow where I sit writing
and demand, 'Feel my heart!'
Covering her whole chest with my one hand
I picture it, the size of the fist
clenched at her arm's length.
She smiles. She watches my face for recognition.

Or another time weeks later
after shampoo and floss and the story about the bear
she snuggles down among the quilts and her
eyes find me in the dark. 'Your heart,' she says,
'sometimes you can feel it without hearing it
because your hand can hear.'

KNOWING WITH THE REST

Under every righted goose
is one turned upside down:
The river lay like silk
beneath their feathered vests.
It is early morning
and every righted beak, every neck,
is angled to the West,
gauging icy rain moving in.
Each echo-geese does just the same.
How soon to go to Mexico?
(Knowing anything is magic.)

And then without discussing all agree.
Half the geese heave up--their going
makes splinters of the water where
the other half, as slivers,
reduce, reduce, reduce below.
These are left forever
encoded in the folds,
the river's ripple-patterned watermark.

PAPER, WATER, STONE

Some poems
I write
on hair--
they are
always
slender.

In Japan
tongues
and teeth
and lips
form every day
this word:
Kami.
It means 'hair'.
It means 'paper'.
Every spoken poem there
is stroked, black and fine hair.

Leonardo was a paranoid:
everything important he coded.
He wrote backwards; if you own
an Italian mirror you can read him.
Sitting by the river he discovered
hair and water tumble just alike.
Rocks are shoulders; breasts, boulders.
Every girl he ever drew had hair of water.

Children, we took more than paper kites
from the old Chinese--more than gunpowder, spaghetti.
We stole our oldest games: Paper covers stone.

WATER NEWS

The river's way is this:
Some days it reports
what's happened north.

I go down the banks and sport
limbs or wide clumps of bark chips
shaped as amoebas.
Or crates,
or Palmolive bottles bobbing.
Perhaps a piece of plastic toy.

Another time I stop the car
beyond the bridge
and get out to read the news:
nothing.

Nothing doing today, Bub.
I've been through twenty counties
but have nothing to show.
So stay or go away--please yourself.
You know my motto:
All the news that floats.
I'm only water.

Stephen Bunch

DOG DAYS

The sea that left this place
dry & chalky
ages ago
returns every summer, and

Billie's singing from a phonograph
willow weep
for me
passes through the screened window upstairs
2 houses down, settles
on the ear
dense & languid as the air
when the pressure drops & even
the tao index is falling

heat waves in the eyes of
Cyrus the Dog
of Rhode Island Street
who lies in a heap
at the curb
on the seabottom
in the shade of a blue
Ford pickup truck

and Einstein's brain nods in
an alcohol solution in
a jar on a shelf in
Wichita, Kansas

while the Local Dog chews
on the neckbone of platecarpus

are you Serious?

nothing to do worth doing
except the occasional visit to
the catalpa
sniff
lift a leg
sniff again

this is the life

HARSH CLIMATE

1

the sheep run into the mountains
& withhold their wool

even the snowmen
look haggard & gray

2

pipes freeze at 4 a.m.
then the sun

never so distant
as now

the house next door
an hour's drive

in a car that gave up
2 days ago

3

tongues stick
to sled runners
buttocks to bathtubs
across 3 counties
old men
fall on their snow shovels
& try to forget

LAMB'S QUARTER

thrives
dull gray-green
white goosefoot
pulling salts from chalkbeds
salad days on
the remnants of
a sea

thrives in the winter wheat
along the alluvium
pops up unannounced on
the neighbor's worried lawn
grows round the doorstep
in the path my feet
have worn

William Burroughs

from THE PLACE OF DEAD ROADS

Just because they know a thing or two
You can see them every day
Strolling up and down Broadway
Boasting of the wonders that they can do
There are con men and drifters
Shake men and grifters
And they all hang around the Metropole
But their names would be mud
Like a chump playing stud
If they lost that old ace down in the hole. . .

Kim has reserved a table. Eyes follow them. But nobody sees Boy do a \$50 palm on the headwaiter, all they see is \$50 in respect.

Cold, watchful, probing eyes . . . gamblers, con men, sincere untrustworthy eyes of a Murphy Man . . . "Now there's a party to stay well away from."

Some have a girl on the old tenderloin
And that's their ace in the hole

Never interfere in a boy and girl fight . . .

WHAP . . . "You no good junky slut what's this?"

He throws some crumpled bills into her face from his manicured fingers. All pimps get manicures. He has the assurance of one who knows his precise area of exploitation and never steps outside of it. (In Kim's party he is way outside his area. Nothing there for a pimp.) An old con man smells money. But he doesn't smell marks. He looks away with a wrench because it's big money he is smelling . . .

"No I'd be wasting my time."

A heist team smells money too in the pocket. They also smell guns and trouble . . . "Looks like a bank mob from out West carrying heavy iron . . ."

Shake men and grifters . . .

There is Joe Varland. He worked the broads on the trains. Nobody knew just how, but he always came back from a train trip with money. Thin scarred face . . . bout thirty-five. Yellow gloves and brass knucks . . . You notice his eyes . . . "sleepy and quiescent in the presence of another species . . . at once helpless and brutal . . . Incapable of initiating action but infinitely capable of taking advantage of the least sign of weakness in another . . ."

And he lost that old ace in the hole . . .

Slugged a cop and run for it. Didn't run far . . . A short trip home.

You can see them every day . . .

A shadow land of furnished rooms, chili parlors, pawn shops, opium dens, hobo jungles, bundle stiffs, and rod-riding yeggs missing a few fingers some of them, mostly from the caps.

He remembers a dream phrase spoken in Tom's voice a few months after Tom's death:

"Life is a flickering shadow with violence before and after it . . ."

Walking up and down Broadway . . .

Eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent, follow them to their table . . . Noting the ease and deadly assurance . . .

Eyes old unbluffed unreadable

From Florida up to the old North Pole . . .

They wind up in a Village all-night place, eating spaghetti, surrounded by long-haired scruffy-looking artists and poets . . . and there but for the grace of Carson . . .

Yes he could be living in some cold-water flat peddling his short stories from editor to editor . . . "Too morbid," they tell him . . .

They pay the check, and as they step into the street and turn left on Bleeker, Kim feels it up the back of his neck . . .

"Hey Rube," he yells.

He moves behind a lamppost and drops his satchel, the .44 in his hand. He can see Boy diving for a fireplug, a charge of shot misses him by inches. Kim gets Liver Wurst Joe with the .44 and he drops his sawed-off into the street.

Guy has the mauser out across the street, shooting for the driver . . . Cherry Nose Gio pumps in another round but his aim is bad because Frank the Lip lies dead across the wheel and the car is bucking out of control and he is catching lead from all of us. His head seems to fly apart from Boy's .45 . . . The car jumps the curb, crashes through a shop window in a shower of glass.

"The coppers will assume of course it is just another Wop-pish beef," Kim says as they walk rapidly away.

The most unpleasant, precarious and downright stupid immortality blueprint was drafted by the ancient Egyptians. First you have to get yourself mummified, and that was very expensive, making immortality a monopoly of the truly rich. Then your continued immortality in the Western Lands is entirely dependent on the continued existence of your mummy. That is why they had their mummies guarded by demons and hid good.

Here is plain G.I. Ali . . . he's got enough baraka to survive his first physical death. He won't get far. He's got no mummy, he's got no names, he's got nothing. What happens to a bum like that, a nameless, mummyless asshole? Why, demons will swarm all over him at the first check-point. He will be dismembered and thrown into a flaming pit, where his soul will be utterly consumed and destroyed forever. While others, with sound mummies and the right names to drop in the right places, sail through to the Western Lands.

There are of course those who just barely squeeze through. Their mummies is not in a good sound condition. These second-class souls are relegated to third-rate transient hotels just beyond the last check-point, where they can smell the charnel-house disposal ovens from their skimpy balconies. "Might as well face facts . . . my mummy is going downhill. Cheap job to begin with . . . gawd, maggots is crawling all over it . . . the way that demon guard sniffed at me this morning . . ." Transient hotels . . .

And here you are in your luxury condo, deep in the Western Lands . . . you got no security. Some disgruntled former employee sneaks into your tomb and throws acid on your mummy. Or sloshes gasoline all over it and burns the shit out of it. "OH . . . someone is fucking with my mummy . . ."

Mummies are sitting ducks. No matter who you are, what can happen to your mummy is a pharaoh's nightmare: grave robbers, scavengers, floods, volcanoes, earthquakes, the dreaded mummy-bashers . . . Perhaps a mummy's best friend is an Egyptologist: sealed in a glass case, kept at a constant temperature . . . but your mummy isn't even safe in a museum. AIR RAID SIRENS, IT'S THE BLITZ!

"For Rah's sake get us into the vaults," scream the mummies without a throat, without a tongue.

Anybody buy in on a deal like that should have his mummy examined.

Scott Cairns

LIVING WITH THE DEAF

I rented a basement room
from two deaf women; they never heard
the heaviness of their feet
pounding down the stairs, or the hard
way they called my name. They loved
to talk, shouted mostly, bleated and made
excited yelps that must have been
to them the way I sounded when they
chose to wear their hearing aids.
Those days, I woke every morning to a kind
of conversation from above, an early
morning music made up
of private sounds that sent out
all they felt that needed speech.
It was Mary Ann singing. It was
Mrs. Thorsen telling some lyric tale
to the stove.

WAKING HERE

--for Kathleen and Zap

This night, one of those clouded
nights that glue the sheets
to your legs and drain the hope
of sleep from you, so that even the woman
tossing beside you becomes nothing more
than an irritation. So, the two of you
grow slowly stupid in the dark,
being for the most part awake, but numbed
by heat and darkness. At such a time,
you might believe you'll go on like this
forever; but the night above you
clears, and your borrowed room
cools by slow degrees, and the moment
arrives when you startle to the fact
of having slept.
If, at this moment, you would lift
yourself to one elbow and witness
the moonlit room, you would know
that there is waking in this house
a word, simple as blood, whose sound spoken
clearly enough might make things right,
a word like water or light, a word clean and honest as dirt, or
a woman

you wake to clear autumn nights, the odd light
of the moon on her, a quiet word that tells you
all that it is you're in the world to learn

WAKING IN THE BORROWED HOUSE

Our lips move, we say
morning,
we say
wake,
we hear the words
and thinking back
feel them coming from us
and going out
across the still air, waiting
in the lighted air before us.
There are words
that come from us,
and we fool ourselves
by thinking we have said them
on our own, have imagined, say,
the sun lifting past the ridge
and have given a word
to contain it. There are worse
things we do, and worse things we do
with words, but we fool ourselves
by thinking we've imagined all we say.
Our hands lift and find
the common breath falling
from our mouths, and lifting
a little further
find the sputter of our lips, the exit
for all our given words,
water, morning, green.

TAKING OFF OUR CLOTHES

Let's pretend for now that there is
nosuch thing as metaphor; you know.
waking up will just be waking up,
darkness will no longer have to be
anything but dark; this could all be happening
in, let's see, Kansas. We could
lie back in a simple bed that is a mattress
on the corner of a floor. We'd have nice
blue sheets and a wool blanket for later.

I could be the man and you could be the woman.
We'd talk about real things, casually and
easily taking off our clothes. We'd be
naked and would hold onto each other
a long time, talking, saying
things that would make us
grin. We'd laugh off and on,
all the time unconcerned with things like
breath, or salty skin, or the way our gums show
when we really smile big. After a little while,
I'd get you a glass of water.

--after C.F., D. W.

Erleen Christensen

GOODBY TO THE FARM

Half a mile of yellow lilies
line the road from the mailbox
to the house. Out back, Sister
steps from a little building,
yellow feet bloom between her
fingers as she takes the chickens
from the cages in the truck.

"Slide 'em in! Slide 'em in!"
Yellow ankles in the metal track,
the hens settle their disputes
and quiet in to roost--feet up.

Daddy slashes throats and slides
the chickens on their track into
the tunnel, walks to the other end,
removes them from the steam and
throws them in the whirling drum
which never stops as Auntie
picks the naked chickens out.

Slice, Auntie has a gizzard. Slice and
pull, a pile of guts. She slides the empty
chicken on to Buddy, searches for a heart
and liver, swipes her hand across the
table, plops the guts into the garbage
can between her legs.

Buddy, in a football jersey, picks off
little feathers, picks out bits of
lungs and liver, throws the chicken
in a tub. The water splashes.

Mama takes a chicken out and reunites
it with a liver, heart, and gizzard--seals
the plastic bag as Daddy slides more hens
into the steam.

Mama turns to Auntie, smiles a little
as she says, "Aren't the lilies nice
this year?"

FARM SALE

The farmers in starched
pants bid carefully on rusty
bolts, sorted out by size
and type. They line
their purchases
in rows along
the tidy edges
of the barn--and always
count their
change.

Across the no-man's
land of cars, the
polyester wives still wait
and gossip neatly
on the lawn.

The crocheted doilies
will come next
and all the dainty dishes
the lady of the house
dusted every
day.

THE BODDHITSATVA OF THE INLAND SEA

Kuan-Yin of the Southern Sea,
wrapped in a marble museum,
the sea before him dry,
feels the slow waves the wind makes
as it shapes the Kansas limestone.

I would build him a red and gold temple
in a grove on the banks of the Kaw,
and on nights hot as Honan,
we'd eat fresh wheat as the crickets
sang at the edge of the inland sea.

Clark Coker

GOING WINTER

It goes winter now.
The dark air is very cold,
and the snow falls where it can.
The street is like a power failure.
Everything is dark and empty,
and no one goes out.

Something should happen:
a cigarette glowing
from my neighbor's window;
a dog barking;
someone talking.
Anything to break this thin place
where only the snowplows move.
They are old men, drooling oil.
They bite at the sidewalks.

A PHONE CALL

We've got a bad connection here. I can't--
Yes, that's better now. But don't you hear it,
that strange, quick sound? No, listen--a woman
crying through the static. I don't know what--
something, anyway, to make her cry.
No, she can't hear us. I think, maybe she--

Yes, I'm listening. He's left you again.
You're getting a divorce, for real this time
and never mind the others. No, don't shout.

Listen. This other sorrow penetrates,
and I--You told me that; he never loved--
can't hear. Yes, I remember from before,
the time you said never again; only
you took him back. He never really goes
farther than the corner. You should listen.
I tell you, that woman is crying.

SIMPLE

Begin simple.

Begin with a smooth white wall
and with a small ojo de dios
made of blue, brown, and black yarn.
Notice how the rough threads spiral
from the center.

Then imagine a woman on a fine white couch.
See how she ignores the eye above her.
Instead, she leans to crush a cigarette
and to settle her dark hair.
The skin of her face stretches blank.

Listen as she quotes from Eliot,
and it really would be worthwhile.
Now it is strange. When she talks,
shadows pour from her mouth.

Go back to the wall. Go back simple.
Let your eye trace the spiral of the eye.
Notice toward the middle
how the weave quickens, each strand
wheeling and turning on the center
so fast and twisted you can not see it;
and blank eye confronts blank eye.

Victor Contoski

ANIMAL LIFE ON THE GREAT PLAINS

1

Before man came to the Great Plains
there was a huge sea in the middle of America
wherein swam great monsters.

Then the Rocky Mountains rose.
The sea contacted, the water flowed away;
but the monsters remained.

They became buffalo.

2

Then Indians came.
Then white men.
Then Buffalo Bill.

The monsters retreated deep under the earth
beneath Salina and Great Bend and Wichita.

They went home to their bones.

3

They lie now under the prairie
and dream of the Second Coming of water.

THE MAILMAN

In the dark of night
he has opened what is mine
looking for money
and copying excerpts
for his novel.

For years he has
burned my mail in secret
trying to make me believe
my friends have forgotten me.

JOURNEY WEST

Whoever travels into Kansas
exploring the great American desert
goes out into space
--the interstellar distances
between the lights of the prairie farms.

Suddenly his hair turns white
and he rejoices in his age.

The wind touches his face
like a wrinkled wife
who loves him

and grain moves at his feet
like grandchildren.

At sunset
in the hymn of the locusts
he hears
voices of dead Indians

and feels buffalo hooves
in his heartbeats.

Whoever leaves Westport
journeys past Council Grove
and Bent's Fort
into the unknown

Where he shall find the past
waiting in ambush
like Arapahoe and Kiowa.

Stricken
he shall fall
headlong among the stars

and lie with the dead
at Pottawatomie

Marais des Cygnes
and Lawrence.

He shall lie with Jedediah Smith
and the Kansa Indians.

And he shall be home.

LEAVENWORTH

The mansions on South Broadway
settle like fat uncles
after Thanksgiving dinner.

Soldiers in the fort
guard ghosts of settlers
from ghosts of Indians.

For years escaped prisoners
have thrown their grey clothes
over the white houses.

They are heavy, heavy.

So Leavenworth lies down
in the Missouri River valley
soothed by muddy water.

And rain falls on it
like dust.
And snow falls on it
like dust.

DREAM 1971

At 5:10 a.m. Uncle Henry
came back from the dead
still partially bald
his face a round red sun
his fists full of cards.

I thought he had answers
shoving his hands toward me.

He had just one question:
what do you do
with cards like these?

TEETH

1

Kiss the one you love.
Behind the lips
teeth are waiting

like a man with a weapon
waits in a dark alley.

2

They are not knives
but clubs.

They come down on meat
like a lead pipe
on the head of a woman.

3

Sometimes in dreams
they wither and turn soft
like rotten cactus.

They curl up and fall out
like men refusing to fight
an unpopular war.

4

If you are beaten long enough and hard enough
your teeth will be knocked out.

Then you can use them as chessmen:
front teeth, pawns;
back teeth, pieces.

5

They line up in the mouth
like soldiers for inspection.

Ever since I can remember
they have surrounded the tongue,

reminding what is soft
of what is hard.

Bruce Cutler

RINGS

I sing at the center of a tree Its roots describe my age
Love at the heart of air draws me nothing nearer
You can discern the outline of a perfect disc of moon
As the farthest of familiar things concentrates bright beginnings
A hand is not less perfect than this geometry
Woman not less lacking than a man in circle centering

I say that I know I sing With the force at the heart of this tree
Love-seeking, blind to its being that scatters years like leaves
You will be carried beyond this place space will recede in its arc
As we grow out of trunk and root and our branch beams with endings
A seed unlike any other locked in the cell of this singing
Wife to the rising nightsky Husband to the withe of willow

THINGS

lead in the windows
a burnished mist above the bed,
the click of wind in cottonwoods

 waiting on the fulcrum of a day
 as the long beams bend
 over a dark horizon

that mist--it is as if a great
mahogany itself stood there
basement to attic and beyond

 and drawerfronts and handles
 seem to peep out of its bark:
 day draws them out

and figures of furniture emerge,
a curtain surges
we are the things, are meant to be

THE RECREATION

her hands
explore
the tabletop

walnut

veins and
valleys
exclamations
of grain

in its
unflecked
iris, they seem
to sense
its sleep the way
singing
you can hear long
after voices
or the song
returns
from dreams

with wool
and wax
her hands begin

to stroke

to sing
the grain
awake is all
their dream

YOUR NUMBER

This blank page begins as a snowfield,
a terrible white-out on the way to somewhere,
dawn in a DC-9 in a cloudbank over Denmark

and of course, the thing is you have to make it:
I have to make it, you have to make it
with your mark or sign you have to make it

the cabala--since I am who I am, here's
a palindrome, or some curious device
and archimedicals were wont to come up with such as

three threes, an ennead; and from three
to there requires the perfect six
"not because God created all things

in six days, but rather the inverse: God
created in six days because this number is perfection
and would remain even if his work did not

exist" by way of St. Augustine and his own
fecund and favorable Venus, goddess
of the watch, days, months neatly

divisible by six, and St. Eustorglo, patron
of Posillipo and the ex-Royal Aquarium of Mergellina
neatly divisible by $8 \frac{1}{2}$, and the squid

...I don't like the way this is going--squid
arms get to me; did you ever think
of their markings, Dag Hammerskjold, over

the Congo, when you were shot out of the air?
I see us being shot out of the air.
We fall right into the snowfield of this page.

Gene DeGruson

SHOES, EGG SHELLS, AND CAREFULLY LABELED HEADS

Felix Janeskie, The Bachelor, was as much a hermit as life would permit. He papered his walls with covers of poultry magazines; he had known a woman once, according to Marie Pernot, who asked; he could be depended upon to have the latest Sears & Roebuck Catalogue. When he died each room of his little shack overflowed with shoes, egg shells, and catalogues stuffed with phrenological drawings--chart after chart labored in Polish: the physiognomies of each neighbor blocked off into realms concealed from us by hair--a mad, mystical, meaningless mess which was shoveled into a well, capped clean, his house demolished, the land leveled. Soy beans grow over The Bachelor's lot, save for one corner, rife with weeds, which would destroy the plow that scraped into the well cap guarding there.

DOG DAYS IN THE COAL CAMP

Old Lady Bob received from the Mouth of God the Revelation that she was to have the Gift of Flight. She told everyone, hitching up her drab haying dress, and to all who would hear she scheduled her impending flight for the third next Sunday from the Polk School steeple. Even skeptics came to see the show, to the shame of a niece who begged Old Lady Bob to stay firm on the ground, not to risk her neck, but Old Lady Bob climbed and leaped, flailed the air and broke both legs. That's all. Old Man Brunskill yelled, "What happened to your faith?" as they took her inside to wait for the doctor. "My faith," she yelled back, "was strong. I just got off on the wrong flop!" There was no laughter--just the nagging thought by all she might try it again, come cooler weather.

Harley Elliott

THE MOUNTAIN MEN OF AMERICA

This anonymous laundromat
where junebugs lie dreaming in cold light:
it will be our last stand.

The mountain men
out beyond the parking lot
are coming to avenge their sudsy graves
and new black pioneers
wait against one wall
long-handled combs stuck
like revolvers in hip pockets.

We gather inside plate glass
where the rainbow of america sinks
its colorless roots
faces bent against each moment
and the revolution arrives

in a swarm of greasy buckskin.
Mustang Grey and Old Bill Williams
are lifting hair in the restrooms.
The maytags leap up
filled with bowie knives.
Grizzled trappers bite

the curlers from the hair
of housewives suddenly amazed
and Talbott the skull-faced riverman
appears his homemade leather nose
stuck in everybodys foaming underwear.

What joy to the
droves of suburban beaver
plundered at last:
as if america had been holding
its daughters all these years
in trust for this moment of barter

and the men of america all these years
making love to billfolds instead
of the women at their sides
and the young aspiring

fathers of america
falling still in the valley of diapers
half crazed with all
this unfamiliar hairiness
rolling eyes and great

square yellow teeth
as the trappers of america come home.

--

Each lead and arrowpoint investment
accepted in scouting the land
glows like a star on their skins:

Jed Smith slain by Comanches
Vanderburgh by the Blackfoot
Henry Fraeb dropped by Sioux & Cheyenne.
The Utes said goodbye
to Old Bill Williams
and Hugh Glass tumbled once
to Arikara rifles once to Shoshone arrow
and years later the final
arrow Arikara once more

so many mouths full of dust
for these future
insanities of asphalt.

Charles Bent dies in Pueblo hands
John Glanton by Yumas
Jacob Snively Yavapai
Herman Ehrenberg Mojave
Charlie Harrison Osage -
the arrows that grew in spines
now return in tears of despair

And Broken Hand Fitzpatrick
falls back on the candy machine
eyes shot blind
in the face of his
old smothered land:

two factories to every meadow
houses like a telescoping dream
a highway to every buffalo trail
two superhighways to every highway
four megahighways waiting in the wings
and the mountains groaning
with chrome and smoke.

Even the Great Desert
where a human animal could
shatter in the clarity of air
the sky is wounded now
with every breath

death proclaimed by yellow
islands in the sky

Denver to St. Louie gassed and
fallen to its muddy knees
like a trapper struggling with the
sudden feathers at his breast.

--

And the mountain men of america
have returned in a laundromat
damning our clouds of soap

damning for the way we have
abused the dog
and for feeding their horses to those dogs
and for poisoning
the white-haired father eagle

and damning us again with our
grizzly bears licking
pork and bean cans in the moonlight
for shitting in our own saddlebags
and riding on
ripping wide open
the opening of the west.

--

The mountain men of america
have folded up their sorrow
and settled in
the laundromats across the land.
Scars hidden under drip-dry clothes
they go out among us
finding the Indian brother
waiting in a dusty car
and taking his hand at last.

The mountain man will
find you in your final hunger
the mountain man will follow
the sound of your weeping
and enter your body
and show you
the land of his dreams.

A PHOTOGRAPH OF MY GRANDPARENTS
ON THEIR WEDDING DAY

Ingevald and Anna Moen
norwegian dreamers
in a room upon the prairie

both faces fill
the photographers eye.

This man will die
in bed and swear
he saw Jesus standing
on a bluff above the river
and he said then

This woman dies
in bed
as quiet as the
wind she moved through
with the words

"pass by"

"I wish"

although there are no thoughts
of drought or sorrow
on his face

no dreams of cancer in her eyes

Tonight the stones alone
are speaking of them

Rest In Peace

All Beautyfull
And Foolish Souls

THE PYRAMID THAT STANDS ON ITS HEAD

The radiating fossil
section of reed
clenched in a limestone bed
supports the flint chip
struck free and dropped

as the hedge tree post
holds long legs of a long necked bird
wings lifted balancing tail
fans up as it
shoots the moon
dim white behind a band of floaters

and way off if we
need an edge to it
four corners composed
of whatever we wish.

SECRET LOVER IN THE LAUNDROMAT

Somewhere during
the whirlpool cycle
I feel my heart
nearing your lap

you are reading an article
on supersonic flight:
I am staring
at an ad for margarine

and George Washingtons bright
blue eyes
stand up on a million quarters
when your whispering nylons cross.

Why not love
in the laundromat after all?
Shall I offer to unload
your dryer plunging fingers
in to warm clothes

like a butcher
before a great carcass?
Will the problems of margarine
and speed of light
find resolution in our time?

A solitary crow crosses
the falling snow outside
and you look into my eyes:
a blue-eyed scream of plastic butter
crossing a brown-eyed
scream of falling planes.

You sigh.
I blow my nose.
Our love is doomed.

THE OFFICIAL GRANDFATHERS

They've got us on some kind
of dope they put in the fish

say what you want
all we see is broken eggshells
instant myth

this is what we get for being
big and beautiful. Be it so.

David Ewick

TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP

You know your wife will wake you
when she comes home, but instead
she passes into the bathroom.
You are not sure it's her.
You are uneasy and call her name,
but the words are garbled, the voice
low, not your own, you think.

She hears, though, and comes
to the doorway wearing tea rose
panties, a white blouse, half
removed, a green bandana.
She looks like Lauren Bacall
in "To Have and Have Not"
only sexier and in color and asks
if you need anything.

You need to change your name,
you say, as easily as she changes
the color of her underwear,
and as quickly as that
they're chartreuse, then ultramarine
and she's coming out of them,
smiling, strolling toward you.

THE GROCER AND THE RAT

Each night he is in the potatoes. I injected some of
them with strychnine but he wouldn't touch those. I set traps
but he avoided them. I set a mirror at the end of the hall so I
could watch from my room but he didn't show. I built a ledge
above the entryway and waited all night with my shot gun but he
stayed away. So I scattered flour on the floor to see where he
entered. Tracks in the meat room. I set a screen across the
doorway. The tracks showed confusion but he climbed it anyway,
became accustomed to its being there. I set a brass rod on top
of the frame that holds the screen and each night he knocks it off.

Tonight, I have attached to the brass rod a forty-pound
test line, stretched it from there to the head of a claw hammer I
have balanced on the wall with a nail, from there to the twelve-
pound weight balanced neatly on a shelf, from there through a
pulley to the trigger of my wife's Smith & Wesson, secured to the
wall, aimed at the top of the screen. I will scrape him off the
meat grinder with a blade.

GRANDFATHER ON THE PORCH

He tells me
he has gold buried
in the back yard.
He tells me he used to walk the tracks
from Batesville to Columbus
with twenty pounds of marbles
in his hip pocket.

And I believe him.
But grandfathers won't last.
They walk one day off the porch
with a paring knife
from grandmother's kitchen.
They make a slice in the sod,
tear it back like ripping up carpet
in a rich woman's house
and without so much as a tip of the hat
they're gone,
a lump in the yard
for children to trip over.

He reads papers on the porch,
concentrates on the obits.
There're people dying now
'that ain't never died before,
he says, and looks at me
like I'm some hope,
or could raise the dead.

Melanie L. Farley

THE PLAINS AS RESTORATIVE

I

Josiah Gregg, Santa Fe trader, takes eight trips
across the prairie ocean.
A Missouri doctor prescribes dry plains air
for his consumptive lungs.

Modest, reclusive Josiah Gregg finds knowledge
of plains flora, fauna, phenomena
and becomes addicted to his cure.

He noons at the Elysian vale
of the Cimarron,
breathes freely, sweats happily.
There are no flies this far West.

II

Long ago, mother died.
So I roamed the breathing abdomen of a continent.
Ridges of loess left by Pleistocene dust storms
rippled over Nebraska.

In eastern South Dakota
ridges flattened into rolliong green,
black plowed land undulated,
empty as the day it was born.

The northern herd seemed to rise out of black loam;
dollar-green farm crops blinked to soft, mossy hide.
I thought of that sister waiting to hold me,
and I was nearly home.

III

He's here somewhere breathing in these fossil beds,
his persistent eyes scanning yellow chalk walls
and blue gully bottoms.

Sweat bees hum around my ears.
I trip on brittle grass and fall forward,
catching myself on a chalk wall
that absorbs hands' sweat like a slow sponge.
An inhalation dries my lungs.

Arid space clarifies each dirt-capped knoll.
Small heat waves skirt the whole horizon,
Making low-lying hills ripple.

Now, as brown lizards dart and grasshoppers click
away from my moving feet
I hear my father's pick striking chalk.

IV

You have been captured.
Drops of sweat run like greasy ants down your neck.
Lie still, with your ear to the ground
your head and chest pressed into sand.
Four ropes pull you taut.
The sound of blood moves in your ears
like a slippered, shuffling old man.

Unstake your spirit.
watch your dead body burn into desert sand.
Weightless now, stare with rising eyes at high cholla
until the moment when thin clouds stand quiet
and cactus begins to move slowly west.

Leave flesh to dissolve and bones to bleach.
That slice of you stays
While your journey spreads, horizonward, into dreams.

Louis Forster

LOSING THE GAME

You've come to a time
in the game you chose
where you allow you're losing
and slip your shoes under
the bed for several days
and stay home

and hear the streets fill
at 7 a.m. with cars
carting people

and once
a week the hum of the
trash-truck man clanging
lids: finally daring
to knock at your number
wanting to know why
your can stays
empty.

What does one say?
"I'll do better"

or smile in silence, risking
a hum in the face & a
freshly dented can.

MEMORIES OF
ONE BLONDE AND SUNBURNT GIRL
& OTHERS

Wilk came
to Kansas, remembering

and viewed the flat expanse
from his bed
once
and since has sat
in the hub of his room twirling
his hard-backed chair, whirling, thin
thighs pumping, hands
holding tight his bifocals.

They all live by the oceans
he'd say,
his world
floating
further away
spinning along in a room full of photos
in frames
coruscating.

He tells that worlds start out
together

Bang!
fly apart and out

and Doc. . . he says
I can relate. . .
pirouetting
before the framed photos
of plump kids and couples and one blonde sunburnt girl
expanding orbits
before his eyes.

Matthew Frazel

SWEET FISH HUM

Once the sun goes down and the darkness
comes up over the greenhouse bench,
the roof of the house opens to the sky,
and then the hole house lifts up
and sails off into the night.
The coleus glows like this
also in the darkness,
near a flood of sweet humming fish,
a flood in the air of sweet fish hum.
Below blossoms fall down your neck
into your lap and pool.
Breathing is like dreaming a glass of water,
drinking a glass of water every time you breathe.
And the wings inside your body take you
through the air, wings like birds inside the body,
take you through air,
take you into the breath of flooding sweet
coleus houses open to the night.

LOOKING AT THE GROUND

I first saw him the night of a bad thunderstorm.
He showed up on my front porch,
wet and not saying much.
He ended up staying for months.
I only saw him at night though,
as if he had some kind of day job
or went somewhere else.
I wasn't sure.
But I'd go on anything,
and believe anybody at that point.
At first I didn't know who he was,
then the longer he stayed around,
the more he started getting on my nerves.
He'd be out there at the back of the yard
and I'd have some friends over.
He'd just stare at the ground all night.
They'd ask who he was.
What could I say?

Deborah Goodman

THE END OF THE TRAIL

1

What you expect is Red Cloud or Cochise.
Even Crazy Horse or the Trail of Tears.

Or Chisholm Trail. Goodnight.
A few blue-jeaned men lathered up
over a campfire and blue-tin mugs,
with cattle in the background
clicking horns like castanets clicking
in the dance halls in Texas City.

Or some artist, deep in a mint
in Denver, carving the face
of coins clicking in your pocket
or casting in plaster and bronze
this limp indian and a nag horse
for the Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

2

What you get is this trucker on I-80,
just hit Grand Island headed for Omaha,
who goes blind from fatigue,
and some CBer who guides him,
like the voice of God, to a stop.
Him and a rig of Chrysler Cordobas.

Or this woman and her seven kids
who jump from the fifteenth floor
of a Holiday Inn to follow their
christ-father-husband
who gassed himself in a borrowed van,
the manna in the new land a dream
even the gasses don't kill.

Or this gal who just turned thirty,
who volunteered for Viet Nam
when she was twenty, who came back
shell-shocked and overweight,
who hides screams and the sound
of the shells in her fat,
who never finds the man who ran
from foxhole to foxhole in her dreams.

Or the other million and one people
who catch the time and the place just right,

who come at you like some awful wound
you're supposed to know how to dress,
who know like you know
they are the end of the trail.

3

The End of the Trail is a picture
above the piano at Granny's house
where Pat and Rosa live. Where Pat
plays for Granny and Rosa, where
he watches Sarah and Betty, neighbor kids,
hair skin lips dark white red
blooming like magnolias among pods of stringy seeds.

Rosa watches his fingers click on the thin scales.
This thirty-year-old son she guides
through his blue-steel tightness
until the right chord chimes and he hangs limp,
holding the black and white horn of the keys,
a shadow fixed at the end of the trail.

4

Somehow, it's me, seven years old,
standing at the end of the drive
waiting for the bus to take me to school.
It's late. I'm cold. But I can't go
back inside. I'm supposed to be gone.
There are two huge pines on either side
of the drive and I crouch behind one,
blow on my fingers, and ask the bus to come,
to be the next car down the road.
I know it's never going to come.
It makes me think of going out to shake the dust mop
and the mop head flies off. The floor
was supposed to be clean ten minutes ago
and I can't get the mop to go back on the head.
"Please God" I pray "Help me get this done
and I'll never be bad again."
I wake up and I'm crying and suddenly I realize
my mother is standing there in the wind
saying "Why didn't you come back in?"

The End of the Trail is a motel at the end of Skyline Drive, which begins in Mena, Arkansas and passes over Rich Mountain to Broken Bow, Oklahoma. The main attraction along the route is Wilhelmina Helena Pauline Maria. While Wilhelmina fought for neutrality and fled a German invasion, the home became a hotel and gift shop, an attraction for the mountain folks with its high ceilings, chandeliers, and great stone fireplaces. They called it "The Castle" and took home souvenirs--pieces of quartz and glass swans whose broad backs opened into bowls for flowers, greenery, Christmas candy. Sometimes the old men would walk to Lovers' Leap to look out over the valley to the hills they never crossed. Out-of-state tourists began making the drive, circling through the parkway, eyeing the Castle, then driving on to Broken Bow to the End of the Trail where rooms were cheaper, the kids slept free, and hamburgers at the stand down the street cost half as much. The Queen abdicated, the Inn burned, motel business slowed. No one paid it much mind. Indians slept in the light of the Trail sign, the Dutch took on alliances, the governor made the Inn a state park. Two lovers sealed a tryst and leaped over the cliff.

Which somehow gets us back to the end of the trail, maybe in Guyana, where the bright red of Kool-Aid reminds us of our blood, where the medicine spills into our veins, where Odell Rhodes, Jr. slips off into a jungle, is it Viet Nam, is it Cambodia, is it 1968? Or is it Dover Air Force Base where mortuary teams remove the skin from victims' fingers, slide it over their own gloved hands and ink the prints as if they were their own. They wear these prints into their dreams, into their masks of wintergreen and fear. Or is it in Junction City, Kansas, where Odell Rhodes, Sr. tells us with the help of God, Odell Jr. is alive and he is uplifted and he thanks God and Odell is welcome anytime he should care to return. The trail ends at home and Odell has waited a long time to come home.

THE SAME LEAVES, THE SAME STREAM

My father was born in Kansas.
That's the only thing I've ever heard
about the place, except he'd like to know
who planted the trees on every quarter line.
I tell him when settlers claimed the land,
the government passed out osage oranges.
It was to help civilize the country,
get some trees in that wide openness of space.
He says yes. To hold back the sky.
It was like that when he was a child,
brown as leather out there in the sun and sky,
the air full of summer, and every now and then,
a tree to remind you it was still land,
even when the sky filled you, took your breath away.
He tells me some walnuts grew by the river
where he lived. He and his friends always played there.
They'd mash walnuts and paint their skin.
He always felt older, out there on the rocks,
painting his skin. Then he tells me he thought
time held you the way a rock holds leaves and twigs
in the river. The water flows around a rock,
leaves and sticks gather in the eddy, sometimes
they break loose and go on. Maybe a twig
gets caught by itself, a leaf washes under.
You could look at it for a long time.
It would be different. Even if it were
the same leaves, the same stream. His hands float.
I think of him hulling walnuts, the stains
drifting and changing under his skin. He says
it's the rock that holds steady in the stream.

Jeff Gundy

ASK THE RABBIT

It's good to see
dead wood left
to sink into humus
in its blank way.

It would not be
so bad to rot.
Damp, yes, but
quiet, steady.

Oh yes, I know
about fire, soft and clean,
to cook the meat
to thaw the hands
to hold the wolves away--

I know about fire.
When the rabbit
ripped by me
with two black dogs behind

one close and loud
one two minutes back
tracking, trotting silently

the rabbit's eyes
were fire.

FUR IN THE THROAT

Walking through the pigweeds I step high at first,
fearing a snake like the six-footer I saw along the
road a quarter-mile back, its tail kinked by a tire.
But the ground at my feet is clear, almost bare, the
high weeds shade out everything else.

Five miles out of Herbert, Saskatchewan, I stepped
out of the overheated Chevette and onto a thin brown
snake lying stiffly in the grass. I jumped back at
its twitch.

At a rest stop in Banff, a silent coyote haunted our picnic table; squint-eyed and sick looking, moving only grudgingly, it vanished halfway through supper, and reappeared suddenly eight feet from the table. When we threw rocks it moved off. It would not run.

At Yellowstone we saw one bear, sick or drugged, lying by the road, children shrieking at it from a yellow bus. Now all over the country its image lies in scrapbooks, jaws clenching, silent when the door to the room opens or closes, trying to learn to see in the dark.

DRIVING ROUTE 80

On the road at five-thirty,
so underslept that when I
close my eyes the dreams
press in at once,
an old woman walking,
a thin, blond child,
hands hanging empty.

At Davenport a shred of newspaper
settles before us.
An orange balloon hesitates
through the unsprouted corn.
I dream the road curling
into foothills, clouds,
slopes of rock and pearl.

I open my eyes. It is still Iowa.
The old hill road ends
thirty yards above, chopped free.
In a wooded pasture
black sheep and black cattle
bend to crags of rock, ice, pearl.

George Gurley

A THEORY OF SPECTATOR SPORTS

We see the ball is in the catcher's mitt
before its slap reaches our ears
as if another, secret ball had followed the first.
Again, from where we sit, we see the bat blur,
the shudder of the hit, the arc of the ball.
Somewhat later, we hear the crack.

According to Hume, this is only
what the years have taught us:
there is no necessary connection
between the swing, the hit, the arc, the crack.
Bishop Berkeley said
if a tree falls in the forest
and no one is there, it makes no sound.

In an instant replay we can see
the ball returning, the swing recoiling
into the batter's torso.
The shock waves subside and the report
flows from our ears
back into the cork and wood.
In that reversed violence
is a music of the spheres.

But what brings these molecules
together in a game?
What remains of the line drive
after the ball has been
smothered in a double play?
If a spectator leaves to get a beer
is the homer he misses diminished?
How are the players managed
by the dreams of fans?

I remember being on the field
in the ninth inning of a scoreless tie
when an immense corridor opened
and we eighteen were suddenly in the stands.
It seemed the fans had taken the field
until the cry play ball brought us back.

Sometimes a play develops at home plate
so obscured by the dust of the slider
that the umpires must confer,
exchanging their signals for safe and out.
And if their blindness is perfect,
the play must be performed again.
Every steal is a rehearsal.
Every game is the same.

When the films are reviewed later
and the speed slowed down almost to zero
we see the catcher throwing back his mask,
the baserunner wading home through the heat waves,
his face distorted in a kind of prayer.
His breathing fills the projection room
until we can hear his heart beat
silence the roaring of the crowd.

If a tree falls in the forest
and no one is there
the sound sifts through the pine needles,
gathers in the moss.
In a millennium you can hear,
even in the cities, its boulder-cracking roar.
There is a space between every swing and hit
where the milliseconds flourish
and all the gathered games can rest.

We dream that the manager will exhaust his bull pen,
that the announcer will appeal to the crowd
for anyone who still remembers how to pitch.
Each of us with every windup
hears that summons and comes down from the stands,
shedding his warmup jacket and years,
reads the signal, nods
and delivers the pitch,
the ball getting younger
as it passes through decades
never reaching home,
the stadium flaring like a ziggurat
discovered in the jungle
in the dazzling blaze the floodlights leave
when they are extinguished behind our eyes.

KAW RIVER TRAP LINE

I had a line of traps
About twenty years ago on the Kaw.
I caught beaver, muskrat, mink.
I realize there's a prejudice against trapping,
But I paid for school with the skins
And imagine I learned something too
Baiting and setting the traps, staking out a line,
And from that mixture of satisfaction and regret
When you find a broken animal in a sprung trap,
Pry open the steel jaws, look at the savage teeth
And throw the dead thing in your bag.

After school, I left the river.
I put my hands into the world
Like those spiders in September
that throw a line of silk.
Like everyone else, I got taken,
I caught my share of wind.
But I filled my pockets too
Baiting the intricate gothams with cash.
They call it making a killing,
Buying low and selling high,
Bagging your customer.
When everyone's name is an ad
It would be terrible not to sell.
In the banks and offices
My shoes clicked like little traps.

Long years and much river spent
I went back under the rain bent boughs
And looked along the banks for my old traps.
In the leaf muck and muddy loam
I felt flakes of metal, powder of bone.

Sometimes an animal waits all night
Rabid with visions, gnawing its foot
Until it dreams of a rescuing god
Who will come through the frozen woods,
Until it hears your boots
Breaking the crust of ice,
Looks up in wonder as you come near
With the axe handle in your hand.

THE SHELL GAME

Driving my son to his mother's home,
He tells our family story
With three dice tumbled across the dash.

Here are box cars running between snake eyes,
The mother die, the father die,
The child shuttled in between.
Couldn't we all scatter to a middle ground,
Full house in Ohio, say?

But we bet and ante
Scoring each an eye, a hand, a half of Xmas;
And the prize commutes between our lives
Like the pebble in the shell game.

So the gambler breathes on his hands,
Inspires the dice with
Baby wants some brand new shoes;
Tosses his coded bones like a shaman at the fire,
And prays,
Before the hand reaches in the lottery jar,
Before the con man cups the pebble in his palm,
And the croupier rakes his chips across the felt.

Jeanine Hathaway

RECOLLECTION

Before you sleep come home to yourself.

The woman examines melon seeds, tiny,
profuse as the day's regrets. The better
moments sing: cinnamon, coriander, nutmeg,
salt.

She closes the house and covers
her children, gathers for each
a ribbon, a night name of her own,
a bell ringing under each dark gown.

THE NAME OF GOD IS SIMPLE

as the attraction
of nipple and mouth;
the spring songs
of everything seasonal;
expansive as bread.
Creatures of a silent life
store it outside the interruption
of syllables (as mountain, desert,
deepest water). Beasts are born
with it hidden like an extra cord
in the voice box. The name of God
is a great cave in which
we say our own names and
our own names return to us
round as song; full of snow;
striking.

LOOKING BOTH WAYS

As a nun I gave my twenties to God
and assumed the character of baptism
unmistakably inside out which is to say
on the bell sleeve of that wedding white
habit which I still wear in dreams
I can't help but remember.

Like the youngest child
who shares her bread in the forest
and so receives a token, a means
to be invisible, to stay awake,
to save herself, I was given
a daughter with a black birthmark
like the shadow of a hand poised
for a long and violent blessing.

PREPARING THE WAY

It is advent, says the priest, the time to expect
what cannot possibly be. Think of Mary. . .

A woman in the back of the church shudders
recalling her own pregnancy, her guilty ambivalence,
anticipation heavy from the outset with sore breasts

and months of soda crackers and white lips,
unable to brush her teeth without gagging. And
the thickening belly and need for naps, the
preoccupation, tired, wanting to be left alone,
unaccountable, disembodied; people saying

she certainly had the glow and she seeing the cow
in the mirror, the bloat that used to be her flat
and private body that gave her definition, that
gave her her mind; and all that resenting and anxiety.
wishing she knew who it was and whether or not

it was all there all right swimming, smiling,
kicking an empire up under her ribs. Smiling,
what cannot possibly be: a healthy daughter
who can feed herself, change herself, kiss good-
night and awake in twelve hours precocious and

articulate. Think of Mary who gave birth on her
due date with angels and stars; the woman's baby
born two weeks late, coaxed out with gloves and IVs,
wearing a black cap of a birthmark over the back
of her head and the pediatrician and dermatologist

and plastic surgeon looking at each other saying
Hmmm--watch it for growths--prone to cancer--sometimes
a growth means it's too late. And the woman leaking
and draining suspects this wild thing pink and black
milking her thinking:

this is advent.

Michael Heffernan

FOURTEEN SENTENCES AT MIDWINTER

The snow is general all over Kansas.
I climb to the attic for a look upstreet.
The great pinoak by the corner is half white.
One could be cold a long time in those branches.
The sky turns to iron and the tree blanches.
It is like the inside of a hermit's cave.
He sits in the mouth of it barely alive.
Suddenly he abandons himself to bliss.
That blackbird settling there in that elm is him.
In the ashram of the sun he sits and dreams.
One of his cousins comes and invades his light.
He takes off trailing ribbons of requiems.
Just after that it's the middle of the night.
I wake and stare at the dark for a long time.

THE MIRACLE OF THE NAILS

One day in mid-September when Saint Francis was approaching 43, he received the Stigmata. A hole in his side oozed blood. He needed special socks to cover the wounds the nails had made and kept on making in his feet because these nails were actually nails not just the prints of them, they were hooks of iron under his soles. His hands with the nails in them were torn and bandaged and tucked up his sleeves so he only showed the fingers. This went on until the day he died and Francis sang because he was happy and safe in the knowledge that he would gain Heaven, which Pope Gregory said he did so then Francis was a saint. I rode my bicycle around town today thinking about this. I kept my bare feet free of the sprocket and I sang my song to the humming of the tires. And I came home to continue singing as if to the blue sky where the roof left off and it was all blue above the windows and the trees. As I bent in blessing on my neighbors and my kinsmen I practically bled all over the neighborhood.

DAFFODILS

It wasn't the daffodils so much
as the idea of them that got
me. I was wandering by in my
own lonely manner like a cloud in the sky
feeling ugly and grim when out
of nowhere up blossomed a clutch

of yellow daffodils by the curb.
Bright things they were, good and sweet,
and I knew I liked them better than
music or money or my girl's friendly skin
the way they stood there by the street
nicer and newer and simpler

by far than anything I had seen
all morning. Oh, it was fine
to know them! I said, You daffodils
put me in mind of the clean white windowsills
of a kitchen when I was nine
one April Saturday in 19

52--my grandmother's kitchen,
her fingers dangling with dough,
the odor of pie in the oven,
the windows white as the windows of Heaven,
as if the air were bright with snow,
and someone outside them, watching.

4TH OF JULY

All afternoon we did nothing but read,
she in her book about Josiah Wedgwood,
I in a history of England during the Georges.
Outside it was hot so we stayed inside.

Then we got trapped and bored and it got late
and just about then a firetruck came down the street
and the dog was howling so we went chasing fires.
Four houses down a roof was burning and they put it out.

When we got home we decided to go for a ride
in the country in our old Olds and the air was good.
No one was out there but us and a couple cows.
On our way back we stopped at Mike's and sat in his yard.

Mike's wife got us tea and Mike had some sparklers to light
along with some bottle-rockets which we watched him shoot
out of a milkjug and I showed him Scorpio behind some trees.
Then the mosquitoes started and we got bit.

When we got home we found out we were tired.
There wasn't much point in staying up so we got in bed
and pulled the one sheet over us and gave each other a kiss.
Whatever else was wrong, it hadn't mattered.

TEN PAST ELEVEN

This is the time of day the mailman comes.
This is the mailman who dreams every night
that his mother is home from vacation in the grave,
waiting to greet him in the kitchen in the sun.
He goes on down the sidewalk in his brisk black shoes.
All the homesick letters ever written are dangling
from the halltree in his brain. We are nowhere
near the ocean. There is sunlight everywhere.
Life has a curiosity undreamt of in other ages.
We dream in circles, answer our own loveletters,
stir soups all day in kitchens for the dead.
They primp in our mirrors, borrow our talcum powder,
and depart by way of the backyard picket fence.
This was the light we found ourselves in once
when everyone kept coming through the musty vestibule
on their way in to see us where we sat in the sun.

Steven Hind

REQUIEM FOR GENE AUTRY

Yours was the perfect hat, Gene, white even in Republic's "B" light. I loved that glory over your ears, your smooth face fooling every squint, and the force of your guns, heavy as swords with more noise. And Champion champing his pistols among the cathedrals of rock and cactus, trotting into the sunset.

I confess: I miss your delicate scarves, bright as a rooster's throat as you yodelled your way into the heart of the matinee. I'm not kidding, Gene: I love your black and white life, leading a pack horse and Pat Buttram, whose grubby voice snoozed in the scrub of his face, even in danger when Champion came up lame.

In my dreams you swing back into the gleaming ark of your saddle and ride down the canyon of 1949, the ranchhouse inviting goodbyes from the doorway aglow with regret. You lope into the sagebrush, Pat bobbing behind, a perfect shadow in my west.

SIX OF ONE

A mobile home is a center piece
in a yard full of combines.

I count 13 wildflowers I cannot name
in the ditch.

"The Santa Fe Trail passed here," says
a plaque near a feedlot.

A red face and fertilizer cap
flash past in the usual near collision.

A green tractor cuts up dirt in a big
flat tract of weedless rows.

I stare down the blue road, pretending
I am going home.

FROM STORIES I FORGOT TO TELL YOU

I. Beet Team

There was a big darkie out there by Lamar had the biggest pair of Belgians I ever saw. His name was Hagan. They called him Bones because he had the biggest skull and hands you ever saw on a man, big cuss. His wife was about a womanly match for him and they lived in a little brick house by the tracks. He worked a quarter by Barkley and hired out in season. He was the proudest man I ever met when he sat up on the seat behind those horses, and they did step fine. "Git them weaklin's out a'my way! I's comin' through with my beet team," he would shout down if a wagon got stuck in the mud in his road. But he loved to unhook and saw those big horses round in front of another outfit, hook on and pull them loose. "Now you sees what a real team can do, doesn't you. You jes' stay out a'my way when I's comin' with my beet team, das what you do. Git up there Zeek, Hussy. Don't you be lazy now."

II. That Woman

Bones Hagan used to come in the Picketwire Feed Store with his head hangin'. Ever'body in there knew what the cause was, and what he would say sooner or later. That woman of his would light into him about something or other, and, listen, his dander went down. I heard her get on him once about plowing her garden crooked: "Are you blind or dumb, Mr. Hagan? I don't recall I ever seed rows crooked as those. Course, maybe you knows the easy way, but is that the good way, is what I wants to know." I can't get her lingo just right, but that's kind'a the tune. After something like that, old Bones would come into the Store, his dander down, and say, "Umm, Umm. That woman jus' worries me an' worries me."

THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE

Pull down old roses.
Pry loose the trellis.
Knock down the starched
petticoat of a porch
this house wears to darken
and cool its windows. Strip
the blistered siding; break in
to beams, studs. Inside,
the square-nailed homesteads
wear these additions like
dry icing. Break in where
accumulations disguise the house
in the guts of this place.
The straight oak, dry as a sermon,
scored by the ax in knowing hands,
is the place to begin.

THE GOOD RED ROAD (For Harold)

This is the journey you make
alone. The country is fine
but dangerous: stones, thorns,
and stings. The sun is warm
though, and the moon hangs its
faint crescent in the sky.
The red memory of this much
walking, the red hope for
what is to come -- on these
things you continue to walk,
to move into the sun, to try
to move in light.

Black Elk's prayer hoop was crossed by the two roads, "the good red road of spiritual understanding" and "the black road of worldly difficulty."

BALING AFTER THE FLOOD

We catch the cottonmouth
sliding under August
for water and shade.
We fling the hatchet
at his tense aim,
and kill him.

The stubble whispers with his writhing.

the dead vigor. We twist
open the white jaws, clutching
revulsion by the throat.
These thin teeth, we say.
All day our hands tremble
in the hot grip of work.

THREE DAYS ON THE PRAIRIE

I. Coronado

In the King's armor he troops
over the green fur of the prairie
to the trough of the Arkansas.
A red-tailed hawk cries
over the eye of a dustdevil
and buzzards wheel above skulls
in the yellow evening.
Still he clings to the gold
thighs of his dreams.
Quail's call sweetens the wind
as the horses drink.
The noisy array strikes
back for a knoll to the south.
Teeth of bluestem grease
taut bellies as the sun fades
to a dark hide full of stars.

II. Wheel

High wheels break the morning
grass on the prairie.
Necks polish yokes
and the whip stings the air.
The hawk cries
into the day and the rabbit
hunches in flowers.
No thing knows what will happen next.

III. Drilling

Grain furls close to the hub
of the rig, grinding its steep trail
through the rock. Pickups gleam
in the sun and the roustabout
hammers on steel.
Dustdevils rattle the grain
and a buzzard's eye
holds a small steeple,
clear and bright as a shrine.

Jonathan Holden

LOSERS

The best part of NFL playoff games
is those shots of the losing bench.
Overheard in a bar

Without their helmets
their faces betray everything:
defeat, an open political
scandal. Some are
crying. I want to thank
them: They admit. I'd like to shake
their homely, trustworthy hands.
But they just sit there,
each of them going
over his own private score
again, checking the bland words
of his rejection,

like a man sorting slowly
through all of the flattering
hackneyed constructions
his lover had once placed
on his eyes, on his mere
hands--I'll do anything
for you--each word a smooth
flat stone, a tabula
rasa he still strokes absently
under his thumb, remembering
when the act of simply unbuckling
his belt
was cruel,
a command that could crush
her parts of speech to a single
vowel, the same
stark question begging
his answer--a short
hard retort he'd thought only he
could give her again
and again--what he'd always
suspected of his true
worth, the secret he'd scarcely dared
whisper even to her--

Not like these
men, slumped on the losing
bench, staring ahead, trying
to comprehend the rudiments
of some old standard system of
weights and measures

they'd once learned they had
to go by--
these men who, out of
power now, relieved
of their secrets, are as honestly
miserable as they look.

HOW TO THROW APPLES

Choose a rotting orchard
where crabapples clot
the grass. The whole
stale afternoon should
smell like beer. Be
careful where you place
your feet: yellow-jackets'
feelers move in those
rust-colored dumps
of apple-meat. Half
an apple could turn out
to be a live ember
in your hand. Pick
the hard, unblemished ones
whose stems stick up
between their cheeks; they're
worth it. If you get
a green stick with spring
in it and whittle it
to a taper, blunt enough
to make each apple's skin
pucker with a crackle, foam
as you force it in, you can
really ride them. One
whip of that stick and
wow: you can touch
MacKenzies' chimmney without
trying--ricochet--
or take the shortcut
home over the trees.

HITTING AGAINST MIKE CUTLER

One down. I step into the narrow,
dust-floured shooting gallery, glance
out where the tall right-hander's squint
aims in to size things up. If it were up
to him, he'd take all afternoon he looks so
lazy--a gunslinger who just sauntered
into town, his jaw working over

a forgotten scrap of gum. He spits,
feels up the ball like a small, hard hornet;
and I hear the catcher settle in creaking
leather harness. He clucks contentedly,
does something dirty in his groin. Far
out there on the bright, bare, heat-rippling
hill the big guy nods. The hornet in his hand
begins to buzz. He bows. Slowly he
revolves away, then whirls, draws. I fire back.
The hornet hisses, vanishes with a BANG. STEE-RIKE!
The catcher grins. Good chuck, good chuck, he clucks.

ON A MILD OCTOBER EVENING

Rope smarts the asphalt,
Adele in the middle,
the Lamberts' girls turning
the warm slack pages
of this evening
which like the full moon
has called the whole neighborhood
out. Bicycles swoop.
Dr. Bark, who can't throw
anymore like a man, lofts
a flare pass for a short
gain. Lightfooted I lope
along, keeping my daughter's
bike from tipping too far as I dodge,
stutter-step cracks
like a man skipping rope,
until my daughter wades
forward, deeper, out
of my reach,
and the sidewalk is in shade,
stranded on the bottom
of the evening.
The sun's parting shots
miss, high wild,
nicking the treetops,
the sky still an ebullience
of birds, tilting
with the luck of the light,
testing their balance, taking
the late brilliant
corners,
and the street is ambushed
by something greater
than shadow, it is time
to call the children in,
and the moon has unsnagged
itself from the elm,

rides free so early,
when I want to keep skipping rope
and learn to ride a bicycle
all over again,
to be called home by somebody else
as I used to be
just as the dusk started
to turn cold.

WASHING MY SON

Zack's eyes can't
focus, but his skin
can. He squirms
as I hone him down,
tickle his feet, erase
these foamy four-lane
highways down his back
and wash around
his thimble-size wet
cock. He wants to be
touched all over,
rubbed behind his ears
like this, his neck
stroked, even
his navel's little map
explored. Scrubbing
him is polishing
this whittled spear
of wood until
that new wood shines
and he's firm,
sanded down all
over with my hands,
healed up
like a model airplane
you just made over
into silver. I kiss
him again. All
the decals go on perfectly.

Jane Hoskinson

From THE HOURS OF THE HERBS

Candlemas: rocks

I unclench my back,
walk to the house to trade
the corn knife for a shovel.
I prefer
a Sharpshooter; it takes a little longer
but the herbs
like deep, loose soil.
The shovel swings with my stride
over sandstone sidewalks
I plunge it into the sod
to meet the buried sandstone
with a clang; the shovel shapes
the rocks; its tongue
licks them loose from the clay.

I ring the spaded ground
in stone, building another sidewalk,
linking last year's garden
with the new one; each year
reaches a little deeper
into my woods.

Bealtaine: survivals

Of course, a lot depends
on what the herbs decide to do--
who wants to sprout,
who would like to grow
on sandstone hills
in poor, dry soil
and whether anybody minds
if the gardener is a fool.

I've learned now to expect
the unexpected--
from the fine black sand
of neglected spearmint seeds
a jungle of purple stems
before Midsummer;
chamomile, flourishing in overwatered flats
stacked in the shade of a walnut tree,
shrivels in the garden;
tansy reincarnates faithfully each spring

and suicides in the August drought.

A single seedling of rue,
the only one to sprout,
thrown out in despair, takes hold
of life and rises
three feet tall when no one's looking.
It keeps its green well into December,
"in the remembrance of a weeping queen."

Lammas: Extravagance

drought

The weather has been too dry
since Mount Saint Helens' blew.
I mulched the herbs this year--
they wilted and sulked
at first, like children forced
to swallow cherry-flavored medicine.
Even so, I lost a few,
but the people who like it dry,
hyssop, lavender, rue, and purple sage,
bloomed and bushed and towered,
perfuming the heat-warped air
until the parched hills smelled
like a roadside in southern France
by Diana's Day.

garlic

Last August it took a moss rose
riot to keep the garlic
from strangling the winter savory.
This spring the garlic was up
before the equinox.
Maybe I'd better cull
the savory while
I still can.

Wild marjoram overflows
the woods and spills
through the sieve of the sidewalk
into the dill.
I harvest it
along with the mint in the mustard patch
and the catnip
sprouting between the rocks.
The challenge lies in figuring out
which square stem is which.

wild bees

For want of a better place,
two years ago I stacked
the deep drawers of a beehive
beside the driveway.
Now I park the car
on the other side of the yard
and the bees have the run of the garden,
all day they hover
above the garlic and the chives.
Even if I manage to move the hive
to the meadow over the hill,
the marjoram and spearmint,
catnip and lemon balm will never again
be quite distinct
and the wild dark honey will hold
a tangle of tastes
better suited to French
cream cheese.

Diane Hueter

1. THE DREAMERS

In their right hands
earth and seed
in their left
shadow and rain
At night the sky around their shoulders
like a blanket

They slept on the ground
inhaled and exhaled
almost like singing
Wind rhythms
in the trees
carved their dreams
which in turn rose like sap
through the branches
Sugary and taut
open leaves paced restlessly
across the sky

But no one sleeps on the ground now
No one sings in the river bottoms
Leaves rattle in the wind
percussive
like instruments of Indian dancers
turtle shells filled with pebbles
strings of elk teeth sewn to their gowns.

Pin oaks dance and wait
wait and dance
Where are the ones who dreamt the world?
who opened their eyes each morning and saw?

17. JUST BEFORE SLEEP

we listen
for small sounds
almost silence

yours are secret and slow
and shadowless like fire

I think mine will never come
my ears are so busy with other things

but there
I will not forget

the sound of this man's heart
slipping into place again

DROUGHT

An impulse took her by the lake
instead of down the highway
directly home

Among the trees
the sky fell like cotton

The hills rolled with memories

And where one winter they had skipped stones
clanging and echoing across solid ice
now no water

"It's a sweet dream," sang the radio
the water so low she could see
the foundations of farm houses
the cement lids to the cisterns
piles of black tires
She could point to where she knew
the lilacs should stand
and the elm tree with the swing
She knows there was never a promise made here
that was not broken.

SPRING

1. March

The toad hunkers down again
backs into his burrow
beneath the sharp dry spikes
of last summer's spearmint.
His clammy grey hide the color of cold earth
dark spots like eyes all down his back.
She calls the others to come look
One greets him like a tiny, story-book friend.
But the other asks: Where? Where? I don't see anything?

2. April

The clothesline sags with duty
legs of jeans flap in the wind.
Shirts open unbuttoned

and billow out in welcome.
Her mouth fills with the taste of her own children's hair.
Just washed or sweaty and dirty
it is the same joy.
When the clothes dry
she unclips them
and drops them into the basket
shirts socks jeans
they tumble together like lovers at night.
One child stirs in fervent dreams
awakens suddenly to say
please oh please
let me
a little longer
She asks: What? What?
and must turn back the covers
to straighten the small body in bed.

3. May

What is the language they speak now on the rim?

my eyes do not see
my nose does not smell
my ears do not hear
through the soles of my feet
the hollow of my bones
the pit of my womb
I feel the quake, the torrent

4. June

She checks the sky and the clothesline
charms herself to sleep
In her dreams
they eat the yellow bulbs
the yellow flowers
nickels and pennies and dimes
as if they swallowed them whole
to be richer and richer

Ken Irby

THE GRASSLANDS OF NORTH AMERICA

for Bob Grenier

Only a succession of far-reaching green prairies
the grass that is in
my backyard

As we moved down the hill in the grass
looking past the highway toward Hammond
our pants and legs caught thick in it
the same winds blowing

Where Pike entered Kansas
and drunk after drunk in highschool
we ended, the piss in the clover
the smell of clover so strong for miles
we stopped the car and got out
drunk in the roadway

That same country as entered
the first time it was ever seen

is entered again and again
each time I come to it
as I came here at three
out of Texas

was the New World
*

There must be in the juice
and flesh a same plain
as these, the same moving
wave as this grass

the body comes back to
only having heard as they
only heard, by hearsay
and believed it

HOMAGE TO COLEMAN HAWKINS

for John Moritz

--still hearing the Hawk in his region
following his season

across the Northeast shorelines, heart
strike

of the horn, dive
bomber of the home

front porches

that there have to be porches
in the heat of

--he raised his horn
across the Missouri fault

as sure as the rise and now the fall of sap

the rubber plant
and geranium of affection

from Washburn from St. Joe
following the tornado

jazz hounds direction

yoke of going somewhere else
to find out home

--so fall the leaves
in Massachusetts

settling home, a longing
for all Northeast corners everywhere

the pressure upon the body
of the Pacific mental

of the Atlantic visual
of the Canadian

anterior elemental

--so falls the warm November
Medford rain

as fine as winter
California

pooling the brain

having no known direction, even
...only the open road

the eyes closed, leaning forward into
the only riches

the great souls
solo

THE WALTZ IN APPALACHIA

the waltz in Appalachia

the fox trot
Hawkins said Fletcher's band
never recorded as well as Ellington's
but on the band stand
stomped em under

the inheritors of that
were Basie and Lunceford

Kansa, Dhegiha
Reno Clubbed East

they rode the Clouds of Joy
the Blue Devils, the Hounds

those were the clans
"what's your tribe?" the kid asked Shao
in a, say Gallup, Southwest bar

the bone flute

"Oh Honey I am going down the river in the morning"
equals exactly

"Oh Sweetie I'm going off on a dustdevil this evening
for the big time"

the crossroads

whirl left, to West, to California, leads directly to China
(Buck Clayton)

turn East, to New York, takes straight to Europe
(Hawk)

and now the rise seems possible
more than any lateral, straight up
and never seen again

and in that desert

"only grass"

in the Land of the Hermetic Learning
the Spirit Journey Dances
on the Wheel of the Plains

THE PLACE OF THE LORD OF THE SOIL

The place of the Lord of Soil is down close to the ground--but in the Himalayas he looms from a ridge pole on the road out of town, small silver lead skull bursting into a golden trident of flames, out of a black fur barrel chest, immense.

There is over all of it, for all the landscape not visible, a melody of lost pastoral, of another land altogether of this same place to which the worship has come. Lord of Division.

Here it is a hillside crossing, of the way up from under catalpa trees and the back dirt streets, dusty, to the downtown, West, and the persistent line of the small town mysteries of the prairies, dividing into brick and concrete, paved and dirt, tall grass and short, crow and cardinal, even the Lodge once into North and South.

But now only the sunset dregs and tree tops are visible West, and around us the lights of the Othick Park softball field are on, and the Southeast Kansas semipro Lords of the Soil are warming up, the pitchers we'd come to see most of all. And we stared into the darkness beyond the outfield, across Buck Run and the Frisco tracks, and into the call home from playing late, a vista lower down and more Southerly, of the first pale military perchers on the bluff over the Marmaton, watching the Leavenworth-Gibson road come cattycorner out of the Indians, who were Lords of the Land but not of the Soil, and make the grand division North and South for this piddly corner of the Osages' screwed out of free lands. If the ball flew on out of the arc of the pitcher's intended slash but still with the pitcher's magic from behind his back and in the great wheel of the saluting arm, it would go on wild light and forever, Southwest till it struck the last setting sun of winter solstice on the last barren Cortezed stretch of the Bay of Baja California, and explode like a puffball the way straight into the land of the under world, which is what the Lord of Soil guards, opens, and grins at, for we fear to enter there.

Michael L. Johnson

AMTRAK STATION

The old man drowsing at his desk
croaks at me, "Twenty minutes late."
I turn back into the hard light
and pace among the empty chairs.

Only two trains come and go: one
just before sunrise and one just
before sunset. Out of the dark,
back into the dark. Nothing else
happens here, and no one else waits.

Twenty minutes pass. The old man
is gone. I walk out by the tracks.
Rusted steel rails run through a cold
penumbra--both ways, from nowhere
to nowhere--where I stand and wait.

LATE SEPTEMBER

Sunlight sifts
through the trees
before the change comes.

The shadows of leaves
on the grass
are not like

the skin of
a giraffe
running on a plain

and not like dark flames
flickering
on a sea.

They are ghosts
of the leaves
waiting their release.

DRY SEASON: A SORT OF LOVE LETTER

Slowly I walk a fence row
tangled with dead brush. The trees,
engulfed by webworm tents, grow
a dull yellow; the grass, dried,
brittle, is laced with gray webs.

All summer I have waited
for you to come and ripen
love, but now the hot air is
electric with cicadas'
buzzing haze of sound and fall
forced upon reluctant green
too soon.

 This long afternoon
yawns into evening and still
waits, listlessly, with small hope,
for the sparse, scattered high clouds
to drop and thicken with rain.

FOR AUNT BILL, WHO SENDS ME NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

At each crisis in my life, flocks
of them come to my box to nest,
scissored clippings my mind's eye marks
your hands, like nervous mother birds,
slipping into the envelopes:
sound advice on money, reports
on the ways of God in His world,
editorials, and a hash
of pieces on death and divorce.

I skim the love and skip the rest.
The scraps flutter down in the trash
in quick spirals, like dying birds--
all that wisdom you might have shared
with all the sons you never had.

JOHNNY WEISSMULLER READY TO DIE

Tarzan, who once could swim
like a god in crocodile rivers, swing
on vines like an ape from tree to tree, and sprint
for miles with Jane in his arms, now sits
on a terrace in Acapulco, stares
at the ocean, breathes
through a tube in his throat, eats
through a tube in his stomach, and waits
to die.

In the hospital, a year ago, he yelled
his jungle yell in the night. The nurses rushed
from their monitors. The other prisoners of tubes woke
to fear.

But the animals did not hear.

BIBLE BOOKSTORE

There is a cleanliness
and order in this place
where plastic idols, slick
Hallmark cards, and slim books

promise the agony
and mess of Golgotha
are somehow swept away,
lust and greed vacuumed up,

so that we can live just
the sweetness of the thing,
hearts ruled by that doe-eyed
spiritual janitor

framed in gilt on the wall--
all the rest understood.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A fat man in a ten-gallon hat drives
past flat-out in a brand-new Cadillac,
a German shepherd up front and a stack
of movie mags and two Colt forty-fives
under the blinded window in the back.

Stanley Lombardo

IDAHO FARMER WATCHES AN ECLIPSE

It almost never happens
This perfect alignment
Of sun, moon and my garden patch

The black disk sliding
Over the incandescent

Chill shadows falling, the cows
In my neighbor's pasture lowing for home

As the sun contracts
To a burning sliver
Disintegrates
Into a string of diamonds

And oh Lord what a spectral flower
When it all lines up,
What a morning-glory
In the sky's dark field.

CRAB NEBULA

Chinese astronomers observed the explosion
Nine hundred years ago, a guest star
Near T'ien Kuan, the Celestial Gate

And the Pueblo Indians
Memorialized it in a petroglyph.

Tonight we look near the Bull's left horn
For a patch of crawling light
That is the shell of that stellar cataclysm
And find it, oh, six thousand years or so
After the photons left to find our eyes.

The Chinese saw it for twenty-three days
In broad daylight, a brilliant guest.
We collect its faded remnants in a mirror
And pay our brief respects.

BENEDICTINE ABBEY

The sun rises through a golden tree
over the Missouri River.

Holy Saturday.

My thoughts are on you.

The wind beats the branches white on the riverbank
all afternoon. My mind is swept clear,

and when the simple night
opens the stars like bright silver buds

I know you are near.

Denise Low

SMALL TOWN LANDSCAPE

(based on stories by Mary Swander & others)

the county highway grids
and repeating stretches of grass and cattle
hold people apart

gravel roads called "town"
branch off the black top
the same gas station, beer hall, post office
appear every 20 miles
 their names vanish as soon as spoken--
 Wilsey, Olpe, Allen

insurance calendars
hung in sheds
mark a cycle
of high school football, basketball, and harvest
one farm kid says,
 "we watch a lot of television"

each town of old families
immortalizes the few sires and dams
 swarthy German Catholics with green eyes
populate one quadrant
 round-faced blondes another

 in one place children have six toes
 or half the town is twins,
matching pairs of potatoes in overalls
 or a seed of Parkinson's disease
flourishes like wheat
the middle-aged tremble in wheelchairs

in this isolation
strains of genius are tolerated
equally with the retarded
people live undisturbed in crazy tumbling houses

and a body can indulge himself
 one of those barns contains 350 antique violins
 another a tractor seat collection
 barbed wire collections, arrowheads, cattle skulls
 a vehicle pieced together from a Harley and a Ford

all secret in those wide open spaces

VIEWS OF THE KANSAS TURNPIKE

1. Mother's Day Drive

We head South,
limestone country.

Highway slices stone,
exposing skeletons, hills

filled with fossils,
crinoids, corals, trilobites--

like these thick bones of mine
leached grain by grain

from her bloodstream.
Seedling cottonwoods

push through cracks.
Short grasses spread.

Layers of ocean
still float.

2. Towards Topeka

roads tunnel into hill hearts
V-shaped birth canals to new worlds
or death doors
hewn gates of hell

naked stones

shale for old shallows, marshes
limestone for sea bottom
thick with creature remains

further below

stumps of the Nemaha foothills
vanished in rain, wind, grit

center of the continent

new world

pressing deeper--
these ruins

3. flint hills

the trees refuse to follow from Topeka
the car radio loses contact
and mumbles fuzz to itself

the highway bisects a moonscape
and you are completely alone

if you see a dieseel truck
it wanders like a beast
lost from another age
like you

two sounds rise from the gullies
and angled rises out there
 in the summer wind and waves
 of cicada chants
 in the winter
 only wind

4. West

here the sky gives clarity to each tree

a gray hand on horizon
perpendicular on horizontal

the long slope of miles approaching
moving always into blue, blue haze

each tree
a slow traveller on this road

PLACE

is it the eagles returning to Lecompton, old Eagle Town
to that stretch of lookout cottonwoods on the Kaw River

or those rivers we measure our towns by
where we wait for flood and drought tides

or finding my grandfather during a storm
clouds and lightning and his face by the window

is it the house I grew up in
the way the sun slanted through the front window
warm bars of winter dust and light

is it a locus inside a muddy muscle
the heart squeezing rivulets of blood
again again again

Sally A. McNall

TREES FALLING

sounding like nothing else
final and complicated
even in the wind
the rain
that long crashing
clear as a picture

at four when I was fitted for glasses
I was amazed most
by leaves, all those
separate leaves

one summer in Wisconsin
I slept in the attic
of the lakeside cottage
the tree came right through
the slanting roof
I woke with rain
and leaves
all over my face and arms

in New Mexico
lightning split the pine
top to bottom beside our tent
it fell apart perfectly
naked to our touch
at first light

I don't sleep well
where there aren't trees
in the desert my eyes are dry
before my mouth is
in dreams I see not water
but leaves
leaves anywhere, growing
out of my books, in my cup
fastening the windows
making forests

this last Kansas wind lifted the neighbor's tree
right out
of the rain-soaked ground
and sent it against our walls

Sunday morning we spent two hours
with a chain saw
clearing the driveway

beneath the wet black trunk leaning
down over us
scattering slow leaves

IN THE SPRING OF EIGHTY-TWO

rainfall unlike any
we'd seen before,
and this is not
a land of mild
or steady weathers.
We are in tornado country.
July of eighty
cooked tomatoes
on the vine.
Last winter
tall trees split their length,
ice at their hearts.
Still--this rain--
nothing escapes it.
Flowers are beaten into the rank grass,
potatoes rot under black ground,
trees leaf out
layer on tossing layer
between all the houses,
wind rips thick branches
into the streets
while hail big as pullet eggs
rattles our roofs.

We live with mud,
the smells of damp,
with morning fog
and an uncommon crop
of angle worms.

The sun,
when we see it,
is sour as old lemonade.

Marilee Mallonee

CONVERSATIONALIST

Great-grandma

Dad always said you could talk the paint off a barn
Whenever we were in the car
ready to leave
you'd put your foot behind the tire
grab the front door
and hold us captive
They said you died of the stroke
But I know it was the struggle
to talk

KANSAS: LAND OF AHS

I-70

The great white upright elevators
of WaKeeney and Russell
protrude against the sky.
Whispering wheat fields
undulate slowly in the sun while
the oil pumps work rhythmically
over the thighs of the pasture.
As the empty highway slides along at 70
the windblown tree transforms
into tangles of arms and legs,
and the semi drivers grin over their coffee
at the couple in the blue Mustang,
her head buried in his lap.

CATCH

You are falling
ninety miles an hour
into the rocks, the concrete spikes
the innocent little lady
Your eyes speed past
spelling Help me
Your hair whips wildly
trying snakeholds on the building
I have taught you about gravity
explained the dangers
My arm could snap off, you understand
Try to read this flying manual
quickly

Marilyn M. Mann

WESTERN KANSAS BLIZZARD

The travelers never believe a forecast.
When the snow begins to fly they feign
surprise, then dismay at the blinding crystals
filling up the ditches, inching their way
across I-70 until even the chunks of snow
dropped from the cattle trucks are covered.
They praise their snow treads right
up to the jolt of hubcaps buried in a drift.

After it clears it's my turn. I hurdle
feed bags, circle around the John Deere,
pass by the pickup. On horseback I trace
my way to the highway. There's the maroon
cadillac blaring music to freeze by. Together
we survey disabled power poles, warm our hands
on Blackie. We unfold blankets, water and bread.

GIBRAN'S FORWARD ARROW

Technology takes my second son
to St. Louis where satellites
will send him photos to make maps.
Security reasons will forbid
him to explain and he won't know I'm helpless
as an immigrant whose children
are flying in a new language.
My sons move their minds like silent
film stars and I am straining
to read their lips.

INTO THE CAMERA

Brush the dust from the photo
on our parents' walnut bureau pulling
us back to two and six years old.
I'm the older, skinny one with knobby
knees and elbows in a splotchy-
figured skimpy dress. You're
the lapable one in peach
with lace insets. I stare straight
into the square camera while you
turn your plump blue eyes just beyond
to the curve that smiles back for you.

Jim Miley

CLOSING THE BAR

You dance like a demon.
You are brilliant
And striking. Women
Adore you. Your friends
Deserve you. Drinks appear at your table.
You think it will go on forever.

When the lights come on
You're back in yourself.
Your friends are almost ordinary. The women
Have false teeth, like yours.
Your life's not what you want for your kids.
You think your wife's having an affair;
Yours is going sour. . .

You don't remember driving home.
In the morning your insides quiver.

On your way to work
The radio plays country
And you sing.

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If you want to know how to say it
Just watch the Commercial.
They say it Right.
They don't have some Dude
Waltz in here and say
Say, gimme one a them
Chicken Sammitches.
No Sir.
They say it Right.
They say McChicken
McChicken.
They're not a bit embarrassed.
They call it by its
Right Name.
And what about you,
Asshole?
Don't you have any respect
For the Language?

THE TIME YOU LEFT

The moon was void of course
And Saturn had just gone retrograde.
It was a time when I wanted to cry
Every day. And did.
It was the time when you left.

And I stayed. Behind,
Like a sloughed off snake skin.
Tied down here in the middle of the world
Like Gulliver with a million threads.

Your aura was yellow and red
With a hint of blue when you walked away
With sun in your hair in the spring.

The vernal equinox was near.
At night the flames from burning pastures
Crept like slow death down the hills.

John Moritz

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The interiors,
 driving South out of Lawrence
mosiac would be the Osage Plains
and the dog leg we made into the West,
 the bluestem downs
 [of Kansas]
would be the Flint Hills

accumulations
rolling out of Cottonwood Falls
passed the Victorian splendor of John Haskell's courthouse

the back roads
back
across Hollenback's junk windmills

unrelentless wind dervish
Dixie-cups

"Morning in the Flint Hills"
layered scenes only
from the car window
 landscapes

*

"The day when you could set the points on a pick-up in an
afternoon with a sixpack of beer under the shade of a
cottonwood is gone forever."

over the hills
and brown of day
late summer grass and Smoky Hill River
view from Coronado Heights
Coronado never saw

and initialed heart
carved into stone
as slow as the flow of that river
beyond the recollection of

"where that leads"

following the endless trails
of the heart's sweep of rütted vistas
head on into the Kansas vector
magnitude and direction
as vertical as the whirlwind
up from the SW

weather and geography

lean in

spiral above yucca
blossom above thistle

*

Driving through those hills
Catalpa blossoms along the road
white "showy" corolla clusters
and thread of purple through the petal
the heart shaped leaf I once gave in love
the morning's sunrise viewed from the night before
bareassed and propped up
legs spread over the brass bed
sweat down the crack of
fucked and rolled in the wash
as though we would fuck no more
the leaf I picked after
on the way back
walking to the house with a sack of milk and eggs

the gift somewhere pressed in the pages
of a Kansas sunset, the sun filtered
over red hills

would be the red dust of the Cimarron

not harsh as it was that winter on the Texas panhandle
above the sink holes but the soft tones of the Kansas interior

*

I am engaged with
the landscape's
back pastures
engaged with
what love is
and the focus
and misery of
the unrelieved event

the burden of
from the car window

the open road
and the road of excess...

"where that leads"

not to the embrace
but a dark sympathy with
from where I stand apart
the great home of the soul is the open road

*

Twins born in Fredonia
near the Verdigris
conjoined at the heart
of one heart
clutching for the measure

a flower a vessel

the cup held out in the mind's eye
the star both Jung and Whorf
were shown by the Hopi

born at the junction of two roads
and both dead
blur of the heart

buried as twins dress
in twin coffins
or with knees up?

*

off toward some rise
some course
or crossing of attention
from the window
wild carrot behind the barn
Catalpa hedge the land
purple lines examined
flowers with an orange-yellow streak
on the lower lobe
local grass on the back porch
blown out across the interior
thumb and forefinger
rubbing the eyes
at the bridge of the nose
touch the skull
at the temples
from where the hills
roll out

BEGINNING WITH A LINE BY ROBERT DUNCAN

"Let grief have its voice"
love fills the cup
the loss the heart would endure again
I stood on the front porch listening
to the various wind chimes down the street
all the way to the river
New Year from under the storm
and halted celebration seeking
something other not just someplace

we painted flowers on
under the foliage of a spring night

not knowing of the thorn

and where could you go after the wake
of sea

but to the wake of dream
and from the stern of the Orzaba
looking back toward Azteca
dark and hypnotic

her legs up into the black obsidian blade

how quietly did you fold your coat
before you leapt?
(this is no requiem
nor meant to raise the undiscovered dead)

VINLAND CEMETERY, DOUGLAS COUNTY

These hills do nourish fierce attentions
from tit to cradle, we face the swath made
some imagined terror,
wood cut down the slope, left in heaps
to be burned, as if this had been the site
of an indian massacre,
body of wood cleared off for pasture.

The earliest settlers, Malin guessed, were Mennonite
gone under to the grave
or the oldest land grant
library in the state,
now a line of crude houses
a church boarded up,
just a slow place.

And a December wind whips
out of the North across these unpretentious stones.

German names and family plots
to the wire, a line flat out,
again, these hills...

This is the only of all possible worlds
where it leads to a slow place along the Santa Fe Trail,
marked only by a few
eroded passages.

Death angels do not smile
from these carved stones,
these idle days, these hills.

W. R. Moses

CONFRONTING OLD THINGS

The big limbs of the heavy, resistant white oaks
Twisted like grass; the front door wouldn't close.
Black out. A tornado left only fragments
Of the sturdy enough farm house.

It's possible to picture
Tortured, useless, glutinous threshing
Of an out-size, prehuman creature before some tar pit
Closed finally over the thing.

Today I stare at a monstrous, pit-reclaimed thigh bone
That has lasted x thousand years.
I remember an ironstone dish I own, cracked, clumsy, thick,
Which the tornado spared.

I feel like the string beans or whatever that were lying in the dish
Before it was blown through a wall.
I feel like the straining meat-stuff bound to a bone
Before that was reduced to its essential.

PLEASANT INTERVAL, KANSAS JULY

To take the road again
For an innocuous fifty-mile errand.
To notice that the morning haze-light on the plain
Seems a hundred years out of place

And four thousand miles:
Impressionistic canvas in France. To like it.
To notice that the long reach of pasture green reveals
No black left from the compulsive burning

Ranchers inflict in early spring.
To like it. To sit-feel how comfortably the car runs
After its last repair job. Because you bring
Neither urgency nor anxiety on this errand

To take vacant-minded time
To visit again a Walgren's lunch counter
For coffee and a tasty junk roll; to watch pedestrians trim
Their way along the walk outside. To like it.

BIG DAM

Muddy meek river, oh, it was splendid sport
Those times you tore apart tranquility
And swam the gar through frightened village streets
(And sent the villagers to live in tents)
And spread your silted bed on every sort
Of floor, and rammed the prairie at the sea--
But where, do you think, is the end of suchlike feats?
Good Lord, did you never hear of consequence?

Look, do you see your wedge of tumult spread?
Words rage like water, and all Congress frowns,
And tit for tat, and the world witnesses
You shall be damned and dammed for tumult's sake--
And swim the carp above the milking shed
(And send the farmers off to live in towns)
And try if cedars can be cypresses
And lose the arid prairie in a lake.

--As for me, I limit my claim hereabout
To a handfull of berries (wild) from the thorny bank;
Yet the heart turns a little at seeing wreckage.
Though algae thicken in calm on shallowing stones
And an innocent babyhood of willows sprout
Fishbone-thick on the bar's widening flank--
See, in the under bend, a huge flung breakage
Of bone-white cottonwood boles, white as old bones.

SALUTE

I went hunting along up the side of the reservoir.
It was public hunting area, government land
Apportioned to the loves of the heart, to certain of the loves
Of the bloody old anarch heart. I found where a town
Had been, some scrap of a town. A retaining wall
Curbed a hillside yet; there was even a planted line
Of tough iris, frost-dimmed, crowded by weeds.
There was even a sidewalk, nearly overarched by weeds.
Comment was pointless: most of man's artifacts
Are already deeper in words than they are in dust.
When I fired at something, the 20-gauge rang like a bell.

TURTLE-BACK

My father loathed snapping turtles; and why not?
They ate his goslings, or bit them one-legged.
They were tough, very hard to kill.
(No use firing from shore with a .22).
And I was almost a baby, but I too
Must have picked up some rancor/fear.

It was a twisting, ominous thing
That my fishline raised through water dimness, up near
The surface. It shattered now
Into grisly then. My nerves spasmed
As though to trigger a death shriek
From a food-thing grabbed by the lizard-fanged antique.

But then--in a sudden settling
Of nerves that cleared the day, and more than the day,
I saw the turtle clear and diminish, and plunge
To the innocent bottom in algaed innocence.

Turtle and I have journeyed. It's tempting
To fancy further journey. Recalling
He's tough, very hard to kill,
Can make land passages, long ones, over rock and hill
From water to better water--how would it be
If (forgiving his feeding habits, his stink, and his temper)
I should mount pickaback some traveling shell?
Would he portage me back to the pond of innocence and goslings?
Forward to the place the dolphins ferried souls?

Yet turtle and I are tangible flesh; the future
Lacks tangibility. He wrenched free of hate;
I'd better wrench free of--something. He got off
My hook; I'd better get off his malodorous back.
And wait.

Michael Paul Novak

WIFE, SWIMMING

An arm, legs, the other arm--
Her body somehow kissing
Dark surf--at sea and at home,
Fish swift and otter happy,
She swims toward me as I wait

On the beach. I who once fell
Off a dock and thought of death
In three feet of water must
Shiver at the spray from the
Infinite and her strong ease.

As she rises from that foam,
I will not touch her wetness
But keep my distance--strange sea
Creature, until she walks
On earth, becomes earth, like me.

ENGLISH 101--THE STATE PRISON

The evening the lights went off
They kept discussing the essay--
A clever piece about undertakers
Being con men, but I was silent
Doing my minute's time.

When the lights turned shadows back
To Monday evening faces,
It all seemed normal--the green walls,
Peeling and sad, the glaring bulbs,
And the grey clad men.

Yes, it's normal now for us
To sit around and play college
In this cage--discussions, themes,
And arguments about some symbol;
Only the clothes tell.

Only the uniforms say guard from guarded,
And without mirrors how do I know
Myself from them?--we distrust
Institutions, do-gooders, and cops,
And have our vices.

But at nine gates clang to let me out

To space not into walls, by chance
Underneath my photo it states
Teacher not Armed Robbery, and I
Can't talk in the dark.

A TELEGRAM FROM INTERPOL

As the ship bounced and jarred to announce
Vera Cruz at six a.m.,
The police knocked hard on our door.

He said we were carrying heroin,
He said he was sorry for the inconvenience,
He said he saw by my notebook I was against the war,

He said that wasn't a crime,
He said I was guilty until proven innocent,
He said they had found some heroin,

He said they will have to take my Renault apart,
He said Mexican jails weren't pretty,
He said they could take my children away,

He said they were the FBI of Mexico,
He said they had a telegram from Interpol,
And he said they hadn't found any heroin.

Later he said the garage bill
Would have to be paid out of his own pocket,
And I said his English was very good.

ADVICE FOR PEOPLE WITH LICENSES

When the cops shine their lights in your face
And you don't know where you are at
Nor even--for a moment--who you are,
Don't panic. You are who you are.
Show them your license and a sober face,
They'll send you home to sleep it off.

Of course, this advice is not
For bums, blacks, or those people
Without licenses, as all of us
White gods know sleeping it off
On the edges of America.

ENGLISH LESSON, EL PRAT

What are you going to do tonight?
I am going to sleep tonight.

When I lay down the world
Keeps flashing its pictures
Before my eyes.

What are you going to do tomorrow?
I am going to study tomorrow.

And tomorrow when
I stare at pages
Blank with worry.

What are you going to do this summer?
I am going to the beach this summer.

"What are we ever
Going to do?" Eliot
Said fifty summers ago.

What are you going to do next year?
I am going to America next year.

You'll take off your language,
I'll put on mine;
We'll all be Americans.

Now we are going into the street
To find a bar where
We are going to drink
Coke or whiskey
Because deeper than lessons
We don't know what
We are going to do.

Sister Emanuela O'Malley

CORN HARVEST

The pheasants have no place to go:
We cut the corn today. Only stubble's
left, and dead stalks lying flat,
sprawled where they fell.
The red corn rattled up
and in the big machine roving the field
like some prehistoric animal sucking
the shucks up, and spewing them out again.

The pheasants sped before us
in short, half-flying jumps, the whirring
of their wings drowned by the great beast's
heart beat as it crawled, gulping everything
it touched.

I think the pheasants know
the monster doesn't take to water,
for they gather at the creek, pressing
their bodies low among the sedges.
I'll have no liking for the man who goes there
out of season with his gun. The underbrush
is all the birds have left now the corn is gone.

FALSE PROPHET

My father was not inarticulate,
yet he could share so many ways
that did not call for speech:
his finger lifted from the wheel
could point a swarm of bees,
an earnest flock of migrant geese,
a pawpaw thicket rich with fruit.

Sometimes it wakened me to wings
before the flash of color
betrayed the bird.
Once it marked a possum
on a persimmon bough,
tail arched with young,
poised against an autumn moon.

Later a waxen finger prophesied
Spring would never come again.
Yet when herons we had watched together
in November wheeled north in April,
the world was suddenly alive
with long-familiar promises of more
than trumpet vines and humming birds.

TALISMAN FOR A TEACHER

Togged for battle they brought her roses:
new giants shoulders hunched with leather
shoved October's lately lost splendor
into her hands with fingers toughened
on rubbing tightened pigskin to test
a better thrust for spiral passes.

"They're Montezumas," the quarterback
chanted, mouthing the tall word upon
his young tongue as if it were old wine.
"One for each of us," boomed the right guard
through a babble of bewilderment,
while green and crimson made her remember
all Galahads and Gawains shuttle
between dreams of the grail and a girl.

"The white one in the center?" she asked.

"The florist called it the Rose of Peace.
We thought you'd like it, so we got it
special," an end man told her, looking
for faces to frame the fact.

She drank
the whiteness and its symbols. The taste
of dawn and sunset in the petals
unvoiced her throat, but eyes canticled
as the fullback, needing the comfort
of combat, rumbled his team and fled.

Tom Page

"Dein ist mein ganzes Herz"*

i

I wanted to see it all again at night.
There was no traffic on 21st, the Stockyards Building and the other buildings were deserted. I didn't expect to see him. No one was working on the signals at 21st and Broadway.
I saw him there last in the summer of 81.
He was repairing a crossing gate.
I pulled off the road to have a smoke with him, to tell him I had found a job.

ii

I was in college when he showed me his photos of the camp in Czechoslovakia. I remember Grandfather telling him to return to high school so he wouldn't be drafted. He graduated, was drafted, and was an infantry replacement in June, 1944.

iii

I was a scout for one of Patton's forward units when my outfit linked up with a Russian reconnaissance group close by the camp. We went in together. The Germans were burning bodies in the ovens when we went in. Jesus, the smell! We lined up the guards and shot them. Next we broke out whiskey and vodka and got drunk. Then we separated the living from the dead-- one detail cared for the Jews who were still alive, the other dug a mass grave. Some Communist and Catholic politicians who we found in a special barracks helped as much as they could. The sick and starving inmates were dying faster than we could bury them. My scouts and the Russians were like sleepwalkers by the time a staff officer arrived with some medics. I told the major that the Germans died defending the camp. He knew better than to ask any more fucking questions.

iv

I know he was tender. He is that kind of man.
This is the last time I'll take these photos out.
I thought they might do you some good.
The railroad said he had to work until December to get a full pension--he was dying of cancer.
He made it. His wife will get the money.

Whoever said we weren't tough sons-of-bitches?
I need to get a .38 passporets,two-thousand
in cash, and bury them in an oilskin in the basement.

*"My Whole Heart Is Yours," sung by Joseph Schmidt, Berlin, early 1930s.

THUNDERHEAD

An oil streaked engine
stands on the tracks and
in the restaurant across the street
veterans of Patton's armies
and Topeka's wards
retreat
 from the headlight's empty stare,

Before dawn the wind forms rain
in darting rivulets on the glass,
soon the yards will be
a sea of grey
around the shining rails,

This is not the place of plastic padded
electric controlled babbits
from College Hill,
nor a reflection in the peddler's eye,
"Coffee all the way around,"
for the heroes of the cattle pens
and packing houses
while boxcars are being switched,
returning like our lives
and then back out
to the North Sides
at the end of every line.

THE WICHITA CUTS

for Tom McGrath

1. I think of you with Tomasito
in McGrath, Minnesota and
with Cisco Huston before he died.
I remember the summer evening spent
over beer at Fred's--
your story of the 50s:
blacklisted, losing a teaching
job, pearl-diving in LA.
I read your prefaces on the place
of political ideas in writing.
I read words of grace and reconciliation.
2. That day at the KC airport you told
Leslie and me,
 "Take care of one another."
3. Believe me Tom, I've been trying.
 And trying to be a human being in a
 Kansas factory town--a place that
 was known in boxing circles
 as a tough tank-town fifty or sixty
 years ago. When I see a
 blood-sun come up on flat Kansas,
 I know why.

Cynthia Pederson

AUNT EVA

"the callas were in bloom
when you were last here."
and later that day
she gave me a tour
taking me from room to room,
to each window ledge and table
to name each plant as she passed
touching them lightly.

she spoke in terms of seasons
as they were planted by the flowers
months are only vases
which hold the different blooms.
telling me of transplanted twigs,
new leaves and tender buds;
english ivy twined about
her fingers as she spoke
and the begonia in the window sill
turned from the sunlight
to listen to soft words
"too soon," she said,
"the tiny pink flowers fall to the floor,
and fade to a dingy grey,
needing to be swept away."
I lift her
catching the last light of day
in the farthest western window.

GRANDMA LUCY

Her colors were tan
and brown, shades of gold and orange
like the place
she was born--
"on the banks of the Cimarron River."
In a log cabin?
"borned in nineteen-hundred and five,
makes me, let's see,
seventy-five"

"no girl, it was a log house,
longer than a cabin,
with a kitchen-shed set in back,
under the eaves, like this."
And a sun-worn hand explains the slant.

It was always "girl" she called me
or by my middle name, "Sue."

Oklahoma--the Indian Territory
where the wild west outlaws
lay in ambush up in
the Winding Stair Mountains
and back country heroes
like Pretty Boy Floyd
in the Cookson Hills,
red dirt and dripping black oil
see-saw drills pumping out a dry desert earth
and men, with skin darker than mine,
dancing to a full-blown moon.

"we oared 'cross the river
to visit our Grandad;
he made the boat.
walked two, three miles to school
in Norfolk
most times there was a store there too."
What'd you do for fun?
"well, on Sundays some,
we rode the work horse down to see friends;
ought to 'a been ashamed of ourselves,
the one day the horse could rest."

As the afternoon leans into night
she bends nearer
squinting to see the tiny embroidery stitches
and the Oklahoma wind sweeps past us both,
I can almost hear the slapping water
against the far shore of the Cimarron River.

STARLINGS

Starlings wrangle
in the Chinese Elm
raucous
wraaa wraaa wraaa
spilling yellow leaves
in their shrill fury

arguing over
which way is south

Antonia Quintana Pigno

KANSAS CITY, MO.

The new passenger boarded the bus--
an old black man
in a long black coat,
once fashionable,
fashionable still--he wore it so.
He carried a rolled newspaper
out of which peeked a small snout--
an animal skinned and cleaned.
His ride was short.
As he got off,
the large white woman driver
shuddered,
and the young white male passenger
snickered, "A possum."

The old man in the fur-collared coat
moves gracefully untouched
by rubble ruins of broken brick buildings,
under his arm--
fresh meat for stew.

THE MIRACLE OF SANTUARIO

While we played marbles and
dug irrigation ditches
for backyard adobe ranches,
we almost forgot about
Your new shoes and the
blue satin cape Mama was making
with the shiny gold rick-rack.
When the cherries fell
it was time
to travel up the mountains
to Chimayo
where You waited
with outstretched infant arms
for our kneeling approach
and our yearly offering.
From Your small glass dome
You watched our curious
watching come nearer
and nearer to see
indeed upon Your tiny feet
last September's white shoes
now scuffed and worn.

Philip M. Royster

GRANDMA'S HOUSE

In her house grandma ruled
despite her watery gray-blue eyes
and ghostly sagging skin.
When she leveled her crooked forefinger
at the map your fingernails carved
on the wall between the bunkbeds
you knew it was "kitty by the door."
You had to pull down your pants and lean
over her firm lap while she stripped
away your underpants and paddled you with
her wooden spoon. She always counted out
her licks and told you beforehand whether
they were going to be soft, medium or
hard. Her hard weaker than daddy's
softest, yet hurt just as bad.

Despite her nightly moist thin kiss
I was terrified of the pitch dark
servants' staircase cluttered with stealthy spirits
waiting for me to go to the bathroom.
I never stepped inside the abandoned
toilet downstairs in the basement,
a dungeon-dark cobwebbed cell;
I ran past it
and past that black coal bin secretly
hiding the monster who ruled the darkness,
to pick the evil eyes off
potatoes sacked in the cool laundry.

When I was three
the washer's wringer
gobbled my left arm
up to the elbow;
at six it wrung my fingers
but popped open before
crushing my wrist.
When at nine I learned
Grandma called and chased the spirits
I told her I never want to see one.

Yet I dug for China with Lynn in the back mud
garden, stung the hind leg of
a mouse Patsy and I trapped with
a shoe box on the back porch,
and read and counted before my fifth winter,
with Uncle Gifford at the dining room table
after dinner.

One late afternoon I watched the dust specks
floating through a shaft of sunlight
from the livingroom window
and saw tiny cowboys falling down particle
to particle from the straight arrow of Cochise.
I loved the evening sun's golden reflection
bathing the houses across the street.
And when it was too dark to play
rock school on the new wooden front steps
sawed and hammered by Uncle George
bossing Uncle Gifford between quaffing beers,
I sat on the floor in the frontroom,
knees huddled snugly under my chin, and listened
to the tramp of Gangbusters and the Great Gildersleeve
laughing out of the floor-standing Cathedral.

WHAT IT IS

all our supposed-to's are done
the children sleep
and our friends have found
someone else to call
while entwined in stillness we
listen to the myriad rhythmic signals
of cricket designs lacing the dark silence
and our next-to leaves nothing between
myriad hues of black shade your dark skin
the etch of fatigue softly shades your eyes
obsidian angles carve your cheek to a smile
and slate-gray blues lie still on your shoulder
as in this still dark
new light shadows planes
daylight never touches

Lynn Shoemaker

LETTER TO A FATHER, LETTER FROM A SON

Cincinnati. April 11th.
The bus depot stinks of leaving.
It's like a church. The light lays down
its dirty lines on the floor.

You elbowed me into it, you and your smiling
new wife. "Ask for our picture
together." Six bits for three dull little ones,
a false confessional, sample
faces stuck to the photo booth wall,
smiles as if there was never anything
to atone for. For three hours
you told me, drew out your side
of the divorce story. Details, angles, the ugly
twist of your father disinheriting you down
to 1%, casting you out, when all I wanted
was a steady hand on my knee, saying
sex is OK, fun, girls like it too,
and if you touch them just right,
afterwards or when they are pregnant,
they will smile and stay with you.

For twenty-two years, you waited to be forgiven.
Your father died, his voice,
his hands, all of him. It's too late.
For twenty-two years, I waited.
You left. You never wrote.
I still carry your photograph;
I can't throw it out.
Though browned, your faces stare through
and beyond my own, as if
I was a shutter, some blessed flash
of light.

I won't tell you about my own divorce.
Now, in the last part of my letter,
it's spring again. I bus back to where
you were born,
but to my mother's father.
His hands are spotted with age.
Easter, Grace Methodist Church,
Christ is leaving us, ascending.
We sing the last hymns.
My daughter beside us, we cry,
we cry for the hallelujah faces.
And my anger shakes in the lilies.

CROSSFIRE: PILOT AND CHILD

Not my eagle bird story. Not
I come from an ocean away to rescue
a slant-eyed princess story. Not my wingtip

All during the war, I hunted them.
I couldn't find my daughter's stories,
the words that would smooth out

in the Mister Mekong story. I tell her
the swamp and the mother mangrove decreed
my bullets home. Intake, intake,

her quilt from 5000 miles away.
My letters flew in a warp, an exhaust.
My pencil hand no longer fit the earth,

The air's hands rammed up walls, G-forces.
By fisting myself and heightening my fist's
one time, I gave respect to the barriers,

her face, I kept telling them,
strafing them too fast. I want, I want

to break through,

break through. Once,

I was inside my daughter's voice

and this girl told me a story.
The tree's branches cradled my life.

ICICLES

Lined up like an old
farm family having their picture taken.
It's been a lean year.
The melting snow pulls them into finer and finer
points
yet they cling to the eaves
the tired roof of their house.
They feel embarrassed in front of the camera.
All they have to show are their rough knuckles
and the transparencies
between.

Anita Skeen

THE POET IN THE BACK SEAT

did not come with the car.
She appeared one afternoon
while the car was illegally
parked on Prospect Street.
The Ford Motor Company
refuses to take responsibility.
They've had enough problems
with Pintos already. Some days
she slumps sullenly in the corner
muttering about the continuity
of American poetry and asking
for cokes whenever we pass
a Quik-Trip. And she refuses
to wear shoes. Other days
she seems more friendly
and lines of poems pester
us like beagle puppies.
At the green light she
comments, "Green spiders
rest like dust inside
my head," and as we enter
the Safeway parking lot
she adds, "Canned salmon
always comes in cans."
She practices her image
in the rear view mirror,
complaining it is convex,
and spits cracker crumbs
into the wind. She will
not leave. Laughing
and scratching, she has
settled in for a long stay.
She says not to worry,
she isn't pregnant,
doesn't smoke, and never
has liked Baptists.
Besides, her typewriter
takes up less space
than a sack of groceries.
She says she will grow
on us, pushing forward
between us a note
which reads, "privacy
is a luxury you have
to pay for."

WHITE CREEK

Last night, this creek, traveling
hurriedly behind the cabin, woke me
like a wild summer storm, tossing
hail against the small panes
in the window, herding
cattle across the roof. But this
morning, at sunrise, it was simply
a Colorado creek again, threading
through tall weeds and dead, bleached
tangles haphazardly collecting
above the smooth rocks.
Others say they have heard it
pretending to be a swarm of bees,
the monotonous regularity of the tide,
or the endless Kansas wind. It is skillful
with disguises, always back in the exact spot,
wearing the same small rapids and still pools,
before light spoons into the valley. Dogs
drink at its banks, unsuspecting, in the cool
evening, and as they lope on up the narrow path,
it shuffles the deck for the next hand.

MY YOUNGER BROTHER SITS PLAYING HARD ROCK

on my grandmother's proper blonde piano
while outside the snowflakes crochet
themselves in borders to the small windows
of this house, hang
in lace on the long-needed pines.
Today is her birthday
and his long fingers and long legs
set the same shape above
and below the bright keyboard.
He has not known her, though he sleeps
in the room where she slept,
where she died. Twenty years past,
in a brown cotton housedress, she sat
straight-backed at the narrow bench,
metronome droning, carefully traveling
the notes of "Sweet Hour of Prayer,"
"How Great Thou Art." The dream
of this piano she suffered all her life,
was not too old for lessons
her granddaughter didn't want,
wouldn't have. He cannot read the music
either, but doesn't need to. His ears
are chords striking everywhere
he goes and when with perfect timing he records
"Stairway to Heaven," their tall

lean bodies, heads of dark wavy hair bowed
over the keys, blur
then merge identical.

FIXING THE MOON

It happened in the night, she said.
She had just passed the upstairs window
on her way to the bathroom and saw it
shimmering in the back yard. She remembered
hearing it hit like a brick, hard and flat.
She thought it was just the neighbor backing
through his garage door again. He always did it
when she was asleep, just for spite.
But then she saw the moon
at a funny tilt like it was just about
to trip on the roof of the Safeway.
She noticed the chunk missing, the bite
out of the bottom. And there is was
in her back yard, burning
like a porch light.

She needed to glue it back before anyone
noticed. Especially the neighbor
who would try to convince the whole street
it was her fault. At K-Mart she asked
for MoonGlue, but the kid with the lisp
who worked in the hardware insisted all they had
was Superglue or Elmers. He was sure
they would work. She knew they wouldn't.
Plus, her husband had the extension ladder
at the observatory and wouldn't agree
to bring it back until the weekend, still
four days away. She tried to reach the moon
from the elm in the neighbor's yard.
That was impossible, as she knew it would be.
And the Doberman trying to fly up to the low limbs
didn't help any. She was afraid
that if she didn't put the chunk back soon,
other pieces would chip off like paint.
One was bound to land in the pool when the kids
and five or six friends were splashing about
carefree and unperturbed. They'd be electrocuted,
with her luck, and what would she ever do
with all those bodies?

HOW WE DRIVE EACH OTHER

to words, you and I,
letters shuffling between our cities

like commuter trains
I feel language rooting

in my fingertips,
sentences necessary as blood

I hear you in an unlit corner
speaking words

I recite as I travel home
I send back words red

as the dozen roses he might send,
green as Nebraska that spring

I send words explosive
as seeds,

unsure as the rabbit
cornered by two hounds

You return words to me:
neon signs

in the night,
the extra quilt I fling

on the bed
Your words fill

this house, splashing out
like balloons

when I open the mail
I see syllables line up

like freeway traffic,
jockey in and out

the motor hums
in my Smith-Corona 7000

As the light turns yellow
I race through

Michael Smetzer

REPORT TO THE AIR

There was your yard and your old house
and your two dogs
And I was sitting on the rusty tub
we moved in from the farm
There was your father with no fingers
your mother opening beer
and we all sat outside in Kansas
without you

Today a neighbor brought a pie
Someone you knew came to adopt your cat

PRAIRIE SUMMER

Always, under the heavy sun, there is time.
You look around, and nothing has changed;
the hills are more steady than the heart.

Clouds move for days across the sky,
like strangers down the highway
looking for some other place.

THE MILK HOUSE

The stones are crawling from their mortar
to settle like old farmers in the clay.

Their fields have sprouted puffball houses;
red flags ripen in the orchard.

END OF WINTER

Sloshing through marsh at the end
 of winter
in hip boots
with snow still stuck to the willows
Sky above is featureless gray
and oak-covered hills are
 black-gray lines
with brown tatters
To the south an angry farmer calls
 his son
To the north water trickles through
dead grass
Legs and face are numb and still
Only the heart is whispering
spring

LATE-NIGHT CAFE IN MISSOURI

It's 9 p.m. and they're
 out of mashed potatoes
 out of corn
 almost out of beef
 (Mine's the last order)

In the john the air dryer's
out of air

Behind the cashier they are
out of Brach's candies
in the Candyland display!

The tossed salad is out of
everything but lettuce

The waitress is out of pep
so the cook refills my coffee

Got any apple pie tonight?
Sorry, he says, you're
 out of luck

A. G. Sobin

THE MUSEUM, THE HANDS

for Albert Goldbarth

I.

The darkened Sixteenth Century English Room floated
stone by stone across the Atlantic then fell back
into just the right shape dead-center U.S.A.
The entire length of the long-board and eight oak chairs
are cold and still waiting in front of the carved stone fireplace
(with plywood false back and sides) for the scullery maids
to come with a coal from a peasant fire to rekindle the flames
that were allowed to die during this exceptionally long night.

I focus on the dents and furrows of the table, evidence
for what must have been centuries of brawls and platters
sliding under heavy English meals of forest game. Everywhere
signs
are telling us that we cannot run our late 20th Century hands
even lightly through the old scars or across the medieval
tapestry's
images of fragile people in a garden looking happy and afraid--
their long gothic fingers made from single brown threads.

I hold out in front of me this image, this
evidence for a hand and I watch as my thumb skims
across what must be my fingertips, one by one. Any touch
and my own marks, my heraldry, would give me away;
my name would slip down the swirling lines into a summoner's
ear
and I, like everyone, would be betrayed by my own hand.

II.

In Archaeology, a half-yard deep in the wall and behind thick
glass,
is the gift from Sweden: the deep brown human hand of the Iron
Age
Woman of Windeby Fen, found perfect in a Scandinavian bog,
A.D. 1947,
clad only in the last traces of what must have been a short linen
tunic
reddish hair curling to well beneath the waist--

"This statuesque young woman of 18 or 19 years, clearly an
extraordinary beauty in her own time, was divided carefully after
this photograph was taken and shipped across the Atlantic
to several North American museums. It is thought that the iron
of her belt, bracelets and jewelry dissolved in the bog water

and preserved her intact--giving away her exact appearance at the time of her death, quite early in the Iron Age."

Today her fingertips would leave clearer prints than my own, pressed against the glass--solid evidence for an entire body, a life, clearer to me than my own. The half-inch thickness of cold glass protects the hands from one another like the span of two thousand-years--like the width of the Atlantic Ocean before there were ships to cross it.

III.

On display in Paleontology is the huge slab of petrified sea floor separated carefully and carried away intact from a fossil ocean-- "Each half-inch of strata represents roughly two thousand years."

Clear impressions offer solid evidence for the lives of the extinct, the curling patterns in the mud of burrowing sea worms, the death masks of trilobites like fingerprints of the Paleozoic. In the dents and furrows we can focus on the outlines of their bodies just as they were at death, before there was an Atlantic Ocean.

Last year's student, a woman who will always be too young for me, stands intensely watching the display as if something were happening in it--as if it were the movie at the drive-in complete with plot and action. As she looks up and sees me my old recurring dream flashes by--the one that always ends with Queen Bess ordering me beheaded and quartered, the dream which always begins cloudy, with me watching intensely, as if through a half-inch layer of translucent bog water, tiny worms curling under my fingernails like thin brown threads, their trails beginning to fall into just the right patterns-- my own hands beginning to give me away. She is happy to see me,

and tells me all about her European summer, her new car and lover and art history paper she's in the middle of --the one concerning Michaelangelo's "Creation" far out on the Sistine Chapel ceiling.

We talk about how "unpainterly and statue-like the figures are, yet how they nonetheless seem real in spite of their look of being frozen there in stone." Only I am uneasy. It's cold she says and jokes about wishing they'd start a huge fire in the English Room

I focus on her hair and her hand curling the bracelet at her wrist.

I measure with my eye the hard transparent distance between us
and
hear her asking me if I know the statistics--the ratio in a
lifetime
of things we can see to the things we can touch.

PROPPING UP BODIES TO FOOL THE INDIANS

It is your birthday.
Another man falls dead at your feet

and his body is like a shadow
that stretches out from your black shoes.

You pick him up from behind
grasping him beneath the shoulders
and clasp your hands across his chest
until your hands begin to look
like his hands folded in death.

Then you drag him toward a covered wagon
your face buried in his wet red hair
breathing the smell of his worry
and already he seems
almost too heavy for you
as if you were lifting
more than your own weight.

His heels dragging in the sand
leave ruts like the wagon tracks
that start in Virginia and now
cross the plains of Kansas, half way there.

You jerk the arrow out from between his ribs
but the head strays behind
to float for years through the cavity of his chest
a shrunken and petrified heart.

But no matter.
You prop him against a wagon wheel
alongside the others, facing the enemy.
Soon the Indians will learn how hopeless this is;
for each one of us they kill
another will come to fill his place.

You weave his arm between two spokes,
jam a carbine into his shoulder
and let his head flop down on the barrel
taking aim forever
from his place in the circle of wagons.

Far down the line are the handful of infants,
useless, drooling, self-indulgent,
and then there is the gang of boys with slingshots
the leather pulled back, touching each of their cheeks
just beneath the right eye.

Then come the men in their twenties
as if in a room of a wax museum.
You have posed this group after Giott's "Lamentation"
though each figure is holding a six-gun
and one is also drinking from a bottle of rye.

Your masterpiece, though, is the man at thirty
set apart, nonchalant, without even a gun--just
showing the Indians how fearless we all are.
You have him leaning against the chuck wagon
hands cupped to his face, frozen there by death
as if calmly lighting a cigar.

THE CALCULATION

"Given a constant velocity and the
exact location of two points on a
continuum, the time required to
traverse the distance between them
may easily be calculated as may
the absolute time at one point
provided the same for the other is
known."

--Kurt Hauptmann
Astronomy 1797

It is touching that I don't know for sure
whether today is Saturday or Friday.
I'm sitting at my desk early in the morning
biting my nails and blowing the chips
against the landlord's wall.
I am crying softly because it is, for sure,
not Sunday and there is, for sure, no NFL game
until at least tomorrow--and even then this
miserable Salt Lake City T.V. doesn't broadcast the Redskins
(Will my aging father back in Washington, who watched
with me through twenty lean years of Sundays, screaming
at the picture tube "Put in Bukich--why won't they ever
put in Bukich!" when even as a child I knew that Eddie
LeBaron was doing as well as any quarterback could, given
that lousy team, live to see the Washington Redskins win a
Super Bowl?)
but rather lets the signals from the East just zoom by overhead

to disappear forever in space. In the sky this Sunday, only a dozen feet over my roof, the plays of the three-hour game will stream by like weather, the line-backers red-dogging through breaks in the clouds like horses in an apocalyptic painting

and I'll be sitting down here not knowing a thing about it until the highlights are shown on the news, hours later.

I think hard about yesterday for any clue to its identity so that by a rational Eighteenth Century process I could make a definitive deduction about this one late Twentieth Century day.

I cry harder and wish for snow to fall from the charged clouds to freeze all that motion out the window and deaden things like a shot. The powerful stadium-shaped dishes on the planets of distant galaxies are at this moment still picking up the Redskins of the fifties and sixties. A lot they know. If it should happen that today is Saturday, then right now Eddie LeBaron is fishing on the Chesapeake Bay, retired and growing old, his hand poised behind his head about to make a long cast.

At this moment one of the super sensitive antennae Out There is receiving the Redskins-Browns game of Sunday, Jan. 15, 1959. The speed of light being a universal constant, if I knew just where

that signal was right now, today would be a simple calculation, but

I don't, and it isn't, and we are in the last quarter, and all their Redskin fans are plenty worried and drinking their kind of beer fast.

At this very second, Eddie's arm is cocked somewhere about to throw

the game-losing interception, and is frozen in that pose forever, hurtling past planet, planet and planet, like a painting, a painting of the only believable life after death.

Theodora Todd

THUNDERSTORM SEASON

My cat sniffs the air and peers into it
as if her yellow eyes could see ozone.
Another front is moving in from the northwest
and is only six hundred miles away now. And coming.
In time the sky whitens. Trees
shudder. Tiny jumping bugs freckle my arms.
Mosquitoes buzz and hover. The world

is trying to tempt me to violence
with the arrogance of fleas in a white cat's fur,
or bass feeding off the top of the lake
around the lines; it is tempting me with storms
and the pinprick of ovulation, fat,
the nervous twitch of my eyebrow, paperwork,
exhausting sleep. These things are family

goading me into confrontation. The sky
thunders in the distance, sounding faintly
like heads slamming into doorframes, then
the lightening crack of glass breaking against the wall,
shattering into crooked shards of light,

over and over, and always from the northwest. I believe
the front originated on 21st and Hoyt
in Portland where my stepfather
still drinks, and the gentle women he sketches
see themselves become sharpened and wicked
on white paper. It begins

on the hill in Lake Oswego
in the Catholic cemetery
where my mother is buried. It begins
in that city where my sister sees angels
and my nephew tells strangers
he is Jesus Christ. And it rains, hard and steady,
washing the world; afterwards
they send me all their love,
that green smell after rain.

SOMETIMES

Sometimes he watches her with her pregnant belly
and he thinks she has four arms
and four legs like a spider. Her life is mindlessly
purposeful. She arranges the furniture
and preserves food in jars. He

is often reminded of orb weavers
weaving webs in the moonlight,
weaving the world together
with meshes subtle in the breeze,
meshes that beguile the mayfly
or the mosquito. The spiders have long ago
eaten their mates and now they rest
in the center of their webs
where the slightest movement in the web
is felt. She knows

where every object in the house is placed.
She knows what he had been doing in the house
an hour ago from a knife sticky with butter
and crumbs, from a telephone book
lying open on the chair. From her center

that turns in its dreams
comes a life that ties great grandmother
to grandchild, ties him here to this house,
to her. Sometimes that frightens him.

Patricia Traxler

THE WIDOW

strange how my hair
never went completely grey she says after life
on the farm all those years
I watch her restless hands remembering
vast meals that noon required her wedding diamond
rages against the Kansas sun
and the chickens
she says
the chickens I
raised I used to kill
them with a hoe handle
laid across the neck & a yank
to pull the head off
she pauses
with the memory I always
enjoyed that
her eyes
absorb my stare they say
she waited years for her husband
to come in

from the fields & then
he took ill like that she watched
him failing their last year
he went slowly
like the butterflies
she used to kill with cleaning
fluid in perfect unison both of
those wings would lose
their stir body pinned
there as it
was to paper
pinned with a pearl
hatpin
she watched
that beauty drain
away like daylight
caught
beyond the early shadows she
watched
till she was sure
she finally
owned it

WHY SHE WAITS

Another night: late winter falling
on the prairie like a nightly husband
no longer impassioned but knowing his rights
and duties

The snow no longer quite
conceals what for months has gone
unnoticed: the land, plain
and faithful beneath it
holding out

for something no one can
describe, something
the starlings whisper about, evenings
in the melting snow, something
they look for
in the cold winter grass

THE ROOMER

Grandmother is
dying in the living room, dying
at the supper table and
in front of the evening
news, dying in the halls, she is dying
in every room of our house. I can't find
an empty chair. She is
dying in slow motion, taking years,
and with a clamor that makes whispers
of ordinary words. 95 pounds,
89 pounds, as she dwindles
she becomes gigantic. We lock her in
a home for people who are dying
impolitely, and driving back
we take the long way. At home we find

the walls are papered
with her life. She's in my teacup
reciting Shelley's "Skylark," she's singing
Toorahloorahloorah at the clothesline, she's on
every talk show dying. Neighbors stop
by to see how her death is doing. It is doing
fine. We will let it
come home for the holidays.

DEATH & THE REDHAired MAN

And there is my grandmother Nora
in 1957 clipping health
articles from the evening paper
reading obituaries
in her chair wishing
for the redhaired man
who almost loved her once
years before he was a civic leader
whose name she clips
along with recipes just
in case dreaming
at night in her iron bed
of death & the redhaired man
of all the ways
either one could take her
knowing there are
so many ways & you're never sure
until the last
how it will be
when you go to bed
you take
your life into your hands

Chuck Wagner

THE TRUNKS OF CARS

In the late 50's
we crowded friends
into the trunks of cars
to sneak them into drive-ins,
and then refused
to let them out.
their shouts of rage
and rhythmic kicks
gave birth to rock-'n'-roll.

In the 60's
we went off to war
despite the clamor of cars
in driveways and garages
across the country.
When we returned
we diagnosed
the recurring pounding
as delayed stress syndrome.

In the 1970's
we heard knocks.
Cursing the unions
and shoddy construction,
we replaced shock absorbers
and poured STP
into engines.
Next time
we'd buy imports.

In the 1980's
all seems quiet,
but they sit
hunched against wheel-wells,
hands wrapped tight
around tire-tools
waiting
for a dark deserted road
and a flat tire.

SLEEPING ALONE

The warped sound track
of the late show Western
trails off to a test pattern;
once again the homesteaders
fight off the cattle barons.

A pile of wrinkled clothes
has settled by the bed
like a basset hound,
and in the darkness
cold blue sheep
leap from the digits
of a clock-radio.

Switch on the electric blanket.
The dial lights up,
an all-night cafe
waiting for a lonely man
to wander in
and take a seat
at the counter.

CHRISTMAS

You see them
in parks
all over Missouri,
old drunks
frozen solid
as streams,
the fish
of their pulses
caked
with ice.

At night
the rangers
wrap them in robes
and stand them up
stiff as statues:
wise men
in a manger scene.

George F. Wedge

A STILLNESS ABOVE THE RADISHES

Sometime during supper he takes a notion
Not to speak until she does:
No big deal about it, you understand,
Just a vague sense about turns--
That they should take turns, and that it isn't his.

She waits to speak, thinking he may be weary,
Knowing she certainly is,
And hoping that he may say the meal is good,
The kind of compliment a wife
Expects for giving man his daily board.

The stillness hovers over the polite hush
Of gentle people eating
And at length she starts to clear the table,
Hoping he won't come right away
To help with drying--so she'll have to call his name.

But out he comes, just as she starts to speak,
Takes him a towel from the rack,
And clatters amongst the silver urgently.
Then just as she's about to say
The rest can stand, he puts the towel up
And goes away.

But now the tables, as it were, are turned,
For he finds something in the news
He knows would make her laugh. So he breaks down
And reads aloud. She can't respond.
She's out on doggie constitutional.

When she gets back, they're in a different mood,
And neither'd speak to either
On a bet. In time, they take their separate ways
Through wash and dry and gargle,
Then lay them down to sleep on edge of bed.

"Oh, Lord," each prays, "Just let us gently touch;
That's language we still understand."
But she is tight and tense and still, and hopes
Not to get talking in her sleep.
And he's afraid he'll thow his arm about her
In some dream.

The new day starts, snap crackly and pop.
She makes his eggs and bacon jump
And slaps his coffee down so hard it spills.
He sips and sighs and chodes it down

And buys antacid on his way to work.

When he gets home, the next-door lady's there,
Oiling waters or salting wounds,
Saying the cat has taken both their tongues.
They are impossible, she says,
And goes away. And each avoids the other's
Speechless eyes.

Even the candles sputter. Everything
Is burnt, except what's undercooked.
He reads the paper. She stares out the window.
Neither gives or gets a graceful word.
And when they're done, they snuff the candles out.

AT THE LANSING PRISON POWWOW

(For David Knoxsah)

I don't know what to expect of your drum,
used, as I am, to Krupa's smiling dervish mad,
his bandsuit drenched from long and loping joy,
and to proud tympanists, dancing masters of the symphony,
whose arms and bodies fly like semi-Baryshnikovs,
proud, muscular, and sure as you are, as you stride
across the floor to seat yourself by your great instrument,
begin the beat, your body swaying slowly as the beat,
your feet moving with the tribal beat become a tribe,
your arms setting the pace three other men must keep.

And then chant bulges through your throat,
changing your solemn face to joy,
dancing bright grace from proud and certain eyes,
calling some part of each of us to be
proud, muscular, and sure as music spiralling to prayer.

Philip Wedge

CATECHISM AND A PRAYER

What did I tell them about Kansas?
I told them all the lies:
that under every haystack, a farmer's daughter hides,
that Oz was really a place
just north of Wichita,
a small hill outside Newton, full of grace,
that the yellow brick road was a metaphor
for the breadbasket of the world,
symbolized in a field of wheat.
Of the waving wheat of football,
even, I told them.
I told them that the world's largest prairie dog
had outlasted gunslinging Dodge City in fame,
due to an overshadowing event caused
by the prairie dog's convenient juxtaposition
with a major, interstate connection,
and that the true Garden of Eden
could still be found at Lucas.
I told them all this,
yet still they wouldn't believe.

MEMORY POEM

At the first sign of a hard frost
he picked each firm, green tomato
from the thriving plants still ranged
in the garden. Wrapping each one
carefully in tissue paper saved
for the occasion, or newspapers
left from last week, he carried
them in bundles down into the cellar
to wait. He brings a few up
to ripen each week in kitchen-warmth,
reddening slowly, softening slightly.

Fred Whitehead

VICTORY HEIGHTS

My earliest memories are of this place:
thunder and lightning sent me hiding
into the cushions of the huge green easy chair
and next day the parking lot was flooded
so scores of poor kids splashed in muddy water.

Thrown up to shelter army families in a makeshift
tenement of concrete blocks on the northeast side of town
I remember its persistent squalor lasting twenty years.

Take this record of scattered recollections:
a family of deaf mutes lived a few rows away
when my cousins visited we slept head to foot in a bed
my first book--Golden Encyclopedia--when I was four
we had coal for heat and a small ice box
not a refrigerator but a box with a block of ice.

Later we bought a house in the neighborhood
still later my brother and I threw papers in this
the only authentic slum of the town. At Halloween
everybody gave us treats though we were too old for it
I found this typical of the generosity of the indigent
a population of welfare folks and oil field drifters
also many honest forthright people like the old man
who when we went to collect each month always gave us
an extra dollar bill saying: "Now you boys--
don't you give this to the company, you hear?"
Sure, a lot of them skipped out; the first month both
of us only made the grand total of \$10 for working hard:
"Little Merchants" the management styled us
and our parents thought it a good lesson which it was.

One tenant had an astonishing ethnological collection:
when we went in on cold and bitter nights for our money
he displayed for us unusual defunct currencies from the war
wild knives and his great treasure: a real shrunken head
and we savored these mysteries along with the heady aroma
of cheap hamburger frying in the close air of musty poverty.

THE RAILROAD

Telegraph wires hummed louder when a train was coming. Even at 3 A.M. a small crowd gathered on the concrete platform some climbing aboard sleepily for El Paso or Los Angeles places I wished I could go right then escaping but I only sold tickets, called crews and worked mail.

Sometimes old Bill Loop who retired five years before would come down to the station at 4 or 5 muttering to himself, inspect the line-up and crew board and shuffle around in the bullpen waiting for the next train.

After I came back from college I went there and with K.C. and Renfro the alcoholic conductor the subject of recent spaceshots came up: well, K.C. the telegrapher being of a technical disposition signifies his approval listening as he does all night to the news and crazy Texas commentators on his radio but Renfro says: "Naw, we ought to spend that money right here; even an old woman on welfare, I don't care how she got all her kids, we still should support her. I guess when you come down to it, I'm a socialist."

THE FARM

From infancy we were familiar with infinity for in that direction endless cloud strata soared where broken sunlight in clear shafts refracted to bless us and our young minds easily constructed pure and limitless futures for the country we loved.

Let Proust recollect his delicate patisseries; I am summoned to the strong and fragrant rye bread my grandmother baked in her clean and airy kitchen.

Buffalo wallows out back where the old machinery rusted three of us kids speeding on a stripdown garden tractor hit one at 20 m.p.h. and flew off in every direction turned it upside down and damn near killed ourselves.

A quieter day we'd hike a quarter mile across lumpy fields our short children's legs stumbling over lumpy furrows just to reach around the gnarled trunk of a distant tree.

Edgar Wolfe

TO T.H., LOBOTOMIZED

Away! the foul fiend follows me! Through
the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.
Hum! go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

- - -

Who gives anything to poor Tom?
--King Lear

Peace to you now in the calm night,
calm now, becalmed,
betrayed, soothed vegetable in a warm, moist bed,
saved from those nightmares
I hoped once you might ride
(your cockroach nations and escaped Nazi lords
and boltings from beds of child Mexican whores)
and turn into stories to startle and stay,
stories you'd put truth in, learn how to,
grow up to But peace now, my student,
they've fixed you, it's done,
and peace to you, good doctors, good parents, and son.
Goodnight to you all, best night to the son.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE?

Behind my collar's fence crouches a watery eye,
and that long grotesque, my shadow,
hitches along westward over the mooned, unstable snow.
So, hugging two fruit jars full of milk, I hurt and hurry
home across Orths' half-mile of pasture.
What's home? A drafty one-room shack
in a postoffice-in-a-store town, population eleven.
My wife awaits me.
She's nursing the fire, she's shaking down ashes,
feeding our too-small kitchen range more lignite,
keeping her overcoat on indoors.
The milk I bring--it's destined to freeze.
Over night (thirty-five below now and getting colder)
everything in our shack will freeze--
except us, deep in our one ball in bed.
No matter. On a night like this
the world is beautiful, beyond suffering.
Thinking which, up goes my head
to glimpse the unblown stars,

a deed that's worth a frosted cheek
and frozen tears.

But now, all these many too many years and miles away, I am thinking:
how could I live at Stoneville now,
an old arthritic with neck-bones fused?
I could freeze in the wind as of old,
but how, with what grace, forego the stars?

INVENTORY

Eight years now together we've limped our sorry way,
to no good coming, no increase,
our lives ill-managed and our strengths ill-used,
until the days now have leering looks as we go by.
Yet "for us" the pasque flowers bloomed, the bright cedars
sprawled,
along Fox Ridge's side; for us the paired doves made song
and daintily stepped, sidling before they flew, along
the quiet evening roads;
on us the numberless eyes of sheep, like yellow lights,
all massed
in the Badlands night, fixed staring, and she stood
with them,
the poor mad woman, their shepherd, and we passed them,
silent;
and once, crouched from the wind behind the great white
butte's sharp crumbling ridge,
we watched an eagle strive against the sky.

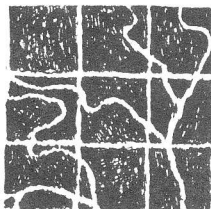
MIRACLE

Mid-June, four in the morning, and the trees
Wore never a shadow. The bushes stood
To be counted. Yet something out there was all wrong.
Something was strange. "Where," I said,
"Are the birds? I know they wake up before this.
It's almost frightening." And you--you amazed me,
Agreeing so quickly: "It is. Why
Are they so still?" But I, just then
And like that, fixed things:
I turned on a light--and a robin.

AS THE LOVING HIND AND PLEASANT ROE

Proverbs 5:19

Sometimes in dream I know my loss.
She in the bath sitting, industrious with soap,
Yet so put back her head and raised her smiling lips,
Them lathered too, that I reached down, naked
Still from my own bathing, my right arm under
The wet, live hams, and lifted her, all eager,
To my kiss. So with arm and breast and hand
I felt her breathe against me, muscled sleek
And hard, and she with unsupported head a moment
Pressed her mouth to mine,
But the soap, in spite of lips held tight,
That kiss embittered. And yet 'twas strong
And therefore sweet. Strong it was
And therefore dream, as waking now I know.



CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

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Scott Cairns (English Dept., K.S.U., Manhattan, KS 66506) has poems currently appearing in KANSAS Q., SWALLOW'S TALE MAGAZINE, TEXAS R., and others. His chapbook, FINDING THE BROKEN MAN, will be reprinted by Window Press, Minneapolis. He teaches composition and creative writing at K.S.U.

Erleen Christensen (1128 Rhode Island, Lawrence, KS 66044) edits COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE. She worked on the NEA project Images of Aging, a collection of written and illustrated portraits of Kansas elderly. Her poetry appears in KANSAS Q., LITTLE BALKANS R., NAKED MAN, GREAT LAKES R., and others.

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Victor Contoski (English Dept., K.U., Lawrence, KS 66045) teaches creative writing and literature. He has three full-length books of poetry: NAMES (New Rivers), BROKEN TREATIES (New Rivers), and A KANSAS SEQUENCE (Cottonwood). He has published a translation of Tadeusz Rozewicz, UNEASE.

Bruce Cutler (English Dept., W.S.U., Wichita, KS 27208) heads the Creative Writing Program at W.S.U. He has published several books of poetry with Nebraska U. Press, and THE DOCTRINE OF SELECTIVE DEPRAVITY with Juniper Press. A new book is forthcoming from BookMark.

Gene Degruson (601 Grandview Hts. Terr., Pittsburg, KS 66762) edits LITTLE BALKANS R. He is Special Collections Librarian for the Pittsburg State U. Library, and he has compiled bibliographies of Kansas writers.

Harley Elliott (Art Dept., Marymount College, Salina, 67401) teaches art and art history. His most recent book of poetry, from Hanging Loose Press, is DARKNESS AT EACH ELBOW. In addition, he has written and illustrated six books of verse, from Crossing Press, Juniper Books, Pentagram Press, and Emerald City Press.

David Ewick (2330 N. Oliver, Wichita, KS 67220) is a student in the M.F.A. program at W.S.U. He teaches English to foreign students for the departments of English and Intensive English. His poems appear in MIDWEST Q., COLORADO-NORTH R., CUTBANK, and INDIANA R.

Melanie Farley (421 E. Crawford, Stafford, KS 67578) is a former editor of COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE. She teaches at Pratt Community College. She edited KANSAS WOMEN WRITERS and co-edited 19 STORIES. She is completing an edition of W.E. Webb's BUFFALO LAND.

Louis Forster (2033 Raymond, Salina, KS 67401) is a poet and physician. He teaches at the Smoky Hill Family Practice Residency Program and at Kansas Wesleyan U. His poems appear in SUN DOG, NAKED MAN, MIDLAND BARD, COLORADO-NORTH R., KANSAS Q., and others.

Matthew Frazel (1180 MacVicar, Topeka, KS 66604) works as a horticultural therapist. He runs the Topeka Poetry Workshop and the Annual Open-Air Topeka Poetry Reading.

Deborah Goodman (Box 16, Dodge City Comm. College, Dodge City, KS 67801) directs the Adult Learning Center and is working on a doctorate in Adult and Occupational Education. She received a graduate fellowship when she studied creative writing at W.S.U.

Jeff Gundy (Box 3000, Hesston College, Hesston KS) teaches and has published poems in a number of magazines. He is working on a collection of poems and a dissertation on modern American poetry. He writes reviews for COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE.

George Gurley (711 Indiana, Lawrence, KS 66044) teaches at Washburn U. and U.M.K.C. He has a book of poems, FUGUES IN THE PLUMBING, from BookMark Press. He also publishes fiction, including a story in Cottonwood's 19 STORIES.

Jeanine Hathaway (English Dept., W.S.U., Wichita,, KS 67208) teaches in the Creative Writing Program at W.S.U. She spent a year in France researching the life of Joan of Arc, and now is writing a cycle of poems based on that research. She has

publications in KANSAS Q., GEORGIA R., BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL, INDIANA R., and others.

Michael Heffernan (English Dept., P.S.U., Pittsburg, KS 66506) has a new book, TO THE WREAKERS OF HAVOC, forthcoming from University of Georgia Press. Georgia published his first full-length collection, THE CRY OF OLIVER HARDY, in 1979. He is Professor of English at P.S.U.

Steven Hind (503 Monterey Pl., Hutchinson, KS 67501) has published a collection of poems, FAMILIAR GROUND, with Cottonwood Press. He teaches at Hutchinson Community College and is active in the Kansas Association of Teachers of English.

Jonathan Holden (English Dept., K.S.U., Manhattan, KS 66505) won the Devins Award for his first book of poetry, DESIGN FOR A HOUSE, and the Associated Writing Programs award for his second book. He also publishes articles and books of criticism, including THE RHETORIC OF THE CONTEMPORARY LYRIC, from Indiana U. Press.

Jane Hoskinson (Rt. 1, Box 117B, McLouth, KS 66053) works as an editor for University Relations at Kansas U. Her publications include WOMANSPiRiT, IMAGES OF AGING, and KANSAS WOMEN WRITERS.

Diane Hueter (NW 317 Webb, Pullman, WA) recently moved from Vinland, Kansas. She is working on an M.A. in Creative Writing at K.U. Her publications include a chapbook from Cottonwood Press, KANSAS: JUST BEFORE SLEEP, and poems in KANSAS Q., IOWA WOMAN, and others. She directed poetry readings in Lawrence for several years, and she won the 1983 Carruth Poetry Prize.

Kenneth Irby (311 N. Regency Pl., Lawrence, KS 66044) is the author of OREXIS, published by Station Hill Press. His other books include THE GRASSLANDS OF NORTH AMERICA, FOR MAX DOUGLAS, CATALPA, THE FLOWER OF HAVING PASSED THROUGH PARADISE IN A DREAM, RELATION, ARCHIPELAGO. He has taught at Tufts and the University of Copenhagen.

Michael L. Johnson (English Dept., K.U., Lawrence, KS 66045) directs the Freshman-Sophomore English program. He publishes widely in Kansas and national magazines. His books include FAMILIAR STRANGER, THE UNICORN CAPTURED, and DRY SEASON, the last two from Cottonwood Press.

Stanley Lombardo (Classics Dept., K.U., Lawrence, KS 66045) teaches Greek and Classics at Kansas U. He has published verse translations of Permenides' and Empedocles' fragments and of the poetry of Hesiod, Aratus, and Callimachus. He won a Translation Center Award.

Marilee Mallonee (1933 Sleepy Hollow, Olathe, KS 66062) has published in HAPPINESS HOLDING TANK, KANSAS WOMEN WRITERS, and

COTTONWOOD R. She received the 1979 Lichtor Poetry Prize. Currently she is a faculty member at the K.U. Medical Center.

Marilyn Mann (816 Kearney:, Manhattan, KS 66502) has an M.A. from K.S.U. and teaches in U.S.D. 383. Her work has appeared in KANSAS Q., TOUCHSTONE, and KANSAS WOMEN WRITERS.

Elizabeth Mayer (134 N. Old Manor, Wichita, KS 67208) is working on an M.F.A. in Creative Writing. In 1982 she won the American Academy of Poetry's Pami Jurassi Bush Award. Her work has appeared in MIDWEST Q., MIKROKOSMOS, and INTRO 13. She has read her poetry for Wichita organizations, the Shawnee Mission schools, and Tabor College.

Sally McNall (English Dept., K.U., Lawrence, KS 66045) is on a Fulbright Teaching Fellowship to New Zealand. She has published poetry and a book on women's popular fiction. She was part of the NEA-sponsored program, Images of Aging, a collection of written and drawn portraits of Kansas elderly.

Jim Miley (1528 Pierre, Manhattan, KS 66502) teaches in the Sociology Department at K.S.U. and edits a sociology journal. He participates in the poetry workshop and has poems forthcoming in KANSAS Q.

John Moritz (Vortex House, 645 Michigan St., Lawrence, KS 66044) has been active in Lawrence publishing since the 1960's, when he founded Tansy Press. His chapbook HART CRANE was published by Zelot Press (Dade City, Florida). A longer work, THE HEART TOO IS A FLOWER, is still forthcoming.

W.R. Moses (314 Denison Ave., Manhattan, KS 66502) in POETRY NOW, NORTHEAST, and MID-AMERICAN R. His books PASSAGE and IDENTITIES are from Wesleyan U. Press. He is retired from the KSU English faculty.

Michael Paul Novak (English Dept., St. Mary College, Leavenworth, KS 66048) teaches English. His books BOOKING PASSAGE and SAILING BY THE WHIRLPOOL are from BookMark Press. He has a story in 19 STORIES (Cottonwood Press). He was awarded a Kansas Committee for the Humanities grant to compile a tape/slide presentation, "A Geography of Kansas Poetry."

S.Emanuela O'Malley (English Dept., Marymount College, Salina, KS 67401) has publications from KANSAS Q., SEWANEE R., and many others. She is an English professor.

Tom Page (PO Box 522, Wichita, KS 67201) has a selection of poems in DREAMS OF THE HIGHWAY (West End Press, 1979). He is a student in the M.F.A. program at W.S.U. He has publications in FLATROCK JOURNAL, NORTH DAKOTA Q., and QUINDARO.

Cynthia S. Pederson (2240 Kentucky, Topeka, KS 66605) just completed an M.A. at K.U., where she was a recent winner of the Carruth Contest. She has published two books, SPOKEN ACROSS A DISTANCE (WOODLEY Memorial Press) and EARTH COLORS (Hole and Corner Press).

Antonia Quintana Pigno (Farrell Library, K.S.U., Manhattan, is Assistant Professor and Coordinator for Specialized Collections and University Archives at K.S.U. Her poems have appeared in many small magazines.

Philip Royster (English Dept., K.S.U., Manhattan, KS 66506) is an Associate Professor of Minority Literature and Creative Writing. His essays on literature and language appear in FIRST WORLD, BLACK BOOKS BULLETIN, and CLA JOURNAL. He has two collections of poetry, THE BACK DOOR (Third World Press) and SONGS AND DANCES (Lotus Press).

Lynn Shoemaker (English Dept., K.U., Lawrence, KS 66045) is an Instructor at K.U. He has published three books of poetry: COMING HOME, CURSES AND BLESSINGS (both from Ithaca House Press) and most recently HANDS (Lynx House Press). He grew up and did his first writing in a small Dakota town on the Missouri. After roaming both East and West, he has returned to the heartland to live, teach, and write.

Anita Skeen (1315 Willow Lane, Wichita, KS 67208) teaches poetry in the Creative Writing Department at W.S.U. She is active in the Artists-in-Education Program of the Kansas Arts Commission. She has published a chapbook, LILITH (co-written with Kay Clossen), in PULPSMITH. She organizes the Women's Reading Series at W.S.U.

Michael Smetzer (326 N. Main No. 8, Bowling Green, OH 43402) has recently begun an M.F.A. in writing. He was awarded a teaching fellowship at Bowling Green. He has been an active editor and publisher, spending five years with COTTONWOOD R. His most recent magazine, NAKED MAN, was a SMALL PRESS R. monthly book selection. His poems have appeared in POETRY NOW, HANGING LOOSE, TELLUS, LITTLE BALKANS R., and others.

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Patricia Traxler (1101 S. Santa Fe, Salina, KS 67401) teaches creative writing at the Salina School for the Deaf. Her first

volume of poetry was published by Morrow Press. Her second book, THE GLASS WOMAN (Hanging Loose Press), was published in 1983. She teaches creative writing at Kansas Wesleyan U. Her work appears in MS., THE NATION, POETRY NOW, etc.

Chuck Wagner (2028 Massachusetts St., Lawrence, KS 66044) is working towards a Ph.D. in English. He works at Spencer Research Library and teaches Freshman English. He has published in LITTLE BALKANS R., POETRY NOW, KANSAS Q., and others. He is a poetry editor for COTTONWOOD MAGAZINE.

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Edgar Wolfe (1619 N. 38th St., Kansas City, KS 66102) is retired from the K.U. English Department, where he taught creative writing. His recent work appears in INSCAPE, KANSAS Q., COTTONWOOD R.

TONY ALLARD holds a Lockwood Graduate Fellowship in Fine Arts at Kansas University. He was an artist for the NEA-sponsored Images of Aging project, with drawings published in Images of Aging and Images of Aging: Douglas County. He participates in the Kansas Artists-In-Education program and teaches drawing at Kansas University.

DENISE LOW teaches English at Kansas University. She has two chapbooks, Dragon Kite (BookMark Press, 1980) and Quilting (Holiseventh Press, 1983), and she edited 30 Kansas Poets. Her poems have appeared in Heartwomen (Harper and Row, 1981), Abraxas, Mid-American Q., Womanspirit, Kansas Q., Tellus, Naked Man, Focus Midwest, and others; her reviews have appeared in the Kansas City Star, New Letters, Abraxas, and Cottonwood Review. She is a poet for the Kansas Artists-in-Education program, and she is book editor of Cottonwood Press.

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