

Marsh Hawk Review

Fall 2015

Edited by Norman Finkelstein

[Rachel Tzvia Back](#)

[Don Bogen](#)

[Joseph Donahue](#)

[Thomas Fink](#)

[David M. Katz](#)

[Claudia Keelan](#)

[Basil King](#)

[Ralph La Charity](#)

[Sandy McIntosh](#)

[Mary Mackey](#)

[Nathaniel Mackey](#)

[Robert Murphy](#)

[Peter O’Leary](#)

[Bea Opengart](#)

[Paul Pines](#)

[George Quasha](#)

[Kristen Renzi](#)

[Michael Rerick](#)

[Donald Revell](#)

[Mark Scroggins](#)

[Eileen Tabios](#)

[Susan Terris](#)

[Henry Weinfield](#)

[Tyrone Williams](#)

Rachel Tzvia Back

from *Small Poems*

Cat

Walking silence, inaudible beauty

suddenly

at the threshold: This

is the only poem

I wish

to write –

Slender, unadorned, asking little,

speaking less. But

definite

in its footsteps.

Cat (2)

As though all that could ever
be desired
 were in its boughs – she
unfaltering
climbs.

Her smoke-grey self
is steady as she rises
 deep into the Sky
and still
the Surprise –

 When there
on the swaying steeple branch
as though she herself
a bird –

she lies down and sleeps.

Cat (3)

Smoke in the hills from a fire
we couldn't see, Winds delivered
the news at dusk.

As smoke curved around
oaks, parched pages
unfurled –
 Singed letters
unmoored
rose in the haze:

The charred C,
The burnt A,
The

O

O

O

my very

sister

it is time

is it not

time

you returned –

Don Bogen

Diamond Song

The band is loud, its firm bass thumps
the heart and will not stop.
Off to the side, we nod and mime
as she comes bounding up.

What dance is this that cuts her knees
and makes her elbows point,
riffing her, as if she were
a marionette?

The body slips to let joy loose
when it moves to the beat.
But her joy is taut and pure,
beyond the bass line's reach.

Her torso sleek with energy,
jittery yet sure,
is following the sharpened pulse
from another room.

I catch it in her glossy eyes
that can't stay long with mine
but dart their cold sparks all around
as if somewhere inside

her bobbing skull a diamond sliced
across a whirling disk.
Why don't I feel the music now?
What dance is this?

Mesoamerican Song

The plant will give no seed.
It must be sown again.
The poor line up to buy
seeds from a bin.

Where is the long-stalk god,
descendant of the sun,
who died and came to life
every season?

Now the land stays dead.
The poor man's crop will fail
unless he soaks each row
with chemicals.

He cannot feed himself--
a factory mills the grain
and cooks and sells it back
to him again.

When the god drank blood
that showed the people's love,
would he shrink away
and let them starve?

Who captured the strict god
who helped the people thrive?
What happened to his terror
and his love?

Window Song

*Leaf green and lichen,
moss green on bark*

Light rain in the wind
outlines him on the tree:
dark where it's wet now,
a green man on a limb,
his hair as in a carving
made with three blunt strokes,
a prophet's beard in runnels
covering his mouth.
The eyes small, staring
a little to the left,
suggest a world of cares.
I watch him through a screen:
green man on a gray limb
in the dripping air.

Gray man on a green limb
now that the rain has stopped.
In the clearing air,
as the green turns light,
he blurs into the limb,
the man becoming tree,
the tree itself again.
His beard trails to the knot
where a branch fell off.
Birds sing in his face--
his features grow confused.
In the wind that lifts
rainclouds from my sight
the outline fades from view.

*Leaf green and lichen,
moss green on bark*

Joseph Donahue

from *Wind Maps*

O

Now might Night

give a garment
a shirt of gold mesh

dense and fine

A weave of porous metal

Slipping it on one would be
the very midst of all glitter

A spell in its cling

It feels like a healing fire
writhing without heat

Fire is seeping into you
passing through you

Knowledge, of sorts

As if the glowing script of
a lost alphabet
was what the micro-links

most truly were

Pain is pulled from you

Pangs and aches leave you

Havoc of nerve-ends

that blade-thrust in your shoulder
that agony down your arm

is lifted away

As if a new body were
gathering within the gold

Simple motions now pure delight

You can look to either side
you can look up into

the dome of the night sky

a bluish light like
a most delicate web of

 electricity

Like the initial ripple

of a gas fire

You can turn freely

 to the left

 to the right

move your arms

palms to the sky
in thanks to the night
which bequeaths you
undeserving
though you are

night that brings
if not a body of light
a body becoming
a kind of light

or if not that
a sensuous vestment

at least

a shirt

where you lay

cold, alone, and in pain

Thomas Fink

Doppelganger Therapy

In closing, I

*wish to continue
indefinitely.* Sloshed memory

buds. 13 years
since his thorough
disappearance. Only 1

doppelganger (of his
last decade), alone
on Lexington. Silence
facilitating the semblance

job (lest the
voice turn out
alien). Comparable large
round progressive lenses.
Restrained toupee. I
welcome an immediate

response but am
not recognized. Afraid
to try opening
some ghostly dialogue.

Would Pop ever
wear such t-shirt
eyes? Barely possible

whimsy. Breeze wheezes,
creases, freezes. Bread

turns to stone.

Inflation

(collaborative poem with Maya D. Mason)

Can I just live in my car?
Young people are good
at finding new apartments.
The magical two-bedroom:

big as a museum.
Someone threw a party for 100,000.
I was insulted
to be left out.
Family

who are gone still seem to be
there in the Temple of Dendur. I
hate that all their shoes and slacks and
glasses are gone.

The wall colors have changed.
Home
is a mental safe.

David M. Katz

To George Oppen in 2015

How curious to return to you
I must be now, curious to
Understand, and curious and strange
Myself. Harvey Shapiro refers
To you and to Zukofsky as
Thin and “tessellated” Jews,
Quiet and interpretative
Jews, denizens of the Brooklyn
Harbor, pacing the geometric
Paving stones, tiled, and in
A fanciful illustration
On Wikipedia, a checkerboard,
Seamless, hexagonal
Overlapping shapes with no
Gaps between them. Oh
Is it always a fault for a poet
To be writing a poem about poets,
To be writing a poem about poetry,
Is it a crime to be writing
About anything but the truth,
George Oppen, even if
The truth be circular, or a maze
Leading through itself
Until the path to the sanctum
To the sanctum be found? How
Curious you were to stand
And peer at the grazing deer,
How strange you were to stand
And stare at the startling deer
And let that be your only
Psalm – just that curious,
And nothing, oh nothing, more.

Charles Olson's Blues

Oh fuck! Oh shit! Oh piss! Oh blues.
I'm tired of taking the measure of things.
It's too late to count, and I just want to be
The master of nothing and the master of things.
Breath is the key to the words I breathe,
Oh breath is the key, my little ones.

Oh fuck! Oh shit! Oh piss! Oh blues!
I'm sick and tired of the numbers.
I'm tired and sick of the news.
Old women die, and old men too,
And only the white whale goes on living.
Oh breath is her key, my little ones, little ones.

Oh piss! Oh shit! Oh bliss! Oh news!
We expend our breath, and we pay our dues.
I don't want to die, but I won't get beat,
I won't get beat by the world or the street,
And slow as I am, I won't feel the heat,
Oh come to my arms, my little ones, little ones.

Which opens your eyes to more reality

Your thoughts caravan in the reality

Laden and moving slowly

But glad to be laden

The moon's surface just reminds me of a brain

The picture I saw of a brain

Where nerves had been gaps

And in the gaps the terrible face of God

The terrible face of God is gentle

And the intelligence is pained

Non-descript eyes not avoiding contact

But looking around as much as *at* you

Yes you are part of the scene

The willed yet passive gaze suggests

& Every sign you post to signal party

Takes you further from the point

I wouldn't have wanted to be Abraham

And couldn't have raised my hand as he did

Sometimes I can see as if I am

Yes in fact am

Outside and beside

My body and so Divinity

& End of sacrifice

In the newest plurality

Oppen's Sailboat

Was not Mallarmé's
Though made of words
a chance glint
Of some mineral
Element however
American the space it took
To be there, really
Not signing his name
He made it with his own hand
The sailboat is mine
If I write it
The planet is ours
People really say that
Ours sails inside hours
The word needed was Niedecker
Lorine with such knowing
When water makes a movement
The sailboat turns and there is meaning
A life and stars *etoiles* rising
As Mallarmé sets forth

Basil King

Soft Hands

Mother of pearl there is an Olmec head
In my back yard and it doesn't stop talking
And it says we cleaned out my studio
The top two floors will be
Renovated into a rent able apartment
104 paintings were cataloged
And 84 went to storage
Hundreds of drawings shelved
The basement looks like Fort Knox
Books magazines letters post cards
Foreign landscapes archived
One 1973-74 Michigan license plate
Rusty ice skates a figure eight
A short-lived academic career
The chairman of the faculty
Rides a white horse
An equestrian replacement for flying

Pause

My mother's parents never
Labored with their hands
It's in the photograph
He is a few inches taller
She has Tartar eyes high cheekbones
Blonde curly hair

Pause

Bronze and silver candlesticks
A good haircut a skirt of sturdy clothe
Roots sod gruff English seed
Weeds Dandelions and Buttercups
A heath I walked over in childhood

Pause

There were secrets
Migration Sisyphus
Russia France England

Argentina Canada America
The Flamingo in Key West
Rests its neck and ignores the Hawk
A Turtle spits every time it gets fed

Pause

My mother was eight years old
When her father died
She never forgave her father
Grief
The loss of
Her lover

Pause

Looking at my paintings at Black Mountain College Fielding Dawson
said, "There are always things under the surface of your paintings. Do you
know what they are?" And years later in another studio Fielding said,
"You paint your Tunes, your Gremlins."

To paraphrase something that I have already written: I build houses their
grief is mine.
I feed their grief three times a day. I make love to everything that has been
given to me and to everything that has been taken from me. I understand
that if their grief starves I too will starve.

Part 2

Soutine sold sixty paintings to Barnes
Got into a cab on a Paris street
And told the driver
To drive him to Nice
The south of France
Matisse cuts
The skin
Of his lover's
Back
Flora
Grieves

Pause

As Soutine was painting
He broke his thumb
Oh Christ Oh Jew

Russia's carcass hangs
On the back of his studio
He grieves for his mother
The village that never wanted him
He grieves for Modigliani
He grieves
Spain kicked us out
And we migrated
And we renovated
There are secrets
Food romance
Plates valued
By Picasso

Highway Obstacle

For Robert Creeley

Friend and mentor
Who taught me
How to turn
Things upside
Down

Mother of Pearl there is an Olmec head
In my garden and it can't stop talking
It says his brother has been betrayed
His brother is locked up in a museum
Where there are no windows
Artificial light surrounds
Cases of sculpture and artifacts
And he knows who made them
He says he has seen men and women
Stare at him wanting to know
Why is he so simple
Why is he so complex
The Police want to know
And they have questioned him
Photographed him and they tried
Without success to fingerprint his culture

Pause

Mother of Pearl there is an Olmec head
In my garden and it can't stop talking
It says if he finds a letter
And he doesn't know the sender's name
Before he throws it away he checks
The sender's address
Remember children grow up
To understand every word
Has its own
Highway Obstacle
A deck of cards address unknown
A profile of a three-dimensional shape

The ridgepole has its own security
With it you build a house

Without a roof rain will destroy
The house and its contents consist
Of names I have never heard of
Creeley asks forbearance
By his own accounting he has been
Procrastinating over the difference
Between a short Line and a long Line
Oh, mighty Ovid replace the metaphor
And give us a phrase that ignites
Brevity

Pause

Mother of Pearl there is an Olmec head
In my garden and it can't stop talking
I was told that I would be given everything
New York would be mine
I was 50 and it was 1985
I was betrayed
1985 was the year of my second dunking
All the promises came to naught – nothing
I licked my wounds and we went to England
To the land where I was born
To the country that I'd never called mine
I had not been back to England in 38 years

England has made itself into a Little America
The tongue and the wardrobe has dismissed Turner
And Constable and has become a bloody carcass
Francis Bacon rules
Bacon's space is contagious it is housed
In the Thames the tide and the bridge
Meat Fish Bow Bells
What I had been writing in my head
Since before I went to Black Mountain College
Daisy chains jellied eels the Second World War
Anti-Semitism
MIRAGE

Calligraphy is for lovers
A short story has no ending
If it fails begin again

Pause

Creeley turns and asks forbearance
We are not always given what we ask
But ask again the ridgepole has its
Own security and without it
We cannot build a house
Without a roof
Rain will destroy the house the contents
Consist of names I have never heard of
Creeley by his own accounts has been
Procrastinating over the difference
Between a short Line and a long Line

Oh, mighty Ovid replace the metaphor
And give us a phrase that ignites
Brevity

Ralph La Charity

Sometimes the Night

for Robert

unravels itself
coming undone
as

Time become
Dawn does

inches & ounces
oh pleas

I've always
held one
reads to

the faces in
front of
one's face, no
other faces will do

have done can be

as if being inert was the innate default setting from
which there was no escape & to be imprisoned that way
was to be bound to a treadmill at once repetitious and
exhausting, as one-dimensional in its horizons as it
was narrow-gauged in its imaginative responses ...

I wanted my audience to turn on me : it never did

offing gloat

there's a ruin in the offing
don't be fooled she'll say
gotta go see things not seen before

principality of square one recall :
ruins in the offing gloat obliquely

ol' Tom ain't been heard from's all I know
& Mort flies in silence behind the bar
specificity lightly touched glows

how many old man bands are there anyway
goad's pristine utility quicks it's
been that long for others, too

you can't tell another man how to live
time to withdraw the dispensation

qualitative analysis matters more
apostasy's spontane anodyne
on the early early dawn

showing off's just flying the flag, I'd say
maybe he went & fell off a mountain
got mugged to death in London Town

out front the pampas grass leans & leans
its elevating tufts picked clean by birds

(she'll even tell you what they mean)

DO SWEETLY DOOM ASKEW

tucked asleep against their lovers
 poets swale sweetly askew
night rolls round
 the globe loony & tuneful
in a wide band kicked off by sun
 & Lo! the poets who have lovers
 swale sweetly tucked, rolling
blessed breathy resonance reigns
 these are those wee hours
 poets who have lovers know
 & who sleep with lovers have, aye
blessed are the tucked against
 whose easy breathing reigns askew
 whose true plight heaves sweetly
 whose global glaring wearies, in love

blessed are the poets, their wakeful raging
 precisely bent nightly down
 & close
 their tuned terrors fleshed, merciful
wet & torqued & rhymed & fat
 blessed & hard & naked & fading
 softed & close, sleepful gone

for yes it is death to wake a sleeping poet
 is death to bring certain sun to bear there
 & tis death to sing the bitter wake lovelessly
 o tis death tis death
to plight soundless wordless & alone

blessings on the poets
 who sleep love's sleep
 their solitary plights softed aware
softed aware as night rolls

 as danger nods
 as sweetness weaves
such brevity drains & o !
that such charm
 find thee, sweet bitters
 o poets

who come here sans sunny praise
dire comiserary
lucre
or loony tunes

sleep tucked, o rolling nod-weavers
tis danger-loving death ye despise
aye, all premature dawn
& a moon that cannot rock us

sleep tucked, nod-weavers
bend precisely nightly down
we come bereft of policy praise

our thoughts hum
we are penniless
choked by jokes
unfocused
limp & newborn
noddy tuckers
loony bayful bawling ones
o ye plight-bound livid Okies
distend ye aye, disperse

dispel this stiff blind
stink & go slick
dye whole days in shade
damn doomers
lick hug
die another birth already
defy decline
go down

bend nightly
mock a moon that cannot rock us
nightly down, doomed
plight nodly, loon
do sweetly doom askew

aye do

Sandy McIntosh

From A Hole In the Ocean: A Hampton's Apprenticeship

John Hall Wheelock: A Brief Return

Wheelock had been a celebrated poet in the first half of the 20th century, a winner of Yale's Bollingen Prize for Poetry, and--more fascinating to me--an editor at Scribner's publishing. Along with his senior, Max Perkins, Wheelock was responsible for discovering and fostering the talents of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and many other novelists and poets, including May Swenson.

I.

"You will excuse me," the elderly poet said as he adjusted the pince-nez glasses before examining the book I'd offered. "I misplaced my new glasses. I suppose these look rather silly, but in my time they were an essential part of a gentleman's costume."

Wheelock asked what writers I'd read. I told him I'd spent my teen years reading biographies of authors, and about my pursuit of a favorite British writer, P. G. Wodehouse, that began with a trip to England to meet him and, when I found he wasn't there, ended with a visit to his actual home in Remsenburg, just east of Westhampton.

Wheelock said, "You know, I had a similar experience. When I was at Harvard I fell in love with the poetry of Algernon Swinburne, the British poet. Unlike you younger poets, in around 1907 we were deeply in love with rhyme. And even though English is not the most facile language for producing rhymes, Swinburne was able to work magic, producing three, four or even five rhymes within the same verse line. And all of them sounded so natural!"

Wheelock's admiration for Swinburne was so great that he convinced his father to pay for his passage to England so that he could introduce himself to the great poet. Once in London, he found Swinburne's address and, not having brought with him a letter of introduction, could only wait outside for several days, hoping that Swinburne would show himself.

On the third day, Swinburne appeared walking toward his building. Wheelock, gathering his courage, approached him but couldn't speak. "Swinburne had an extravagant reputation that he, no doubt, worked hard at. Oscar Wilde had said about him that, though he affected to be a great homosexual and bestializer, there was nothing either foppish or bestial about him. In fact, Swinburne turned out to be a little man, conservatively dressed, and without the flamboyant hair waving in the wind that his

portraits depicted. Even so, I hadn't the courage to speak to him. I managed only to touch his coat as he passed in the street. I spent the rest of the day in my hotel room lying on the bed, thinking about the great man."

II.

In Hays' library there were several of Wheelock's poetry collections and I borrowed them. My idea was to get to know them before our next meeting. Reading, though, I was immediately overwhelmed by what I took to be gushing sentimentality--something contemporary writers I admired rooted out of their work with cold diligence. One poem especially repelled me: a long, loving, lachrymose paean to his mother. Others of his poems were easier to take, especially those in which he wrote about the ocean and the East Hampton beach, a mile or so from his house on Montauk Highway. In his poem "Pilgrim" he writes: "The cold wind cries across the rolling dunes,/ The gray sails fleck the margins of the world."

"I lived in the City and spent weekends here in the country. I composed my poems while walking on the beach. When I'd get back to the city I'd write them down. I believe I know all of my poems by heart, even the multiple versions that preceded the finished product."

The next time I met him he surprised me by saying: "Mr. Hays told me you'd borrowed some of my books. What did you think?"

I hadn't expected the question and was embarrassed that I had no answer that would circumvent my real feelings about what I disdainfully considered his out-of-date poesy.

"Don't feel bad," he interrupted my silence. "I suspect you're uneasy with the style of the poems. But you'll miss something important if you judge the past by the present. Remember what T. S. Eliot wrote? 'Some one said: "The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did." Precisely, and they are that which we know.'"

He went on to tell me of an experience he'd had at a Shakespeare performance. At some point he heard the line: "Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels.' I thought, God, what a wonderful line; I wish I'd written it." As it turned out, the line was not Shakespeare's at all. It was his own creation. "Yet, I swear I heard it from the stage. That's a poet's experience, whether a poet of yesterday or today."

III. On the artist's reputation

"One generation takes the place of another, inevitably. I don't worry about how my work will be appreciated by future generations--if it is at all. My poetry is less visible than it was, and my ideas are out of favor. If I need a

mirror to reflect this, I contemplate my friend Van Wyck Brooks, who died some years ago. We had put together a collection of poems while at Harvard. He'd gone on to write about literature. His immense project was to read more than 800 books by American authors from the beginning of the country until our time, and to write his major work about their significance. But I've seen his name in the literary press less frequently, and I assume the public significance of his life has faded, except to his friends who still remain--to me, at least. (I remember what he said on our last visit, when he was very ill. I'd asked whether he'd like me to leave him alone. 'Oh Jack, I never want you to leave,' was his reply.) Reputation is a bubble, as is history itself."

We had been talking in the shade of a tree that transfixed the Hays' second floor porch. Although Wheelock lived around the corner, he had difficulty walking and asked if I would give him a ride home. Despite his literary accomplishments and heritage (one ancestor helped found Dartmouth college, others were fixtures of New York society), he was a modest, polite and quietly elegant man. He invited me to visit him again. "And thank you for bringing me back," he said.

Mary Mackey

Deathbed Confessions

when we said *the sky is a transparent shell*
they said *the sun is a burning rose*

when we said *the ducks are on fire*
they said *the stars are made of glue*

at the end they told us they had had a good life

but they wanted more
and we wanted to forget them

The Citizens of Pompeii Shelter in Place

an orange salt cake in the middle of a green acid pond
salt rafts salt foam the salty sting of vog

Huckleberry Ridge Yellowstone Lake
Lava Creek
(Please don't feed the bears)

Kasbek Lobatan Daht-Nawar
“a nice hotel with a view of the Taal volcano”

the sky burns
the earth shifts
liquid rocks flow to the sea

*and the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun
And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found*

Nathaniel Mackey

We have to do it to where our hands are Mu and our feet are Mu and our body and mind and everything are burning with this Mu and we don't get caught on any nihilistic *or* confirmative idea about anything. That Mu is burning! It's as if we have swallowed a brightly burning, shining, hot iron ball that is in our mouth. We can't swallow it down completely nor can we spit it out...

—Shodo Harada, "Three Commentaries"

Song of the Andoumboulou: 133½

Namesake serendipity, namesake
serenade. More what than could be
in a name came out, filled as we
had
once been we'd be again, no hol-
low we played or played on... Not
the nothing we'd so been taught
a-
bout, black hold empty as air. Not
the soon-come never yet there
we'd had our fill of, the Mu dogs
bit
we'd heard... Netsanet saw thru,
as did Itamar, Mr. B... Itamar
saw thru, as did Netsanet, Mr. B... Mr.
B saw thru, as did Itamar, Netsanet.
To
see was to fill up, see thru... They
were telling themselves no more
scorn, not to let themselves thicken,
look though they did as though they
were
left out, solid, they saw, even so...
A spoonful of honey sang out, sung
about, sweet risk they sat ladling in,
tej
gambit, spoon's edge cut with sea
foam, Lone Coast arrived at again. So
it seemed or so it was or so they sat
so

long pretending, sweet sip whisking
what was otherwise real away... We
saw the surf crash, missing it again,
we
saw it evaporate, looked in wanting
it again, bedouin seacoast, sand lain
in, legs looked at, moving on. All of
it moving on, Mr. B taped it, a movie
of
sorts, black hold and shadow box both...
Sand would never be the same, surf
would never be the same. All since
the
ships pulled away, one coast, chain
tether holding the world close, one long
shore it would be, salt symphony, salt
sub-
limity, they
saw

Some had said there was a hold where
the honey was, neither black nor
gold, a bent or a blue note endlessly
is-
suing out, a half step there'd be no
other half to, the non-world Mu readied
them for... We were they whose flesh
the
earth tugged harder, we who'd seen
our faces before our parents were alive,
we who'd accidentally woken up...
We were a dog's ears perked up, eager
for
high pitch, tired of the honey conceit,
tossed it away. Sick of deserts crossed
and oceans endured, held horses, bright
sky
sharpening
knives

•

“Where were you?” someone asked as
I came back. A cracked head cushion-
ing stars he said I seemed like, ears
like
a deaf man’s, mouth like a mute’s...
He said I’d been saying life is a tease
before my voice went, mumbled it
again and again. I was Brother B, Mr.
B,
Brother Been. “And the alternative?”
I thought I heard him ask, wink, in-
sinuate, Mr. Z the he whose voice it
was,
the he I heard. “Relatively sweet,” I said,
hiccupped as I spoke... So it was or
so it seemed or so it seemed we said it
was,
each of us newly initiate, B and Z, bro-
ther bodhisattvas, would-be bodhisattvas,
A had fallen away... Thus the half step
we
missed, bent anacrusis. Gone, we’d been
led to believe, before getting on, bent
wheel again gotten off, blue truck, an old,
old
dream trundled
up

(slogan)

Setting out had fallen out from under
us, the original step dissected. There
was no way of getting going or,

going,
getting there, handed my head by
Brother B in a bag... I held it bagless
by the locks, wound into a horse's tail.

Saw

myself riding
away

Robert Murphy

**The Lay Of The Land –
Hudson Falls New York, Just This Side of Elysium**

That it could be at all difficult to say exactly how it is
Bronk's blue squill, *scilla siberica*, survived the frozen Parian of his
winters there,
when we should know by its name to have faith in such a season of return.
It is, of course, our own return we doubt – not theirs.

I sent Bill the poet's flower, poeticus narcissus, variety *old pheasant eye*,
once –
you know, those ones that are fragrant, almost impossibly so, an echo
of the Mediterranean world from which they come, pure white, with six
(as it is described in the catalogs) perianth segments on a single stem,
petals slightly recurved; with a small, red rimmed ruffled yellow cup
into which you might pour yourself to lie within reflected –
the last of its kind to bloom, late spring.

The zodiacal twelve were planted where he could watch them grow
from his kitchen window. Someone else's window now
no matter how they look, never to be in the same way seen.

I've brought one into the house to show you.
It's in a vase on the sill by the cellar door
just this side of Elysium,
closed up, furled, if not quite folded like a letter
still in its envelope waiting to be read –
stamped: not with *Return to sender*, but with
From a place no longer able to be received.

Father of Himself After All

O, the need to rise.
And in the rising fall,
and fall and fall and fall,
the son, after long practice,
become father of himself after all.

To awaken between light and night
in the marriage bed, the placental bed,
bed of the dead of the ghosts we are
each morning found in body wed
to the dream of himself newly born.

Peter O'Leary

Saint Peter's Denial

Hexes in waves upward surging daylong onto banks of seraphs
signaling like blown fuses—what
can God do with all these curses?
He's like some biblical tyrant.
Glutted

on wine
and meat.

Your blasphemies only lull him to sleep.

Sobs of martyrs and supplicants.
A symphony of
 vitalizing toxins the sky
absorbs like a septic sponge. Jesus!
Once, you prayed. In earnest. On your knees. To a God
whom your punishers seemed to please
with the sound of the nails they pounded into your flesh.

Your immense humanity. Cored in divinity.
Soiled by fools. Punctured by thorns.

And drawn down.
By gravity. Horrible like a limb dead in the nerves, sagging.
Your whole body. Arms
distended. Blood pooling, turning you
into a bull's eye.

Did you dream at that moment of fulfillment?
Mounted on an ass, strewn flowers lining your path?
Or, your heart throbbing with
 power and miracles, of the time
you stroked the whip
and the moneylenders quailed at the sight of your brilliant
 terrible energy?
Remorse—

didn't it pierce your flank even more than the lance?
It's true: I will have left this world
satisfied, this world
without its dream sister—.

When life hits, it hits
hard, a sword locking on bone. The pain
an unholy thrum. Saint Peter—
denying Jesus? That
was a good call.

after Baudelaire

Bea Opengart

Night Drive

Asphalt line across sand hills
the rhythm of rise and coasting descent.
In daylight there'd be a mirage to pursue,
teasing quicksilver pool. In darkness
there's no horizon. Miles are broken
by boulders hunkered in shadows.
Speed dissolves panoplies into
single anonymous stars. In my nightgown,
windows down, two a.m. Another
insomniac excursion across
bare acreage in the middle of town.
Moving through, not toward or away,
as if the road didn't lead to quick-stop
markets, houses with windows darkened,
walls of concrete block that separate
enclaves from sand and tumbleweeds
blown across blanks on the city's grid
laid over trilobites, conodonts, sauropods
hinting at inlets and inland lakes
long dried to beautiful nothing, these miles
of undulant waste. In sleep I track
the route from above. A small white square
crosses sea bed. Ravines open
on either side, plunge and the car threads
a single lane above pillars some
windworn to spikes. *The whole world
is a narrow bridge; the key is not to be afraid.*

Auteur

A single lit candle. A guitar in his arms.
The nearest he wrote me to stardom was bit parts.
In one I walk naked from bedroom to kitchen
and back, to bring him water. Years later
I've shrunk to a skinny sarcastic neighbor with
corkscrew hair. In my own mind I'm tediously
the star, learn more about him from
publisher bios than I knew when he leaned his
guitar against the bedstead and reached
across the expanse, bare windows behind him
admitting a backdrop of smoking chimneys
and stars. When the machine that's been me
shuts down it will take with it us as we fused
and lit ourselves up, facts blazing
to ash in the glow. And this: I'm back
from a trip. He meets me at the small-town
airport in his beater Mustang, maroon.
On the bumper an iridescent star.
No heat -- the passenger seat draped
with the blue down bag that blankets his bed,
our sleep, his sleep at the top of the old
frame house. Now he folds the bag
across me, tugs it to cover my neck, ears, chin.
Hovering, "Warm enough?" he asks.
Back in his seat, playing the throttle, he
flourishes a nearly full bottle of Jack. A long

swig for each then he inches forward the car
consigned to junk not many years after,
but it's many before I realize
the thought he gave each comfort,
every judgment he weighed including
distance required for an easy retreat.
No discussion. Just gone, to reappear
on a website with a growing list of books,
photos of a wife, a daughter. I'm still
my own better half. Maybe that's
why the mismatch lingers, names that don't
fit the tone of a story, notes toward
unrealized scenes. Even these will fade
into the everything that's buoyed me
all along and me too preoccupied to notice
except in moments I realize there will be
an end and it could be okay to die.

Paul Pines

Fire Sermon

Eddy calls from Ottawa to say
he has seen the first red leaf just north of Hull

I hang up
and think about
autumn in the Adirondacks
Look Out Mountain
on fire

the world in flames

Saigon
New Year 1966
bamboo roofs exploding

Baghdad
March 2003

we live in a burning house
fire inside of us
fire outside of us

my wife and child
burning embers

I reached out to Carol
and Charlotte

trapped
in this blaze

cry silently at night
wake to the smell
of smoke

eat ashes for breakfast
signaling through
the flames

Coming Home

Santayana urges us
to distinguish

*the edge of truth from
the might of imagination*

but I wonder if
the might of imagination
doesn't house the edge of truth
though truth might stand
beyond any image
a refined mathematics stripped
of physical sensations

such as I dream
at night

find myself
in a part of town
I've never seen

outside a church yard
walking a line between
light and shadow
kids inside playing
as bells ring

a Priest steps from the doorway
calls me by name

I reply
-Good morning, Father.

George Quasha

from the series *Pulsations of the Mind to Come (preverbs)*

2 *pulsations in the mind to come*

I'm one, I'm two, I'm one is the song rarely sung.

I've been throwing arms around dark air loving the darkness of a secret scent.

Time may be on a roll but the pulse from outside has its own timing.

Track what lacks where the curtain breaks.

Chance requires belief.

Drawing the line means trouble.

Think it where you like before the verse reverses.

Relative meaning relates or isn't.

That line back there I hated were the last best chance to stand free.

Some words make trouble by their nature.

I'm still boiling to break free.

Follow the bubbling verbals till they're soft enough to mouth.

The bread fulfills the spelt wheat field.

Interconnected being levels at the median.

Eye never fixes but it learns her dances *for* her.

Reading open invokes the many voices.

When the eye returns the meaning churns.

Reader, she says as to herself, marry the moment.

Risk disorder in the household? Will it hold? Or even house?

Music strains the longing to a break.

Who carries a power object in hand is carried by it.

Receive the message or your loaded message will die.

Just writing it down, by force of incursion.

Some openings aren't. Eyes map.

The true truth is incomparable.

Who reads me into appearance?

I or my telling text is asking, but no matter.

The truth about oneself is unbearable

Until not. And what's not?

Syntax in history? BC begins the sentence ending AD.

Openings are self-filling when running longer than their edge.

Metanoia by field. Every which way.

Resonance finds one's own note way outside.

Shifting gears is the basic fact of the transmission.

You never see the inner workings.

Nothing goes anywhere without gears.

I thought I was falling but the terrain was adjusting its view.
We're taking micro steps and turning on the spot barely ahead of ourselves.
No more believing in agency.

no thing nest is a title that knows how to keep a secret.
Moving inside has to follow a current pulsed from behind.
It's almost like not being anywhere. And feeling everything.

Are we there yet is unanswerable.
Past grace is unrecoverable.
Language altering alters reading.

The simplest sentence swells in surround.
One word drags along another, excited mounting her next wave.
Bending over the edge syntactic, verbs birth.

Close speaking hovers in space around my mouth.
It makes me listen rounder.

How fearlessly face what hard inquiry scares up?
Only track principles never stated entire.
Think undernow.

A current is pulsing from behind or we didn't get here.

Maybe you think I'm not all there or there at all but here on the page.
You'd be right where you stand.
No one is other than so.

It's the weight, pure weight, how much I carry like now.
Now weighs this much. So you tell me.
While linguality has no measure as you know it to be, sensing as we go.

It aims to waken the will the will can't see.
It blackmirrors an actual world and its further incursions.
It has no face value.

It's not an it.

Time and again time is different.
There are times when you have to take the horn by the bull.
Times like these are singular and scale invariant.

I'm describing a world at its request as strange as it sounds.
I'm saying a time to break down and a time to break up.
I'm an experiment gone south, I'm here to tell you.

Losing the drain of thought.
Idling in neutral.

Kristen Renzi

life, sleepwalking

to a dawn

I'm learning how to miss

and a darkness

that cannot come save

finger in cup not quite

right slow reaction

time overflows before

I pull away learning

to parse by candle

position self in

flicker propped poetry

to ease my dark way

with no need for those

blinds to a dawn

I'm learning how to miss

to a coming darkness

which cannot save

Out of the Cardiac Recovery Unit's Window

With such slim fingers,
again the wind pokes through
a gauze of taut-drawn rain.

Shadows contuse the thresholds,
spill across streets, the dark
sidewalks, the gritty cars, until,
dulled in rainfall, they blot away.

Here, a blue awning's metal lungs
blow their measured gasps,
the wheeze and fall of some carnival
grotesque. The new human

balloon. There, a sharp figure
slides along, catches a single
drop on the cheekbone before
slicking it aside. A body thread
—so easily between:

formed so thin, even rain
can't find it to light upon.

Ode to the “Ode to Billy Joe”

If you sliced a yam so slight
it barely remained, you could overlap
the films to form a venn diagram

of vegetable, build the sides up
to shape bowl. The sticky bits, we know,
are what’s held in common. About indifference,

I was always sure. I’d imagined it
monstrous; it was its every-day drawl
that frightened me: a voice masticating

suicide and biscuits in the same smooth
exhale. “Billy Joe” endures as my root
childhood mystery. Its chords spliced

long car rides home from church
in hushed tones when, though they’d kissed
at peace, I saw his hand brush hers

when reaching to shift, and hers,
annoyed, flinching away. I remember thinking
is this how the world works? and then,

years later, watching a man come on my stomach
ten minutes after the call it was cancer
came, asking *exactly what type of freak*

am I? In the 3-D venn diagram,
we see that overlap only equals
proximity; any understanding, a by-

product of parts glue happens to annex.
A bowl of yams can hold only air;
its body warps roughly at any

wet drop. Now, older, I stand on
a bridge and wonder what Billy,
his girl, threw so recklessly

away. It never occurred to me
that flowers might mourn
not graves but time—the space

before the scales of compromise glazed

over, then set in.

Michael Rerick

From: *Moss*

wind tears clothes from the limbs
 a disordered toss
a violent sound pleasure and debris

diffident
 holly and sweet
 gum (pod) trees
shrubs and not

for snow to limp grass along
 emerging
again a limpid

conspiracy against
 rings
and ring tree ontology

lolls a fog
 push
not pull at head level

against a sun
 that can quiet the asphalt

At night foliage crowds and either an eerie silence marches or a rushing wind threatens. Coffee shops open up. And houses bear slightly blind windows to imagine where the body's upper parts move. Sometimes it is rain and sometimes it is wet air cushioning the temperature. The next day bars have won but still cats rise in hunger.

Donald Revell

Utah

In memory of Sundin Richards

For a certainty...the worrying doves
Not of eyesight, but small as of a hand
Reaching inside her one last time:
The wise child, the foreshortened moment then.

Pulling the green out of her trees with heat,
Her eyesight, small between the wings, is wet.
Is wet, like a certain town in the trees.
I had built it, a free man's jubilo,

Upwards as a hornet in the blue, for
Certainty. Tell me that the boy loves more
The more deeply his hand, the smaller she.
I shall answer with blind eyes. Say to me

The boy was climbing to his worried dove.
I shall answer without Christ, just this once.

Mark Scroggins

Section From a Poem In Progress

1.

Something happened. It's always that way.
We look around, find ourselves in a place
we don't recognize, among strangers, in clothes
we didn't choose. Something happened.

Our cards won't work in the ATM, the cashier
wrinkles his brow and rejects our unfamiliar
monochrome bills, the tinker doesn't recognize
the profiles on the coins we hand him, the cheese-lady

won't swap up a little wheel of cheddar, no
matter how many bunches of misshapen
and bitter greens we offer. The commons
we played on as children, grazed

our llamas or goats as adolescents,
have become golf courses or giant
rectilinear factory farms. The dream
of unabashed, unauthored selfhood—

wet and shining from the bath,
depilated smooth and rippling
with all the right muscles, padded
with all the proper erotic softnesses—

woke to find itself a dream. A raccoon
last night, clambering the rocks
on the side of the reservoir, winsome
rat scampering behind the wheel

of a parked car, the piebald
mourning dove on the steps
of the museum, napping and
rousing and shunning the lights.

It happened "nature" groaned. Kind
of middle eight, she seized—
he seized—gender it right, or don't
gender it at all—the lowest-

hanging fruit, the whole tree
came tumbling down, and now
we're crawling, and walking, and
driving and skating among its agonized

distended roots and rotting branches.
There are paths, roads, runnels carved
and leveled out, made safe and
convenient—easy on, easy off. They run

in circles. We run in circles. One night,
all the disused, abandoned, rusting
machines in the junkyard one by one
hoisted themselves on corroded struts

or groaned onto tireless wheels, creaked
into motion, fucked prodigiously—exchanging
belts and gears and miscellaneous bolts
and nuts—and then, as dawn broke,

settled back into heaps of inert metal:
Parable of our lives—all three Synoptic Gospels,
and alluded to in both Pauline and
pseudo-Pauline epistles. World all before

us, and every path leads back to our
poor, colonized partitioned minds.
Was it last night, asks the bearded man
in the armchair behind the sofa,

that you dreamed a blue moon?
And why does this map of Europe
remind you of an orgy, or your
father, coming to beat you?

Eileen R. Tabios

From “The Opposite of Claustrophobia: Prime’s Anti-Autobiography”

I forgot entrancement with the layered auras of decay.

I forgot I began drowning in air.

I forgot the night was unanimous.

I forgot how one begins marking time from a lover’s utterance of Farewell.

I forgot one can use color to prevent encounters from degenerating into lies.

*

I forgot gardenias were crushed for perfume entrusted with canceling midnights.

*

I forgot where bones erupted mountains in Guatemala and Peru.

*

I forgot that if you call an island “Isla Mujeres,” half of the population will be anguished.

I forgot psoriasis enabling disparagement.

I forgot powwows without credibility.

I forgot the gravestone outmaneuvers all.

I forgot you turned time into eternity by waiting at the gate.

*

I forgot ~~the difficulty in dying~~ the world saw me as a hunchback.

I forgot drinking from ancient goblets whose cracked rims snagged lips
into a bleeding burning. I forgot my skin was ruin.

Susan Terris

Burma, 1945

The road is a dead serpent. On its back
the women, a trail of worker ants,

warp into the middle distance. Only
the last one is distinct, rangy, shoulders

back, feet bare. On her head, tied in cloth,
her man's lunch. In her right hand,

a tin heavy with his tea. This woman
feels the muddy scales

under her toes, accepts the slap of sun
and heat. Nameless, faceless, she

strides into territory with a dream map
I can't follow. She doesn't like me

or my Rollei, and I know
she'd like me even less for stealing

the way her dark shadow, undulates
behind her down the road.

The Night Before Her Birthday

She was climbing the tallest oak tree, jumping
off the highest rock into the wild river below.

She was walking a slack line while juggling china
plates, skidding on a zipline between redwoods,

completing the marathon she said she'd
never run, and did it all in her sleep, her sleep.

This is a message about dreams, about how they
advance hope while blocking hopelessness.

Modified Acorn Recipe

Like the sound of a rifle shot, an acorn hit the roof
of the cabin called the Acorn, then another

and another, triggered by a September wind. Inside
the shower rod was pocked with acorns that

looked so real they made her remember, as a girl,
boiling them while wildcrafting, trying to live off

the forest on sorrel, lamb's quarters, mushrooms,
and acorns, trying to eat like a Wabanaki child,

because she, too, had acorn-tinted skin and long
black braids. The pot was a #10 tin can with

a coathanger handle. To cook acorns: boil and boil,
changing the water, boiling, changing, boiling.

What she got, however, was brownish mush, soft
yet still bitter. Better to drink the sorrel soup,

chew up lamb's quarters. Leave the mushrooms
untouched. But come home with her pockets

fat with acorns and press them into a pan on
the doorstep, humble pie for sassy city squirrels.

Henry Weinfield

The Ironies

What was it that you thought you had to say
(Though possibly you said it anyway)?
It turned out to be different than you thought.

What was it that you thought you'd come to know,
So long ago, you can't remember now?
It turned out to be different than you thought.

What was it that you thought that you would be
When you had come into maturity?
It turned out to be different than you thought.

* * *

It turned out to be different than you thought,
Different from everything that you were taught.
You couldn't ever have imagined it.

The things that you evaded or forgot
Were details deeply woven in the plot.
You couldn't ever have imagined it.

Whatever you intended came to naught
Or turned out to be different than you thought.
You couldn't ever have imagined it.

* * *

You couldn't have imagined that the doors
You opened closed off others that were yours,
Or that the forms revealed themselves as veiled.

It didn't seem impossible to seize
The golden apples of the Hesperides,
Where the eternal verities prevailed.

Like everyone you wanted everything
(The Autumn simultaneous with the Spring),
For which no kind of medicine availed.

The Vale of Disenchantment

Vale, dark vale, we dwell within the Vale
Of Disenchantment, having torn the veil
Enveloping the things we couldn't see.

The things we couldn't see we now see well—
In this dark vale, unveiled, in which we dwell
In disenchantment—will not let us be.

They will not let us be, but work their will;
And though unveiled, in this dark vale, they still
Envelop us, will not let us be free.

The Fountain of Youth

In search of the Fountain of Youth they go
To the beaches of Florida, Mexico,
Or else the Caribbean archipelago:

Old men and women to escape their doom!
Many of my persuasion—those for whom
There is no God or any life to come,
And no Messiah to lead them home.

Fountain of Youth, pure source, hence still unknown,
Sweet bird of youth, once flown, forever gone—
This the conquistador Ponce de León,
Having sailed to Florida in a galleon,
Discovered for himself and on his own.

Eyeless In Gaza

“Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves . . .”

Milton, *Samson Agonistes*

Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Digging our own and one another's graves,
We have no access to reality.
I blame you, then you in turn blame me.
Subjected to our subjectivity,
We only see the things we want to see.

Eyeless in Gaza, can it be we still
Go round and round that dark, Satanic mill
In vicious circles, playing that old game:
I blame you and then you do the same:
I claim you're a terrorist; you claim
That everything was yours before I came?

I blame, you blame—*I blame you blame me*
Goes on and on in perpetuity.
And blaming becomes bombing in due course,
So *I bomb you bomb me* without remorse;
And in bomb craters we can make our graves—
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.

The Afterlife

The afterlife
Was after life.
There was no life
That was not life.

Tyrone Williams

Easy Pieces, Or the History of the American Century

1. From Downtown

To nothing but net
Your inner suburb.

2. Post Up

To bank a shot
from the slot
is not to not
swish but rattle the rim
a little before.

3. In The Paint

To get around the seven-foot center ten feet tall
when his arms fly up like a drawbridge or a man
robbed at gunpoint duck
dribble by and before
momentum stumbles to the parquet
lay it
the better die
of a pair of dice
up if
not in

Chin Music

for John D. Fairfield

You pick yourself up,
brush off the dust,
look back at the ump
(can't see the face
behind the face-mask),
plant your feet
back in the box,
choke up a bit
on the bat,
turn to face
all the legs and arms of one hell of an ace.