EDITORS
R. Daniel Evans
Louise Simons

ART DIRECTOR
Roslynn Smerilson

THE PAINTED BRIDE QUARTERLY is published
four times a year by Painted Bride Quarterly, Inc.,
527 South Street, Philadelphia, Pa. 19147
COPYRIGHT © 1974 BY PAINTED BRIDE QUARTERLY, Inc
With special thanks to:
Gerry Givnish and Frank Vavricka
The Painted Bride Art Center

Manuscripts welcomed with stamped return envelopes.

SUBSCRIPTIONS:  $4.00 yearly
                $1.00 each issue

.............................................. Subscription Form ..............................

name..............................................................................

street.............................................................................

city and zip code........................................................

amount enclosed........
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Tagliabue</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phyllis Middlebrooks</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard Malanga</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila Cobb</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audre Lorde</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Dlugos</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartolo Cattafi: translations by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Burke</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Bukowski</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maralyn Lois Polak</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Penzi</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Mariah</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary McGinnis</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Daniel Evans</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharon Barba</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cover design by Gerry Givnish
five poems
suggested by Persian manuscripts and prints

1

Four Persian angels
four pages of music

2

The golden rattle for the god
has little suns for everyone

3

Leaving a lot of small tangerines
the Persian Prince said
orange poems for you

4
The Persian patriarch's beard
(as he was writing with a beautiful script, O he kept writing)
grew longer and longer like snow flake falling
a cascade of delicate music
in Green loveliest Green
and folks and neighbors and all sorts of characters
used it when no one was looking
(there was no proof of this in the Police Books or Law Books)
as a knotty ladder, they held conversations
as they climbed (sometimes, when they felt like it)
he all the time wrote and the seasons and moons
and angels of flowers that spoke to him were
more than satisfied it just had to be
and that is why Persian Civilization
is what I dreamingly admire

5

Prince in a Persian Landscape

Making music  making prayers
the cypress tree held its breath at attention,
dreams began to search for new dreamers who
when attending and awakened began to dance
with flowers in their hands

John Tagliabue
three poems
not far from Florence

1

Olives will be Olives
A small ladder left overnight in an olive tree
the top between the branches,
for an angel to climb?
for a farmer to find tomorrow?

2

A group of words before they're seen
a crew of young rabbits in the dark

3

Antella Scene
between pond and haystack

Very large male duck, waddling, sometimes wading,
colorful as Deruta ware or as a Kabuki Actor,
his female duck by a curving road by the blissful small farm
is in the weeds,
he wanders toward her like a general or millionaire, with his
beak taps her on the back
and both begin a ceremonial motion of the neck and head
perhaps meant to assert presence,
fear and authority.
durable life, beauty, certainly is presented by the two, hundreds
of olive trees on hills nearby
are peaceful

John Tagliabue
When I see an empty white page
I feel as an aviator must when he sees a clear sky and he wants
to fly in it
or as a child who wakes up, has a good breakfast, looks out the
window and sees that
for the first time this year
the hill and field are covered with snow, and so he goes out
to sleigh ride on it
Your purity too much more vital than an empty
page much more complicated than
beautiful songs written in the old days
in honor of the Virgin makes me feel
fine  Better than Medieval  Better than
Modern  There's such a thing as pure poetry
and it makes anything that the heart calls Sunday

John Tagliabue
TRANSYLVANIA

1

The Buddha from Ajanta
   will spit
   a lotus bullet from his mouth

Soon
   For I am sitting in a posture
   No yogi ever taught
   Would teach, called "Death's Confusion"

This is not my season
Philadelphia faces East
But the wind comes from the
   Great Pig-Breeding Plains
   Through stone-tongued towns
To close me in
   Windows shuttered
   Lips muffled
I am the babe in swaddling clothes
Gone wrong
2
Symbols desert me
Sparrows chatter
The peace of walls well-maintained
   Allows me
To spell this fragment out
   Through the watercourses
   And floodgates of heart and head
A seepage to nourish a dry body

3
And is that hope
   Glittering on the waves
   Of the inland sea?
I will wait for night
    To see if deer come down to drink

4
Nataraja, Cosmic Dancer, catch me
Eyes of frost ignite me
Spew your breath
The stones will split for dandelions

Phyllis Middlebrooks
PORTRAIT

A

Brown eyes
  gray hair
Brown vest
  topaz ring   gold band
  &
Silver cigarette smoke
Instructional film  cool grays
Gray jacket  gray shirt
& Brown earth
brown eyes brown vest brown slacks
(Rembrandt tones &)  faded photographs

B

"Its eyes were as big as saucers"

The steadfast tin soldier struck the tinderbox
  discovered an enormous dog,
(lis eyes were big as saucers)
on the treasure, gold & silver

I see  my father
I see  your brown vest gray shirt
  gold ring & silver cigarette

I lost the battle
  Steadfast fought again
  Bang bang my father's dead
You were
grey hair brown eyes
Somebody else

I carefully removed my weapons which
had been a family heirloom
handed down to me by my same
father
Removed them from my heart
where they had lodged
    staunchly
And threw them away
Even though they were old

And won the war
Over your living body, Mr. Brown & Gray

You didn't know this
But you might have expected it, a private man
Keeping mum about yourself
Letting my student fantasies flourish
Beneath your fatherly assertiveness & flint-quick brilliances

Later, my eyes felt big as saucers
From curiosity & the dim sparkling light
Studying your browns & grays

Wondering about your Rembrandt shadowy past

Are you the portrait film you said
    that I should do?

I aim my camera at you
Shoot
A heavy falling snow on rich brown loam

Phyllis Middlebrooks
SCREAMING ROOM

for Diane

I rush headlong towards something—
towards this snowfall of sleep
towards a darkness divided by shadows

I walk towards this one tree that is shining with thousands of eyes!
I look into this tree
I look for a name for myself
I look for a sign
I see the body waking, a body of whirlwinds
I see hundreds of shipwrecks
I see flowers frozen with silence
I don’t want to see my face flash before everyone’s eyes
at the instant of their being told of my death
I see my life
I see winter, the season of women, the house, and the shadow
I see doors, closed and hidden and maturing in darkness
I see moonlight
my isolation increases

it is too late to sleep
already the pre-dawn is waking

I can hear my heart beating
I hear the close breathing beside me
I feel the nightsweat

the body spreadeagled
the body hieroglyphed
the body squaring the circle
the darkness is beginning again  
the darkness comes out of hiding  
and the seven days of the week  
now number one

Scorpio is no longer to blame

there is this death of grime beneath fingernails, torn carpets—  
there is this scent of fucking—  
a semen that dies of the cold  
on the cheek  
on the breast  
on the shoulder

another day disappears into the body  
not knowing which room it is in  
not knowing which room it will dream in tonight

DREAM  
once I held my hands stretched out in the rain  
once I held my breath under water  
I can hear the water carried along the roof gutter  
the water that pours down the drain spout  
now the water pours down the throat  
now I hold my hands to my face  
I have finally reached that part of the brain  
where nothing’s simple,  
where there’s no turning back  
where everything’s changing—

that part of the brain

that can bend metal  
cause or prevent change  
see into the future  

that same part of the brain

that cuts people off in the middle—
but a fog's coming in

Suddenly the eyes go to sleep separately
And that's not all!
A voice begins screaming
its echo comes back petrified
because it takes in the pain

the you inside me appears once again
the you begins speaking
Suddenly two voices begin speaking at once!

Your dream gets up out of bed and walks to the blank wall
your dream gets out of hand!

You write words on the wall.
You smear them with your left hand.
You draw two windows side by side around the smeared words.
You look through them.

You see yourself simultaneously
you see yourself dreaming
you see these uprooted shadows, these sied voices
You see yourself in the dream of you waking

the body disappears where it slept

Suddenly you are seven years old!

Now I inhabit myself
now I am two voices
now the darkness comes early
now the optic nerve fades
now I am joyful
At dawn snow blows over the field
the snowy owl is poised for flight once again
—its eyes bloodshot with fiery traces,
    its wings flinching
I fall asleep
snow covers each footprint that never stops walking

    now
one   now
    the other

taking its time
until time stops

snow covers the darkness with more darkness
each fallen leaf is a voice
each fallen leaf is a stone
each footprint is possessed of direction

Right now the wind is howling around this coffee shop
these dead cigarettes singing

There are no similes, there is only experience

Gerard Malanga
from Possessing The Secret
WHEREVER

Wherever I go
love fattens me Memory
eats off me I am
a bone gnawed raw One wide eye

Sheila Cobb
THE FLOWER GARDEN

What has happened here?

After months of lust,
summer flops on her wicker chair
in her floral dress. Globs of sweat
roll down her breasts
The big sun
swagger in his overalls

Marigolds lift their skinny arms
Wisteria grabs
the fence's edge, and under leaves, mulch
moans and steams
Rose and aster
lean, but cannot touch
Zinnias talk with painted lips
The big sun patrols

Wiggling in the deep earth,
toads and moles
nudge the bulbs
Summer yawns and sleeps
From the dark of the woods
towards the garden,
a deer begins its delicate walk

Sheila Cobb
TO DESI AS JOE AS SMOKY THE LOVER OF 115TH STREET

Who are you
that your name comes
broken by the speeding cars along the East Side Drive
tumbling out of the concrete wall flowers
as I pass
Desi as Joe as Smoky the Lover of 115th Street?

There was nothing furtive about the swirls
of neon-bright magenta
prancing off your fingertips
like ideal selves
is the dream you
valued more
because you glanced over your shoulder
as you wrote
the first letter
undecided
its flourish
shaped like a question mark?
But there was nothing at all
to see over your shoulder
except my eyes in a passing tide of cars
wondering
if you wrote under a culvert
so the approaching storm around us
would not wash you away

There was nothing at all
furtive
about your magenta scrawling
but I saw the bright sweat
running off your childhood’s face
as you glanced behind you
choosing that wall beneath a bridge
where so many others had written
before
that the colours merged into
one sunlit mosaic
face without name
decorating a highway
on the very edge of Manhattan.

Audre Lorde
Halfway between the rain and Washington
as we stopped stuck in the middle of Delaware and a deluge
At least she said
as the muddy waters rose covering our good intentions
At least she said
as we sat stranded neither dry nor high enough
somewhere over a creek very busy becoming a river
somewhere in northeast Delaware
At least she said
as we waited for the engine
to tug us back to where we had started from
and my son complained he could have had more fun
wrapped up in an envelope
At least she said
as the flooded out tracks receded and the waters rose around us
and the children fussed and fretted but were really
very brave about it
and the windows started to leak in on our shoes
and the gum and the games and the New York Times
and the chocolate bars and the toilet paper
all ran out
as the frozen fruit juice melted
and the mayonnaise in the tuna fish went sour
At least she said
as the rain kept falling down
and we couldn’t get through to Washington
as we slumped
damp and disappointed in our rumpled up convictions
At least she said
The Indians aren’t attacking

Audre Lorde
NIGHT LIFE
    for Ed Cox

The lives we lead at night
you are on the streets of my
city, and I am asleep. In
my dream you are talking
to an old man, white beard
You call him Fritz. You
call him Walt. It does not
matter what you call him,
he is just an old man

You and he have made the same
choices. Now you think there's
something you should know. You
want him to tell you, but he
will not speak. You are both walking
down Spruce Street, and you are alone

You are in denim. You are
in therapy, too. You learn
what you mean when you talk
out loud. Sometimes you learn
in your sleep. In strange cities,
we discover the way we can be
We learn that we have always
been talking to ourselves. People
lead their lives all the time

Tim Dlugos
CANCER

July sixth five in the morning
the steam-tram headed for Messina
spewed from its funnel
smoke sparks and a long whistle,
newborn I turned my head
toward that first greeting of life.
I belong to a breed
that needs omens.
It grieves me I can’t
shake my right hand with my right
kiss on my own cheeks
when once a year
the moon’s aquatic son
who carries my fate sealed
in the pentagon of his breastplate
runs beside me trotting at dawn
SMOKERS

With the monopoly on war:ime leaves
our days
got off to a bad start
Squatting the country
spitting on the ground
as in Steinbeck’s novels
we smoked dry leaves
of trees and herbs
wrapped in newspaper.
When the Americans arrived
we turned the bitter pages
we blew real tobacco smoke
over tangled shreds
turned expert
we seasoned our entire lives with the molasses
of Prince Albert and Camels

EEL

The sisters killed
the delicious consanguineous flesh eaten
only one saved from your own
cannibal mouth
rich in enigmas
of tortuous vertebrae
as though for a tribute already paid
you come from a casbah of ferocity
and snap up pollen
microorganisms of the pond
stretched in the shade of your curtain
or gliding lazily
with the rippling flanks of a Queen of Sheba

Bartolo Cattafi
from L’Aria Secca del Fuoco
translations by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann
the leaves drift along
in flotilla formation
on the water beneath us
maple oak beech
whisking by like the
Spanish Armada
the Normandy
invasion fleet
swirling
tangled like
Greeks and Trojans
and we:
sitting above
on the ramshackle
wood bridge like gods
tipping the scales
with rusty nails and
getting some sun.

Stephen Burke
SATURDAY MATINEE EPITAPH

"when I die
I'm not going to
look—"
she says it as if
she were putting
a stamp on a
postcard to death
who will
come to her at the
creepiest
part of the
movie and
touch her
on the shoulder
like
an usher to tell her
to get her feet
off the seat in
front of her.

Stephen Burke
my comrades

this one teaches
and that one lives with his mother
and that one is supported by a red-faced alcoholic
with the brain of a gnat
this one takes speed and has been supported by
the same woman for 14 years
that one writes a hack novel every ten days
but at least pays his own rent
this one goes from place to place
sleeping on couches, drinking and making his spiel
this one prints his own books on a duplicating machine
that one lives in an abandoned shower room
in a Hollywood hotel and steals record albums
this one seems to know how to get grant after grant,
his life is a filling-out of forms
this one is simply rich and lives in the most artistic places while knocking on the most artistic doors
that one once had breakfast with William Carlos Williams
and this one teaches
and that one teaches
and this one puts out textbooks on how to do it
and speaks in a cruel and dominating voice
they are everywhere.
everybody is a writer
and almost every writer is a poet
poets poets poets poets poets poets poets poets
I’ve met too many of them

the next time the phone rings
it will be a poet
the next person at the door
will be a poet
this one teaches
and that one lives with his mother
and that one is writing the life story of
Ezra Pound

oh, brothers, we are the sickest and the
lowest of the breed

Charles Bukowski
warts

I remember my grandmother best
because of all her warts
she was 80 and the warts were
very large
I couldn’t help staring at her
warts
she came to Los Angeles every Sunday
by bus and streetcar from Pasadena
her conversation was always the same
“l am going to bury all of you”,
“you’re not going to bury me,”
my father would say
“you’re not going to bury me,”
my mother would say
then we’d sit down to a Sunday
dinner
after she left my mother would say,
“I think it’s terrible the way she talks
about burying everybody.”
but I rather liked it
her sitting there
covered with warts
and threatening to bury us
all
and when she ate her dinner
I’d watch the food going into her mouth
and I’d look at her
warts
I’d imagine her going to the bathroom
and wiping her behind
and thinking,
I am going to bury everybody
the fact that she didn't
was even rather sad to
me
one Sunday she simply wasn't
there, and it was a
much duller Sunday
somebody else was going to have to
bury us
the food hardly tasted
as well

Charles Bukowski
ANOTHER FRIDAY, ANOTHER BAR

Nero's burned down last night
while we were fiddling
At 6 a.m. I looked out my balcony
saw a fire engine by the bakery
and no traffic on this center city street
clogged with fresh wet snow and police
Once I had my picture taken
near Nero's I wore a bright
red dress tight under my bust
and sat under their sign
of a nipple-tilted silhouette labeled
Sexy Dancing Girls We Cater
Open 'til 4 A.M
when I didn't even dance
I hung the photo near my kitchen
and don't really mind making you
all those midnight breakfasts

This morning fire trucks camped
on every corner for blocks
Traffic was stopped
I had to step over hoses everywhere
The snow was ruined and I remembered
my dream of fire the night I missed you
The same charred smell in midwinter
The same lead sky The same closed throat
The same unwillingness to cry
even when I see a city paralyzed
Sometimes when I went to Nero’s
after work
people would forget me
if I was quiet
while they laughed and talked
When I got thirsty
I had to serve myself
Two Bloody Marys at a time
toing with the straw
pouring the juice from one glass to the next
sucking the ice and thinking of something else

Nineteen at a college fraternity party
I could drink seven beers almost
without breathing I ended up in Teddy Schvimmer’s
room He had a flag
of Israel and a sword on the wall but
I couldn’t get past
the buttons on his
shirt When drunk my handwriting
resembles Daisy Ann Cohen who never kissed anyone
her entire three years in school
because she feared she’d forgotten
how But here I am years later another
Friday another bar Please save me
from this new Irishman who looks Greek
speaks with a New York accent
and teaches English at a girls school
in Glassboro New Jersey

Maralyn Lois Polak
WILD STRAWBERRIES

once my father planted strawberries
in little mounds
winters he would hide them
under a blanket of hay sometimes
snow buried the strawberry hills
and in the spring
he would feed them
horse manure

playing farmers my parents
would pick strawberries before the birds
pricked them with their beaks
a few could not be saved
the others however found their way
into a pressure cooker
where they were steamed into jam and preserved
under esso paraffin
poured to seal the jelly glasses
like a layer of concrete

I dreamed I was covered my whole body a huge
strawberry birthmark
which changed into a black cotton dress
covered with hundreds of little red
strawberries
looking good enough to eat sour
cream or not

and you had this horrible
allergy to strawberries
second only to seafood or cats
you broke out in little hives
shaped like berries
red all over your body
and I loved you for your
strawberry sickness

Maralyn Lois Polak
ORGASM
for John

1
There are no chains
in my sexlife
there are no bounds
there is only
meditation and
ecstasy in
a proper yoga
style

2
COME FIRES HOLY UNTO THIS WORLD
WOULD THAT ALL FIRING BE SO LOVING

3
We bruise each other w/ our whispers

4
He has an ego like a jolly green
giant with a hard-on

5
Hunger attended

6
Bumbercome

7
I stand naked
with my words in your mouth
Depantsed in 4 3 seconds

A cock ring party

Why do you look at me so
Do you want to taste me? Or feel my buns?
Or want me to dig into you like a jack
Hammer? I would love to take down
those red, white & blue
stript pants and make you see
the stars that are so apparently absent
from them

ODE TO DAISY MAE

Ma askt if id hurd about Daisy Mae,
How Big Bert drove her mad,
Wuldnt keep his hands off 'er
Wuldnt do nothin but chase her
thru the haystack,
Drove her mad, prod her
til she went mad,
Plumb crazy
from all that heat
from all that teasing and laying her,
Plumb crazy

for Bob Plantz

"If you take us
to the party
we can wear
our fuck-me dresses
and make over
you "

35
He ponders before he goes
to the party   Already
he has been confronted with
"bring a date "
before he has interned
his job

Take the man you want to take
Let the women find their own "fuck-me's "

13
  Half Poem

68 is lonesome
34 1/2 is nowhere
69 is one position
There are many

This poem is 1/2
of a position
be
side you
waiting to be read

That to be read is the other
half
which I do not know
and only you can
be beside me
there when I come
to you
   when you come
to me,
to poetry,
to be

Paul Mariah
AN HOMAGE TO GERTRUDE STEIN

I.

A gem
Rose out of my heart

Ida knows
    (ho falls
Cowboy boots
All over my feet

The trek to Calgary
To catch the morsels
Of meat
Coming in for Rode
O Days
We spend together
Lying anguished
Over rocks
Letting

Sun break
Our bodies

We feel sun
Bursts
Inside us, drops

We allot each other
Slipping
Through our new skins

Aur a dawns
    or
On us en
Snarled inside
In sun) town up
Side down
The head of a man
The head ahead of a man
The head of a man ahead
The head of a man ahead of a man
The man ahead of a head of a man
The man a head of a head
The man of a head
Ahead of a man a head
A head of a man ahead
A man of the head
A head of the man
A man of the head ahead
A man of the head a head
Ahead of ahead
Ahead of a head

The manhead of a man
The manhead of a man ahead
The manhead of a man a head
The head of a manhead
The head ahead of a manhead
The head of a man ahead of a manhead
The head of a man ahead of a man
The man ahead of a manhead
The man ahead of a headman of a man
The man a head of a headman
The headman ahead of a man
The headman of a man ahead
The headman of a man a head
The headman of a manhead ahead
Ahead of a manhead a head
A head of a manhead a head
A manhead of the head
A head of the manhead
A man of the headman ahead
A man of the headman a head
The head man of a man
The head ahead of a manhead
The headman ahead of a man
The manhead ahead of a headman of a man

(head ad in fin)
Just a rose
A just rose
A garland for Gertrude
Enters the rose
Primrose

Prim rose early one morning
Prim rose green early one morning
Prim rose kelly green early one morning
A gem rose prim kelly green early one morning
Prim rose kelly green early one morning green kelly rose prim
Prim rose green early one morning green rose prim
Prim rose early one morning rose prim

Prim early one morning prim
Rose early one morning rose

The sun greets us with garlands such as this
A just rose, a rose just, just a rose, just rose a

Tabla

Knows

Through the garden softly

The prim rose rose early one morning

Paul Mariah
KEEPING WARM IN SANTA FE

Walk on the sunny side of the street,
Don’t be ashamed to wear a jacket,
Remember
The sky isn’t cold blue but just clear

Open your veins to the sun,
When you start feeling better, send pictures
To your friends in the east
So they can see how healthy you are

When you get tired of walking,
Stop and sit on a bench in the park or
Lean against an adobe wall,
Close your eyes and let the sun caress

When you are hungry, find a
Cafe where you can eat
Beans and green chilies—they
Have more flavor than the red ones
Eat until you start sweating and your head clears
If you live in a basement and it’s cold
At night, light the gas heater,
Tell everybody to gather around the heater so they can get
warm

Before going to bed,
Take a good look at
The lights from the moon and stars,
Don’t forget them,
They’ll warm your dreams

In the morning if you’re still cold
Jump out of bed and make hot chocolate
With cinnamon and whipped cream on top
because that’s a Mexican idea
And if you’re still not warm yet,
Slide back into bed and make love easily

Mary McGinnis
RITUAL BANQUETS

1

The Chinese banquet begins and ends
With soup, the first course
Sweet and sour soup
I savor its contradictions
The last course is bubbling
Hot soup over live coals
Emblems of the Four Seasons are
Painted on the porcelain bowls

2

At the Kwakiutl winter ceremony
A woman disappears in fire
She is resurrected when her
Bones are thrown into the ashes
Sulfur powder escapes from the roof
The night air swallows the sparks
Red and orange-turquoise before
They drown in snowbanks
The poet from New York is
Amazed at the gossip we
tell each other at a party
"I like all of you," he says
Touching my hair, later exclaiming
On the length of Monte's lashes
Long as Spanish saffron
We drink champagne tinged red

The Seven Campaigns of General Wu
Contains at least eight ingredients
Peking duck takes 36 hours to prepare
There are many ways to prepare duck,
Angel hair, ritual drama, Spanish eyelashes
Our eyes rimmed with broken sleep,
After several attempts we have
Crossed the Islands of the Immortals

R. Daniel Evans
from THE SECRET LIFE OF MARY X

1
when mary gets up in the morning
she don’t know what to think
usually her hair stands up like rats’ feet
and she can’t spit out what’s bothering her
sometimes she remembers being well thought of somewhere
but now she’s obscure as georgia caruthers
it’s a tramp’s life, she’ll tell you, without so much as
a coffeepot, no place to dunk your doughnuts

2
when mary eats
it’s never enough
the sauce runs down her chin
the noodles are doomed
but even three bowls of pasta
can’t make her belch
so for a little tenderloin
she cries
the tears pouring out like salt
Mary's lonesome again
no one to call long-distance

I wish my mother would
talk to me, she thinks,
but she's so dead
and prune-faced about it,
i guess I'll talk to myself

but it's been days
since she's seen a paper

and there's no weather
at all outside her window

Lately Mary thinks she's shrinking

and she's shorter than
most people to begin with

she could wear a tall hat
with a feather in it

but high-heeled shoes
made her arches fall

it's all right to be
small I tell her

but I can't make
the midgets dance with her
though she has never heard of rousseau
mary runs through the jungle
wearing only a leopard skin

something is hot on her trail
and tarzan is too pooped to save her

whatever it is, its face is missing
but its eye gleams like a pilot light

get me out of here she pleads
shinnying up a banana tree

when mary writes poems
the keys jam
pencils crack in her hand

i should ‘a gone to school
she thinks—they can
teach you stuff like this

she can sit there
till her eyes turn red

but the building’s
condemned

an angel wouldn’t
land on that roof
mary had a child once
a tiny boy
with hair like a baby duck

though he smelled bad
he had her nose

he cooed like a pigeon
in the laundry basket

but finally he ate so much
she couldn’t keep him

and now he lives in new jersey

nobody knows her like i do
and i don’t know her at all

oh, once or twice we
talked behind the hedgerow

and i offered to buy her a coffeepot

but you know how she is

i think i frightened her a little
with my superior airs
and my talk about kisses

and what could she do with me
after all

how would you like to be
immortal i asked her on tuesday

but she didn’t know what that was
and she was having none of it

how would you like your doughnuts hung up in public she said

Sharon Barba
FOR PABLO NERUDA

I was looking
for a woman
who was also
a poet
when I stumbled
against your thighs
white and eloquent
yet solid as the knots of trees
sturdy as
the heft of your songs
You suggested I
take my socks off
like a man,
poetry beginning
and ending
in the feet
the roots
or chains
around the ankles
poetry beginning and ending
with the bare earth
the white hills
with the calves of a man
the thighs of a woman
the big legs of the poet

Sharon Barba