

the wormwood review: number twenty-six



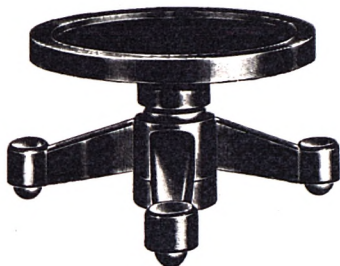
the wormwood review

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charcoal

wolves feed on the hind-
quarters of the moon,
above a windy chaos of fire,
air, earth and water

while a see of bishops
armed with burnt holly
files along the basalt foothills
of impending mountains.

dogs sleep. babies toss
in their cribs, dreaming of birds,
while chickens observe the horizon
with snake eyes. eggs stir.

on ricepaper wings
an enormous cat floats
down from the tropical sea
to scratch in the sand.

-- Peter Wild

Tucson, Arizona

Lecturer

You should
love yourself
he said you
should care.
We were sitting
on bleachers
listening.
Old myths are
useless find
new ones
to go by.
I understood.
I'm a veteran
(instructed at 11)
a master of
self-love.
But that's
not what
he meant.

2 Days to Xmas

In bed late
Billie Holiday
coming across
KXRQ my lady
mumbles how cold
she is and
I say well
let's have at
it but she's
a onceaweek
girl and curls
up with an
electric blanket.

Dogs

I had 3
dogs all
died then
this new
one swallowed
a ball
and damn
near joined
the parade.

Looker

She was a looker
but all them
in this place
were lookers.
She took me
to this room
where she undid
my fly skinned
me back for
a look then
washed it up
over a basin.
Stretched out I
saw her ear
was bunged up
like someone bit
it forget
that concentrate
on this she
said spreading
her hips just
like those broads
in Dr. Funk's
home movies.

Lucky Numbers

Lucky numbers
are going around.
Had a number
once Army gave
it to me
to hang round
my neck but
it wasn't like
Spiegel numbers
or Columbia Record
Club numbers or
any of them
sweepstakes ones
going round.
It was made
to mark things with
-- canteen covers
carbine slings
broken bodies.

Time Was

Time was when
whatever it was
you did everybody
was on to you
you couldn't sneak
a night out or
a stray lay or
beat your kids
without everybody
aimed at you in
a put-down way
but now nobody
cares except
a few door
to door Christians
and they usually
ask a little
money for it.

Services

After prayers songs quotes
& redeyed dontfeelbads by
Susanville's Methodist minister
we got to file by satinquilted
waterproof coffin to see where
George was how he looked
powdered rouged & ready in
clean underwear & Sunday suit.

-- Phil Weidman

North Highlands, California

In Memory of a Friend

The late representative was our good friend, though he never knew us. I don't believe he ever laid eyes on us. We had always taken precautions that he wouldn't. Nevertheless we all felt that we knew him -- that he belonged to us, and belonged to us even exclusively. I think it was love that made us feel this way. A tender thrill, and sometimes a shudder still accompanies my thoughts of him. Yet I am not sure that love may be the best term to describe our feelings. I think that we appreciated him more. Above all else we appreciated him. We felt a debt of gratitude

for what he had done, as though he had gone out of his way especially for us. But of course that was not true. He did it merely in his natural course.

Ours was a very close organization, cemented together by our shared attraction toward him. Sometimes as we watched him from the gallery, fastening our eyes upon his neck with eager attention, it seemed as though we would always be together -- him and us -- to the end. We met (all of us) under fortuitous conditions. As we sat in the gallery for the first time, we began to notice him more and more. As we watched him, he seemed to come apart from the rest, to stand out in a manner that we had never experienced. We knew -- I don't know how -- that this was it -- the real thing. From then on we felt a bond of mutual understanding among us which was never to dissolve -- not until he was gone. We knew then what we had to do, and this gave us a sense of purpose -- of comradeship.

From then on each one of his working days was one of our working days. Each morning we congregated in the gallery to see him. With bated breath we would wait for more. Sometimes he was inactive for long periods, but at last he would do it. It was during these quiescent periods that we sometimes felt like leaving -- like stalking right out of the building, but when he finally did it, we felt refreshed and eagerly awaited the next one. At these times we felt at peace again and an innocence and happiness with the world would settle over us. Then of a sudden he would do it again. Sometimes when this happened we would feel like squealing. Then it would be over, and we would be saddened. This would be repeated over and over, each time giving life new meaning.

As time went on this became our way of life. We went to sleep thinking only of the morning. Every day seemed more beautiful and more exciting than the one before. Each morning we would rush to stand in line for the opening of the gallery. Alert and breathless with excitement we waited for him to come in. The sense of meaning and purpose which we felt in the beginning vaulted to new heights -- to something -- to a feeling that made us ecstatic. One day one of us came down with a fungus and infected the rest. But that didn't stop us. Fungus or no fungus we were going to see him.

One day in particular was especially eventful. We came that morning expecting him, when, as the morning rolled by, he didn't show up. At first we were only impatient as usual, but at last when the truth came, it incurred our greatest displeasure. In fact it made us furious. Apoplectic with rage, we left, vowing to return.

The next morning we began to plot a fitting revenge. We felt we had been cheated, and we said so. We decided to follow him home that evening. That night we surrounded his house, watching the windows, waiting for him to come into view. When he suddenly did, we shrieked with laughter. It was good clean fun and we felt a genuine sense of refreshment at the end of it all. In the early hours of the morning we mobilized and

left, recounting our experiences and planning our course for future nights.

As the days and nights went by, we became more rabid in our appreciation. As we watched, we felt as though we wanted to be more and more with him. When he walked, we wanted to walk, and when he wrote, we wanted to write. We felt that whatever the cost he had to be watched at all times. We could not bring ourselves to waste it.

As time went on we came to a point of frenzy. We began to mutter about him constantly, trying to think of something to do. It was during one of these discussions that one of us finally pointed out that we had to kill him. He showed that he was making fools of us. Then we began to feel for the first time like monkeys, and this incurred our displeasure. We began to see that he was mocking us and having fun, and we saw finally that he was perverted. It was then that we unanimously resolved to kill him. Our first thought on this matter was to eat him alive. But although we initially agreed on the appropriateness of the method, we found it had certain technical flaws. At last, as you know, we decided to machine gun him. At our last meeting in the gallery we remarked how fitting it was that we had selected him -- that he among all people had been elected.

After the assassination we felt a great loss. We didn't meet much after that, and when we did, we only exchanged broad smiles. Our organization seemed to crumble. Our committees of correspondence, which had been our pride and joy, dissolved. We had lost our guiding aims, and our sense of purpose in life. I miss the old times, which I recall now in tender and poignant memories. I have only a few souvenirs to remind me of those times -- a few snapshots that we took of him, and a few personal belongings that we stole. It seems to me now he was like a flower. But he was much more than just a flower, he was a great artist -- a prodigy. But perhaps he is not really dead. Perhaps his spirit lives in others, lifting their daily performances to such great heights. If so, we will find them.

-- Philip L. Sawyer

Auburn, New York

Mr. Lavender

Mr. Lavender's unpainted bungalow was located between Mr. Black's green bungalow and Mr. Brown's white bungalow on a five house street. Across the road from Mr. Lavender's property, Mr. Green lived in his brown bungalow. Next to Mr. Green, Mr. White lived in his newly painted black bungalow. Mr. White was the only man on the five house street who had a sense of humor.

The wives of the four humorless men and Mrs. White always met on Sunday afternoons to talk over such harmless things as budgeting and their husbands. The five male colors convened in one of the five kitchens to drink beer, and to talk seriously about fishing and playing golf. Sometimes, they talked about drinking, while drinking.

One afternoon they consumed more beer than they usually drank on a Sunday afternoon, and their conversation took a strange turn. Mr. White playfully suggested that Mr. Lavender's bungalow should be painted. Mr. Lavender was feeling very happy, and he was only too eager to agree with Mr. White. But the color? They were all very bewildered when they tried to think of a color.

"Such a serious undertaking must be given much thought," the cautious Mr. Black told the other men.

"Agreed," said Mr. Green. Mr. Green was always very likable.

All week long the five men thought about the unpainted bungalow. The next Sunday they talked and talked about it. There seemed to be no solution. All the following week the five men spent sleepless nights worrying over the selection of a color.

"I guess it will have to remain colorless," Mr. Lavender said wearily.

"Perhaps it's just as well," Mr. Brown said with a sigh.

"What do you mean by that?" Mr. Lavender snapped.

"What do you think I mean?" Mr. Brown snarled. Mr. Brown was very irritable from so much thinking and so little sleep.

"Turn to stone," Mr. Lavender said crossly to Mr. Brown.

"Turn to stone yourself," Mr. Brown replied.

"You all act like a pack of dogs," Mr. Black said justly.

"Perhaps you should change your name, Lavender," laughed Mr. White.

But Mr. Lavender was aroused, and Mr. Lavender told Mr. White to turn to stone too.

The next Sunday the wives didn't meet, and the men didn't drink together. The street looked smalled. The paint on the four painted bungalows definitely seemed brighter in the sunshine.

One Sunday Mr. Lavender painted his bungalow black, and shortly afterwards, Mr. Black moved away. Then Mr. Lavender repainted his black bungalow green. Mr. Green accepted a new but less lucrative position with his firm in another city. Mr. Lavender was so pleased over his newly acquired powers that he painted his bungalow a rich brown the very next Sunday. The next day Mr. Brown died.

Mr. Lavender wasn't Mr. Lavender anymore. He repainted his rich brown bungalow white. Mr. White repainted his black bungalow lavender. Mr. White had a sense of humor. But Mrs. White didn't have a sense of humor. She was witty instead. She left Mr. White. Mr. White laughingly burned his house one night. There wasn't anything else he could do. He was still laughing

when the little men in white jackets carried him away.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Lavender are the only people who live on that small four house street. Nobody wants to live in the three empty buildings. Some people say that these three empty bungalows smell strongly of paint.

For years Mr. Lavender has been repainting his bungalow a new color every Sunday. He must like his work. Mr. Lavender is a house painter by trade.

-- John Stevens Wade

Monmouth, Maine

1

Reading Pliny
in a broken book
my Grandfather once looked through
Quid platanon opacissimus?
Quid illa porticus vernâ semper?
I remember his house outside Baltimore
the banked lawn and sycamores
over a low stucco wall
and the car roared up
over the top of time
into the Twenties
the house coming into view.
"That's where we lived,"
my Father said
when he brought us back there for a look.

2

This book
with its broken back
thumbed pages
and letters to a friend
is like my Grandfather's
fortune
in
10/10/29.

-- Ben Pleasants

Los Angeles, California

In This One

this guy has been
water skiing, see,

& he says to his
buddy in the boat,

jesus that's great,
wish I could get

the wife down here,
she'd like that,

& the other guy says,
christ, bring her down,

I'll pull her around,
hell, take her behind

Teddy Bear Island
& tap her there

in the blueberries
& the first guy smiles

sort of like
he was on a

roller coaster & says
probably do her a

world of good, & his
buddy says, do you suppose

she does, & he says
how should I know,

she'd never say
anyway.

So a month later he
brings her down see,

& it's a long lake
studded with islands.

She's off on the skis
& they're gone for an hour.

She finished smooth
& there's this bit

about droplets of water
down in her halter,

& she takes off her cap,
shaking her hair,

& says, I kept falling off,
looking away,

as a loon laughs
across the bay.

All the beams
above the bed

are rough sawn
excepting one

which seems
to be factory planed.

I say to myself,
next time I get up

I will touch it
to feel its smoothness.

I have yet to do this
so I have something else

to look forward to.

-- Dudley Laufman

Canterbury, New Hampshire

Crippled Folly

The object of all literature and art
is to establish relationships
between time & eternity
That's the only miracle we're trying
to pull off.
And the laughable poisonous fact is
that we don't really believe
eternity exists,
and time (we insist) is nothing
but an invention of man's
arbitrary will.
Yet we continue
with our slithering jokes,
determined, sweating, panting, ... lying.

Puberty Memorial

O boy, what a piece of luck (I forget
when) when I came to the closed locked
closet door and knowing I had to spring
the latch and observe

what teased from inside.

O man, what fun when a female voice
began rudely croaking soaring promises
which till then only ravens
had dared chant in their caves
while I played with myself outside alone.

But now duty splintered
and irresponsibility drank the left-
over acid lodged tight in my rear.

At last I am granted a glimpse:
a little toy fire engine of tin
oddly painted jade-black
and on it scrawled with spider venom,
"In memory of fatal wonder."

-- Brown Miller

San Francisco, California

How to Hallucinate Properly

litt
lebl
onde
girl
sare
nots
obad

Before you become
unnecessarily abrupt
allow me to surrender
for you
that way no one gets
away

excuses at this point
are, to say the least,
inappropriate.
You can keep your damn
goldfish

-- Barb O'Connelly

Carmichael, California

'Wormwood Review' To Give Poets a Break

Old Type Setting Processes to Be Used in Publishing Connecticut Quarterly

STORRS, Conn.—The perennial problem of publishing poetry is being partially eased this fall by a small band of verse fans with headquarters in a 100-year-old barn near the University of Connecticut.

The first 500 issues of a new quarterly catering to all "schools" of quality poetry are scheduled to roll off an antique platen job press located in a unique publishing house in the Mt. Hope section of Storrs. Entitled the "Wormwood Review," the journal will consist of 28 pages.

Editing the copy, setting the type, building the circulation and even sweeping the floor of the rustic print shop are three of U of C grad students and a high school teacher.

Alexander "Sandy" Taylor, a dedicated young English teacher at the University High School and one of the co-editors, sums up the objectives of the new publication:

"We feel that there is a definite need for a solid quarterly journal of poetry," Sandy explains, "since there certainly aren't enough good ones for all the fine poems being composed today."

A published poet who is already launching his second poetry journal, Sandy contends the "Wormwood Review" will publish all types of poetry with a "valid purpose," including free verse and sonnets.

"While we will stress no particular 'school of poetry,' we will accept avant garde work as well as formalistic poems. Our main yardstick for accepting a poem is emotional impact and accuracy of expression," he observes.

Sandy proudly announces that the first edition will offer original poems by many leading American bards, including E. E. Cummings, John Holmes, R. W. Stallman and James Waugh.

"We also plan to publish sev-

eral American poets who are living abroad. They have been contacted by our foreign editor in Rome, Eugene Walter and promise to make a substantial contribution to our journal," he adds.

Among the transplanted Americans are William Weaver and Michael Lebeck, two distinguished young poets. Other contributors include Enrico Da-Riva, a young Mexican, and James Wright, author of two volumes of poetry and the 1959 winner of the Yale Series for Younger Poets.

A rather special contributor to the "Wormwood Review" is Edmund Brock, an Irish poet who currently walks a police beat in London.

Sandy's co-editors are Morton Felix, a 24-year-old Ph.D. candidate in psychology and James Scully, 22, a doctoral candidate in English. Stephen Jones, 23, former editor of the university's student newspaper, is managing editor. He is a graduate assistant in English at the U of C.

John Holmes, a Tufts University poet, is advisory editor and Mrs. Susan Felix is business manager. Mrs. Felix says single copies of the Review will cost 75 cents, a year's subscription \$2.50 and patrons' subscriptions, \$10.

P

Comments by Alexander Taylor:

The Wormwood Review was begun in 1960 by Morton Felix, James Scully and myself -- all of whom hoped to establish a quality, eclectic, poetry magazine which would encourage young writers as well as print quality poems by established authors. As I recall our conversations at that time, we were all somewhat disappointed in the quality of work in some of the established magazines. This dissatisfaction and a certain amount of egotism are necessary for the creation of any new magazine.

Wormwood was in the beginning printed by letterpress on an antique machine that we operated by spinning its flywheel by hand, its electrical system being defunct. We were located in a rather drafty, unheated barn on River Road in Storrs. In the winter there were many numb hands; occasionally the only way we could finish our work was to use martinis for antifreeze.

Our first two issues included poems by e. e. cummings, Donald Hall, James Wright, Jean Garrigue, R. W. Stallman, and Hollis Summers, among others. Our circulation was concentrated among friends and acquaintances. The original group of editors parted company, when two of them were released from the bondage of graduate school -- their new jobs carried them into other communities and other responsibilities. This co-incided with the release of the second issue, and an \$80 debt (contributors were paid modestly). There was considerable doubt about whether a third issue would be printed.

Poems:

Like It Was

Whistling up the path
past the forsythia
eager for the day,

up into the meadows
for a crack at ploughing

or for a few hours
roughing your fingers on stone
as the wall took shape,

before the ships set sail
from the harbor,

before the town was sacked,
and you came home in garlands,

before the terror and the myth,
before the terror of the myth.

after which you seemed always smaller
confronted by the quizzical glance,
caught by the questions of the young
or the inquiring look of the elders.

you will have to die
to benefit the legend.

Two Lynched Negroes

Two lynched Negroes
hang like mannikins,
One white man
with a mustache
points to the dangling bodies
for the benefit
of the photographer.

Translations:

Spring

by Arne Herløv Petersen (1943 -)

And there were dry eggs
that shattered in the wind.
Brown children
with small dirty hands
dig riyers in sandpits.

Arrogant birds
roar like sneezing lions
in Ørsted Park.

And three ox-eye daisies
in a bottle
bid the milkman welcome.

Translations by Adeline Theis and Alexander Taylor:

Rowing, Conversations

by Bertolt Brecht

It's evening. Two boats
glide past. In them
two naked young men. Side by side
rowing, they talk. Talking
they row side by side.

Sled Romance

by Heinz Piontek

Their faster sleds
will catch up to you,

they will consider you
a wolf in your sheepskin

and will suggest a new direction
to you with their thumbs:

With noisy bells
you will travel into exile.

You

by Hans-Jürgen Heise

-
They have shot you
driven me off

And now with weapons
they defend your grave
against my flowers

in the outside silence of things

by don gray

. . .

1

the year
my mother wounded
me with light
was before
the war

legend says
she dunked me
in a muddy
georgia river
to keep me from
running away to sea

legend says
she held me
by the right arm
besides achilles
was something in
your heel &
don't belong
in legends

ever since
old enough
i've run toward
the sea
besides
achilles went to war
& the river told
me there was
more light
by the sea

2

nobody told me about this time
full of eat

& sleep

motherwarm

maybe pisspants

& pukebelly

o motherwarm

full of visions without dreams
nobody told me

3

jumped off
the garage once
& landed both

ways

on my feet

like a cat

& on my head

like any dumb animal

thought i was
superman or
rocketman maybe
& i guess
everybody wants
to fly sometime
even if your
wings take you
straight down

4

my grandmother
used to kill chickens
wrung their necks
flap & snap
just like that

one day
a headless chicken
chased me around in
a circle around
my granmother & my mother
until i climbed on top
of the woodpile

my mothers laughed
but i lost my shoe
& there was blood on
my pants & the
chicken hit the woodpile
& died
just like that

5

daddy came back from
the war in a hospital

wounded in the leg
all the way down to
his heel where he
didn't walk at first

the hospital was a
white & green place
full of long tunnels
& beds full of strange men

once my mother sent me
to bring daddy back
& make him happy
after the war

but i lost myself
in the green tunnels
& daddy couldn't walk
in the hospital to me
& the white dress woman
lost my mother

& i found myself
walking & crying
among wounded men

used to play
with the big
red velvet ants
under the porch
behind the house
where the ground
stayed moist

when i found
an ant
i dumped
moist dirt on him
& watched him crawl out
& dumped dirt on him
& watched him crawl
& dumped dirt & watched him
& dumped & watched

until one day
he bit me
& the red
velvet pain
shot up my arm
i put moist dirt
on the sting
to draw out the poison
the ant still struggled
under the dirt

daddy
shot a rabbit
over my head
that ran into the
bramblebriars

i was only
sevensmall for
my age

a 12gauge
shotgun
browning & semiautomatic

i heard
boom running
down my dreams
for a week

the rabbit
got away
wounded

8

sin
terrible black ugly
sin in you/

mama
can i go out &
climb the mimosa tree

yes sin
you all have sin
& yes i too have
sin/

mama
can we go up to uncle louie's
& catch june bugs today
now let us all
bow our heads &
pray that we
might receive the light/

mama
can i have a nickle
for a popsicle

the light of our
lord jesus christ/

mama
churches are all
dark inside

9

during
the first year
of beaches

i always tried
to run the
foam line

between the sea
& the land
but i never could

the sea was always
going out or coming in
& the land the other

when
i sat & listened
to the waves land in foam

& the gulls screech the wind
& the crabs scratch the sand
& the wind wave the trees

i ran again
by the sea
in the outside silence of things

10

mother
laughed kisses
on my face
that burned skin
blush in front of friends

i was at least
tenmanly
for my age

avonred
lipstick from
the doortodoor sales

i felt
kisses laughing
down my dreams
for a week

my friends
ran away
laughing

during
 the third year
 of beaches
 i always stayed
 until sundown

the sea .
 remained light
 past the last
 second of the sun
 & the sea
 was filled
 with the blood
 of the day

& then i turn inland
 to the shadows
 of the mangroves
 where the sun never rises
 & the light of the sea
 fails

the day mother died
 i knew it already

because dad left
 after the phone rang

the house weeped full
 of georgia relatives

& it was in florida
 the land sick with green

& i went outside to lie in the
 juice of grass cut yesterday

to watch the aphids climb
 each other on nasturtium stems

& smell the sweet acid mold
 of sun rotten oranges

dad came back as i ran
toward the palmetto & mangrove sea

& i stopped & three feet
under the swift sand

felt the green sea surge

13

the second
time i met
my other mother
she played a trick
on me

gave me
a little tincan
that said candy
& i opened
 sprong out
 popped a 5ft snake
a cloth covered spring
green backed rattler or
a diamond backed green snake
anyway everybody laughed
but me

we never met a
second time after that
& i never opened cans again
but later i gave her
a birthday can of rattle snake meat

-- Don Gray

San Francisco, California

once more -- an encore

by gloria kenison

pudding

illa is
vanned
past here

how is
our house?

fit
green
rockers
on
our
porch
if our
glider
isn
use
place
a
sflower
in their
hand
&
file
their
names
in office
furniture

boy on
merry-go-round

he
never
grasped
the brass
ring,
but rode
like an
old man
in a cart
of feathers,
inside
a swan

la bohème

gold cherubs
decorate
the opera
house,
gilt shining
on the
proscenium
arch,
on stage
"empire"
lovers
stroll&sing

eakins' "concert singer"

clasped
hands
below
small chin,
thin
reddish
hair,
drawn back,
peach
satin dress

"gate of hell"

a samurai
rode in a
race
)pennants
strung high
)a married
lady
watched

memo

get
poodle's
hair
cut,
before
he
is
repos-
sessed

short story

1 day
on that shore

1 boy
in stripes

1 bush of
rosemallow

1 steam-
ship
whistle

1 rock
with
barnacles

1 weir

1 raft

1 red
beach
chair

ggnaw

chipmunks
ggnaw
foundation
of
cong. church

wedding

kwartz
rooby,
lace,
frok
coat

apoc
riffa
what?

xmas list

um,
for
cousin
ella,
a new
umbrella

clash

white door
slapped in
areaway
by spring
bright
sharp
green

pome

en hear
of kinder-
school
of fence
to keep
in anarchy
speak
temporarily
of
sta
on earth

-- Gloria Kenison

Harding, Mass.

*

Flagging my hand against the heat
I imagined the look of a king
waiting for a late report

saw his face slam with the door
shut with the question,
How easily my ride came!

except the driver sits beside his wife
: a foolish queue of two.

Fused by their long escape
the smell from Auschwitz
steaming in their hack, they steer

: the duty of a queen
to help a king look out
for kingdoms on the right.

She hunts customers
he hugs scrap.
The metal in their throne
is closer to the jewels
than us, you and me

we sit back
(in case of sudden stops)
accepting laws from every throne
I rode helplessly against the heat
against the offer of that door.

*

I felt a raid :first my shoes
the laces snapping from the altitude
my jacket slack, tumbling slow
the cash parting into snow and speed
last, my life :naked and alone

-- for 30,000 feet my chute never filled.
I was replaced without a watch
surrendered
like the deed to the lot :Marie
takes the house by entirety. Always
the transfer, the poverty

that leaves the ease to act.
I attack, fly!
a trail narrows in my hands

30,000 feet from Peenemunde
a street divests its wealth
touches the fall
feels the raid

first
a window cleaner in front a small dress shop
its Spring dress begging, Love me! Love me!
its oranges and red, Jump! Jump!
last, me.

Him disabled by a speck nesting on the glass
Her helpless in that sweet, full blown silk, adrift
Me out of range, stalled, stripped, bald

none of us had time to look
to feel the laces of our shoes.

-- Simon Perchik

Staten Island, New York

Two Poems

1

a river outside the door
carrying black leaves to the sea.
The tallest flower stands in the water
swaying in the passing flow
and stirring the mud with its roots --
a grey haze of swirling specks
a jumble of misty words
falling into place as they settle:
a poem written by water on water.

2

A line on the wet sand
drawn with a black stick;
a scattering of bark
leaves and pebbles
at random round the central line;
a trickle of water
seeping through the gravel;
a few squirming insects
disturbed by the stick;
a pattern under overhanging branches
beside a pool inhabited
by a pair of water snakes:
a poem without words and without readers.

Early Morning Poem

The darkness twists its hair in a knot
hangs from the rafters
with an apple in its hand.

The birds shoot the arrows of their song
split the apple
and spill its seed on the ground.

A myriad morning worms take the seeds in their mouths
raise them once to the sun
then bury them under the grass.

-- Michael Bullock

Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, England

Number two

Daisy Maisy,
Maisy daisy
Hunker, hunker, hunker!

Lazy daisy
Shine on Maisy,
Crazy, hunker-hunker!

The daisy, you know,
Has an elegance
The orchid would never understand.
(Although a Canadian would.)

Bliss

So, lazy daisy
Shine on Maisy
Hunker, hunker, hunker!

Daisy Maisy,
Maisy daisy
Crazy, hunker-hunker!

... then bit by bit
munch, munch, munch,
we got little pieces of
each other,
chewed and chewed,
spit out the pits of us,
and bit by bit
munch, munch, munch,
we got little pieces of
each other,
chewed and chewed,
swallowed some,
spit out the pits of us,
and bit by bit ...

-- J. McLeod

Binatang, Sarawak, Malaysia

Listen you women, green eyed,
big limbed, you know how
I love what's hiding
under your clothes; but
I've been under a spell
for six years, and I'll
tell you now, a lot
of it was hell, but
after her, none of you
could hold me more than
a week.

Dream

He was alone and hardening
and hadn't spoken in two weeks
but smiled constantly and put wine
down his throat. After the first week
his wife and friends left him alone
and he sat by himself and hardened
catatonic, no one knew it but him.
The second week his enemies found
him and made him talk. They took
a hammer and broke his teeth.

-- Michael Perkins

New York, New York

Wars and the Coming Winter

Heat crawls through the pipes and walls, clanking disgracefully.
-- Almost December and still a fly to swat.
We battle dully, the cold has numbed us both.
It takes me almost a day to make the kill.

Spiders are more frequent and easier to catch,
Squatting boldly on the walls, waiting for darkness.
Once they frightened me into a rage.
I'd charge blindly, fear making us equal,
Web and weaver scattering before my clumsy blows,
Often as not to freedom.

Now the war is mechanized -- search and destroy --
The vacuum cleaner hums softly,
Sucking the sour mess into its gut.

Lacking an enemy, I turn against these groaning walls,
Screw shut the taps on the radiator pipes
And watch the creature stifling,
Choking in its dying sweat
With a soft wheezing of faucets.

The Dream

There is a brown familiar bird
That walks the seasons of my dreams.
Drab as a soldier, it turns around
And turns around, dancing a secret dance.

A bird behind a horny beak,
A long and wicked beak, like cranes' or storks',
A fisher's beak, cast in my sealess dreams --
Drab as a soldier, it turns around.

And then my pretty bird begins to stare.
Its eye becomes a shrinking moon,
And turning on its pretty feet,
It starts to cry and then to shriek,

Splintering the leaves from trees.
The heavens shake before its questioning,
And still it turns and turns around,
Pondering the awful, disembodied sound.

-- Charles Wyatt

Arlington, Virginia

The Rockingchair Brigade

"Any excess of emotions gives me the hives,"
says John

an old boy
pretty far gone
parenthetically, less alive

than

"Look sharp, eat good, and make love,"
that's Mary, who's

an old girl who
stews a hen in gin
instead of sherry

and

"What would be perfect would be if
John would marry Mary," says Jack
a troublemaker from way back.

Gambit

Liebling, said Bluebeard, trust me
but stay the hell out of my closet

and whoever it was who gave Pandora
that box full of beautiful itchings

Trust me, look at the etchings, but
don't turn that key, well, honestly

anytime anybody's said to me Don't
I've thought I will before I won't

A Beginning

Over the yawning of
I have looked for you then
over other people's memories
I have searched, rims and
over innumerable lost ice cubes
I have never slept
over elastic Time, stretched
I, with taut eyes, have
over conversational chasms
I have looked and looked
over all openings and closings
over, and over again.

-- Ruth Moon Kempher

St. Augustine, Florida

Caterpilling Time

The moon swings out of the sea
Stretching cobweb dreams from a common here-now
To another space-sigh,
Where there is no caterpilling time for bug-eyed boys
To search a tree
For God
Knows what he'll find,
Among the crevices and cross-arm branches,
Perhaps a caterpillar
Making time?

-- Nina DeVoe

Storrs, Connecticut

Poem to Bukowski

I can't write about rats and cock-
roaches friend cause we exterminated
them and the only ones I see around here
are two-legged ones with no tails.
Booze gives me arthritis and my money goes to
the dentist car insurance groceries plumber
doctor taxes phone gas water lights so there's
not much left for playing the horses
and as for whores who steal your manuscripts
that's one problem I don't have.

My life laughs sometimes too
and I guess that's bad for a poet
but maybe it's only because I'm irish
and the fairies tickle my ribs. Maybe
your trouble is being a pole since being married
to one I know how hard it is
for them to laugh unless they're boozed and then it's hard
to tell the laughing from the crying
and you keep hoping they'll go to sleep
because your irish tells you
the sun will be shining when they wake up
and you'd rather hear them snoring
than cry-laughing because you know
they are hurting
and you can't help.

But look at me.
I started out to write a poem to you
and wrote about me instead.
What I want to know is how come
an irish Clairol redhead female with four kids
a beautiful blond husband
and a polish grandfather
likes your old man dead in a room poems?
If you think I'm going to wear
black to your funeral
you're crazy.
I'm going to wear the rainbow color
of your poems.
Only don't die yet friend.
Don't die yet.

-- Claudia Winski

Malibu, California

Dzadza

He sits all day waiting for death.
Not without humor
But resigned.
His grey white head shaved almost bald
(he likes it that way)
his eyes twinkling
with a sudden joke
or damp with fleeting memory
of his Fanny
(we called her Baki)
gone now nearly a year.

His eyes narrow sternly
at his son,
suspicious of the latter's affectionate pats, pets
and kisses lavished on a budding granddaughter;
("You no sit on Stanley lap," he scolds lovingly. "You too old sit on man's lap!")
and open wide with delight
when four great-grandchildren play around
him in harmony;
darken with pain when typically children,
they fight.

Old Polish granfather, he
reads Catholic tracts now,
(Fanny would be glad, she usually walked
to mass alone.)
fingers his rosary, puzzles
the morning news
then sleeps.
(Takes cane, pushes self painfully
up and out of chair,
lays self carefully on couch,
knees pulled up, head on arms
like baby.)
Tho a cover always lays nearby
he never covers self.
I think he waits for me to do it.
I always do.

He'd like to die that way --
Just lay himself down and go to sleep
("I die and go to heaven. Be with Baki
then.")
Sometimes,
he is impatient to be gone.

-- Claudia Winski

From the Established Fish Section of Message to Cunda

Pound, you are a crazy old man
i LOVE you!//Cummings you
rot in the grave/your eyes
have death cookies to watch in the oven.
i LOVE you!//what is my word to you?
//what is my word to you?

Emily, your tons are in the ground/
Whitman made sure you were well watered/
The old like Ezra cry
The dead like Bob Frost rot
i LOVE you!//
i LOVE you!//

Chuck Bukowski sits in his
alcove in L.A. just down the hill from where Huxley
lived and died.

Bukowski will die when God dies/
God, how you climb that hill!

Inquisitive?
Desperate?

Hic/hic/hic/hic/ i am drunk now
and i must die
just to sober up.

Moraff is probably sitting with dreams of kittens and
extra Heavens.

-- George Montgomery

Hackensack, New Jersey

Sisters are all right (for a night).
Some are fats -- some act like rats (like mine).
Some are kind, some are blind, and
Some are nice (like sugar and spice);
But the best ones are the fun ones!

-- Gayla Malone

Storrs, Connecticut

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