

# *The Wormwood Review*



*Second Issue*



# *The Wormwood Review*

Vol. 1

**No. 2**

## THE FIRES OF HOME

Home is where the balanced mornings fall  
Like orange and noiseless dominos beside  
My father's bed. Piping like a flute  
Upon the concert of his youth — he notes  
My mother, a sober courtship in a timeless  
Middlewestern town where Darwin and the patterns  
Of Oak accustomed avenues prevail, where  
Gloom and vanity are hauled to the curb  
Before pedestrians and jailed like drunken drivers.

He grieves for the pale, defective child  
Who spits out the cream and turns  
Away from his father's hearth. "My son  
Sits tuneless as shadows, feeding one  
Hand to the other and eating his brain," he sighs.  
I mutter how the snow drifts towards us  
Over our lawns like the population of Asia,  
He replies, "a burden but distant, bad  
Manners and gone with the season, my son."

Before dawn I heard him call  
"Come, come to me without a quarrel."  
The cur that napped beside the grate  
Howled like history at his door,  
The strangled song which was my youth  
Rose like a bird and flies away — Father,  
When the moon burned like the fires of home  
Were the hills warm with mortal desire?  
Before history, were the trees startled  
A deep green blush by the sun?

“You rave of dreams without design  
You will not mourn for me,” he sighed.  
Grinning the lazy wisdom of the aged  
He kissed the hound that tore his throat,  
“With my death I will you all  
The Certainty there is,” my father said,  
“Your son must follow his father’s wake  
As the geese fly dangerously in spring  
From winter toward no natural home.”

*Grandin Conover*

## **ENTER THIS DARKNESS**

Enter this darkness.  
Feel the folds of the rock and sigh.  
Light the way through the cold fall of water..  
The wrinkled seeds  
that patter as they tumble  
reveal the eel's lair  
beneath the crow-beaked rock.

Here is a new house  
and an unworn garment.  
The hand's ring is empty,  
the finger's skin restored.  
A nest of everlasting  
apple-breasted birds  
is perched on the tree  
beside the vacant window.

House of mist  
hall of cinders  
hope of tomorrow  
hell of empty night —  
by these four signs of darkness  
I pledge the needle and its eye.

*Michael Bullock*

## THE BREAKFAST

Mythology in a bowl. The morning arrives and seeks the birth of sound and cherubim denounce these chairs, these florid fruit, and the voice that vines around the news.

It feeds on someone's yesterday. Perpetuates and deludes. Say, on a hill two barefoot boys trade diction and throw rocks at a target. In a city, say again, a clerk looms about his cloth and holds it against window light. Between hours time sanctifies a horticulture of events.

This family of dishes makes simple in the round the popularity of being where milk, cream, and buttered notions accumulate about a table. On a cupboard shelf, spice and other inventions befriend the hand, and nearer than spoons to the soul the community of passing the dreams. Say again, this day is planned to collect experience to port and rearrange. Between events time sprouts hours for remembering.

Come mysteriously seated, but not in sinister mystery, the act of time, so natural to acceptance that it gives what is asked and takes in forgetting. Say again, the food is good and means to make us new and partakes of us. This helping of being shares time and makes an island under morning light. The city is divided to keep us sane, and the land is traversed by a nation's plans, yet time bounties this time with its host. Let us kiss one another sweetly gently on the forehead.

*Henry Birnbaum*

A  
Bodhisattva  
sitting  
for  
a  
painter  
or  
a  
seed  
sitting  
for  
the  
Rain  
or  
a  
circle  
waiting  
for  
a  
Musician  
began  
to  
rise  
carrying

Audience  
and  
Universe.

*John Tagliabue*

## **THE GIRL WITH THE FIREFLY**

The lightning-bug in her hand stammers wildly  
As she stands there on the verge of darkness,  
A fulcrum for dusk. Her green torch  
Flares sporadically, like a code  
To which she alone can find the key.  
Motionless, her figure fades into black

As the garden blends into earth. The signals  
Come more faintly now, like the pulse  
Of a dying child who feels the balance tremble  
And slide into the night.

When all the green is gone,  
She looms out of the shadows, brushing the dark,  
Bewildered by the silence in her hand.

*Larry Rubin*

## A CENTAUR IN NEW YORK

You seemed to think it strange that I,  
A centaur in New York, should speak of love.  
You laughed when I produced my trove  
Of periwinkle, kelp, and royal palm.

I wore a chain of hyacinths to charm  
Your eyes. I wove a skirt of olive leaves  
To cover my extremities. My hooves  
Trod soft on rugs, the grass on which you lived.

Alas, I saw in your eyes I was two;  
I saw that I was doomed to harry self;  
I saw that nothing I could sing or give  
Would shake the terror you would have me live.

Resolutely, I surrendered flowers.  
My ancient four-foot passion was a joy  
No biped could encompass or delay.  
I clattered down Fifth Avenue, away.

*Stephen Stepanchev*

## LETTER TO W. D. S.

Christ, you made me sad  
with your love tunes gone awry  
and the bitter root twining, mossy,  
among the pages of a songsheet tossed to

wind down the wind and  
moulder in a lost cranny  
of some meadow. I'm not used to loss,  
though aware of it, as one is aware of

cancer. A woman  
I knew, wrinkled like blown snow,  
died of a wild part of herself which  
ravened its own life. Her children, grown to seed

themselves, kept locks on  
their tongues, but their hearts' faceless  
prisoner snarled at the world through the  
portcullises of eyes. Like those striped lines of

yours, that scourge of ink  
and pillory of paper.  
Why did you flay yourself there, in the  
marketplace? Was it because sorrow shown is

simpler than covert  
loneliness? All of us are  
alone. The world we blow through is cold.  
Snow fetters our sorrow, yet we flute and fife.

*Lewis Turco*

## **FOOLISH, FATHER**

Taught how to write, he never wrote  
No novelist — more lamb than goat —  
Was Trollope's son. He took, poor fella,  
Trained by Trollope to write a novella,

To sheep-grazing. Just why, Lord knows!  
Was it his father's woolly prose?  
Fixations father Fixed Ideas.  
Bah! There are no panaceas.

*R. W. Stallman*

## SHORT STORY

“Read me what tea-leaves spell.”

“Beauty, Mademoiselle.”

Arsenic she stirred in  
The cup she drank for him  
Stained the teacup's rim,  
But spared her pretty skin,  
Her beauty and her youth,  
And kept from him the truth.  
Knowing her youth was up,  
She fixed time in her cup.  
But one day time cupped her,  
And clocks began to tick.  
That day she didn't stir  
They said, “It's arsenic.  
It was that wicked sinner  
Put the poison in her.”  
Sinners, drink it up:  
Poison's in the cup.

*R. W. Stallman*

## IN MEMORIAM, J. H. W.

Death takes strong-legged men,  
asking no questions, answering none.

But no one thought of death, there,  
where boys' games and boys' things  
filled the short winter afternoons  
with guns, snares, tracks in the snow.

Or the long summers, with school  
far off and the woods near  
and large enough for running —  
just running, not going anywhere.

He ran (and swung far out  
on wild grapevines, and climbed trees)  
because the young, strong legs  
wanted to know how strong they were.

Death would have had to run  
fast and far to catch him then.

Later, going away to college,  
working and marrying, the legs  
still sometimes wanted to run, but the woods  
were smaller and farther away.

And if he dreamed of going somewhere  
(or getting away somewhere) the dreams  
faded, and the circuit closed,  
from home to office and back again.

Death didn't even have to follow,  
then, to catch him. Death waited  
quietly, while one day's round  
turned back upon the day before.

And casually tripped up the middle-  
aging legs, and took him.

## **THE ULTIMATE COMPOSITIONS OF HER THIGHS**

to kiss the essential symmetries of  
her lips and within that kiss to move  
the sharp responses of her need  
for behind that body stir the  
astonishing expansions of the mind  
that is the meaning to touch

the absolute proportions of her  
breast and around that touch to change the  
deep attentions of her will since  
within that body move the surprising  
contractions of the heart that  
is the idea of loving to embrace the

ultimate compositions of her thighs  
and within that embrace to stir the eager  
motions of her thoughts because around  
that body change the amazing alternations  
of the soul that is  
that pleasure of loving a woman

*Norman Friedman*

## BLOOD

Jew and Celt and Slav  
rush through my veins

it is no trouble to kiss  
the Jewess on the lips  
to love the Irish baby  
to listen to the iron song

of Russia's red battalions

What is more terrible  
is the reconciliation

of listening to my heart beat  
next to hers to watch his hands

unformed pluck at the air  
while they keep drumming  
singing of what is past  
Like Roman renegade

or traitor to the Crown

I soon forget when horses pull  
me East and North and West.

*Christopher Perret*

## **LOVE**

When I was five I loved to swing  
And run around the playground like a hare  
Climb onto the monkey-bars and sing,  
And tell things to the grey attendant there.

In winter when my fingers became cold  
From zipping gloveless down the sliding-pond  
He took my hands in his — and he was old —  
And rubbed them, as a vagabond

Protects his fire from the wind.  
Now, often when I have misplaced a glove,  
Despondent that my passions must be pinned,  
I brood about those chilly days of love.

*Florence Victor*

## **BRONZE CHRYSANTHEMUMS**

In October comes a voice  
From this passive-burning bush,  
A speaking to the Moses in me.

In this flame-and-mist time comes  
A command to the exodus,  
To the far-country journey.

Leave your quiet sheepstrewn hills  
Drowsing in the silent sun, it says,  
Leave love and the lost dream.

Go down, it says, to an ancient land  
Trouble the old gods, the old king,  
Make fugitive the peoples of your mind

Go over into the wilderness ;  
Go in rage or go in peace,  
But go humbly in your knowing.

The bronze chrysanthemums —  
Bush burning, voice burning,  
A revelation, single and unique,  
Speaking to the Moses in me.

*Marden Dahlstedt*

## **HOME TO OSTIA**

Come home to Ostia where no ship sails  
Our quiet harbor. Finding fishnets burn  
Dry on wharves and how our seaport fails

To serve an inland city, merchants turn  
For coastal villages where commerce calls.  
Touring the vacant marketplace, we learn

Carved wood decays, at shrines white plaster falls;  
Austere or lusty, while mosaics break,  
Cavorting gods go lame across thin walls.

Come, we shall watch them tumble in the wake  
Of summer breezes, before sunlight trails  
Down walks, along calm docks by whose mistake

We have, avoiding red flags flown for gales,  
Come home to Ostia where no ship sails.

*G. F. Keithley*

## OBJECTS

### I. **Madam Schaparelli's Birdcage**

She kept it mounted high against the satin draperies :  
a golden birdcage, its wooden pieces pierced and sculptured,  
its tiny wire bars more fragile than the threads embroidering  
her Aubusson with pale, gently pornographic Fragonards.  
She kept it, a Baroque pendulum, riding upon the breeze  
she made when whispering through the room.

But no birds perched upon the inner clockwork of the cage,  
no trained canary singing, nor even jungle parakeets  
speaking seldom, like ancient green and yellow crystal radios,  
and especially no gross crow or parrot to hone their bills  
on cuttlebones and spot the sandalwood with seeds and waste.

No birds sat silent or singing within the cage, because, she said,  
it was too fragile, being old, Rococo, made for some King Louis :  
to decorate the endless hallway of his mistress' home.  
It was too fragile to hold a bird, and thus it served no use,  
nor any function, swinging silent and golden so she might just  
touch it like a delicate, frosted palace with no princess  
prisoned in its tower, and pass on to tea, secure with knowing  
that it would be there still, when she returned  
to close the drapes against the violet sunset.

*David Ossman*

## REFLETS DANS L'EAU: FONTAINEBLEAU

Enlarged and restored by men of taste  
In no awe of symmetry  
This palace climbs from a terrace  
With a statue in a fountain.  
Around the foursquare shaft from which  
Medusas rig steady water  
Discs dazzle green slime where coins lie  
And duller discs show where coins lay.  
With that vain stillness of Roman  
Copies of Greek originals  
Freedom wears the Phrygian cap and hurls  
The discus across the lake.

Across the lake colonnades and stairs  
Realize a figured bass  
To chimneys and eaves: all recommend  
Themselves to ears of the eye.  
When the lark sights sunlight he carols.  
Carp wrestle in boils for bread.  
A dappled percheron carts to plant  
About wild boxwood: flowers.  
The moles sniffle blackness and hark  
Under rich lawns which offer up  
Their reiterated prayer: Prière  
De ne pas MARCHER sur les PELOUSES.

*Michael Lebeck*

## **TO BE READ, LAUGHING FIT TO KILL**

No matter how fat your friend has been  
You will not suffer a heart attack  
Nor strain your sacroiliac  
When carrying his coffin.

Even little children know  
Nobody ever catches flu  
Attending a formal rendezvous  
With death, even in snow,

Even bare-headed, wearing  
A linen suit and no coat.  
Busyness is an antidote  
For men, pall bearing.

I apologize for being old.  
Today I caught sight of my skull  
At a stranger's funeral.  
Today, I caught cold.

*Hollis Summers*

© 1948 BY THE AUTHOR

## WORDS FOR A NEIGHBORING SONG AT A FEATHERING NEST

Grinstead's comb is red as a turkey's  
Although he and it are fifty-three,  
And still he wants to marry his mommy  
Although he has tried it twice and again  
When all men know from the age of ten  
True mommies are scarce as the teeth of a hen.

But sing, for once, that Fate can be bested.  
Miss Nell O'Dell, chicken-breasted,  
Moves next door to Mr. Grinstead  
Loathing love and her music pupils.  
Gather albumen and yolk and shell,  
Ring all doorbells. All is well.

*Hollis Summers*

## **SOUTHWEST OF BUFFALO**

The long lakes, flanked  
by the conservative  
farms, which are asleep  
but thinking, collect  
water from the quiet  
hills, which as they slope  
and touch, make towns  
to hide from the wind.  
Near Ellington, in the Randolph  
graveyard, Albert Gallatin Dow,  
who died a hundred years old  
in nineteen-eight,  
remains in the massy tomb  
which he ordered built  
towards the day when the short beard  
of even a centenarian  
would blow in the wind  
of flowers, on  
the hills of New York.

*Donald Hall*

## MYCENAE

In the shaft graves, butterflies  
of gold flutter at the gold  
masks of the Cretan traders.

Over the gate, the simple  
lions of the Achaens  
stand upright in fierce combat.

The King climbed the long carpet  
to be struck like a zebra  
drinking at a water-hole.

*Donald Hall*

## BY THE EXETER RIVER

“What is it you’re mumbling, old Father, my Dad?  
Come drink up your soup and I’ll put you to bed.”

“By the Exeter River, by the river, I said.”

“Stop dreaming of rivers, old Father, my Dad,  
Or save all your dreaming till you’re tucked in bed.”

“It was cold by the river. We came in a sled.”

“It’s colder to think of, old Father, my Dad,  
Than the blankets and bolsters and pillows of bed.”

“We took off his dress and the cap from his head.”

“Undressed in the winter, old Father, my dad?  
What could you be thinking? Let’s get off to bed.”

“And Sally, poor Sally I reckon is dead.”

“Was she an old sweetheart, old Father, my Dad?  
Now lean on my shoulder and come up to bed.”

“We drowned your half-brother. I remember we did.”

*Donald Hall*

ON RECEIVING A DANISH BOWL  
OF DEHYDRATED ROSES

The hart, my lady, leaps on the lid  
of your forest graven Danish bowl,  
as if from Solomon's canticle,  
and over a buried summer bed  
of the small roses you have salvaged  
for a lover in his cubicle  
of winter shade, needing a graceful  
antler crown swinging above these red  
and huddled buds and their sleeping blood.

Having grazed a thought of the melancholy Dane on this morning in March,  
and some pain trickling of an old search,  
you ask the mind if it is willing  
to be limber again and fall on  
the ancient track and under the archway of your pine and skeletal birch.  
And the mind is already filling  
hollows with roses wet and swollen.

*Raymond Roseliep*

## FOR THE MARRIAGE OF DAPHNE AND APOLLO

Let Apollo be man's paradigm: In Rome  
He lingers still beyond his pagan past,  
Startling in grace like the best Latin, supreme  
But human in desire. Man-shaped he roams  
The ancient groves and ruins, fondling his dream  
Of finding yet in Rome a nymph to grasp.

Recall the god's desires — Daphne his tamer,  
Passive like any woman, but how she runs,  
Outdistancing the great Apollo's strides  
Until her mother Earth reacts and stuns  
Apollo with his fate: The scene is summer  
And Daphne branching leaves on every side.

Apollo is agape among the leaves,  
His body scratched from looking for the face,  
At least, of beauty . . . How can knowledge know  
The ways of other gods and find its place  
In nature? God of healing, of songs that flow  
Like winds from Helicon — what had displeased

Old Earth to treat him so? There was the case  
Of Hyacinth too, his head become a flower,  
With blood marks left to mortify desire . . . .  
O cruel nature: Apollo can't empower  
His own desire as law. His lustful fire  
Must burn to ash, a laurel wreath replace

The mouth of Daphne. Ideally now the sun,  
Apollo moves beyond the moving earth,  
But still his man-sized image finds rebirth:  
In Rome the heat advances all the claims  
Of young Apollo . . . . How can a godling shun  
What nature gives and then withholds for shame?

Nor will he shun it but for Daphne's sake:  
Let Daphne image Beauty, pure beyond  
All other nymphs, Apollo's wife in art  
And shadow only. Apollo tunes his heart  
Tuning his lyre, transmuting life to mate  
Beauty and strength together in one song.

*Douglas Nichols*

## BLUES FOR MISS HATTIE

When they held the auction at Miss Hattie's place, I swung back and forth on the picket gate and watched the blue denim men lug all her things out onto the dog-eared lawn. I guess they pried into every nook and cranny of her big square house because when they got done, everything from a porcelain chamberpot to a big brass double bed sat in the crab grass and Jimson weeds. They had taken down all the curtains too, and I could see right in the naked windows of Miss Hattie's bedroom. While I swung back and forth on the picket gate, a big purple thunderhead sprouted up over the back of the house and the people went past carrying painted china lamps, wax flowers, a mandolin, some old feather boas, a cockatoo's cage, and jars and jars of strawberry preserves. And all the time, Miss Hattie sat stiffly on the edge of the big brass double bed, looking at her lap. Pretty soon the moving van pulled up under the honey locust, and the blue denim men began loading the heavy stuff. They were just jamming one of those fancy curved love seats into the back of the van when the big drops began to splash on the sidewalk and I had to light out for home. The last I saw of Miss Hattie, she had just put up a peppermint striped parasol and was sitting in the middle of the big brass double bed in the slanting rain.

*James C. Waugh*

*This review was set and printed by Ace Printery of Willimantic, Inc., using 11 point Old Style for body type and 12 pt. Tempo bold for headings. Old style is the traditional type specified for all legal documents. The first issue was done by the editors in a 100 year old barn in Mt. Hope, Connecticut, utilizing a hand powered antique press. It is hoped that in the future, Chapbooks and the Wormwood Review will be printed at this location.*

Copyright 1959 — Wormwood Review Press

*Cover design by B. Brann-chieffo*

## PATRONS

Mr. Samuel Albert  
Mr. John Becker  
Mrs. Elizabeth C. Beston  
Mrs. Henry H. Cutler  
Dr. and Mrs. Elliott Duhan  
Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Jones  
Miss M. Mateka  
Mr. Robert Mignon  
Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Rostow  
Miss Barbara Snow

---

## CONTRIBUTORS

James H. Barnett  
Dorothy Goodwin

The Wormwood Review is a non-profit poetry quarterly published from Storrs, Connecticut. Payment for poems on acceptance. Patron's subscriptions are \$10.00 per year and regular subscriptions are \$2.50 per year. Address Box 111, Storrs, Connecticut.

---

*Editors*: Morton Felix, Alexander Taylor

*Managing Editor*: Stephen Jones

*Advisory Editor*: John Holmes

*Foreign Editor*: Eugene Walter

*Business Manager*: Susan Felix

## POETS

HENRY BIRNBAUM has appeared in many of the literary quarterlies and magazines, most recently in the, *Carolina Quarterly* *Carleton Miscellany*, and *Poetry*.

MICHAEL BULLOCK is the author of two volumes of poetry. He has translated some forty books from the German, French and Italian. He is co-author of a book of translations from the Chinese to appear later this year.

GRANDIN CONOVER is a graduate student at the University of Connecticut. He also writes plays.

MARDEN DAHLSTEDT has been published in *The Humanist* and in *Epos*.

NORMAN FRIEDMAN is the author of *E. E. Cummings: The Art of His Poetry*, published by Johns Hopkins Press. His Poems have appeared in the Beloit Poetry Journal and New Mexico Quarterly among others. He is on the faculty at the University of Connecticut.

DONALD HALL is Poetry Editor of *The Paris Review*. He has published two volumes of poetry; *Exiles and Marriages* and more recently *Dark Houses*. He teaches at the University of Michigan and is spending this year in England.

GEORGE KEITHLEY is a graduate member of the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he is doing graduate work.

MICHAEL LEBECK has had poems in *Triad*. He lives in New York City.

BARRISS MILLS has been published in *The Nation*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Odyssey* and *Whetstone*. His book of poems *Parvenus* and *Ancestries*, was published last fall by Sparrow Magazine.

DOUGLAS NICHOLS has appeared in various periodicals including *Botteghe Oscure* and the *Kenyon Review*.

DAVID OSSMAN is Poetry Director of WBAI-FM, New York City. He has been published in *Olivant* and *Chrysalis* and has a book ready for publication.

CHRISTOPHER PERRET has appeared in *Poetry*, *Botteghe Oscure* and the *Beloit Poetry Journal*.

RAYMOND ROSELIEP is Professor of English at Loras College in Iowa. He has appeared in many quarterlies and magazines including *The Colorado Quarterly*, *The Beloit Poetry Journal* and *The Massachusetts Quarterly*.

LARRY RUBIN is on the English Faculty at Georgia Tech. He has had poems in *The Saturday Review*, *Poetry: London-New York* and will appear in the *Massachusetts Review*.

R. W. STALLMAN has published numerous articles and books as well as poetry. He is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut.

STEPHEN STEPANCHEV is author of *Three Priests in April* and has another volume of poetry ready for publication. He has appeared in *Poetry* many times and in the *Nation*. He is the author of critical essays and had a teaching Fulbright to Denmark last year.

HOLLIS SUMMERS has appeared in *Poetry*. He is also a novelist.

JOHN TAGLIABUE is spending a second year as Fulbright lecturer in Japan. His first book of poems was published by Harpers. He has appeared in *Poetry* and in other magazines.

JAMES WAUGH will appear soon in the *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *The New Mexico Quarterly* and others. He teaches school in Groton, Mass.

LEWIS TURCO has appeared in many literary quarterlies and magazines, including *Sewanee Review*, *Kenyon Review* and *Poetry*. His book *First Poems*, was just published as a Book Club for Poetry Selection.

FLORENCE VICTOR has appeared in *Commentary* and in the *Western Review*.



