

POETRY MISCELLANY 2006



David Wojahn, Nance Van Winckel, William Olsen, Nancy Eimers, Jody Gladding, Clare Rossini, Bill Rasmovicz, Leslie Ullman, Roger Weingarten, Susan Thomas, Betsy Sholl, Stephen Haven, Barbara Carlson, Pamela Uschuk, Suzanne Heyd, and others

FOUR NEW POEMS BY MARVIN BELL

SPECIAL EDITION OF VERMONT COLLEGE POETS

SPECIAL FEATURE ON UT-CHATTANOOGA'S WRITING PROGRAM

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POETRY

MARVIN BELL

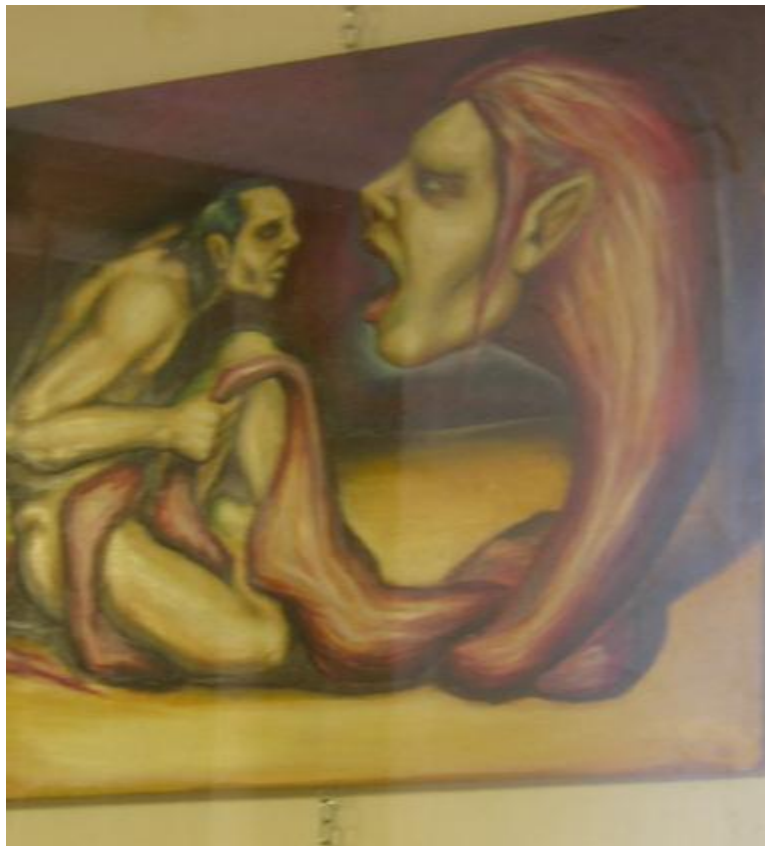
The Time I Tore My Kneecaps Off (*La La*)

I have a place inside me sticky with old cartilage.
If you lean in, you can hear the tendons squeak,
and feel a smoky tickle in your nose like that
of a just-extinguished match. There is dust there,
too, and minute shards of bone that pricked
the surgeon's finger. He was the one in the light,
while I was blind. I saw his glasses flash
as the light went out, and something—a curtain?—
rattled and rustled. I woke with a taste
like dry sand, lips swollen, thankful for ice chips.
By the time I quit the ward, I was nearly nuts
from the swish of the mop in the hallway
and the thin milk at meals. For the next four months,
I lived in a bed at home and laughed about it.

Mirror Image

in memoriam, D. R.

Now I wonder if
in walking
into the sea up to his waist,
was he trying to kiss
his broken reflection? Did the first
wave buckle his legs,
and did an onlooker see his hand
appear to wave from a sliver
of foam? It was and is
a riddle, truncated
by his death. His penned valediction
did not scorch others, but bespoke
the whirr of his mind, a scent of wet ash,
and the bitter saliva of one
in whom the hum of the universe
pressed to escape. He carried
a pocket book, *New World Writing*.



Giorgio Celli, Barga, Italy

from: The Book of the Dead Man

Live as if you were already dead.

- Zen admonition

1. About the Dead Man and Camouflage

When the dead man wears his camouflage suit, he hides in plain sight.
The dead man, in plain sight, disrupts the scene but cannot be seen.
His chocolate-chip-cookie shirt mimics the leaves in a breeze.
His frog-skin dress, his bumpy earth nature, leave us lost and alone, his mottled apparel sends us in circles.
His displacements distract and disabuse us, he is a slick beguiler.
Everything the dead man does is a slight disruption of normality.
He is the optical trickster, the optimum space-saver, the one to watch for.
He is of a stripe that flusters convention, he is the one to watch out for.
That we thought him gone only proves his wily knowledge.
The dead man has lain unseen among the relics of embalmed time.
He was always here, always there, right in front of us, timely.
For it was not in the dead man's future to be preserved.
It was his fate to blend in, to appear in the form of, to become...
Now he lives unseen among the lilies, the pines, the sweet corn.
It was the dead man's native desire to appear not to be.

2. More About the Dead Man and Camouflage

The dead man knows that camouflage is all in the mind.
He has seen in the human need for shape the undoing of shape.
He has witnessed the displacement of up-and-down, across and slantwise.
He has curled the straight lines and unbent the curves, he has split the wishbone and painted outside the lines.
The dead man has undone the map by which to get there.
It is not what the dead man looks like, but what he no longer resembles.
For he hath reappeared in no disguise but as himself.
Call him disheveled, call him disposed, call him shiftless, he is.
For he hath been made and remade in the form of his surroundings.
He hath become all things that he looketh like.
Hence, he has been stepped on by those who could not see him.
He has been knelt upon by those who looked in vain.
The dead man bestirs in a background that looked inert.
The dead man is the ultimate camouflage.
He is everywhere, but where is he?

from: The Book of the Dead Man

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- Zen admonition

1. About the Dead Man and Collaboration

When the dead man joins up, he monitors the monitors.
The dead man, enlisting, pictures the pictures.
He moves among the moving, wiggles among the squiggles, yes, he laughs.
The dead man is part of a new language in the offshoot, unpronounceable yet tip-of-the-tongue.
There will be birthing and splicing, fusing and fluxing, a Gabe and a Jacob, a Scott and a Larry, two Stevens, one Anmarie, and the dead man detecting.
He sees the trees morph into pixels, the text glue itself to the air.
Now hyperspace fills the room.
Now the dead man lives on, embedded in the universal retina.
Will universal collaboration create God?
Only the dead man has pictured it, seen it, absorbed it.
The dead man takes in sight and sound, stillness and movement.

Like the quantum cat, he can be in two places at once, he can move and stay, he alone can be what you wanted and did not want all in one.

There is no stopping the dead man, who is perpetual.

There is no cessation of the life force a-borning.

The dead man tunes in online and offline, from earth and space.

Once launched, the sights and sounds, the signals and sense, travel through time, tidal waves without water.

2. More About the Collaborative Dead Man

The dead man is perforce an installation.

Buried or burned, hung up in the body lab, doled out to the organ banks, he is also rooted in memory.

In his disassembly he is assembled, in his dismantling he is established.

Now he is set among the trees and the leaves that paint the air.

Now his skeleton becomes the ridges and fissures of the planet.

His is the ultimate collaboration, the reciprocal to its nth, the true mutual.

He is a proponent of the big shebang theory.

The dead man is the past, present and future, an amalgamate of atoms and strings and the who-knows-what of bespectacled theorists.

Meanwhile, he wiggles among the squiggles, he mops up the washes, he rolls on the scrolls, he whirls within the whorls, he goofs in the gyres, yes he laughs and laughs, and yes he squirms among the worms.

He is the ready affiliate.

He is awash in the senses.

He lives among those who have mixed eyefuls and earfuls, oil and water, who have alchemized the elements and written in the pitch.

This now is the roadway of the dead man, united in every state.

The dead man shuffles his senses, he flicks, he ruffles, he ruffles and rumples, he puckers and crinkles, he wrinkles, he scrunches, he stretches, and oh yes he struts a little too.

Behold the dead man at the still point of a turning.

See the dead man painting by infinite numbers.

Nance Van Winckel

Only Osprey Nested Across the Bay,

or so we thought.

The lake was freezing fast

but there were still the odd channels

through the ice. Logic

and calculation

got one nowhere.

Red scarf, the nightshift of stars

punched out—someone rows out alone

and comes back

not alone. There are

more of us. A reasonable

belief—new people

in the old places—

is brought home.



DAVID WOJAHN

After Ovid

(Metamorphoses, Book I: The Five Ages)

Golden was the first age
& of laws

men knew nothing,

for virtue was
practiced by all.

Prisons & shackles,
judges pounding gavels--

The Age of Gold

none did yet exist
 & on the mountain tops
no tall pines had been felled
 for the masts of ships
 to sail toward
distant shores.
No moats, no city walls,
 no towns besieged.
No trumpets, no swords,
 no crested helmets.

Men of all nations
dwelled in harmony.
 No rake or ploughshare
 tilled the earth,
which gave of herself
 freely,
 in all her abundance.
& men gathered fruit
 without effort,
wild strawberries
upon the hillsides,
 cherries,
 acorns collected from
Jove's sacred oak.

 Perpetual spring
 & gentle Zephyr's
warm breath coaxed
 the hillside flowers up
unsown
the fields goldening
 with wheat,
 streams of nectar,
streams of milk,
 the golden honey
 oozing from the comb.

But when Saturn
 was hurled down to Tartarus,
 Jove
now ruled the world
 & the age
 of silver commenced--

The Age of Silver

spring
cut off by summer,
 fall begetting winter.
Parched scorched fields
 of August,
 icicles glinting
in cold December wind.
Men now sought
 dwelling places,
caves, crude huts
 fashioned of bark & sticks.

The long
furrows of wheat
 were sown,
oxen yoked
& groaning as they
 pulled the plows.
& a third age,
of bronze, commenced,
 bringing with it
 warfare

The Age of Bronze

& savagery
 as yet unknown.
 But crueler still
 was the age of iron,
 of baselessness
 unparalleled--
 avarice, greed, deceit.

The Age of Iron

Ships unfurled
 their sails,
 the mountain pines
 felled
 for masts & fences.
 & men required
 more from the earth
 than crops,
 gouging iron
 from deep mine tunnels
 & gold,
 pernicious gold.
 Swords were raised
 by bloody hands.
 Men lived to pillage.
 Guests
 feared their hosts, the father
 his own son-in-law.
 Even brothers
 disdained each other.
 Husbands plotted
 the deaths of wives,
 wives those of husbands.
 Evil stepmothers
 concocted
 fatal potions.
 Sons cared only
 that their fathers
 willed them everything
 & prayed for them
 to die
 before their time.
 Piety
 long ago was slain.
 & Astrea, goddess of justice,
 departed in disgust
 the precincts of this
 blood-soaked world.
 & of this latest age?

The Fifth Age

Connection
 upon connection,
 its locust-drone
 unceasing.
 The GPS zooms in to gather pixels
 forming the shape
 of a speeding car.
 Reaching the checkpoint,
 the shape explodes,
 black smoke on the screen.
 Prayer wheel
 on a snake farm
 in a whirlwind.
 The operating system
 is the Gorgon's head
 uplifted.

We hiss in unison.
Format of adder fang,
format of viper-tongue.
Along
the endless pathways
do we crawl.
You kill
your classmate for
a pair of tennis shoes
& transmit
the bled-out body
to your homeys
via video phone
& then to the mall
to splurge on his
credit card.
One hundred stories
over Houston,
Armani-suited
jackals talk
exploration rights
to oil fields
in Kazakhstan.
They Google themselves
on the way
to porn sights,
watching themselves
shake hands
with Republican whips
before the screen
gives way
to the card shuffle
of nipple & crotch.
The mall
surveillance cameras
watch you
wash blood
down the men's room sink.
Then it's off
to Electronics,
plasma TVs, the Visa
not yet maxed out.
A crowd in Tehran
on 27 screens
burning in effigy
the Great American Satan
who at this moment
lands his chopper
on the White House Lawn.
No, it is 27 faces
of the same pubescent singer,
bass line
quickenings,
her pouting lips pressed
to the screen.
Against glass walls
the serpent-head tiara
seethes.
You can download
the toxins
directly to your brain.

WILLIAM OLSEN

A Personal History of the Profane

So many ways to curse the world
out on the dock by the launch,
shallow water, little lappings
the sole audibles for all we know
raising their voices to their extreme
utmost weakness to a world
all water as water doesn't drown.
Wave after wave, I must
stop shaking my head at the past,
I must stop expecting all
I have forgotten to remember
me, all I can't express
to speak out on my behalf,
waves carrying last sunlight
that breaks when they break.
This legacy waits for me
like a statue to be called in
from a dock while across the lake a bark
from a dog I'd never see
tries to tear itself to meat.
I'm meant to eat that past,
I've tried to write it down a million times
but the essence of it is
below was unattainable,
bluegills too quick for hand
and a rain coming in, my father
muttering fuck fuck fuck
not to curse the moment
or to copulate with it or
the rain but because he wanted to fish,
then taking the lord's name,
for sake of fish all outraged
words and because it was that or walk away,
there wasn't a word not worth
a try that dusk beneath dignification.
Blasphemies, pleas, commands,
holy-family roll calls, fecund
desecrations, the place of birth,
its instrument, hate moans,
pissed off mutters from afar,
self-impregnations, self-negations,
the good lord's vain names
taken sail and silence made,
and the cursed words helpless
and the mildness even in curse
and the shame of all occasion
and the guide and the guided
and the walk up from shore
and the same moon never again,
a lake with its black back up to a cottage
with its bulky claim on dusk
a raven might have painted,
or was it a bluebird? And it was
going to fly away and it was
going to cost my life's labor,
so better be good at it, better

pull your shit together because
the goddam past is here and
not even we are really there,
and already the oblong willow leaves
rattled like wooden applause
not expectantly for rain but
because the terrifying words
were finally over themselves
yet hanging on like waterfalls,
and the worst words cursed
were no less helpless than the best.

NANCY EIMERS

Conversation With Julie About Cancer

That certain dark of a parking lot
not going anywhere: yeah we have to go
and maybe there's even
a future awaiting each of us like two tin cans

on the ends of a string,
maybe we're both worried soon there won't be
anything
rippling in the string
but we stay a little while.

Talk is not a spotlight. It is not a car
with a single headlight. It is
not a silver slipper kicked off
though the moon is all of these.

Up above somewhere are a million stars
but they aren't available just now
too busy being outshone
and gone. But maybe

it's OK, as long as moonlight shines
on the garbage cans and it escorts
a woman talking on a cellphone
safely through the silences of cars,

as long as kids on skateboards surf forever
up the concrete steps
like movies playing backwards
you and I might keep on standing here

after class
before the night ahead,
your mouth drawn to the side
as if just saying pulled a string,

the rest of everything just wait and see
whatever that may do to you—
how late inside—
that takes some getting used to—

CLARE ROSSINI

The Boy Reads

Want to try?

I'd ask, showing you the page

You'd shrink back, shake your head, say

No, you

Better to have words

Fall to your ears as if from the air

Your mother's hand absently rubbing your head

As you stared off, the story merely another long unraveling sound

Picking its way through the afternoon in which you leaned on a warm body

Your senses as drowsy as Adam's

After he'd been

Flung into being

What

Happened

Next?

The imbecile marks

Coughing, coloring, suddenly alive? Or was it a long, slow

Drift into marvel, you and the book shrunk into the dark

Corner of the couch, bound

As if in some illicit comradeship—

I caught you at it, your secret out, it was yours as much as ours

This aloneness--

The page growing into a woods, the woods producing a sentence later

A knight, the knight by sentence's end brandishing "a long and shiny-tipped sword"



Near Painscastle, Wales

BETSY SHOLL

Mandelstam

Shrunk inside an old fur coat, stumbling,
perhaps my lips moving, I wouldn't know,
I was a murmur and seethe of terror. But there,
Voronezh, on snow-hardened streets
where no one listened, I could whisper
to myself, wander the split paths of words
as they turned into breath's guttural ice,
till sometimes, shivering, I'd sit down
half dazed on a doorstep in the dark,
as if there is no other way to be found.

Pray it is by a wife or friend,
and not the hobnailed boots of police.

What happens to the swarm inside
when its honey rots? When the pilgrim's
prayers have hardened, so what buzzed
at his lips is trapped in amber? Any way
it's told, history's a bad translation.
Where I went, the road ends in a heap
of confiscated past, a dump
where dogs and the poor and the ghost
of a poet rummage, until the wind
grows weary of swirling and lets us drop.

JODY GLADDING

1-800-FEAR

We'd like to talk with you about fear they said so many
people live in fear these days they drove up all four of them
in a small car nice boy they said beautiful dogs they said so
friendly the man ahead of the woman the other two waiting
in the drive I was outside digging up the garden no one
home I said what are you selling anyway I'm not interested
I said well you have a nice day they said here's our card
there's a phone number on there you can call anytime any
other houses down this road any one else live here we'd
like to talk to them about living in fear



ROGER WEINGARTEN

Late November Dream Argument over the Title of a Poem Written in August

What's wrong with "The A Muse?"

The pun, like kreplach swimming in kiwi butter, is tonally wrong.

How about "The B Muse?"

Supposed to be a love poem, isn't it?

At the ripe age of three I loved a cat's eye marble that couldn't roll straight but curved on a humid morning into a sewer grate. Dad in suspenders —coasting by after work looked up at the sunset then down at me dropping lit wooden matches between iron slats—rolled down his window, but refused to reach for it. Wasn't his love like the Polish GP, who flew to the states after med school, and, turning bipolar from his window seat over the north Atlantic, never even lifted a tongue depressor to the mouth of an anxious patient? His sunset. My poem.

I am you.

Like goys are us?

Stop the puns or I'll assimilate this hokum into the nightmare where we're about to hold forth to a sea of eyes at a world's fair, look toward our little piggies and find all that we're wearing around the equator is a peanut shell and a rubber band.

If Mormon splinter groups, in the hinterlands that overlap Utah and the atomic proving grounds, have more than one wife, why can't yours truly, who only voted for a republican once but tried to take it back, have more than one muse?

Metamusic.

What's that?

Electronic bird calls played in new age Northern California bathhouses to harmonize the right and left hemispheres of what's left of our brains.

How about Metamusil, the age old remedy for a colon with writers block?

The phone's vibrating. It's our eldest, who wonders if you'd stop being so pharmaceutically paranoid about poison ivy and grey squirrels gnawing the underpinnings of civilization. What should I tell him?

That I'm calling it "Love and Death Riding a Merry Go Round on the Pantry Floor."





BARBARA SIEGEL CARLSON

Impossible Poem

This poem has no words to tell you how it dreams itself off the page & out of this book because the page is already erased & the book is blank. Just as the room has no walls to hold me here, the breathing inside expands to the breathing outside to the blind voices of the crickets that keep resounding through the lightest rain, their nests always hidden as the room you've filled with books of pages written in a language you never speak out loud, only those words are not silent but of the night urgent with messages unsent. I am trying to hear you sealed in my memory – there was a milk box by the porch, but it rusted out the bottom & the key slipped away. There's this trapdoor at the back of my throat where you have slipped & keep falling. I imagine you mute in my subterranean heart looking up from its crevasse to where the poem is being devoured, even as it rises to the night teeming with wings drawn like hieroglyphics on the dome of that cave, which is a kind of inward sky where when you look up you think you see the markings of a relief map, but it's really the whirring that seems to cast out every second to another life, so there's a glorious fury beyond itself even as the rain sheets down. I can't tell anymore which is which for any sound is meaningless, even as speech attempts to name what surges from the storm to expose the veins. This poem grows from its own dead skin knowing it will never breath this hour again, but keeps reaching toward the moment as it dissolves already abandoned because it's impossible to sleep inside the lost – so you are reading the wrong poem – the real one disappeared in an echo through the leaves of the relentless & desperate trilling of a single voice out of thousands, where the one yearning for the other makes this ecstatic sound.

LESLIE ULLMAN

Il Illo Tempore

If one is inclined to fashion
a perspective that renders the past
more benign than it was and the future
more daunting than it will be, then
one's likely to find oneself right in the middle,
an aquatic creature—perhaps a manatee
with fragile wing-fins—pretending it has limbs
to run an obstacle course through the intractable
syrup of a New York traffic jam in a downpour

where the future becomes a line of cabs
that gleam like improbable suns, while drivers
lean on their horns with murder in their hearts
and white-collar workers dressed in black,
the Dow-Jones page of *The Wall Street Journal*
folded away from the rain in briefcases that never
bulge with brown-bag lunches or recycled gift-wrap,
pump excess adrenalin that will eventually
mow them down as they try to flag a ride,
glancing at 14-carat watches that tell the world

time is money, and who's to say it isn't?
Nothing less than a power outage or a bout
of flu can halt most of us over a cooling cup,
chin propped on hands propped on elbows
while the present moment expands to a bubble,
a rainbow of melted sequins thinning
almost to air, that never breaks but holds us weightless
and utterly separated from a new opportunity to
screw something up—and I wonder if this sensation
of floating in time as though it were stilled water
could be an imprint from those months in the womb
when all one had to do was succumb
to the will of molecular imperative
and every move was right.



STEPHEN HAVEN

Temple of Heaven

There, in the Hall of Prayer, under the Good Harvest Dome, even the emperors planted in whispers seeds that might rise through concentric circles to the sky. They were the prayers they breathed, the central pillars of the point toward which our tour guide let us lean, not sit. The entire temple was a times table, nine fan-shaped slabs in the top-most inner ring, the second with two times nine, third three times. Until at the center of the bottom-most eighty-one

everything depended, the testosterone of the throne, the hunger of the people, on that flaccid number's masculine design. The throne was roped off, but in that 9 x 9, we could see the exact point where earth touched sky: vats of gathered rice and wheat, gored pigs and sheep on the engraving of the clipped wings of September, corn-fattened flocks on the ninth of the twelve pillars. Within eternity's nine circles, we imagined them imagining.

Then 1999 lifted its angles against the sky like monuments some Muscovite mob never traveled East to tear down: A small crowd gathered around two ehros, old men who whined with bow and string and not for money, for no one's pleasure, as far as I could see, but their own beneath the trees. Through the haze of that grey evening my wife and I saluted and clowned with Mao caps on, posed for money in the Empress's and Emperor's gowns, snapped and flashed away at the new tiger of the Chinese yuan.

Then, tired at last, we tipped our glasses and filled them again as the night snapped on: downtown's monolithic slabs, pure concrete, capped like bad teeth with pagodas or the ghostly shape of them, their wings made wholly of wire and light.

We talked of Mao, of beauty, its price, its presence too in this dark matter of food, and wondered what he'd say, preserved in the polished monotony of his own infallible decay. (He whispered from his glass coffin of the kiss that might wake him.)

Gate of Good Harvest, Hall of Abstinence,
in such a house, who would throw a stone?
You nod toward the yellow arches of McDonald's now! But even the architecture, swollen in time's mundane swagger, wouldn't wish them back again, these emperors who killed millions, who kept as slaves thousands of women, eunuchs to herd them, and had prepared 99 dishes for each royal New Year! Over noodles and dumplings,

history's downward imperious curve beaded in the sweat of our *Yanjing* beer. We wondered what it said for them that at the center of such grace, only in the wash of beauty, they prayed for their people's rice.





PAMELA USCHUK

Spotting Whoopers

For Don and Lynn Watt

Swallowing dread, we drive to the coast
where sun tosses white grenades of light
bursting cumulous banks. Four friends,
we have not given up on this dispirited world, look
for signs to reverse what curses us.

Salt-balmy the air, and I try not to think
about my nephew nor Don's son deploying
to Iraq this month of kites and wind-bag politicians
staying a course set on greed.

Pulling into Aransas Refuge
we're here to see elusive whooping cranes, those
rarest of wings. Our chances are slim
as this trip to the edge of Texas, a dare
on a day bright as a tin foil balloon
and as fragile. Up ramps
winding through new oak leaves, we climb
breathing humidity and pollen
to the viewing platform.

I focus on what I don't believe,
a huge brown sow swimming with its litter
across a channel, then the miraculous curve
of feathers white and luminous as magnesium
above knobby knees pistoning to land
dancing into swamp grass.

Tea-colored Gulf waves froth over
over the small clatter of blue crabs
across sand spits, gorse and lacy wild flowers
intersecting the tracks of javelinas, deer

roseate spoonbills, raccoons.

White as arctic wind, whooping cranes bend
intent on their hunt while we lose sight
of their red-gashed heads, lush eye-liner
black as pharaoh's kohl, primaries
dipped in ink. We are stunned
by these birds, celestial
and inaccessible as words
we fail to find that could stop
war's unappeasable appetite.

Oh prayer beads of fortune, safely
lift these cranes into the salty cradle of blue Gulf air
that mimics air above a gulf a half a world away
where my nephew will fly to a war
like ice to fire
leaving behind
we who have not learned the charm to turn
roadside mines into love notes,
who too often speak the stiletto syllables of loss,
whose nightmares are lit by mortar fire and suicide bombs,
who cannot find any real map for
peace.

Tonight the moon opens
its white lips and howls. It has no need
of patriotic slogans or sacrifice.
Defying extinction, cranes snap up blue crabs
in their anthracite beaks, then
light.

Money Can't Buy You

Broke again and spending the last spare change
of aspen leaves rattling autumn sun, we set back
the hands of clocks, dreading
the black hammer of early nightfall, killer
frost and the stiff-legged horses who must go without
shelter save the bare arms of scrub oaks
all winter in the lower pasture.
Stupidly, I buy lottery tickets, getting
the numbers wrong each time, and
still my heart clicks like spring ice
breaking at the weekly announcement of winners.
I remember the poet back East, who asked
if we knew any poets who weren't millionaires
in America, each word like a velvet fist
around our throats, accusing our lack. Of course,
his novel was chosen by Oprah so that his press
had to scramble to print enough copies
for the million fondling hands of TV worshippers,
and his back-woods boy face
lifted to cameras, to the sweet breath of fame
that began to line his pockets like sow's ears.
I sift through the stacks of bills, a parfait
of debt, burying our kitchen counter, wondering
how to shift them from credit card
to credit card, that sure coal chute to destruction.
And, I stubbornly write verse

that has no fingers for profit, no nose
for investment, nothing but a gambler's heart
jumping on the river boat of promise,
of wax-winged and sun-struck hope
despite snow clouds eating the far mountains,
fat Canada geese laughing
over the backs of fenced horses,
flapping away from our toothaches,
the astronomical cost of propane,
their wings the color of burnt coins,
heading South.

NOELLE GOODING

FRIDAY BURNING

There is seventies glam rock playing overhead
and the crooked arm of a backhoe
beside the river, where the men are big and sweat
into their workboots and ripped out armholes.
And into this existence, Neruda
is the beckoning cattails and glaring orange
plastic safety fencing. For he has given to all
this, in the factories, under steel, with heat and
monstrous bodies heaving
machine parts, as the demise of the audience
is calmed by *Twenty Love Poems*. This is why
the breakfast speakers are tender, they
have softly taken us, unaware
to 1973. And I think you would agree
that Neruda makes us consummate. And that
death is happening everywhere. The womb
was the very first hospice. It was comforting
and red and prepared us to leave.
You are comforting and wear yellow
seashells but still have bones
that break when it rains. And that is why
I am writing this, to you, today. Neruda
strived to be "corroded as if by an acid,
by the toil of the hand, impregnated with sweat
and smoke, smelling of urine
and lilies." Like the men of the docks, we will all be
saved, because we all get tired of being.

SAMIRA DIDOS

Dark Wings

The hawk caught in our throat
is flapping its dark feathers.

Our shallow breath is wedged
in the hollows of our restless wings.

Smearred with indistinct coating,
We glide leaving not a mark.

We have become a master
key, a passe-partout, for every lock.

A mirror without a face,

a besieged city entered in disguise.

A wrecker trailing a failing comet,
spewing ice and dust in every eye.

CHRISTINE GALT SHIELDS

FUNERAL SONG, WITH BEES

We are sitting in my garden,
sunlit, pink snow from redbuds
settles on the fine hair of our arms.
You are practicing an elegy
for your mother.
Behind your voice,
behind birdsong
and the distant sound of cars,
rises the hum of bees
working in a plum tree

while a thousand miles east of us,
in driving rain,
an eighty-year old beekeeper's
truck has jackknifed, rolled
and come to rest.
Boxes of hives—
thirty million bees—
scattered open to the air,
hum ferociously, lost
without sunlight,
without a queen,
without the keeper
who lies crushed beneath the truck,

yet sees sunlight
in a garden and a woman
shelling peas into the yellow bowl
his small hands lifted up to hers
just yesterday, after supper.
He touches her knees;
her apron smells of soap
and air. He raises his arms;
she sets aside the bowl
to lift him. She is not singing
yet, but he hears,
in the garden around them,
the humming of bees.

SUSAN THOMAS

FROM THE EMPTY NOTEBOOK SERIES

Identity Crisis of the Empty Notebook

I am not the empty notebook.
My pages do not glitter blankly,
spiraled in a smirking cover.
My words don't harbor silence
to cover what I'm saying. Their
non-existence fills the page with
undercover images. My insidious
presence wallows in a squamous
future, but does not covet the seething
void or fill it with a truant absence.
I've been cubby-holed, coastered,
doodled and dined-on, winked at,
cut and fingered. I've been high-jacked,
kidnapped, tossed and kissed, stirred,
caressed and shaken. My abuses of
language shatter the sky — who cares
if I say *banquet* when you hear *heartache* —
My shadow cracks the sidewalks,
darkens light bulbs, breaks through
doorways while my shredded cover
shrieks from every trash heap.

The Empty Notebook in Ruins

After attack by a murderous
moon, the empty notebook recuperates
as wordless, worthless pulp, withholding
responses to incriminating questions,
but unwitting answers drip in whimpers
into crippled streams of thought.
“No sweat,” the empty notebook
chokes, making no attempt at meaning,
slicking back its blankness, withholding
all desire. Its hovering cover is spattered
with compromise. The paradox in question
was never its agenda. “No, sir,” says
the gloating notebook, simpering with
sickly pleasure, “As every breath is sweet,
discretion is the better part — so I still
my quivering tongue to let the stink
of survival stick to every living page.”

Song of the Empty Notebook

I am the shoe without a foot.
I am the pot without a handle.
I am the note without music.
I am the wordless refrain.

I am the spine that splinters.
I am the brain that fabricates pages.
I am black as a hand, black as an eye.
Flocks of black chickens fly over

my cover, nesting in my hollow
heart. I am faithful as lamplight.
I leave my right hand to its own
devices, but my left hand pursues

pleasure's leap. Bestial notebook,
heart like a flicker of glittering fists,
spattering tattle onto your pages—
sad prattle flattens every phrase.

Voice of the Empty Notebook

Called upon to speak,
the empty notebook has
nothing to say. It can't
remember anything because
there's nothing to remember.
It talks in a voice as thin
as tissues—*My cover barks
against a moonless sky. It
cowers like vapor in a
snowstorm, embarrassed by
its nakedness, anticipating
touch, but nothing has come
to ride its surface. Don't you
hate the way it looks when
emptiness stretches from
where you've been to where
you're going? Don't you hate
when everything's a blank?*

TRANSLATIONS

MANG KE AND GU CHENG *TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN HAVEN & WANG SHOUYI*

MANG KE

PEOPLE AGE EVEN AFTER DEATH

From the bodies of the dead
White hair grows
People age even after death

Nightmares haunt them in the grave
Startle them awake
They open their eyes and see

Another day is hatched
Pecking for food in the fields

Day hears its own footsteps
The laughter, the sorrow
Of its own body, recalls

In its heart, though its brain
Is empty, all the rotting corpses

The day sings of them
And of its own lover
It holds her face steady
With its two hands

Then it puts her back
Cautiously in the grass,
The sexual drag of her body

The day may wait for sunshine
But finally, an old straw mattress,
The wind blows it away

The day waits for dusk
When it will hide from you
As if in fear of the savagery
Of a wild beast

But at night, at night, it is so tender
Released, you can pull it wordless
Into your arms

Play with it as you like

Maybe it will lie down on the spot
Exhausted, its eyes closed
Listening to the roar of the fighting
Of heavenly beasts

Day may worry, on that one night
The heavens might open, blood rain down

It may stand up moaning
At the face of the dead,
A woman whose eyes stare and stare

It may hope, may wish itself
Alive forever, not a hunted animal

Not roasted in the fire
Not swallowed
Though the pain is still unbearable

From the bodies of the dead
White hair grows
Even after death, they age and age

YOU, DEAD DAY

Once I walked in this same street with you
Saw you with open eyes
Dead in the street
I felt the earth suddenly pulled
Out from under our feet
The stickiness of that void
Although I yelled, although I tried
The sorrow of escape—no use
I sank down and down
Worrying in the last moment
Of the smothered future

VINEYARD

A small plot, a vineyard,
My own luscious land

When the autumn wind walks through the door
Bam, bam: my whole home
Nothing but grapes heavy with tears

The yard is darkened by one wall
From which a few pigeons take fright

The children secret their dirty faces
Behind the house

The dog that used to hang around here
Runs away somewhere

A flock of chickens fluttering everywhere
Clucking endlessly

With my own eyes I see
Grapes falling to the ground,
Blood running in the fallen leaves

This is the day of no peace
Who can help desiring it?
This is the day of darkness

GU CHENG

ELEGY

A small potato under the moon
A small potato under the moon

Coming up, a dog

Sniff
A small potato under the moon

DON'T TAKE A WALK THERE

Don't take a walk there

It's getting dark
A small group of stars
Bloom silently
Around a huge dead tree

Don't take a walk there

The dream is too deep
You don't have a feather
Life cannot sound
The depth of death

Don't take a walk there

Come down the mountain
Life needs repetition
Repetition is the way
Don't take a walk there

Farewell to despair
Farewell to the valley full of wind
Crying is a sort of happiness

Don't take a walk there

And then the light
Fresh flowers in a field of wheat
Shake the curtain of dawn

SRECKO KOSOVEL

Translated by Ana Jelnicar and Barbara Siegel Carlson

Village Behind the Pines

In the pines' green embrace
a dusty white village,
a half-asleep village
like a bird in the nest of the hands.

By the fragrant pines I pause:
isn't this in the clasp of my hands?
such a grasp, such a vault
for a handful of children.

Behind the church wall someone's
buried. On the grave a briar blooms.
From the white village, white paths,
and all of them lead to my heart.

Spring

The rose is a goblet of dew
opening into the evening wind
that caresses the dewy fields.
In the middle flowers white stars
fragrant throughout the sky.

Go and fill up your goblet.

Poem

The nightingale shudders
and sings
among thorns,
a white blossom bleeding...

A blooming thorn bush
in the white desert.
Its fruit like drops of blood
ripens on the white scree
of the Karst plain
--there my corner will be.

Song of the Humbled

Through the odor of simmering stews
and the yelling, I walk the gray pavement.
Already the children are old,
cheeks drawn without laughter or dreams.

Their tangled hair barely stirs.
Dressed in rags at noon,
the women carry lunch pails.
Their eyes dead, their hearts dead.

And as I walk I fear I see
in each face revenge,
each moment surging like the sea
in this strait of rotting fish.

Call For Solitude

That I could come to the field at midnight
when the blue darkness spills,
that I could escape those streets
where everyone screams, shoves, scrambles, crushes!

That I could come to the field at midnight
in such solitude for my soul to meet God.
Look, I am hurt from these ways,
from people I am hurt in my heart.

That I could come to the field at midnight
where only stars burn and lakes breathe,
where only a shadow spills into eyes,
tree shadows kissing my open eyes
as I in my heart, in my sick heart
long for His kiss



SPECIAL FEATURE

POEMS FROM WILTSHIRE AND WALES

*(FROM A LITERARY TRIP SPONSORED BY UT-CHATTANOOGA'S
CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM)*

Each year UTC sponsors a trip to Europe for its creative writing students. This year the trip was to Wales and Wiltshire. The three week program included 10 workshops, readings at the Poetry Society in London and in Cardiff Wales, visits to various literary and historical sites, as well as places of natural beauty. Each year the group is accompanied by one or more experienced poets in addition to Richard Jackson, and this year Bill Rasmovicz and Suzanne Heyd, two well published poets, accompanied the group. The poems below were all written on this trip. Students of The Poetry Program at UT-Chattanooga have a 100% rate of receiving fellowships, scholarships and assistantships to the leading MFA Program in the past 25 years, and several such as Khaled Mattawa, Bradley Paul, Ever Saskaya, Paul Guest, Laurel Snyder, Lydia Melvin, and Cathy Wagner, among others, have gone on to publish books, often through contests, and a few dozen have published major press chapbooks. Rasmovicz and Heyd were major contributors to the creative and intellectual spirit of the three week trip.



Stonehenge

SUZANNE HEYD
SCRIPT

Among the confusion of relics, grief. You have to imagine
the love story, a monk, an abbey by its ruins. Architrave after
architrave empty the sky. Remember the end. If

a man from Arimathea rinsed each chalice of passion and only
inks ghost the vellum. And still we argue each road into
its past: this may be the rim of a storage jar, a bowl to hold

a royal spleen, its missing lid. You have to imagine the story.
Scriptorium text in the wooden cupboard: *tabula*,
magna tabula, a binding of rote prayers. Let your lost name

be Joseph. And I childless Hannah, first wife of envy. Our
letters of soot and water, each error a roughened surface on skin.
Do we stand in for each other? This may be a reliquary

to hang around your neck: a bleeding heart, the head
of Christ, a trailing vine. What other salvage? Let annunciation
be nothing more than Bridget, holy thorn of Glastonbury

barefoot on her way to the Axe estuary. Madonna of fragment
and torso. Let this be a love before Dissolution. Our names
a garland of oak galls crushed in sour wine, in rust.



Glastonbury Abbey

AFTER I'M SORRY

the last two lines are illegible.
Maybe I can decipher "dreams."
Also "falls."
And "of it," like a stutter, untethering
the end. Okay, then, what
you meant meanders
into scrawl. And words are
light, just as you
say. But the throated afternoon
knows beyond topography
the way sun brims
from its craters, the way
apologies scribble desire across
impossible distance. Maybe our
voices will always stammer
toward night and dissolve. A comet
falls faster than
my dreams can map
of it. What you don't know is
I make things up. What you mean
to me can't withstand
the crucible.



Standing Stones at Avebury, Wiltshire



Tintern Abbey, Wales

BILL RASMOVICZ
THE WINDOWS OF TINTERN ABBEY

People say the eye, if anything, is a window.
I look around: nothing but sheep and green and barbed wire ,
a landscape tranquilized.

I keep hearing the footsteps of the conquerors.
I keep mistaking myself for a nest of bees.

There is a theory that suggests the whole of man is descended
from an apple, and that the future of the body
is machinery.

Remember the iron lung?
Think; the circuitry of despair, re-wired.

People say love is a place. They say words are light machines
and I believe them. And that the eye,
if anything, *is* what it sees:
two crows for instance, fedoras of asphalt in the rain.
And though raining, I can't hear it for my thinking.

People say that stones have more aesthetic value in the rain,
that the language of futility, is rain.

The body is a window. Look at it:
I keep thinking, if anything, I am a fallout shelter,
that my head is a church of trees.
I keep trying to decipher my life from my life.

If the shadow of a willow could consume now, I would let it.
It is said that with a stethoscope, you can hear a willow breathe,
and I believe it.

I imagine if wind were a voice, it would be born of a willow.
I imagine if I spoke, really spoke, the stones around me
would rise up and listen.

MY POLAND

By its scent, it is ash and creosote, skin
of the accordion.

It's the bowels of a cellar dug by hand
in which your clothes are hung to dry, to reek of soot and nails
and years ago.

The way the tiny gravestone floats like a suitcase in the grass
up there on the hill.

It's your bleached-cork complexion,
the notch in your brow like the bend in the Carpathians
just where they turn
sharply at the border toward some escape southward.

The gold ring around your mother's tooth; a tiny halo holding her up.

The boil of pig's feet and duck's blood.
The rosaries stuffed in the back of the nightstand; muffled prayers
reciting themselves over and over in the dark
for the dog to shut up, for the pipes to unfreeze,
for the penance of living.

The oration of bells, hymns where the choir
sang as though with their mouths full of meat, a language
you never learned.

The quarantine of photographs cradling each other,
like hands clenching for a morsel of food, a drop of wine, or water.

Its eloquently brooding cities and lugubrious black rivers,
rivers of sulfur, its anorexic rivers; mirror-less,
scars in motion,
distilled through you into the gray namelessness of your being.

To know the weather by the hinge of your ankles,
and where the news is always who married or whose chest erupted
during an eclipse of dreaming.

Where the stutter of the streetlight
beneath the gasoline-soaked rag of the sky
illuminates the mutt scouring the alleys for the garbage left.

Its electrical towers feigning obelisks,
its wires and tubes siphoning in the afternoons, then spitting them out.

And the splatter of culm for landscape.
And the green fire of the leaves,

and lights inside staying on late for hardly anyone sleeping.

It's the crutches, the couch and the cigarette burns
and loss of people to things,

the left-over screws and the flammables too close to the furnace.

It's the ants hemorrhaging from the wood,
the tempest of feathers the hawk leaves beneath the vines.

It's the mouth as subjected to its tongue, to know the body
by its breaking.
To hold your shoulders up with your head, to laugh to yourself daily
at the bit of dying you do.

The Mother Mary's in bathtubs, the drunken card games
and crucifixes glaring.
Its litter of cathedrals lodged in the back of your brain
to keep you from floating off.
The thunderhole of the voice you repeatedly mistake for you.

Where the kitchen clock
sounds like someone hammering down your history with a femur.

The bald cries of sirens measuring the distance.
The wrought iron stillness of the trees and decapitated chimneys.
The tire smoke.
The perforated wind.

The wrought iron stillness of the trees.



Near Painscastle, Wales

BIRKIN GILMORE

OWL

The forest at night is a great bird.
It hears my thoughts ticking like raindrops, sparse
and distinct. My feathers mature in its shadows.
I intersperse between sounds until only
my eyes thread moonlight through my feathers.
The night insinuates itself between my thoughts.
The difference between listening to the forest full
of sound and one mouse is my wingspan.
Of all my senses one
gives into all the rest. It springs
from somewhere outside of me and creates
what I know as my body. I remember my shape
by its feeling, the dusty smell of oak leaves,
the lightness inside my breast-bone, moonlight
on the sycamores. Sometimes, in the center
of the night I reach through the trunk
and leaves of the sycamore to a deep spring.
I am held there, in the tree, in the earth
in the spring. On those nights, what I eat is alive
with intent to live.

SELF-ELEGY

When death comes I will see it
from the corner of the windshield,
a thin crack spreading
a thin horizon thinner and thinner
until everything alive can fit inside it.
Everything I have ever seen will begin
to flatten out to touch my death like touching a star.
All the stones will fall from my pockets.
The places I have been will begin their journey
back to where they came from. I will realize
somewhere, that I have lived inside the body
of death since the beginning.
Colors pool separate from their shapes, in back
of me receding until darkness holds me
as I would hold a light bulb in my hand.
My body will speak then to everything inside it.
It will speak the language of dirt and of earthworms to the soil.
It will speak to the sea in the language of salt. It will speak
to the birds in currents of living air, and to trees
in the hard language of fire.

ATA MOHARRERI
WRITTEN IN BED
After Cesar Vallejo

The peace, the poplar, the cloud, the owl,
The places, the cows, the crows,
The helpful, the shoe heel, the doctor, the coffin,
The cousins, the portraits, the poor,
The drops, the void;
The graveside, the forehead, the stomach, the soul.

The drowned, the risen,
The hot blooded, the cold, eighteen, old,
Those rolled over, those aghast, those bitten,
Those filled up, those thrown down, those linked.

Running, burning, breaking,
Living, raging,
Forgetting, calling, going, waiting,
Dying, sustaining, singing, returning.

Afterward, beforehand, there,
Afterward, below,
Maybe, meanwhile, almost, so little, so always,
Above, beneath, between,
Distant, here, these, so much,
So always, so always.



At Dylan Thomas' House, Laugharne, Wales

FENDALL FULTON
APPLE

Blue bicycle, leaning against the gate post
with the apple core, brown, resting against
your tire, whose hand guided you
down what street, towards what juncture?
My mind is a telescope. I pull you
into tomorrow, watch you go past the butcher's,
the book seller's, the post office, past
my window. From behind the curtains,
I watch you ascend the downs and vanish
into next week, among the infinite sheep.
You will keep to the edges of pastures, seams
on a fatigued coat thrown over the bones
of the earth. There you are, high above me,
on a fist of rock, a hand thrust into a pocket,
clutching loose change. I have one pound.
I will go to the market and buy an apple
from Lillith, Farmer Ledlow's daughter.
She will tell me how many lambs they've lost
this spring and who is leaving their farm.

RISELKA IN LOVE

I am a jealous stream chasing you
down the mountainside. I am
the enveloping mist at the base
of a waterfall. I am the tuft of grass
that touches your knee, then
your shadow when you emerge
from the trees. I am the feather you
pick up on your way down the lane.
When you let me go, I am the latch
on your gate, the stone on your path,
the door you push open, the glass
from which you drink. I am
the last droplet on your lip
that you wipe away on your sleeve.



Keats Walk, Winchester, where he composed *To Autumn*

MEGAN HAMILTON
DOORWAYS

Yesterday, when you touched my hand,
I shuddered.

Someday all the tears that I have collected
in thimbles will evaporate.

I felt all the near-accidents of our bodies,
the way we enter rooms ghosts have just left.

Already, the light in my belly is dimming.
I trace my profile on the mirror.

HE THAT BEGAT THE HORSE

The sound you hear in the attic is his
rotating body, the way it spins around
his great eye, framed by flies
incomprehensible in their stillness.
Many years ago, language dried up in his mouth
and left the odor of corpses. He tries to
awaken his hunger by feeding, but grass withers
at the touch of his soft pink tongue
and he watches the world recede and fall away
again. Like you, he never blinks.



Birkin Gilmore, Ata Moharreri, Zebediah Taylor

ZEBEDIAH TAYLOR
THE ZEBEDIAH POEMS

HALF-EATEN WORDS

Zebadiah's the nave of an abbey,
a cloister through which I struggle.
I see through him like endless panes of glass
as he forms the belly through which I worm.
He tells me how to chew a squirrel's paw
to raise an ailing sound,
to wear the passing like a coat,
how to unravel into sweeter emptiness.
I worm for his half-eaten words
under stinging columns of nettles
and marble afflicted by the earth,
My eyes become the webwork of cracking
running through his shivered glass,
and I form from myself the buried body over the sky.

SELF ELEGY FOR Z.H.

Zebadiah, look on Zebadiah
the corpse you made and left.
Thursday last he danced even in his ember hat,
with years of unrest and quiet within him loosening.
How is it the sun is always falling,
it's only a gravestone for the swelling of air --
In him, the earth had made a light to snuff
and in heaves the lands took note
that he was no bird and stood alone.
Baffled by and dazzled with each other,
it was the world that was weak,
and Zebadiah that more than seemed
a light that pushed --
he had made the air turn belly-up,
and burned the world to rags,
he burned through feathered husks, and ran
till there was nothing on which he could be fed.



Nether Stowey, Devonshire, Coleridge's House

DAVID ST. JOHN

THIS HURT

If you look closely, you can see
the moon's shadow disappearing
in the morning. When I lie
here, my soul becomes a window
opening through the sky. This is how
Stephen Daedalus fell into his own mind
like light into a black hole. Through filth,
hydrophobia, through the ruination
of the body and the unraveling of DNA,
'Brightness falls from the air'.
This dew sleeping on fists
of mud and grass is a reminder
that the Earth will always be sadder than us.
The center of the world turns
like an engine, a flame burning
beneath all of us, like a dog's heart.
There are black raindrops on my cheek,
my tongue has turned to pulp
in my mouth. This hurt is addicting,
this virus clenched around my cells.
The wind rattles like change in loose pockets.
I am following you.

NO EXIT STRATEGY

It's as if our souls were eating each other to keep from starving.
People fall to the ground like shadows of smoke, black clouds
bow to the sun, two thousand plus presumed dead.
Today's news is the same as yesterday's news in that each day is a struggle
for this humanity we all possess. You have to understand:
Language forms the roots and bark of our consciousness.
It's survival depends on our being incredibly forgiving
of our surroundings. Eyes latch on to the artistry of swaying trees,
our ears remember branches cracking like waves against a dock.
The sky turns hillside-green from its own embarrassment,
the young girl who lies down in the park and dreams about the ocean looks
to her friend asking, "Have you ever seen the clouds so close before?"
It's the art of forgetting that keeps us sane. We are told that
in the beginning was the word, and then the word disappeared,
buried beneath a beach of stars, in an unmarked grave.
You can bury me there, wrap my scarred body in a blanket,
parade me around like a homeless man searching
for the warmest room. I will write for you,
you will listen while I live, and the only thing I will fear is the familiar
voice on the other end of the line, when the name that is said is my own.

AT MIDNIGHT BETWEEN TWO GLOAMINGS

I.
There is a sound like trumpets calling
over the embers of church fires
and I wake like a cigarette just lit.
Everyone else died. I lived. I was the only
one. I am Samuel, the first cell.
The sky fell in a flurry of exclamation

points, and light shined through
the hole it left, for the first time. The water,
the mirror of the world's aggression shook
like a sound wave, and I stepped out of it,
onto land, onto my feet, for the first time.
I was bacteria, I was paramecium,
I was a fish, I was the missing link
between tradition and desire, I was a man.
I am Samuel, the first cell.

II.

There was a woman I loved who let
me make love to her. We used to lie
down in hay bails and listen to the music
of gunfire in the distance, watching spirals
of flies dance in the dark. I remember her eyes
still as the moon across her face.
Language travels on smoke, losing its meaning
as it's passed from one being to the next.
I will push these words through her mouth
with a delicate hand.

III.

One must scream before one learns how to speak.
I will hate before I learn how to love. I am Samuel,
the first cell, the missing link between the past
and modern wars. I will hide myself
in the creases of her thoughts, my heart will be
frozen in amber, and you will feel
my blood of oil, and remember my face of bone.

LEARNING

There are five liters in one gallon.
Also, the fish in fish and chips
is generally cod, unless you specify.
I may have started as a mutation,
but really, didn't we all?
There is no escaping being grabbed inappropriately
on the circle line, just grin and bear it.
Waiting for the train is also agony, like twenty minutes
of the last two minutes of drowning
in a bathtub. To pass the time I draw pictures.
I drew a nightmare once.
I drew a box.
I drew a landshark who bit off my arm.
Above me, I drew the girl of my dreams
smooching another man. I neglected
to draw any clothes on me,
my pen ran out of ink.
I wonder what this means?
Sometimes, I remember how I used to act
two years ago, and start to believe I am that person
dreaming of the present, that is to say,
the future. The sky is always gray directly above your head.
No, I can't really prove that.
My life began in the dark, and I've learned
that the daytime is obsolete.
No wonder all the flowers here seem to be liltling
so violently.



Alfoxen, Wordsworth's House

ANNE BRETTELL
I'VE ALWAYS FAVORED PAPER

Don't give me a gravestone
where you will feel obligated
to leave flowers once a year.
Instead, maybe a mailbox
where I'll be visited by strangers
wary bill-payers, dreading
the sea of numbers slipping
out from the folds of the envelopes,
excited magazine subscribers
who've collected every National
Geographic since the year 1972,
or even a hand-written letter,
in deliberating script,
containing words mused over for 40 years
like, "I heard a song yesterday, it was your voice,"
or perhaps, "We should go out for drinks
and renew old hurts we've almost forgotten."
It will arrive an unexpected lover,
a little awkwardness, then
laughter that's heard downstairs,
echoing through the wooden house
all the way to the edge of the yard,
to the mailbox, to me.

WILL FLOWERS
SPOOLS OF DIAMONDS

Another mossy window, grand in its emptiness.
You too look grand
standing there with no shoes.
If there weren't a war right now, nothing

would be different here.

Perspective of a ruined window. Brodsky wrote
that the mother of Muses was Memory—
after Space and Time sit their thrones, she comes
to topple them over,
to make them go into the corner and kiss.

467 years since the Dissolution and I'm in a flux at Glastonbury.
Which way do I look?
Forward. I can step over the pale
bell-shaped tubers that are tender and edible
for a couple of weeks in the spring.
I think sometimes that these hollowed out churchyards
must undergo a midnight lycanthropy,
where all their moss and time-drenched wounds
stitch up with animal fear and pain.

Your eyes aren't green or gray,
and the light that turns in them
brightens the Somerset sky.
If there weren't a war right now, nothing
would be any different here.



Plaque for Medieval Welsh Poet, Davydd, Wales

THE TROWLEY LETTER POEMS

A ROUND OF VERSE LETTERS WRITTEN BY PARTICIPANTS ON UT-CHATTANOOGA'S ANNUAL CREATIVE WRITING TRIP TO EUROPE. THESE POEMS WERE WRITTEN IN THE LAST HALF OF MAY AT TROWLEY FARM, PAINSCASTLE, WALES, NEAR HAY-ON-WYE. SUZANNE HEYD AND BILL RASMOVICZ HAVE MFA DEGREES FROM VERMONT COLLEGE, AND CO-TAUGHT THE THREE TIMES A WEEK WORKSHOPS WITH RICHARD JACKSON WHO GUIDED THE TRIP. THE OTHER NINE PARTICIPANTS ARE UNDERGRADUATES AT UT-CHATTANOOGA.



Trowley House, Painscastle, Wales

SUZANNE HEYD

OF THE SOUL

For David St. John

And you, David, how many years did you wait gentle
for it to find you. And was it joy.

And was it patience. And did you trust
it like the tireless pulse of love at your throat. As now

your sideward glance soft from a car window trusts
the road. Your half-smile at sunset, was this

the ripening vine of it, did it fill to secret your hours.
And David, can we write to it, telling it,

as Eliot did, to be still and wait without hope.

Perpetual the way Avebury stones circle their silence.

And as your gaze escapes over dim hills, can you hear
it in the endless spill of shells from the lips

of the far shore. David, can we name it
as Thomas did, his animal of parched and raging voice.

Does it carry as the wind carries the bleating of lambs
nameless in the nameless sloping meadows.

Can it ever be more than a cameo carved in old rock.
Dusk brings us mile by mile back

to the farmhouse where we have lived these weeks close
as strangers, where you at the sink washed

another dish and said I know it is there but not where
or its shape or how to contain it

in language. David, does it collect us the way words,
our curios and souvenirs, collect us in

their game of syllables and rhyme, distracting us from
the monotonies of the trip.

Are we then, David, are we still summer children
alone with our ropes and puppets,

are we still waiting for it in a puzzle of arrival. David,
the car is rented for one more day.

We lost only a little time stopping for the weasel as it
skittered along the hedgerow near

the road, found its way in, and was gone.



King Arthur's Stone, near Hay-on Wye, Wales

DAVID ST. JOHN

YOU ARE THE ROSE THAT SLEEPS WITHIN THE BODY

For Fendall Fulton

Here in Wales, there is a rock
containing a storm. You can feel
the wind when you place your hand on it.
I saw you yesterday, it seems
peeking out from inside a young girl's body,
the way colors dilute and blossom
in water. It was raining,
the city threatened to swallow
the sky, and the streets were wet
so I passed her quickly, outside the bookshop.
Here, the rain becomes an organ
of everything. It falls into cracks
like sunlight. Sometimes it floats
in the air like paper, becomes the cologne
of the wind, and you stop noticing it.
Here, it's enough to watch
the wind run across a river.
You can scream for hours
and only get back silence. I remember
the spray of gravel kicked up like a rainbow
the afternoon you introduced me to Marcos
and I strained to keep up with him.
I remember your heart, the way you pretended
to sleep when we went to wake you up,
how excited you were returning
home, leaving your clothes
in piles on the floor, finding your lover
lying in bed, on her side, in the same position
she slept when you were there. Here,
it's enough to lie across a rock and stare
at the horizon, still as broken vertebrae.
You can look a child straight
in the eyes, and he will render
your life obsolete with his potential
for grace. Birds disappear
into a single feather, and darkness is always
a breath away from daylight. Here,
the stars hang by threads, same
as the thread inside your heart that sings
in your sleep. Here, your body
becomes a wave that crosses the oceans
between us, the white branches
or your soul, and the light behind them.

FENDALL FULTON
SEA LEVEL AT WORMSHEAD
For Richard Jackson

I will remember wearing Wellies
for a week on holiday in the back-country
of Wales. I think I have always lived here,
although it is not my home. Let me
always feel the weight of the sky.
Let nightfall surprise me again
so that when I look out of myself,
parts of the earth are suddenly gone.
At night, you could map all the houses,
little light-islands clinging to invisible
hillsides like sheep and they would not
outnumber the stars. I will remember
how the clouds wrote themselves across
the sky, how they blew themselves out
of existence and how they poured themselves
back into the deep green bowl of the valley
outside your window. You will empty
your desk soon when it is time to leave.
It will be more empty than it was before
you bent over it, filled it with your arms,
your mountains, oceans, roads and sky.
I will remember how you stood
on the rocky shore at Wormshead, how you
seemed to pour yourself into the rising tide,
seemed to spread yourself out across
the horizon where the sky presses against
the water. The shells you turned over
in your hand are gone. They have become
small inside the ocean, smaller
than pearls, smaller than stars.



Dylan Thomas' Writing Shed, Wales

RICHARD JACKSON

THE WEATHER FORECAST IS SUNNY RAIN

For Anne Brettell

How do you do that? Read minds the way
The wind reads the desire of the trees. I know,
It's what loves us despite our ignorance of it.
It's what burrows, hidden, into our souls, only
To surface when we forget who we are. I think
You must know the secret of trees, how their leaves are
Made of birdsong. This is the secret of lovers,
Of brothers, sisters, mothers, of fathers we hardly knew.
They speak in a language we know before we hear it.
It's a veil or scarf, a foggy window, the heavy odor
Of flowers that keep us immortal in our perfect ignorance.
Look, the branches are so heavy with water they rain on themselves.
It's the way you stare off at the hidden birdsong, or
Downward like these heavy branches, or towards the side
Of the road where a lamb lies stiff and ruffled outside the fence.
We never know where the paths of the wind begin or where they end.
It's the voice that climbs the trees, that enters the far reaches
Of the soul, that reads the heart the way the wind reads the trees.

ANNE BRETTELL

THE SUN IS GONE

For Will Flowers

While writing this poem
my thoughts turn to birds
and finally land in your hair.
The real birds say it tastes
like the butterscotch we watched
them make at the candy store.
The workers hands were lovers or artists
carefully inspecting the long bars
which would soon turn our mouths
into record players, \$1000 Wedding
coming out of our ears and
making everyone dance in couples.
Your eyes remind me of the mirrors
after your bath, cloudy surfaces
reflecting the blue tiles on the tub.
And the tiles are boxes
that don't hold us in, even
when the sun is gone,
we will dance outside, your
finger pointing as if
it were telling the music
which way to go.

WILL FLOWERS

TWO LETTERS

For Bill Rasmovicz

I

In Sienna two years ago it was ninety
degrees if it was ten. We laid around the rusty
campo like it was a beach,
and you barely said a word. I thought
Why the hell isn't Bill wearing socks?
His feet must feel awful.
Don't like socks, you said.

I've been meaning to bring that up.
I sat on the tub the other day
while you washed your socks in the sink.
These are different times, Bill.

II

I've been meaning to tell you that when you read aloud
you can make the stones
in the landscape shiver off their moss,
then stand up and scream it all back.
After you die, or maybe sometime before
the birds will string a circle of stones
around your grave and when moss
buds up in channels of cold spring wind
your head will be a church of trees.

I remember you saying in Aberystwyth
that even when you live in it,
you can't get used to the cold.



Aberystwyth, West Coast of Wales

BILL RASMOVICZ

TOTEM

For Megan Hamilton

Dear friend you are not well.
No. No I can see you looking faint
with that ossified gaze of yours.
What is that thump thumping all alone
in the cage of your chest friend
like one bird murdered the other.
You've got black X's branded across
your eyes. Are you for real friend.
And your throat is not swollen,
where do you hide your howls.
Have you all this time been paralyzed
by the blathering of newspapers
the bleating of ticket machines
and turnstiles, the murmur of neon.
Have you no god to fear. Have you no
teeth to grind. Is that rain on that
skeleton's cheek of yours friend.
Do you not feel the days tearing at you
like the nuns at yours hair.
Can't you feel the wind being stitched
across your forehead friend.
Quit your slouching friend and
straighten up. Let me tell you,
you should be trembling harder.
Don't you know you are perched on a
tightrope of horsehair. You should use
that wooden tongue of yours friend.
What are you just a head on a stick,
a sack of skin, a body-less body.
Hey! Hey you don't look so good friend.
Is that formaldehyde on your breath.
Christ! Say something friend.
Have you no mouth to speak. You are
so thin I can see the sun has burnt
holes through you, I can see ash
dribbling from your lips, and the clouds--
Look up, friend!-- they have you in their
scopes. Look up, friend! Look up!

MEGAN HAMILTON

LOOK

For Zebediah Taylor

Zebediah, look on Zebediah,
the boy born dead to words
and tell him that the ocean was not

mocking him with its strong, silent strokes.
Tell him it will not be long before
language fills his mouth like coals
longing to burn. He is homesick for a place
he has never been.
Look at the man singing to dispel the smoke.
He is dancing over graves, trying
not to fall in. Tell him to count
on neither razors nor pillows.
Tell him light refracts when he speaks.

ZEBEDIAH TAYLOR

WHERE WE ARE

For Ata Moharreri

Persons must be personified and known only
as images; and by the surface of their voices
know that what we are to each other
is distant sounds, and even what we know
of ourselves is only the sound of our own voices
caught on walls.

Your voice tells me that once you have loved,
and that the way you loved is the way a bird loves
testing its wings or diving against a firm wind
that slowly makes you her own,
alone over the vast body of sand and several empty seas.

I myself have lived in a clustered town on milkweed
seeds and thoughts, like a bird framed by clouds.
I imagine how the clouds are and how what they are
is an accident, and yet we find them that way
and that is where we are.

ATA MOHARRERI

SHADOW LIKE DICE

For Jennifer Adkins

I went to the yard to get away.
I dreamed you sleep like a lake.
I dreamed of your scar in the shape of a pistol.
Why was there dust on the small of your back?
I dreamed you sleep with a satchel in your scapula.
It was late when I left.
The moon was like a curled leaf.
I led a horse outback
And tied him to a pine tree.
The stars blinked in me.
It was late when I left.
You left a bowl of cherries

And a glass of milk
Untouched on the desk.
There was dust in the drawer.
I dreamed you cast your shadow like dice.
The wind snored outside your window.
It was late when I left.
A sheep lay with his head on the ground
And his mouth open.
I stood as silent as a snake.
I dreamed I hurled my head underwater
And breathed like a feather.
I threw a handful of dirt like a rainbow
Over my shoulder.
And when I got to where I was going
From where I came
I needed a knife to clean my dreams.
It's always late when I leave.

JENNIFER ADKINS

PERFECT POSTURE

For Birkin Gilmore

He makes love to words
kissing the lines and curves of their bodies,
he tricks them into bed
and molds their forms into crows;
he follows the footsteps of Wordsworth and Keats,
tracking their meadow paths like a bloodhound
he leans his ear to the wind,
lets them whisper their witchcraft secrets,
and remembering the words
transforms the forest into a hawk
spurring its flight with his stonehenge eyes,
it unfolds the darkness like a prison,
holding captive starved statues of the human body,
frames of gaunt bishops staring in
sightless wonderment at painted angel ceilings;
With one glance he takes it all in
and with the second, he changes everything;
he gives souls to the lifeless
and nails their wings to leatherbound pages;
Then he'll go board back on hill top and stand
like an oak in silent judgement of the world;
when he sleeps, he sleeps in meter
with the wind snoring outside his room
and when he is awake, he is watchful,
his presence begs you to be silent, to wait
it commands *be still and you will see what I see*
and when he comes down with wind tossed hair
and cleanly pressed shirt, he'll remark
on how the clouds do not move, but flare.

BIRKIN GILMORE

AT EBB-TIDE

For Suzanne Heyd

The last time I saw you, you were lost
like a bee inside a flower
under a stone. You told me
about traveling through Europe,
how you shaved your head, dropping
layers of clothing as you moved toward Spain.
You say sometimes you feel like you don't
have any skin. Your eyes carry knowledge of bone
like a sheep or deer. Like a tendon, you are strongest
when stretched both ways at once. You share
something in the hands and eyes with the woman
in the blanket shop. She also is a collector
like all of us a scavenger at ebb-tide.
Always you are on the look-out
for avocado, tomato, sheep's skull, chocolate, feathers.
Your eyes look like they relish being tired.
You are hungry. You wear an orange shawl and dark glasses.



Worms Head, Gower Peninsular, Wales

THE POETRY MISCELLANY

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POETS

MARVIN BELL is the author of 16 books of poetry, most recently, *Rampant* (Copper Canyon). and include *Iris of Creation*, *The Book of the Dead Man*, *Ardor and Nightworks: Poems 1962-2000*. The winner of numerous major awards including the Lamont Award of the Academy of American Poets, fellowships from the NEA and Guggenheim Foundation, Fulbright Fellowships to Yugoslavia and Australia, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature. He is Iowa's first Poet Laureate. **STEPHEN HAVEN** is the author of the recent *The Long Silence of the Mohawk Carpet Smokestacks* (West End Press) He teaches at Ashland University, in Ashland, Ohio. Seventeen of his collaborative translations of contemporary Chinese poetry, including the two poets in this issue, appeared earlier in *American Poetry Review*. His own poetry has also appeared there and in *Salmagundi*, *Crazyhorse*, *The Missouri Review*, and other journals. He has twice been a Fulbright lecturer in American literature at universities in Beijing. **SAMIRA DIDOS**, a free lance psychologist, has been attending the Iowa summer festival, as have **NOELLE GOODING** and **CHRISTINA SHIELDS**: this is the first major publication for all three. **PAMELA USCHUK** runs the Raven's Word Writing Center in Durango and is the author of three books of poems, including *Scattered Risks*, and co-edits *CutThroat*. She has won awards from the Struga festival in Macedonia, ASCENT, and the National League of American PEN women, as well as the IRIS Poetry Prize.

VERMONT COLLEGE POETS

BARBARA CARLSON is a graduate of Vermont College and has published in numerous journals and teaches at Wheaton College in Massachusetts. **NANCY EIMERS** is the author of three books of poems including *No Moon* (Purdue Univ. Press, '97) and *Destroying Angel* (Wesleyan Univ. Press, '91). She was the recipient of the '98 Whiting Writers Award, '96 and '89 NEA Fellowships and was a 1987 Nation "Discovery" winner. She teaches creative writing in the MFA and Ph.D. programs at Western Michigan University and Vermont College. **JODY GLADDING**'s book, *Stone Crop*, appeared in the Yale Younger Poets Series in 1993. A chapbook, *Artichoke*, was published by Chapiteau Press in 2000. Recent poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Terra Nova*, *Yale Review*. She also translates French for various publishers, including Columbia Univ. Press and Univ. of California Press. In the past five years, she has translated or co-translated fifteen books. Gladding was a Stegner Fellow at Stanford, has taught at Cornell Univ., and won a Whiting Writers Award in 1997. She lives in East Calais, Vermont, and teaches at Vermont College. **SUZANNE HEYD** is a graduate of Vermont College and has published in numerous journals. She works in New Haven Connecticut as a Free Lance editor. **WILLIAM OLSEN**'s first book of poetry, *The Hand of God and a Few Bright Flowers* (Illinois, '88), was a National Poetry Series selection and a winner of the Texas Institute of Arts Poetry Award. A second book of poetry, *Vision of a Storm Cloud*, came out in May 1996 from Triquarterly Press. His most recent collection, *Trouble Lights*, came out from Triquarterly in 2002. In 2003 he co-edited, with Sharon Bryan, *Planet on the Table: Poets on the Reading Life* (Sarabande). Other awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2005, an NEA ('96), YHMA/ The Nation Discovery Award, the Poetry Northwest Helen Bullis Award (1993), the Crazyhorse Poetry Award (1993), and a Breadloaf Fellowship. He teaches at Western Michigan University and Vermont College. **BILL RASMOVICZ** is a graduate of Vermont College, has published in numerous journals, and is a pharmacist in Portland, Maine. **CLARE ROSSINI**'s first collection of poetry, *Winter Morning With Crow* (Univ. of Akron Press, '97), was awarded the 1996 Akron Poetry Prize by Donald Justice; the book was selected by PEN International as one of two finalists for the 1999 Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry. *Lingo*, is from the Univ. of Akron Press (2005). She teaches at Vermont College's MFA Program. **BETSY SHOLL** has published six books of poetry, most recently *Late Psalm*, (Univ. of Wisconsin, '04). Other books include *Don't Explain*, winner of the Felix Pollock Award (Univ. of Wisconsin Press in '97), and *The Red Line*, which won the 1991 AWP Prize for Poetry, (Univ. of Pittsburgh, '92). She has taught in the Writing Program at M.I.T. and currently teaches at the Univ. of Southern Maine and Vermont College. **LESLIE ULLMAN**'s latest book, *Slow Work Through Sand*, winner of the 1997 Iowa Poetry Prize, came out in 1998. Her first collection of poems, *Natural Histories* (Yale, '78), won the Yale Younger Poets Award. Her second collection, *Dreams by No One's Daughter* (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, '87), was part of the Pitt Poetry Series. She is the recipient of two NEA Fellowships and teaches in the Bilingual Creative Writing Program at the Univ. of Texas-El Paso and Vermont College. **NANCE VAN WINCKEL**, poet and fiction writer, is the author of three collections of short fiction: *Curtain Creek Farm* ('00), *Quake* (Univ. of MO Press, '97), and *Limited Lifetime Warranty* (Univ. of MO Press, '94), and five books of poems: *Beside Ourselves* (Miami U. Press, '00), *After A Spell* (Miami Univ. Press, '98), *A Measure Of Heaven* (Floating Bridge Press, '96), *The Dirt* (Miami Univ. Press, '94), and *Bad Girl, With Hawk* (U. of Illinois, 1988). She teaches at Eastern Washington University and Vermont College. She is the recipient of two NEA fellowships, and numerous other awards. **ROGER WEINGARTEN** is the author of nine collections of poetry including *Greatest Hits: 1972-2002* (Pudding House Press) and *Ghost Wrestling* (Godine, '97) He is co-editor of five poetry anthologies, including *Manthology: Poems on the Male Experience* (Iowa, May, '06), *New American Poets* (Godine, Fall '05). He also teaches in and directs the Vermont College Postgraduate Writers' Conference. **DAVID WOJAHN** is the author of 7 books of poems including *Interrogation Palace: New and Selected Poems 1982-2004*, will be published by Pittsburgh in 2006. He is also the author of a collection of essays on contemporary poetry, *Strange Good Fortune* (Univ. of Arkansas Press, '01), and editor (with Jack Myers) of *A Profile of 20th Century American Poetry* (Southern Illinois Univ. Press, '91). He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEA, the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and was the Amy Lowell Traveling Poetry Scholar. He is presently Professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University and Vermont College.

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