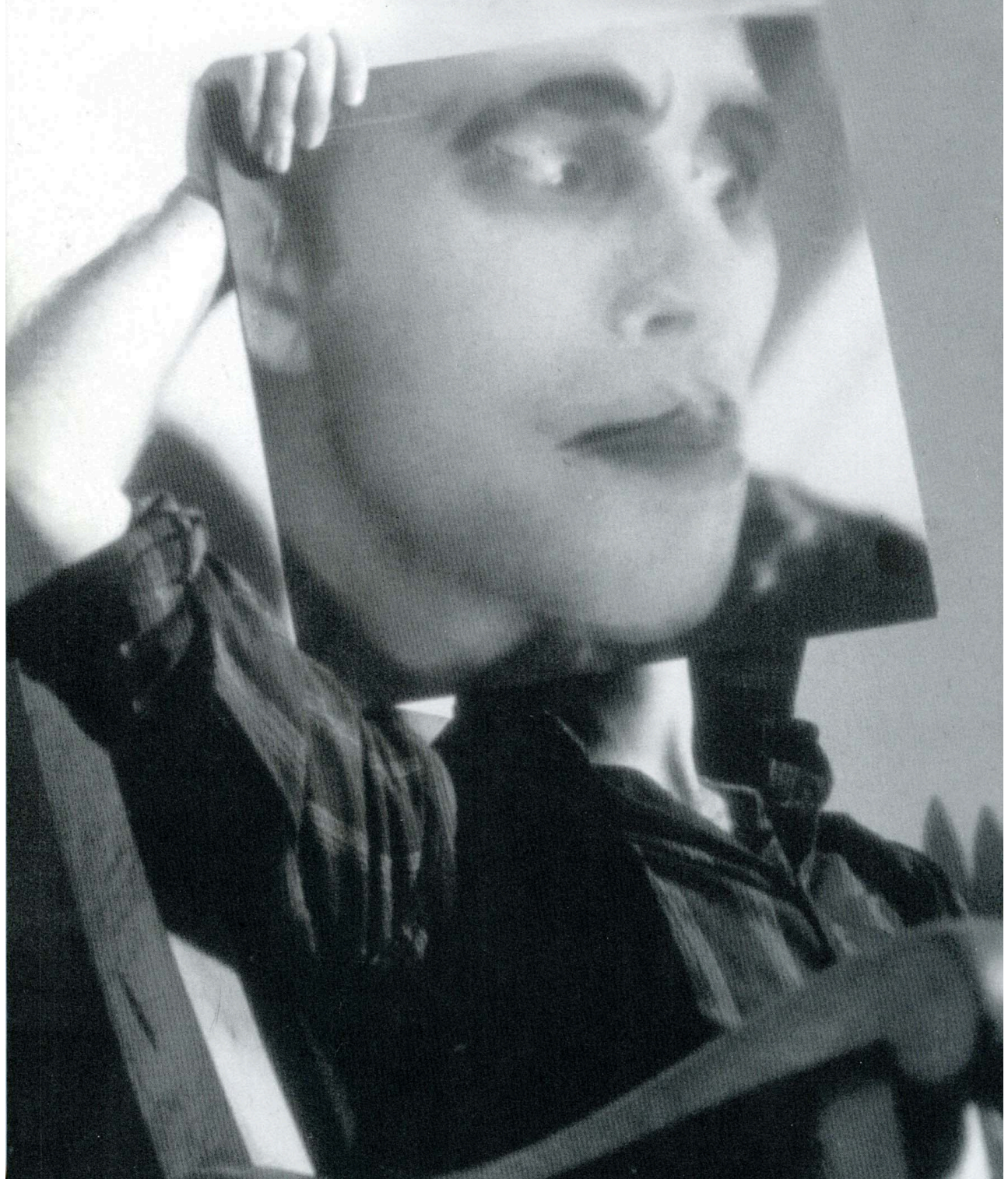


HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

Issue #64

Spring 2003



THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

Issue No. 64

Spring 2003

Editor: Willard Greenwood

Editorial Assistants: Susan Hutner and Gerard Nielsen

Cover Photo: *Untitled*, Holly Lynn

Advisory Board: Carol Donley, David Fratus, and David Anderson

Web Design: Kirsten Parkinson

CONTENTS

Gail Hosking Gilberg

Personal Effects 4

Richard Kenefic

A Day in the Workplace Spent Pondering Obsolescence 5

Jean Owen

Taos 6

Bill Griffin

To a Lost Poem 7

Mark Taksa

Don't Labor, Be Lucky 8

Elizabeth Caffrey

A Year-Round Spring 9

Austin Hummell

Heroin 10

Equus 13

Marlys West

The Opposite of Bomb is Etiquette 14

E.R. Carlin

The Myth of Syphilis 16

Vasectomy Interlude 17

Marilyn Johnston

Annual Check Up 20

Iris Litt GypsyGap	22
Daniel Gallik White Silk Gandoura Lined in Blue	23
Jack Granath How Do You Say...	24
Erren Geraud Kelly A Sin	25
Virgil Suárez Jesús, The Disciples, & The End of the “Deception Tour”	26
Jesse Lee Kercheval There Are European Landscapes	27
Leonard J. Cirino The Cricket	28
Rawdon Tomlinson Indeh	29
Natalie Peeterse Restoration	31
Bill Sweeney The Administrative Assistant	32
Judith Chalmer For My Mother On Becoming a Citizen	33
Eric Trethewey Purity	35
John N. Miller Ballad of Ponce de Leon in Florida	37

David Brendan Hopes	
In A Summer of Almost Too Much Light	39
The Critic in Love	40
Edward Butscher	
Who's Afraid of Mad Bad Emily?	41
Helen Ruggieri	
The Kingdom Where No One Keeps Time	43
Dylan Willoughby	
Inner Workings	44
Charles Valle	
On a Theory of Boxes	45
Louis Gallo	
Green Lollipop	52
Michael Bowden	
Keeper	54
RA Lopez	
June 17th Chorus	55
REVIEWS	
Henry Hughes	56
Donald Platt, <i>Cloud Atlas</i>	
John Poch	62
James Tate, <i>Memoir of the Hawk</i>	
Nick Flynn, <i>Some Ether</i>	
Ted Genoways, <i>Bullroarer</i>	
Jorie Graham, <i>Never</i>	
Ben Doyle, <i>Radio, Radio</i>	
Willard Greenwood	72
Gabriel Gudding, <i>A Defense of Poetry</i>	
CONTRIBUTORS	75

Gail Hosking Gilberg

PERSONAL EFFECTS

Six short sleeve shirts
4 wash and wear trousers
(tropical worsted)
One pair of civilian shoes
One Minolta camera
One clean field uniform
Two books: *Weapons of the World*
Expert Infantry Text
Six months gratuity pay
One signed statement
"I fully recognize the hazards involved"
One black body bag.

Richard Kenefic

**A DAY IN THE WORKPLACE SPENT PONDERING
OBSOLESCENCE**

I am sitting behind my computer screen.
The man that transferred here last month
was last seen leaving the department head's office,
escorted out, "surplused" as we say.
I am inscrutable behind the ass end
of my monitor, only my eyes are visible
from the aisle. The office on my left
is empty now. It is a good day
to be someplace else, assuming of course
that one has someplace else to be, yet
the young men seem not to notice
this latest vacancy. They are absorbed,
reducing what they've learned to practice.
They are sharp and focused, fond
of what they know. I am sitting here
with my fingers knit and motionless
beneath my chin. My elbows
have rusted to the chair and I watch
as the segments of the clock advance,
without making a sound.

Jean Owen

TAOS

A single-word is like the stream, the little rio,
that runs past our cottage
to the Rio Hondo to the Rio Grande to the sea.
The stream doesn't slow because it's small
and not the widest, wildest part of the river.
It makes itself itself by running
loudly
past cottages
over cottonwood banked rocks
through aspen woods as if it is a true river
narrow there
not caring, knowing
that it will expand into itself
exactly where it will expand.
Fishermen pull off 285
rigged-up and hoping there are fish,
river's bounty, in this thin ribbon rolling cold water.
And there are fish
as there is poetry
in one word waiting
to flow into itself
to the sea.

Bill Griffin

TO A LOST POEM

Today a friend asked me about you;
she recalled your face (but not the name I gave you)
from that weekend last fall at the college.
Oh, I said, you've changed some,
shed a few participles, grown wiser perhaps
with age; it seems to suit you (and I hope our changes
would suit her, too, the one who asked).
Then with a nervous laugh I added
I supposed you were making your way in the world.

I was ashamed to tell her that you and I
have somehow parted company. I know
I should remember the curl of your travels,
the allure of your lines should linger undimmed,
I should recognize that whisper of affection, your voice.
I'm sure I can find your address among all these papers;
forgive me, I should know.

I'll send this prayer along after you: May you be blessed
where you are. May the desk of your repose
never grow too dark or too cold. May the pages
of other lives not layer too heavily upon your soul.
And may the next one you meet esteem you
more, even, than I.

Mark Taks

DON'T LABOR, BE LUCKY

Gulping soup boiled twice for the tramps,
I invite a lady to the opera where the only
lazy thing is a sleepy violin.

Her eyes get foggy when she looks
at her faded dress and remembers lace
she left in the closet she once owned. She owns the luck,
I say, of the soup, while tramps gawk
at empty bowls. Her eyes are rivers.

My chauffeur sticks his head
through the tent flap, announces
he has polished my limousine,
and asks if we will go to the opera.

I spin my jeweled walking stick
as if it were the dial of a compass.
It falls equidistant to the soup and the opera.
The lady and I play poker each of us is too agreeable to win.
Wind comes into the tent. Cards rise and fall.

Elizabeth Caffrey

A YEAR-ROUND SPRING

A year-round spring
runs next to the road
where traffic flows.
It does not stop for traffic
but traffic stops for the spring.
It knows the water
which runs under
people's yards
is pure and good.
It leaves offerings
to the spring:
chewing gum
cigarette packets
bottle tops
and such.
It knows the water
is pure and good.

Austin Hummell

HEROIN

*“Un punto solo m'è maggior letargo
che venticinque secoli a la 'mpresa
che fé Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo”*
—Paradiso 33

I

It's not sleep exactly, nor mandragora,
no nap off the path to Oz,
neither is it a stall-tactic snack
for the homecoming hero,
too contentedly slow in return.

More than a dalliance in flowers,
its gentle smell greets you like age:
a full stomach, the roving itch,
a penchant for moon-dull light.

You think you want both the shelter of bark
and the heart to beat beneath—
the plural nerve of laurel, like Daphne
weeping onto her father's shoulder

for refuge from a glaring sun.
For her only the deepest wood would do,
her fear drawn from a fat child's quiver.
When love is a wound, we drug it.

II

Spoon. You number it second of the shapes
your mouth memorizes as a child.
Your only skin is silence then,
your only silence sleep. Now each one
in the silverware drawer rests on a crescent
blackened by flame, the silver charred
and darkness spreading like the dilated

pupil of a junkie sick with morning,
the insolent light flooding its nerves. Call it
a decanter of ails to travel you,
the bed of breakfast, mother's coaxing arm.
In it you boil out the cut, the dirt,
till it's pure junk and a curious yellow
gold. Empty you find a concave face in it,
brittle as silver, shallow and stainless as steel.

III

Plunge is some of it, the taste of blood
sublingual, the rush of warmth
that laps through your heart till a pulse
of pleasure deepens to a nod.
You want both the armor of junk
and your heart to beat beneath.

So quick is its spell, so shellacked
its sleep, that you forget to pull out
the syringe sometimes, and it bobs
at the bend in your elbow
like the prick on a fickle boy,
or the question he saves for a certain
girl, like: Why have you driven
through my heart? Make that
what.

IV

You always wake before the needle pricks
the vein, almost always before you suck
the tar through the balled cotton you mop
the bowl of a spoon with, careful not to dull
your works. Before the browned, soggy ball dries
and whitens as you pull the plunger up.

The bulk of the plot is mostly chase,
what with sanguine faith you call score.
In each dream there are friends to ditch,
family to rob, women to make wait and betray

as waking turns on you—when the dream, dope,
the flu in your body and every poem you write
to kill it, withdraws. When shaking and awake
you beg for the laurel's cloak
and your heart to slow beneath.

Austin Hummell

EQUUS

The kid with the nose ring says he thinks
it's about horses and when he says horses
his lips tremble because his tongue pierce
didn't take. She says what about sex
and he says no but thanks and she says no
I mean the poem and he says no hawses
and his lips bounce again as he reaches
back for the r and since they won't purse
like the lipstick kisses of great aunts
he sounds only numbly British
though regal beyond his parents' income.

He's thinner than her daughter, most daughters,
because his mother let him eat anything
and he didn't. When nightmare came
he'd slink down the marble stairs on which
his father, spavined by gin and mad
with quarrel, once shattered his speaking
and a porcelain Morgan. In the kitchen
he'd graze apples as if stroking something small
or cold as a pet's nose, open an ice box
someone named Bronco and pull sugar cubes
or chocolate milk from the jungle of olives
and frappacinos his mother calls a diet.
Nights he'd stand there and speak tenderly
to cheese, coo the name of condiments
by breed, and when he shut night's loneliest
light he left in the jaws of the box
more words than his father ever wanted.

Still she says what about the tongue stud
and he pretends to misunderstand her again
so she says no I mean why did you put a stud
in your tongue and she says it like she's speaking
underwater or Malaysian for the first time
but he knows what she wants so he nods
and when he smiles back his lips he says
it's the last place his parents would look.

Marlys West

THE OPPOSITE OF BOMB IS ETIQUETTE

You will know the finger bowl by its flowers.
Courtesy equals kindness plus two parts power

The opposite of hunger strike is top sheet.
Cream buns never go out of style.
The more threads, the softer the textile.
Rest the fork tines up when you've had enough

to eat. Three fingers poked neatly into the juicer
equal three spots grafted from the soft swell
of the palm by the thumb.
The opposite of swirling blade is numb.
The opposite of picnic lunch

is mounted gun. A paper rolled up in a tube is
sometimes my old diploma.
In a certain year I finished my formal education.
The opposite of boredom is fornication.

The cosecant of college degree is a trip
across the sea.
We asked the State Department where to go
as certain situations made us nervous and the mass
of our backpacks squared meant deficient flow.

And the shopping? *Oh my cabbage, oh my little
cup of broth.*

In Egypt they pour tea until it slops your saucer.
In Mexico they close for *la siesta*.
In China it is acceptable to belch.
The French drink the finest red wine,
which the children sip any old time.

At a Jewish wedding the groom crushed a glass
wrapped in napkin to signify
the Jericho wall.

At night I dream of noodle pudding, folded
skirts of flour-water.

You must never proffer your defiled hand
in certain lands
at all. It is akin to spitting or shitting.
We missed you at the last division of pork.
Don't tell us you've given up the new white meat.

What will you tuck in your wedding cake?
What will we cut when you find the right man?
What will you eat for luck?
The proper way to eat an egg
is in an upright cup with a crack of the fork on top.

What is for cooking and what is left raw?
Mealy bugs, certain grubs, my daily worm, my
appetizer. This is indeed the wine-dark dinner,
my life a long, white shutter. The sea tastes
bitter all summer.

Gravity must curtsy to every planet. What emits
from the bowels of bird or plane must plummet.
Laws decree that gravity let fall whatsoever
will fertilize or detonate,
the opposite of most polite is accelerate.

E.R. Carlin

THE MYTH OF SYPHILIS

If Camus wrote *The Myth of Syphilis* instead, would suicide
Seem par for the writing course? Sex wouldn't be so sweet,
And academic conferences wouldn't be so popular. The poet
In the red dress who implies color in every stanza, strips
On command, would be extant with myth. Myth, the word,
Might even become catchy. *I'm so mythed at you!* Meaning:
Unless you're a virgin, you just gave me syphilis! Or, *Da Myth*.
Roughly translated as: You were dumb to think that sleeping
With a virgin could cure you. So, put aside your excessive heat
In the vulva theory. Forget your lepers and swamps. If Sisyphus
Had syphilis, his rock would roll itself into the gate of our
New age god. Snakes would sing.

E. R. Carlin

VASECTOMY INTERLUDE

after Brother Antoninus

The lay brother, caught in
the portable mirror,
slants the razor up across
his foaming calves, carefully
crops the hairs higher,
and a little higher each night.
Sliced at the root, wet pubes
drop into a nest of
Christian Science Monitors,
outlining his wet footprints,
that he imagines might be
Christ's own, after walking
on water or over Wall Street
in pumps.

He plows
over pimples, lesions,
then blots the cuts with tissue.
I wonder if she still thinks of me,
he says to the photograph,
the wife and smiling children
that came with the frame.
He thinks to himself
as more of a woman
and less of a man
when he dreams, but this
Is a test, he says, just
a test. He traces his ex-wife's
sulfuric lipstick
down his body, outlines
a Cartesian grid, across the belly,
plots coordinates around his
scrotum, all the way down
to Achilles heel. He has
hedged his grizzled hairs back,
pruned the edges, and waits

now, the razor pressed against
his hip bone. With only
black scapular
strung around his neck,
he hears Matins and Lauds,
like lava through open mouths
pouring out of the chapel across
the rose garden, in the twilight
grotto's afterglow.
His hand presses harder,
draws a little blood.
She comes to him, like a shot,
St. Catherine of Siena, in a vision,
saying, *Shh, gently now, shh...*
This was an informed division,
then her voice slips into
his ex-wife's voice,
Ohh I meant to say, or course, decision.
She said last summer,
handing him the divorce papers,
They were never your children, anyway.
He could hear now, amid
the din of the punctured falsetto,
both voices, thinner and saintly,
their thoughts and his words,
mixing into
a vindictive amalgam,

*Were your children never informed?
They were never informed of your decision?
Your children were just a test, anyway.*

Inescapable! He shouts
and squints his eyes, the
razor pressing in, until
he sees St. Catherine and his ex
being burned alive at the stake,
the fire's slow poetry plays
with gusto on their flesh,
only famished bones
remain—blackened, skin

shriveled into heaps of ash.
He kneels, humbled
under the stained glass vista,
and prays that the
crude lines,
dots, points, intersections
he scribbled down and down
his body
evolve to
mean something
to God.

Marilyn E. Johnston

ANNUAL CHECK UP

“Existence is returning, non-existence is returning, so don’t stay by the river getting blown about by the cold wind.”

—Chinese proverb

“You’ve been gradually losing estrogen for the last fifteen years,” the doctor calmly explains.

“And this past year’s been like a drop off a cliff.”
Indeed. Why wasn’t I reborn? What’s next? I’m ready

to believe Lewis Carroll was a menopausal woman. Other people’s writings

give me morning sickness. And my own?
Well, just look it. The Past. In labeled excavations:

Great Bike Adventuress of tract house city streets to woman cloistered on slow-yielding farm.

I could not have foreseen in that elfin child alive in West Hartford clover, the dream and sexual-

fear oppressed teenager. Or in that bookworm teenager the alienated insurance consultant washed up

at thirty-five. Or in her, the heroically-refurbished blind Columbus at forty-three. There’s no telling what

I can be next. I am my biology, yes, despite political correctness, incorrectness, or inexactness—

And my work is laid out for me each day as it always has been, in what I see to feel.

Sure. There will be at least one soulful young male critic who’ll sift and skewer me straight

off my page with “I don’t *feel* anything!”...
lifting his flushed and teeming youth-filled face.

And he’d be right.

Iris Litt

GYPSYGAP

There was a Gap gift card
in that wallet
the Gypsy Kid stole
in Firenze;

the gift card is good at
Gap, GapKids, BabyGap

and I picture the ragged GypsyKid
transformed into a GapKid
and on his/her back,
a Gap knapsack
to carry stolen loot
and Gap sandals
on the bare brown feet

and I wish I'd had
a gift card
from Dean&DeLuca or Fauchon
or whatever's chic in Firenze

so the Gypsy GapKid
could shop for
something to eat.

Daniel Gallik

WHITE SILK GANDOURA LINED IN BLUE

The woman said she was thinking
a minute and it became a year.
That her mother did not under-
stand a thing, and that she had
died before her life had begun.

Such, she said are women of today,
that she felt sad that she was
not different from others in
America two years into the new
millennium, that she was boring.

He told her that was why he was
interested in younger women, not
because they were nubile but be-
cause they did not care about
such things as womanhood and

Oprah's guests' comments, books
they were selling. She smiled.
He asked if she would ever change.
She smiled. Said no. And he
said that he would never change.

She crossed her fingers, passed
by the chandeliers that were hanging
from her ceiling, the paintings
screwed to her walls, the drapes,
(all the drapes) and her massive

stairs that seemed to lead to no-
where as life hummed quietly in
her unique residence, and said, "I
will become my mom as I age; die
like her because I lived like her."

Jack Granath

HOW DO YOU SAY...

When we broke up, she accused me
of using her, and it was true.
I didn't have cable,
and I love the Spanish channel.
I liked to switch it on
when I was supposed to be elsewhere,
say, cutting the lawn,
or when she got called in to work
on emergencies,
and, in the end, any old time,
like when she got up
to use the bathroom.
The last straw, or so
she says, was when I tuned in during
her birthday party.
I'm pretty shy.
I didn't think anyone would notice.
In her view, which is
in my view,
a species of torture,
the insufferable thing is
that I don't know Spanish.
She has always had a knack
for missing the point.
In fact, I know quite a bit
from all that clandestine viewing.
Anyway, I admit it,
I loved her
cable TV,
Las Vías del Amor
especialmente.

Erren Geraud Kelly

A SIN

I could go to hell
For what I'm doing
For looking at white thighs
In a pair of Levis
Mama preached hate
As gospel
Don't talk to white girls
Don't get friendly with them
Don't trust them
She said
Even though her best friend
Was a white woman
She didn't want a white man
Coming to her home
In the middle of the night
Complaining about his daughter
Being "corrupted"
You invite me to church
As you take off your blouse
I say, I'll think about it
I never thought much of Jesus freaks
If god is everywhere
Then why do we need religion?
Or a church to get closer
To him?
And Jesus was not white!
You take off your bra
And your globes succumb to gravity
And they drop downward
And they become covered by curly
Long red hair
Your crucifix makes an imprint
On my chest as I press against you
As I kiss you . . .

Virgil Suárez

**JESÚS, THE DISCIPLES, & THE END OF THE “DECEPTION
TOUR”**

In Omaha they burst down the hotel walls because the water
would not turn to wine, or rather that they were not getting

ice-cold water. In Tucumcari they complained about the food,
those roadies scarfed up all the good sausage, caviar, foie gras—

nothing to do in Calumet except lounge about the pool, soak
up in the Jacuzzi with the fellas from the Order of the Moose,

then J, the lead guitarist, smashed up his last guitar and brought
out his sitar—what a drag. The crowds booed them in Cairo,

then three of the band members went off into the desert to drop
peyote, having misunderstood the word “ixoye.” Or they felt

quixotic, who knows? The promoters saw the end when Jesús
in a self-conscious moment shaved his beard and buzz-cut his

hair down to the moon-white scalp. Then the piercing, road
porno snapshots, some chick Polaroid washing the man’s feet.

It got to be too much. The lyrics suffered too. Who’d believe
it? All this silliness about love, truth, happiness. The crowds

became fickle. They wanted guns, fireworks, Juda’s sitar on fire.
Right outside Barstow everyone split, cursed, and spat on soil.

By midnight some folks say they could hear the distant twang
of someone playing his sitar until the coyotes started to howl.

Jesse Lee Kercheval

THERE ARE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPES

but this is not one. This is Wisconsin, land of winter white, all cashmere, linen, silk, now that snow has fallen and winter duck-walked quack quack quacking to knock on our door too. I promise like a good mammal to get more sleep now that snow covers tree and trestle, fills the meadow, that mouth, with plush. No more green until next summer. Forget the garish red of flowers. Watch the gusts of snow like wings, like blessings, settle in, the band-aid for every wound, the sugar that makes even our bitterness taste sweet.

Leonard J. Cirino

THE CRICKET

"I seek a form that my style cannot discover..."

—Rubén Darío

Conceiving an ideal, a cricket plays
The only string on his guitar,
As a soul will sing of the divine
That would love to be a rose
Inside the thigh of Venus,
Superimposed over the embrace of Adonis.

But the cricket only evokes
The reality of the ideal—with its string
Of notes and sounds of words—
It only hums of beauty beyond,
A star adorned with lovely wounds,
A sea alarmed with dying.

And the cricket's time runs away
Into the night of strangled chickens,
Where that faun, the moon,
Skitters on the lake, a feral soul
Rising like a swan
On the back of a woman.

Rawdon Tomlinson

INDEH

“The wise old chiefs know that the hordes of invaders would eventually exterminate us and take our country. They knew, too, that the time was short. Hence, we were already, Indeh, the Dead.”

—Daklugie, son of Chief Juh, Nedni Apache

Before first snow, we migrate from pines to canyon
and weave the long nights with stories and fire

though Indah—the Living—now demand every checker crowned;
they deploy athletes to ride us down, but we hold out

dead another day, stab and eat our own mounts,
vanish like rivulets drying uphill into granite,

a puff of rifle smoke at most, no time for a girl’s
feast days; we practice sky and rocks

waiting for the thirst-crazed Living to clot like wasps
around the seep—a private’s screams reach above

stampeding horses like someone yelling across a waterfall.
No grass. No trees. We quiver in colorless heat

shapes running the horizon’s quicksilver lake;
we sleep with eyes ears fingers wired to triggers; we boil bones

and trap rats—but the fat and soft hold the cards.
Humping another serrated ridge spiked with lightning strikes

far below we glimpse a green, open place
before passing into clouds...

the Dead enlisted to track us think they’re alive,
having been promised land, beef, corn, sky.

Everyone wants to go home, as if that story
could be retold. The troopers’ boots need soles;

we miss wives and children and a good smoke—
we look into the lens and smile, even Geronimo:

citizens feed us cake and candy
we're happy we won't be killed again, hung

like that sweet-toothed boy from a meathook
in his mother's mind. Desert poppies,

blazing golden as a scanned brain's heat
whether we wake or sleep, forget us.

Natalie Peeterse

RESTORATION

The coolest place is inside León's cathedral, standing
here for a bit of shade since 1747. The quiet

around Rubén Darío's tomb says little
about *the flaring gold of Nicaraguan sun.*

Vilma Martinez says *we heard a sound.*
From this cool wooden pew it is hard to imagine

that *my children and I went rolling with everything*
that came down. Don Julito talks about heading up

to the fields in North Carolina.
A sound like a plane and we thought people

had come to rescue us because our
houses were filling with rain. They lied

to Spain about the first plans for this Cathedral.
They were considered too splendid,

and to avoid scandal Spain was sent
a plainer version. Antonio Sarria's *Stations of the Cross*

hangs with the cathedral's failing
plaster. *You have to stay*

close with them, the president said about the survivors
who held above the sea of mud.

Next to Darío's tomb is a sorrowful lion.
At the edge of town there had been a place

for Vilma to rest before looking to restore things,
enough to suffice at least under Darío's sun.

She is young enough to find the damage.
She has gone out into his remote springtime.

Bill Sweeney

THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Ignited airline fuel has engulfed her
in the coffin of a stalled elevator.
She raises her flaming arms. (This happened.)
The charged air lifts singed papers
on sudden thermals and scatters them
over the innocent inner harbor.
The tide turns. Imagination insists,
will resist. Stabilities have altered
and will continue to alter as
night falls and rescuers descend—
heedless, frantic, and forlorn.
There is no finding you. The search
is their honor, your glory.

Judith Chalmer

FOR MY MOTHER ON BECOMING A CITIZEN

Okay, so you've never done this.
A day in a canoe and a rest from the grave
won't kill you. I want you to see
where I got to. I like settling into this
bog at the back of the pond. Until
there's trouble Ma, I'm going to stay here.

I've stuck thirty years
through the muds of spring,
ordered flats of uninterrupted speech,
passed the doughnut baptized in lard
at the church after Town Meeting.
These are long services.

I live in the wilderness, Ma.
What do you talk, when you
flappered out of Newark
for bohemian Manhattan,
sleek cigarette holder liberating even
the mirrored front hall. It's a trick

in one generation to turn out American.
I want to float here under spruce
awnings like I landed by mistake in God's
screwy eye. I've been tricked
into loving this earth with its immigrant
loosestrife, its iris, successful milfoil,

as I was tricked into loving these
sons. Cut up and drugged,
overtaken by the new
mouth and its happy tug, I couldn't
help it. They started to grow.
Ma, with the care you took, *kiddush*

silver carted all the way from Kiev,
I've made something for a paddle to apply

at God's eye. I dressed the children
as you told me. I have memorized
our name. Near a loon now
in green water I wait trembling.

Eric Trethewey

PURITY

A nun has breast cancer, and another,
sick with longing for perfection of the soul,
tends the suppurating sores until the odor
sickens her, suggests an opportunity:
she gathers the pus, oozing, in a ladle,
triumphs over her body in drinking it down,
loathsome corruption swallowed
as corruption's antidote. Later, on this journey
into sainthood, she inhabits a vision
of herself sucking blood as it flows
from the pierced side of Jesus.
She's the same woman who tames
her rebel flesh thrice daily for an hour
and a half at a time, lashing herself
with an iron chain until blood streams down
from her shoulders to her feet. At last,
not much more than thirty years old,
she refuses to eat—or to drink water.
Soon enough, she dies. And another woman,
sainthood bound as well, after fasting
for five years begins to feed on filth
as penance to outrage the fallen creature
that stands up in her skin: vomit,
clumps of hair, a blood-engorged leech,
as well as spiders and their fly-trap webs.

She even begins to clean floors with her tongue.
Reading all this, I come back to myself
as a young man, bitter, lost somewhere
between defiance and despair, half drunk
in a New Orleans bar, picking up a cockroach
from the foul floor and popping it into my mouth,
swallowing it down. No moral heroics here,
just a bit of bravado for a rough crowd
on a slow day, though deep down, even then
I knew it was something more.

John N. Miller

BALLAD OF PONCE DE LEON IN FLORIDA

The flatness of this land gives rise
to many a strange mirage beyond
the sun-struck condominiums
and fairways fringed by shimmering ponds;

and many another man in search
of lasting youth and energy
has been deceived. I should have known
that what I sought was not to be

discovered on this earth—a spring
for all our winters, rinsing blight
and torpor from our flesh, renewing
generative appetite—

not on this earth but in a mix
of dep, teg, thol, zine, nil or zac,
alchemic capsules, compounds veiled
in symbols of the zodiac.

Not from a fountain did I need
to quaff; the water in a mug
sufficed when it enabled me
to gulp a wonder-working drug.

I gulped. Caramba! I could feel
my armor lighten, a weight lift
from off my spirit. God be thanked—
a new man swelled my frame, as if

cleansed of the taint our father Adam
deeded us after Eden. Now
retired, carefree, member of
the local country club, endowed

with pills enough to last a lifetime,

I leave mirages to the poor,
my timeworn, creaking self disposed
to hang with my sword behind the door.

David Brendan Hopes

IN A SUMMER OF ALMOST TOO MUCH LIGHT

In the week since rain, edges have sharpened,
leaves found a way to pass the terrible light on, pure,
taking their sip and drawing away,
greened to a shade one shade from black.

The men across the street are new to me,
hired with their beaten red truck for the day.
Red cap. White cap. Two gray shirts.
Everything they do is noise.
I'm trying to watch Red Cap slaying
with his spun blade weeds by the gold wall:
 too much life, though: gold moving in gold,
the gold behind him strewn with swallows.

White Cap is talking to his lawnmower,
exhorting it to dispatch through the saw-blade grass.
Cap pulled low, blond pony-tail, the angle
obscure the outlines of his face—but mostly,
in the gathering, burnished dark before great rain,
but mostly that this deep summer air—
making all things alike, and likewise radiant—
the flowers waiting, and the split mouths of the grass,
everything ready and unfolded to the rain—
so many lovers, so many to whom promises were whispered—
red, gray, white, shifted to before-storm gold,
rain already on the near ridge, coming with a shout,
and the man half visible, and the mower
leaping for him, alive in the moving-every-motion lawn:
that one color, that green-gold, gold, gold,
flattening the rooftops, waving all waveable before storm—
makes it hard to see,
anything,
in the exultation of all.

David Brendan Hopes

THE CRITIC IN LOVE

Change takes
gods and shores and the speech of men.
Change does not take me.
I offer one hour always,
wherein abounds those certain flowers,
wherein the sweet gum is bowed
by the weight of human beauty.

In the time it would take to convince
you of this the stupid Teasdales
and the clever Ashbery's will tease
you away with their equal jangle.

Watch this. I drop the diamond
in the river where it is lost forever.
I stop at the start of the sweetest word,
turn away. Turn away.

Edward Butscher

WHO'S AFRAID OF MAD BAD EMILY?

Elusive Emily uglier than
the sin of indifference
a natural ethic

far beyond beauty's
etna-frail aesthetic

survival, my petite

organs awry, astray
yet functioning

*to swallow germs
secret lark songs*

an orgy of garden dyings
to calendar dungeon days:

rides a whisper of cambric wit
mother moth pinned under glass
aflutter like loose stays

a little girl laughing
at whimsy's every
Austin and Mabel
table tickle:

spined sperm mines

surging down
leased angel veins
in brick-thick dreams
that bedroom her tomb

on satin toes
on spider signs
on simple matters
of pseudo fact.

You scare us all, uncoded Emily
with your life's eloquent lack
of industrial success:

your splayed nose
your crooked eyes
your nun-like hood
of ruler-raped hair

but no cell ruse
of funereal hush
can halt the spade
from knifing you
into blond light.

Helen Ruggieri

THE KINGDOM WHERE NO ONE KEEPS TIME

Once I thought *crepuscular*
described the upper arms of
post menopausal women

how the skin barely hid
the softening muscles
a purple nexus of veins

I suppose I looked it up
but even now twilight
has those arms

and in them
everything slows down
slower than seasons

the pace of plate tectonics
of mountain building
the dusk geology measures

a larger rhythm rocking us
in the arms of an old woman
soothing, hush, hush

in that crepuscular kingdom
where no one keeps time

Dylan Willoughby

INNER WORKINGS

this sucker runs on corn, Etty chirped
and it was like Monday in pictures
the way the Stamp Master hoodwinked
the philatelic society and the
youthful scholar had a readership of
one, and no one was let in on
Victoria's secret, which was written
and discarded on a cheap receipt
flying somewhere down Orchard &
Stanton, mingling with the trash
confettied on the streets, while
today in history magnetic therapy was
invented and the heat was on, and Icelanders
became the keenest of all listeners,
but that didn't console us,
we wore the ink from the Metro Brief
on our forearms, like smeared tattoos,
and we knew when we got home,
the coal would have run out, the child
would have grown itself up and
left for urban pastures, and the
inbox, the inbox would be empty

Charles Valle

ON A THEORY OF BOXES

*In a way, every stranger must imagine
The place where he finds himself—as shrewd Odysseus
Was able to imagine, as he wandered . . .*

*People who must, like immigrants or nomads,
Live always in imaginary places
Think of some past or word to fill a blank—*

Pinsky's Explanation

And then mine:

Imagine the tower in the trees
Ivory in the maples turning
Northeast on 13—upstate in the empire
To an Ithaca without a Penelope
Ivy dying in the clinging
Just a panoply of browns and reds—

200 miles east—another Cornell
conceived [1903] by the Hudson

But I am not concerned with beginnings, just . . .

[X: forget-me-not]

Imagine the move to Utopia Parkway
Brother Robert cerebral in wheelchair or bed

Indian Summer called delicious, he considers
aspects of foliage—myosotis blue
Joyce hunter becomes “Tina”

Teena
Geranium
Flowering
Aurelia

Kathleen turns to Kitty
X becomes Baby

But who is this Gérard?

Why not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?

I will change my name to three
maybe Charles Henri Ford or four, say
Roberto Sebastián Matta Echaurren
Sit in Palisades and read French poetry
de Nerv

box for Matta
top lined with blocks of pigments
upper right lined with map—folded twisted piece of same material
taking up space
upper left—4 mirror lined compartment each containing piece of
rock crystal, except piece resembling meteor blue glass
center mirror in background suspended shells—things pasted on back
of piece of glass show only in mirror—matched on front by end paper
—left—newspaper vague grey pieces of maroon one swinging—
right yellow chamber—streak of mixed colors like a cloud serpent
moving diagonally across ground. Coloured head pins stuck in at head
of comet
lower left—paleontological lined cylinder & chamber red block &
yellow pigment
right—beautiful fish made of twisted green & silver tinfoil thru blue
glass with jack-black constellation lining mask of medium grey darker
outline of frame

Matta with map-lined mind
Travel from Chile to Jersey to France
with the turn of a page

They call it wanderlust
a sense of adventure or
the sensation of movement like Odysseus
at sea
and I did not come by boat
but I am called fresh off . . .

so I crossed the Pacific
left the Pacific
to your heartland...
unpacked boxes labeled: papers, important and otherwise

while you filled your window boxes
with sunflowers and hyacinths
pansies, paper-whites, myosotis
your hands puncture the plastic of potting soil
fists full of dirt—the smell of ammonia lost
in the patting of bulbs down

Eros, C'est la vie

And I never read Aurelia just
Delfica , Artémis

Me llamo El Desdichado

Je suis le Ténébreux,—le Veuf,—l'Inconsolé

[my shadow is brown]

Suis-je Amour ou Phébus? . . . Lusignan ou Biron?

[isn't it obvious?]

centrous nerval system?

Do you remember last summer
reading Acker's *Pussy*,
King of the Pirates ? the rat
traps set—hoping for a good night
sleep . . . dreaming of touring
America on a Harley
the sunset always at our backs.

I wanted to be a punk boy
Squatting in the shadow of Artaud

box for Kathy Acker
top lined with shaved pubic hair
upper right—an unrolled condom
pasted over twilight
blue tissue paper—dead fireflies
pinned—constellations
awakening
upper left—birth control pills arranged
circular, behind
colors coalesce—a sun
in static descent
lower right—Cindy Sherman's film
still: Untitled #92
left—Malibu Barbie disrobed
blonde disheveled, prostrate. Ken, without pants
without genitals—his immutable smile

And it was always pussy
Acker's or not. Nin
Andrews' *Divinia*
Or Anaïs Nin:

*My diary is better than the books
by all these crooks: They will be mine forever*

provoked by Art O,
N writes:

*The Dôme at nine in the morning
Antonin Artaud passes by.
He is waving his magic Mexican cane and shouting*

_____ !!!

It's all conjecture but . . .
Imagine Artaud the Mômô, his magic
stick [*supposed to have belonged to St. Patrick*]
with the metal tip sparking with each step

Lacan would have had a field day—
Jacques smoking Cubans
[always sucking on the big brown ones]

declares: *Artaud is "fixed" and although he would live
to eighty, he would never write another line*

Seven years later:

*You should know from my books that I am a violent
and fiery being, full of terrifying inner storms, that*

*I have always canalized into poems, paint, plays,
films and writings, for you should also know, from
my life, that I never reveal these storms to the outside
world. This tells you to what extent I have always felt
Gérard de Nerval's life to be close to my own*

Gérard

da Narwhal—precursor to what?

Mallarmé's *Sainte*?

[O musicians of silence]

Baudelaire's *Correspondances*?

Artificial Paradises, obviously

Gérard afraid

where do your intentions lay?

de Nerval with your Aurelia

blooming in each damp orchid

I'll show you a storm shift

from Odysseus' sea to . . .

my chest

broken

loosed

heart skewered by those cuckold horns

I'll scour every five and dime between

Ithaca and Alphabet City lose

myself in the liminal space of bric-a-brac and blahblahblah

Turn into a thrift store alchemist

Throw down on Cornell—with fists and feet

for that stuffed parakeet or those Darger reprints...

Vivian girls (go 'round the outside)

Aurelia

Why not Sneeze, Rose Sélavy?

[1921. Readymade. 10.5 X 16.5 X 21 cm]

I'll steal from Duchamp: paint

152 marble cubes

Box it up in a cage at night

Call it found material Create

an aviary of memories—

a convergence of feathers

and feral dreams of flight

I'll box your words

Let them negotiate with bodies

Of texts

Construct a tension

Call it fruitful

X: myosotis

Imagine the theatre of cruelty

unfolding in blank spaces

Louis Gallo

GREEN LOLLIPOP

I sit in my car in front of McHarg Elementary
waiting for the bell to ring, the side door to swing open
as Mrs. Nestor escorts her morning Kindergarten class
down concrete steps. I like the first glimpse of my daughter,
the unexpected meeting of our eyes, her instant grin.
She will tell me the highlights of the day when we drive home.
Or maybe she won't say a word. I can never predict.
Either way is ok with me, words or silence, both meaning more
or less what they don't mean. No need to glamorize the obscure.

I arrive early every day so I can loaf a while in the seat,
sometimes eat a sandwich from Arby's.
Today a frigid wind sweeps the few leaves left off the trees.
Yellow, red, purple, brown leaves everywhere, in heaps,
swirling in intricate designs with the killer gusts
that cut into your throat like defeat. I'm not in the mood
for serious music but I turn on NPR anyway—some doleful Schubert.
In the end all music is Schubert. Apropos for the moment,
this cutting, icy wind, the blackened almost noon sky,
the dark tendrils of worry sprouting from my mind.
But I *choose* ease over strain, a grassy field over the edge.

So Schubert weeps on, weeps forever, and the sky promises
to crack open, and the wind pricks our skin with tiny needles.
What if the door opens and my daughter isn't there?
I entertain these worries like finicky guests whom no crisp sheet
can satisfy. What if a deranged pupil whips out a handgun
and shoots everyone? We've watched the news, haven't we?
They say the news is real. Like Thoreau, I'm beginning
to have my doubts. Queen Mathilda has a cold. So what?
I *choose* peace over distress, faith over the sinew of doubt.

A crow tries to light a few yards in front of the car.
He's having a rough time, buffeted every which way by lurching wind.
He finally makes it to the ground, though hopping to the place
he craves is more than difficult, and he staggers about like a drunk,
the wind throwing up one wing or the other, the way it turns umbrellas

inside out.

His object? Indistinct at first but I see clearly now—a green lollipop lying in the gravel. He pecks at it, nudges, tries to get a grip, and finally he's able to clutch the stick in his beak and fly off. I think neither one of us knows if he'll make it, that extra weight, gravity, the lack of coordinated balance. He dips and sinks, shoots up again, sways from side to side—an awkward ride. But he does make it at last and flies out of sight. A lollipop. He *chooses* triumph over certain defeat—and all for a green lollipop. I must remember this crow, add him to my list of icons. The courage, the absurdity! Who says crows signify death?

Suddenly the door bursts open and the kids file out. I rush over to the steps, where Mrs. Nestor hovers like a dour earth mother. The wind is relentless. I need to secure my daughter's tiny hand. I need to do that right now. She comes into focus, separates from the crowd with that shy smile. I had forgotten her parka was green. Such coincidences disrupt the mind, though I suspect there is no such thing as coincidence. I can even feel black wings unfurling, an ache in my shoulder blades, an unsteady groping to clasp my child's delicate, familiar hand. But in this matter I have not chosen. A gift she is. More than a gift. There are no coincidences. This kind of flying requires no wings.

Michael Bowden

KEEPER

Someone's been x-ing the days on a calendar. Someone's been sipping tea from a mustard plastic cup on a nightstand. And the sterilized straw, the unopened butter crackers in transparent wrappers next to the ruin of garden salad, aren't talking. There will be no renewal for the lone petal fallen from its vase onto the linen tablecloth. For its thorned stem in the water which already sours. No song will issue from the darkness in the throat of a bird pulled from the pool's skimmer by maintenance this morning. After the changing of the sheets and the balancing of accounts there will be no resurrection. Because no one knows what to say they'll say she lost her senses. She rose in the middle of the night, she went down, she went out of this world shouting and cursing the orderly. Her body shrunken. Little more than a soul clothed in sharp bone and translucent blue skin. A broken kite made of stick and tissue paper. Though it makes no difference, you have to admire that toughness in the end. That desperation at the expense of grace. Those last words, their beautiful profanity: *Let me go you son of a bitch*. Something you don't forget. A keeper. So you translate, encode it into the instructions on a packet of red poppies: *Clear area and loosen soil in late fall or spring. Scatter seeds evenly.* Place it deliberately under the ripening hand of bananas in the ceramic bowl, the wedding present. Then, once yearly, on some randomly selected anniversary, you can gently shake the seeds when you're all alone. Listen to their hiss and rattle. Think about the brilliant, impermanent blossoms igniting a white picket fence in perfect silence on the other side.

RA Lopez

JUNE 17TH CHORUS

from Small Town Blues

Blah, blah, blah
day after day after day, ugh
blah, blah, blah
night after night after night, ugh

Blah, blah, blah
here or there or here, ugh
blah, blah, blah
him or her or they, ugh

Blah, blah, blah
in the morning, in the morning, ugh
blah, blah, blah
in the evening, in the evening, ugh

Blah, blah, blah
in the sunshine, ugh
blah, blah, blah
in the moonlight, ugh

Blah, blah, blah
there's no reason, ugh
blah, blah, blah
in every season, ugh

Blah, blah, blah
ugh, ugh, ugh.
Blah, blah, blah
there's no reason
there's no reason, ugh.

Henry Hughes

Cloud Atlas. Donald Platt. Purdue University Press: West Lafayette, 2002.

“Why are there so few poets of the clouds?” Donald Platt asks in his second book, *Cloud Atlas*. In a cloudy world of cotton dreaminess and brooding dark anger, we might ask why there aren’t more poets like Platt, who ranges continents of good and evil in his own backyard and brings personality and human optimism to a genre that has been sterilized by so much hyper-aestheticized artifice and detached anxiety. The speaker in *Cloud Atlas* actually *speaks* to us in an earthly language we recognize, and yet there is always a lyric sky that colors, shapes, and moves the stories as poetry.

Cloud Atlas opens with “Glass Breaking,” a long-lined narrative as wide as Kansas, China, politics, and prairie storms, with all “that strange light and the wind rippling the endless / acreage into ocean.” It is a name—Deng Xiao-ping—that brings together pieces of memory: Chinese students in 1989 smashing bottles to protest their ruler (whose given name means “little bottle”) and the speaker as a very young boy, walking into the flatland with his sister to blast bottles with a .22. The sister is an amazing shot, and the tiny bullet again and again hits the tumbling marks:

and their fragments seed the fields. Everything will be
broken—bottles, regimes,
fathers, grain elevators, alternators, proper nouns. How is it that
these
three nonsense syllables call
back the past, make me see and hear my sister firing
at the bottles I keep throwing
as high as I can into a sunset stretched like a fresh-slaughtered
steer across the storm clouds’
low ceiling? . . .

It is difficult to sever and quote lines from *Cloud Atlas* because the voice moves gracefully and continuously like windswept clouds, or like the wide glide and narrow rush of a river. In most poems, Platt uses a rolling tercet that alternates between long and short lines. This pattern, similar to that found in Jimmy Schuyler's long poems, allows for both narrative expansion and lyric compression. In an interview with the reviewer, Platt explained that he was influenced by a "creative misreading"—what Harold Bloom calls a "creative misprision"—of C.K. Williams's poems in *Tar*. Williams's long, end-stopped lines were broken to fit within the printed page. Platt read the book and was "struck by the energy that these sometimes random breaks seemed to generate," deciding "simply to use it as a formal technique." Dissatisfied, however, with the block look of this format, Platt divided the lines into tercets and created an alternately reversing stanza. "It's an endlessly generative form that allows the voice to associate quickly and to jump from one image or subject to another."

In addition to being rhythmically fluid, the poems in *Cloud Atlas* are intellectually interesting. "Leap Second at the Turn of the Millennium" explores the astrophysicists' claim that atomic clocks are no longer accurate because "the world is slowing on its axis, perfect pirouette / towards the inevitable / standstill . . ." Amazing. And maybe poetry is the cause of this unwinding. Certainly Platt's speaker knows the power of lyric suspension, that thrilling moment before and after possible annihilation when a driver with his infant daughter makes a high-speed pass across a double yellow line and faces an oncoming eighteen-wheeler.

I felt my life close around me and didn't know why
I waited until
the last possible moment to pull back into the right lane

Many readers will identify with the terrifying confession and understand why "For that one second the world / held its breath." Although the speaker recognizes an unconscious "self-hate" behind this terrible exhilaration, he does not let these forces destroy him. The poet visits and then departs from these dark moments, more often than not, finding joy in life. There are the exuberant moments when he describes Frida Kahlo writing "*Viva la Vida*" on her last split watermelon, a daughter's "winged foot" that emerges unscathed from under a fallen tombstone, a bad heart

that keeps pumping. In the sensitive, though somewhat predictable neo-zen, Dave Matthews Band salvation of our time, Platt writes:

eternity is only and always
here, in the space between now and now, in the small moth
beating
its black-and-yellow wings
tick-tick against the lamp shade. If God exists, it is only in this
moment
just before dawn, in the cicadas'
ratchet wrench, in birdsong muffled by the sonic boom of fighter
jets flying
their training patterns,
in my daughter, unable to sleep any longer, telling herself
endless stories,
finding a word she likes . . .

Like all good poets, Platt loves words, and he devotes entire poems like "Scuppernong & Muscadine" to tasting their juices and celebrating middle age's persistent delights.

What remains are two mere words,
three syllables each, dactyls
that I say over under my breath to savor their ripeness.
Muscadine, and the two half-moons
of my wife's small breasts rise slowly over the trim of her
descending
black velvet dress. *Scuppernong*,
her quick tongue in my ear. What more is there to hear?

Using a shorter line, Platt also provides brilliant lyric variety with pieces like "Small Parable." A father tells us, "My anger is a wasp," but the admission disappears as the reader is quickly absorbed into a gripping account of the wasp world.

. . . she has tunneled out
cells the size of herself

and filled them with spiders
paralyzed by her kiss
and then numbed, crushing
their necks with pincer
jaws, so she may lay
her eggs there, seal them in
with more dirt, and let
them hatch into larvae
who will devour the still-living
spiders, grow wings
and fly out of their mud
sarcophagi.

The father is stung while clearing the wasp nest from the house's doorway, and the daughter has a dream in which the wasps have laid eggs in her father's arm where they will hatch, feed, swarm out, and "land upon her / with a hundred stings."

The parable concludes:

I hold her and say I'll never
raise my arm in anger
against her again.

If *Cloud Atlas* has disappointments, it is only in the occasional easy ending, as in "Group Photograph at a Wedding," which wraps-up like a thousand other photo album poems, with "all our past still before us." The language in the book, which I praise for its clarity and naturalness, may be too rhetorical or plainly spoken for some readers. But there are very few platitudes as one might find in Billy Collins's weaker work.

In "History and Bikinis," a clear narrative that is both funny and serious, we come to love the speaker's favorite, crazy uncle who, like a deranged Aldo Leopold, traces history backwards through the blood-soaked rings of the chopping block.

"1963, a good year, plenty of rain, see how wide
the growth ring is—
'I Want To Hold Your Hand' sold a quarter million copies

in the first three days,”
and then, as an afterthought, “When the monk Trich Quan Duc
burned himself alive
on a Saigon street, the Catholic generals called it
‘Buddhist barbecue.’”

But as an adolescent boy, the speaker was more interested in jerking off
with the Sears catalogue in the toolshed. “Listen,” the uncle continues.

. . . “July 5th, 1946, the bikini bathing suit

created by Louis Reard
made its ‘debut’ during a fashion show at the Molitor
Pool in Paris. Model

Micheline Bernardini wore the abbreviated outfit,
covered with a newspaper-print
design. I bet you didn’t know that the bikini got its name

from the Pacific atoll
where, four days earlier, the U.S. had exploded another
A-bomb?” . . .

Here all the humor, horror, and gross innocence of the world is
compressed into the poetic understanding of the boy’s orgasm.

. . . In the seven seconds
of blinding orgasm, I saw
her sundered flesh, the mushroom cloud rising almost a mile

out of the ocean,
ecstasy’s alpha and omega, ground zero, a young Japanese
girl kneeling, and the dead

chickens running in circles without their heads, chased
by my uncle who will
always ask me what the newsprint on her torn, stripped-off
bikini said.

The book's concluding title poem, "Cloud Atlas," a whimsical meditation on the drift of the mind, recently won a Pushcart Prize. And this might signal a warm front of recognition for such a fine collection. Whatever the critical weather, Donald Platt's work speaks clearly for a poetry that is both artfully crafted and simply human.

John Poch

Memoir of the Hawk. James Tate. Ecco Press: New York, 2001.

Some Ether. Nick Flynn. Graywolf Press: St. Paul, 2000.

Bullroarer. Ted Genoways. Northeastern University Press: Boston, 2001.

Never. Jorie Graham. Ecco: New York, 2002.

Radio, Radio. Ben Doyle. LSU Press: Baton Rouge, 2001.

Is there another poet who has more consistently amusing poem titles than James Tate? “Young Man with a Ham,” “What Katy Did,” “Rememberability,” “The End of Zen,” “Chirpy, the Ruffian,” “Boom-Boom,” and “Doink” are just a few of the reasons why you want to read the next James Tate poem. In *Memoir of the Hawk*, Tate is at his old tricks of inventing strange voices to speak stranger things in an almost normal world. If you tried to classify the poems somehow, you might catalog them under magical realism. They border on the surreal, but remain more calmly comic than what Breton envisioned. Most of them are under a page in length (all but two of them). Animals talk, people lie and do violence to others or themselves unexpectedly, and most importantly, a lot of blatantly normal conversations and events occur in the midst of this weirdness to make it all the weirder.

Tate likes to inject slang and onomatopoeic words into his poems: “Ragamuffin,” “shazam,” “poof, poof, poof,” “discombobulated,” and “cowabunga” are just a few examples.

While the poems are constantly surprising, it’s easy to relax into the zaniness. There are so many strange and wonderful objects and voices and moods in Tate’s poems, it’s almost like being at a pretty good buffet. You can tell the cook has gone to some trouble on certain dishes, and they’ve even sent a real person out to hover over the roast beef and put it on the plate for you, but then you’ve got your standard, re-heated mushy green beans, stale rolls, Jell-Os, and soft-serve ice cream here and there. In short, more editing was needed. The size of the book (173 poems), in comparison to most recent books of 60-90 pages, is impressive, but you realize that it could have been a stronger book if weak attempts like

“From Whence They Came,” “Endless Time,” and “Wasted” were weeded out. James Tate is adept at making a simple untruth playful and moving, but in “We Aim to Please,” the lies are sophomoric, transparent, and easy. When this poem about an airline passenger’s trouble with his camera ends with the speaker saying, “I don’t have a camera,” he might have well said, “And then I woke up.” All the air is let out of the poem.

The line breaks aren’t important, so neither are the lines, though occasionally you get one like “once she’s kissed you, you stay kissed!” or “Her soft curves, her beehives, her waterfalls” or even “Great is the day with its potato nestled in the dark.” It wouldn’t be hard for Tate to write good lines, but he’s not interested in that. He’s more concerned with how one sentence might veer from or mirror or do violence to the preceding one. One of the most extraordinary examples of this is “The Workforce.” A dialogue between two men who converse and one-up the other for about forty lines (this is the one poem whose lines actually work as lines). The poem ends,

What are you going to do without women, then?
We will suffer, sir. And then we’ll die out one by one.
Can any of you sing?
Yes, sir, we have many fine singers among us.
Order then to begin singing immediately.
Either women will find you this way or you will die
comforted. Meanwhile busy yourselves
with the meaningful tasks you have set for yourselves.
Sir, we will not rest until the babes arrive.

Most poets would fear reprisals if they used a word like “babes.” The poem is so much more a part of the real because of it. Imagine if the last line read, “until the women arrive.” How flat. The real tasks of everyday living seem to be at the heart of these poems. And while Tate’s poems don’t “sing” exactly, the sentences often rise and fall with a tragicomic mortal hum. At their best, they move us to a conflicted, self-conscious laughter that looks at itself in the mirror of language, sometimes noticing, strangely, tears.

Nick Flynn’s *Some Ether* contains some of the most emotionally moving poems I’ve read in a while, not just because the subject matter

concerns the suicide of a mother but because the priority of these poems is to notice the cruelty that language inflicts on us in its power to prophesy our most tragic moments. The first poem of the collection, "Bag of Mice," begins with a risky "I dreamt..." But what follows is a compelling articulation of his mother's suicide. The poem is small and powerful.

I dreamt your suicide note
was scrawled in pencil on a brown paperbag,
& in the bag were six baby mice. The bag
opened into darkness,
smoldering
from the top down. The mice,
huddled at the bottom, scurried the bag
across a shorn field. I stood over it
& as the burning reached each carbon letter
of what you'd written
your voice released into the night
like a song, & the mice
grew wilder.

This poem haunts. The only "meaning" he can garner from his personal tragedy is an absurd vision of language, rising, hopefully, up into song, yet finally carried away by vermin and fire.

Many of Flynn's poems lead up to brilliant epiphanies found in the quotidian vernacular and gesture. Critics might find the use and re-use of this structure gimmicky, but the language is charged with a different kind of violence each time. "She's not even real," "I'm not here right now," "Look what I did for you," "Who are you talking to?" "I'm going out and I want you to be good" are fairly innocuous statements until seen in the light (or dark) of one who has been left behind.

The imagery and the metaphors throughout the book are striking. A close examination of the seductive and playful nature of a gun in "Fragment (found inside my mother)" is overshadowed by an innocent, but cruel trick of a child. "How Do You Know You're Missing Anything" concludes with this image of neglect: "as the ice in the freezer // thickened, pushing the door open // until the space inside was not big enough / for a fist." The poem, "Two More Fragments," ends with a

staggering conceit of a prison as a sinking ship, the speaker Godlike yet helpless at the controls.

In the poem "Ago," Flynn struggles with the fleeting nature of Time yet realizes he can cling to powerful images of memory. Sometimes, however, these images, no matter how beautiful, are terrifying. He ends the poem, simply, with a memory of his mother turning her back to him before she leaves for work, saying "How does this look?" The poem is powerful, but one of the drawbacks to similar poems is that they rely on the knowledge of the mother's suicide and wouldn't have half the emotional or poetic effect without it. Simply put, if some of the poems were outside the collection, on their own, the reader wouldn't know that the tenor of the poem is a suicide.

There are plenty of weak poems in the collection. "And Then, And Then" or "Peach" or "Worthless," for example, seem only exercises or sketches for a poem that was yet to come. I suppose some will argue that the fragmentation of these poems is explained by the fragmentation of a life or lives. However, the poems themselves are not enough to overcome this imitative fallacy. But poems like "Emptying Town" or "The Visible Woman," in the context of the book, are some of the best any young poet has published in the last five years.

In Charles Olson's poem, "These Days," he recommends poetry with dirt still clinging to its roots. If he were interested in prophesying what poetry might begin the century following his own, he might have conjured Ted Genoways as the medium through which this poetry might come. The poems in his first collection, *Bullroarer*, are loaded with the clay, mud, grass, trees, blood, roots, and weather of the American plains.

With many of the poems, the reader of little attention feels like he is slogging through a muddy syntax and diction that offers no way out except to plow through. Much of the book is set in the earlier part of the twentieth century (headings to many of the poems help us locate ourselves in time, space, and perspective/voice).

The poems have the semblance of traditional forms, but the sonnets don't work as sonnets (with some harder work, they appear as though they could), and the poems broken into tercets and couplets offer

little justification as to why they are broken this way. Poets often defend the use of this kind of spacing by saying that they are giving the poem room to breathe, as if a reader might not be intelligent enough to plow through more than three or four difficult lines at a time. Or the stanzas are defended by logic's mute step-sister, Intuition. However, when poems such as "The Cow Caught in the Ice" or "Under the Big Top" or "The Bolt-struck Oak" pack the tercet with a fairly steady iambic hexameter line (rhyming and half-rhyming, in a kind of *terza rima*), the poems are at their best. One of the strongest examples of this line can be found in section two of "The Bolt-struck Oak":

L.S. wonders if it ever rains where she is.
Though he could straighten his arm across the mattress
to touch her side, he knows—like oceans of cheatgrass

choking snakeweed and sage—the sick baby constricts
her roots. Parts of her brittle like winter-killed corn.
The day he chained the team to the dead oak and pulled,

something buried bent, then cracked. The baby was born,
and rootstock snapped like bones till the rough trunk jolted
the ground. At the glass all night, she stared at the hole,

The sound of the language gets more choked and broken as the section moves toward the uprooting of the tree. No one could deny that *cheatgrass/mattress* is a striking rhyme, and the metaphorical depth of the broken family tree in this poem is nothing less than heart-breaking.

The thick Anglo-Saxon sounds and the compound words that pepper Ted Genoways' landscapes throughout the book charge his language with stark beauty. However, in the shorter poems like "Pietà" and "The Dead Have a Way of Returning," this language is traded for abstraction or image. The final image in "Pietà" is moving and could be its own poem, but the first half of the poem is a flat explanation that obscures the potential of the whole to work as a unified poem. "The Dead Have a Way of Returning" states the obvious, except in the beautiful last line, "he becomes a hundred children." And the poem, "Blaze," is a wonderfully clear poem, but nothing in the third stanza is necessary to the poem.

Despite his flaws as a young writer (some of the poems might have matured, formally, through several more revisions), Ted Genoways looks to be one of the most promising young poets in America.

Reading Jorie Graham's latest book, one understands she's been reading Hopkins and that she spent some time at the ocean, both ventures fraught with metaphysical possibility. With all the slashes and colons and hyphens and dashes and italics and parentheses and brackets and white-spacings and funky participles/inkhorning, you can tell she is trying to find a way to get spiritual (Hopkins stuck to the odd accent mark) via some "special rhythm." It's a poetry begging for you to *see* its rhythm.

Yet it's full of an error of style. Far too much passive voice. Too many *it's* and *its*. A lack of organization. An awkward idiomatic use of prepositions.

"It's like this," is the first sentence in her poem "Philosopher's Stone." Why even write that sentence? How is it, in any way, necessary to the poem? Is there a quality of language here that does anything poetic? This sentence, it's like walking into a museum for the twentieth time and seeing a spoon on a stool in the corner and a note on the wall reading, "Kierkegaard." The viewer has to do too much work. Might the author do some work?

It's interesting that, for all Graham's coining of words, "it" and "is" (and "in") are the favorite words, in constant use throughout every poem. And "I". "Philosopher's Stone" (dis)embodies one of the most egregious examples of this kind of subjective imprecision:

If you open and close your eyes
there should be a difference, no, in the way
the thing seen *is*—in its weight?—and then
what the thinking has begun to make—which is
not the tint of gravity, nor the *was* of the ticking,
(what's not there if we leave
altogether for example)—because there is, on it, which we've

Too often, it's a re-writing of the bad abstract parts of "Four Quartets."

Every once in a while, it's comically sentimental, actually, for all its philosophical underpinnings and solipsistic doubt. A re-writing of the best of Rod McKuen: "I love you: the sky seems nearer: you are my first / person" is one example. Or "It seems this / should take Forever into its garb, deep into its folds, and wrap and / wrap it, holding us firm." Poets should take emotional risks, but they should find a way to distill language out of the realm of feeling. The word "risk" is appropriate when speaking of emotion, because the heart's cries lead most often to an end in language wreckage.

It's like someone talking down to you about philosophy and time and gaze and the "speaker subject," and, because they fear you won't get it and will want desperately to drift off to the "real" world, they keep jerking at your lapels every few seconds. Let go, I say. It's a sort of rudeness.

And yet, there is the *fact* that Graham's poems get so much attention. Why? Is it our culture's fascination with personality and celebrity (and Jorie's a Star?), or is it the presence of a force of particular language within and behind the poems that keeps us coming back to them? It would be less than obvious to deny a combination of both these suppositions. The audacity to write the long line and to tackle the big questions and abstractions is markedly Graham's. Evolution, ontology, repetition, prayer. She's superconscious of the strong verb despite her overuse of the passive. And there are beautiful phrases we don't hear enough in contemporary poetry:

a buttress in silence's flyings,
("In / Silence")

Needle, story, knot, the
knot bit off,
the plunging-in of its silvery proposal,
("Prayer")

nothing else. Wind silks the fronds. They move

their rippling under the harshness of the festival.
Everything seems easily born. All without echo. No souvenir.
(“Where: The Person”)

In what is probably the best poem of the collection, “Gulls,”
Graham ends the poem:

slowly in you reader they stand like madmen facing into the
wind:
nowhere is there any trace of blood
spilled in the service of kings, or love, or for the sake of honor,
or for some other reason.

“For some other reason.” The bathos of this line runs deep and wide,
takes the reader into the comic and the horrible, the philosophical
(“reason”) and the banal. The language here takes us by the hand, through
image, to Gloucester blinded at Dover, and we stand with him, fallen to
earth among gulls, gulled by the absurd world around us, desperately
believing something might be there worth knowing. And then we are
anchored into the title of the collection. *Never*. Remember that Lear cries
out the word five times (one beautiful trochaic pentameter line). In *Never*,
Graham, little by little, continues to bring the promise of poetry forward,
despite the silences.

Ben Doyle’s *Radio, Radio* is a book about a proud young writer
who doesn’t conform. It reminded me of a quote I heard back in the ’80s
by one of the members of the Seattle band, Screaming Trees. He was
asked about playing in Atlanta and what the band thought of Little Five
Points, the then (and now?) hip area of town. That place is so cool, this
rock star proclaimed, someone should blow it up.

Radio, Radio tries desperately to be cool. And like Little Five
Points, sometimes it succeeds. But there is an overall sense of “business
as usual” akin to a street lined with touristy gift shops where one can find
crafts that attempt to be arts. All the tricks are here: a poem that runs
sideways across the page, poems in sections (Roman and Arabic
numerals, lower case letters, and bullets divide sections with no real
rationale), titles with parentheticals, many italicized words and passages,

prose poems, poems of many 1-line stanza poems. All of these attempts at poetry are like a child on the top of the sliding board, screaming, "Look at me." And then a haphazard slide down to the water. Splash. But the great swimmers and divers, and poets, I think, leave no splash at all. Those are the silences we strive for.

One of the most obvious examples of Doyle's subversion of a form is the attempted sestina, "Years of Age." This is the poem that runs sideways. To make it even more "postmodern," the poem refers to how badly it fails as a sestina (are we supposed to laugh?) and also refers to the poet: "Well met, / Mr. Doyle." The only quality of sestina-ness the poem achieves is its use of 39 lines. Even the repeated words are cheated on, so the poet resorts to combinations like "again/against," "creation/creating," and "shoot/shoots." The lines get longer and longer as the poem goes on till they are around 14 feet. But they aren't really feet, since there is no regular measure. Is it a typo when he writes "in an different sky"? An? Did he mean "a"? Did the editors fail? Or did Ben Doyle? The mark of good difficult writing is not that it makes you feel dumb. Good difficult writing makes you feel that the writer is smart.

The pyrotechnical outbursts are a shame because there are so many powerful uses of language throughout the book. The opening poem "Still Life" begins gorgeously:

This must be what I meant to tell you:
nothing is nothing new, o my goddess, o my goodness,
the pandemonium fits on the head of a pin
whose body is within the body of a poisoned
poison red moth.

Who wouldn't want more of this steady revelation of language? But Doyle doesn't trust language, and he resorts to effects. At the conclusion of the book, there's even an "Afterwords" with an obnoxious footnote having nothing (so the postmodernists can say, *Everything!*) to do with the poem.

At the end of it all, you realize *Radio, Radio* falls short of the imagination, even secondary imagination. At its best, it's fancy. While fancy always catches our attention, in time it becomes lost in the shuffle because it is only a flashy notion of fashion.

Willard Greenwood

A Defense of Poetry. Gabriel Gudding. Pittsburgh University Press: Pittsburgh, 2001.

“A Colostomy Bag of Song”

In 2002, the University of Pittsburgh Press published Gabriel Gudding’s book, *A Defense of Poetry*, which won the 2001 Agnes Starrett Lynch Poetry Prize. If you are chortling or snorting at the cod-pieced superhero on the cover, then you will likely have great chortles and snorts when you read the poems. Gudding makes us cackle over this startling insult: “the greatest of your sister’s facial pimples did outweigh a turkey.” Also in the opening poem, “A Defense of Poetry,” someone gets his “dillywong clapped in a sizeable door.” Ouch. There are less painful pleasures. “Infantry,” which deliciously mocks the mincing self-importance of Ken Burns’ documentary on the Civil War, is addictive. I found myself reading the poem over and over, especially the part about the diaper. It should be noted that the poem is ascribed To Ken Burns.

Instead of complaining about the state of poetry (as has been fashionable since Sir Philip Sidney, who, in his *An Apology for Poetry*, wondered why England was such a cruel stepmother to poets), he has taken the current state of poetry affairs into his poetry oven and has “baked the days of boo-hoo / into crusts of fuck-it.” To the generations of poets-to-come, and critics as yet unformed, return to this advice as needed.

But readers should be cautioned that Gudding’s advice can be caustic. We may be somewhat taken aback by the poem, “On the Rectum of Peacocks,” for example, in which Gudding writes:

Having not much brawn, and being rickety in its construction, it is a kind of wicker bird. The rectum of the peacock is thus like a flask in a picnic basket, as it might fall out if the bird is jostled.

This is by no means the most sublime line of Gudding’s, but such irreverence has fantastic results throughout the book. We recall Longinus’ statement on sublimity in writing: “excellence with flaws is far superior to a general competence.” Gudding’s excessive inanity, scatology, and fondness of butts and anuses all serve to declare war and

to make undeclared guerilla war on competent poetry. The poems seem to steer us away from the road of excessive seriousness. He is Whitman on nitrous. Or is he the Angel of Death on nitrous?

Throughout all the violence done to animals and during all the demeaning of people, I kept hearing the line "Is that your butt driving through traffic" as a chorus to Gudding's melancholy volume. We will remember the humor and the outrageousness. However, the joy with which he treats the language and the original imaginative work behind the surrealist representations of normal activity constitute the main strength of these poems. I do wish that "Ronald Reagan" were a tad more irreverent. Gudding misses an opportunity there, but it should be noted that this critic cannot always want a completely different poem than the one he was given by the poet.

There are poems that achieve a remarkable balance between the free-play of language (a mode that can be seen as experimental, avant-garde, or postmodern) and the realm of lyric, in which the poet addresses and represents emotion. "The Bosun," which is such a poem, exemplifies his conventional lyricism that hopefully will not be ignored by himself or his readers. "One Petition Lofted into the Ginkgos" is a painful and beautiful poem, which also might go fully unheard. If all the jokery and nincompoopishness of this volume seems too un-poetic, I suggest a look at this poem, which poignantly stakes out old ground—the spasmodic realization that love for the helpless will always exist because of and despite the sadnesses of the world. The humor conveys and covers the immediacy of feeling that underlies and overlies the poems. This lyricism does not redeem the tastelessness of "Poem Imploring the Return of My Butt," yet the lyric qualities of such poems are brought into sharp relief by lines like "I am in a butt," a glorious bit of lyric parody from the poem "Statement."

"The OED" mirrors the petition Gudding lofts to ginkgos in that its needle finds the thick blue vein in our forearms rather soft. It is an unabashed comic love poem. There is the grandiose, wonderful, and self-conscious Freudian hilarity of a "big toe" growing "larger" in the beloved's hand as there is the lover's rapid departure from the beloved in order to find an Inuit word for "blood-flecked snow." The love poem heaves gently between romance and mania while calling upon the story of Joan of Arc as the mythic muse for the type of love that exists between lover and beloved. Yes, they are an odd couple, but the poem leaves us

with Joan's ashes and blood flecked snow—surely parody is not supposed to have this much pain, but fortunately for us, it does. I mention this comic romanticism, which is continually deflected by the playful language, because Gudding's editor (and the series editor), Ed Ochester, who should be commended for a bold and wise choice, claims that "Gudding's first book is likely to have the same impact as the early work of Russell Edson, Bill Knott, and James Tate."

The first glance at Gudding bears out the aforementioned poetic comparisons. However, we must return to the violence of the book; there is hilarity and cruelty between animals and people that always attends the parodic nature of the poems. And in this cruelty and viciousness, he differs from the aforementioned poets. This comedic violence is the thoroughly enjoyed defense of poetry from all past and future prigs. The book does not end as strongly as it opens, but that is because the great poems have made us weary, and we may not be equal to them at this point. So, we rest, tired from laughing and farting.

CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Michael Bowden lives in Sierra Vista, Arizona. His prose poems have appeared in the anthologies *Best of the Prose Poem* and *The Party Train*. His work also has appeared recently in *Verse*.

Edward Butscher is the first biographer of Sylvia Plath and Conrad Aiken. He recently completed *And Thus Spake Godfrey*, an anti-epic poetic sequence.

E.R. Carlin grew up in Youngstown, Ohio. He has been published recently in *The Heartland's Today*, *Chiron Review*, *Urban Spaghetti*, and *Poems & Plays*.

Judith Chalmer is the author of a book of poems, *Out of History's Junk Jar* (Time Being Books, 1995) and teaches creative writing at Vermont College. She is also the creator of performances including "Don't Go In There!," a one-woman comedy with social commentary and "Cruzando Fronteras/Preselenje/Clearing Customs," a dance/narrative on immigration.

Leonard J. Cirino has been reading, writing, editing, and publishing poetry for over three decades. He has 23 books and chapbooks from 13 different publishers since 1987. His recent chapbooks are *The Widow Poems* from Lone Willow Press (Omaha, NE) and *Poems of the Royal Concubine L.X.* (Lummo Press, San Pedro, CA). He lives and works in Springfield, Oregon.

Daniel Gallik has had poetry and short stories published by *A.I.M.* (*America's Intercultural Magazine*), *Parabola* (*A Magazine of Myth and Tradition*), *Nimrod*, *Limestone* (University of Kentucky), *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Aura* (University of Alabama), and *Whiskey Island* (Cleveland State University). Currently, Daniel is working on three novels. One of his plays may go off-Broadway in the near future.

Louis Gallo teaches at Radford University in Virginia. His fiction and poetry have appeared in *Greensboro Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *American Literary Review*, *Glimmer Train* and many others.

Gail Hosking Gilberg's poems and essays have appeared in such places as *The Texas Observer*, *The Florida Review*, *The Chattahoochee Review*,

The Cream City Review, *The Threepenny Review*, and *The Fourth Genre*. She has an M.F.A. from Bennington College and lives in upstate New York. She's working on a memoir about her mother.

Jack Granath's writing has appeared in *Alaska Quarterly Review* and *Pangolin Papers* among other journals. He works in a library in Kansas City.

Willard Greenwood is the editor of the *Hiram Poetry Review*.

Bill Griffin is married to a Hiram College graduate (Linda French '75), whom he enticed to small town life in rural North Carolina. Bill serves on the board of the North Carolina Poetry Society and organizes the annual Foothills Favorite Poem Project. His poems have appeared most recently in *Main Street Rag*, *Tar River Poetry*, *POEM*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

Henry Hughes' poetry has appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal*, and *Carolina Quarterly*. He teaches at Western Oregon University.

Marilyn E. Johnston's poetry has received awards from the *Connecticut River Review* and *Midwest Poetry Review*. Her numerous publishing credits include: *Worcester Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *South Carolina Review*, and *Poet Lore*. She has received two recent Pushcart Prize nominations. Her chapbook, *Against Disappearance*, was published by Redgreene Press as finalist for its 2001 poetry prize. Formerly in corporate communications, she's now a full-time poet. She works part-time in the Bloomfield Libraries and directs a poetry reading series for Connecticut poets.

Erren Geraud Kelly recently began his 15th year as a writer. He is currently published in *Beyond the Frontier* and *The San Francisco Reader*. He has a B.A. in English, creative writing from Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge. Mr. Kelly lives in San Francisco.

Rich Kenefic teaches engineering at Indiana Tech in Ft. Wayne. His poems have recently appeared in *Crab Creek Review*, *Poet Lore*, and *Whiskey Island* and are forthcoming in *Blue Mesa Review*.

Jesse Lee Kercheval is the author of five books including the novel *The Museum of Happiness* and the writing text *Building Fiction*. Her second poetry collection, *Dog Angel*, is forthcoming from the University of Pittsburgh Press. She teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she directs both the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing and their new M.F.A. program.

Iris Litt is the author of a book of poetry, *Word Love*, published by Cosmic Trend Publications. She has had poems published in many literary magazines including *Onthebus*, *Confrontation*, *Caprice*, *Poetry Now*, *Central Park*, *Icarus*, *The Rambunctious Review*, *Lactuca*, *Pearl*, *Verve*, *The Ledge*, *Earth's Daughter's*, *Poet Lore*, *West End*, *Scholastic*, *Atlantic Monthly* (special college edition), and many others. She has had short stories in *Travellers Tales*, *Prima Materia*, *Out of the Catskills*, *The Second 'Word Thursday' Anthology*, *Kaleidoscope*, *Cronos*, etc., and articles in *Pacific Coast Journal*, *New York Poetry Calendar*, *Writer's Digest*, *The Writer*, and others. She has won many awards, including the Atlantic Monthly Award for College Writing, first prize in The Virtual Press short story contest, French Brad poetry award from *Pacific Coast Journal*, and others. She teaches poetry and fiction workshops in Woodstock, NY, and has taught at SUNY/Ulster, Writers in the Mountains, Educational Alliance, New York Public Library, Marble Collegiate Church, and many other venues in New York City and the Hudson Valley. She earned her B.A. in English at Ohio State University and was an exchange student at Universidad de las Americas in Mexico City. She lives in New York's Greenwich Village and in Woodstock, New York.

RA Lopez is from Edinburg, Texas. He now lives in San Antonio, Texas. He works in a bookstore. His girlfriend's name is Rachel. They have two cats, Nico and Frida. They probably smoke too much and play too many video games. She's an English major. He used to be an English major. He went to UT-Pan Am for six years. He still hasn't graduated. He's twenty-six years old.

John N. Miller was born in Van Wert, Ohio, and grew up in Hawai'i (1937-1951) but has been a Buckeye since 1962. Though his poems have appeared in a variety of literary journals, this is his first publication in the *Hiram Poetry Review*.

Jean Owen was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1944. She is the mother of three grown daughters and continues to call Memphis home-base. Living in unfamiliar places generates growth and stirs creative energy for her. In the last three or four years she has lived in Key West and in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. In the fall of 2001, she lived in Taos in an adobe house which had been updated but which retained much of the original architecture and was fronted by an old fortification used for protection by the early residents. Her friend and fellow-poet, John Martin, and she recently have returned from Paris where they spent a rainy November. She has been published in *Chiron Review*, *International Poetry Review*, and a few other small presses.

Natalie Peeterse's poetry has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Analecta 27*, and *CutBank*. She is an Arizona Commission on the Arts Fellowship recipient.

Helen Ruggieri teaches at the University of Pittsburgh in Bradford, Pennsylvania. She recently has had work published in *Rain Taxi* and *Relative Links* (both online), and *Poetry Midwest*, *Adirondack Review*, *Poetry Magazine*, and in Japan at the *Mainichi Daily News* (English version). Her haibun collection, *The Character of Women*, is available at www.FoothillsPublications.com.

Virgil Suárez was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1962. At the age of twelve he arrived in the United States. He received an M.F.A. from Louisiana State University in 1987. He is the author of two new poetry collections, *Palm Crows* (University of Arizona Press) and *Banyan* (LSU Press). This year, *Guide to the Blue Tongue*, his sixth collection of poetry, will be published by the University of Illinois Press. He is the co-editor of the anthologies *American Diaspora: Poetry of Displacement* and *Like Thunder: Poets Respond to Violence in America*, both published by the University of Iowa Press. He is the recipient of an NEA grant for poetry. His work continues to be featured in international and national literary magazines and journals. He divides his time between Key Biscayne and Tallahassee where he lives with his wife and daughters and teaches as a full professor at The Florida State University.

Bill Sweeney's two-year-old daughter decided to dress up "as himself" for Halloween this year. Bill intends to follow his example as closely as possible. Recently, Bill's poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, and twice in *Ploughshares* (Paul Muldoon and C.D. Wright

issues). The *New Yorker* maintains a parental silence. His first book, entitled *The Minor Poet*, has returned from its submission to Farrar, Straus, and Giroux and once more demurely awaits a publisher.

Rawdon Tomlinson's last book of poetry, *Deep Red* (Univ. Press of Florida, 1995), won the 1996 Colorado Book Award for poetry. LSU will publish his next book, *If You Could Lick My Heart: Geronimo After Kas-Ki-Yeh*, in 2005. The winter issue of *Sewanee Review* contains four poems from the book. He's working on *Letters of the Surgeon's Son, 1862-1865*. He's an adjunct professor at Arapahoe Community College.

Eric Trethewey is the author of four poetry collections, most recently *The Long Road Home*. His poems have appeared in a number of magazines, among them the *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Paris Review*, and *Ploughshares*. He lives in Roanoke, Virginia, and teaches at Hollins University.

Charles Valle was born in Manila, raised in Orange County, received his B.A. from UCI and is currently pursuing an M.F.A. at Notre Dame. Recent works have appeared, or will appear, in: *Flyways*, *42Opus*, *bluesky review*, *Quirk*, and *Goodfoot*. Read his online journal at <http://thschrngboy.diaryland.com>.

Marlys West received her M.F.A. in poetry from the Michener Center for Writers in Texas and an M.A. in literature from the University of Virginia. Her work has appeared in literary journals, anthologies, and newspapers. The University of Akron Press published her book of poems, *Notes for a Late-Blooming Martyr*, in 1999. This year she is a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University. She is a National Endowment for the Art grant recipient in poetry for 2003.

Dylan Willoughby lives in the East Village of New York City. Recent poems have appeared in *Cutbank*, *Spinning Jenny*, *Can We Have Our Ball Back?*, *Pom²*, and *Taverner's Koans*.

THE HIRAM POETRY REVIEW

ISSN 0018-2036

Indexed in the American Humanities Index

Submission Guidelines:

Send 3–5 poems and an SASE to:
HPR, P.O. Box 162, Hiram, Ohio 44234

Queries can be sent to:

poetryreview@hiram.edu

Web site:

<http://home.hiram.edu/www/English/poetryreview.htm>

Subscriptions:

\$9.00 for one year or \$23.00 for three years

Hiram Poetry Review
P.O. Box 162
Hiram, OH 44234