SONYA DORMAN:
Open this door
where I knock
laughing

I carry on my left arm
a gold hut
so that I may sleep warm
any place I choose to stop
With special thanks to:

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CHASING SNAKES WITH A STICK

"Devastation is not a new thing
It is a major part of recorded history"

In other words
You asked for it
No shining days up ahead
Don't own a gun
Haven't got a car
No money
No time
To enjoy an afternoon
Cushioned
Folded and relaxed
Books on the day bed

Lonely half-formed thoughts
Surround me
On the highways of my mind
The cars have propellers
Drifting through internal seas
I float in zero gravity
My thoughts precede me in the dark
Chasing snakes with a stick
Head-tripping through the garbage

Like a fragile vessel
I tremble at the slightest breeze
Following a parade from a distance
I lose a step and wish I had lost two
While the band plays
I yawn at the limp flags

In the park I sleep in the sun
Slipping into bed with someone
She's young and beautiful
Like a red fire escape climbing into the sky
But suddenly she is old  
Her breasts are withered  
Brown and dry as parchment  
Only her eyes and cunt are young

Waking I feel the women are against us  
Their rage is implacable  
They hurtle down the inner surface of our lives  
Like a dreadful torrent  
Boiling around black rocks in the twilight

Can love decay so quickly  
Demented like lust in restless dreams

Fidgeting in the twilight  
Lovers sit on cars  
Scratching a hungry face  
Androgenous and mild  
Make love in the blue light of early morning  
Cry into telephones at 3 AM

Married or not  
They sit and stare  
Out the window  
Looking for a silver lining

Like fowl pecking at chat  
They break up over coffee  
Split the appliances  
And move out by evening

A parting of the ways comes  
Even if there is no fork in the road  
And someone is left sitting by the wayside  
Holding a spoon  
In a landscape without food  
Surrounded by knobby trees  
Fearful of the very gas they breathe
It doesn’t help much
But the man behind the bar can tell you

Go home
It’s the time
When lizards climb the walls
When hearts melt in the terpentine of regret
When horses are beaten after death
And old cars sin in their emissions
When aggression is simply money in the bank
And competition is a way of life
Degradation awaits us whether we win or lose

Go home
In the amusement parks of the world
The fun house is closed
The fat lady sits dusty and disused
There’s no brass ring left to catch at
The lake is full of rotted boats
The children have been sent away unwanted
While all the lonely people
Ride rollercoasters
In the dark

Dick Gallup
MARY McGINNIS

SOME GENERALIZATIONS CONCERNING APRICOTS

1 Their Abundance
People who have apricot trees in Santa Fe
Always have enough fruit to give away

2 Astrology and Apricots
Most Leos love apricots;
Maybe it's because of their intrinsic sunniness;
We like to hold them in our hands,
Because apricots are like little tamed suns
And they comfort our fingers
Also, they taste good

3 Their Sensuality
After we'd picked enough apricots,
Our fingers began to believe they
Were really firm-fleshed breasts and not fruit at all
We ate so many apricots that we got dizzy
The dog was drunk on apricots
He stamped all over our feet
And kept butting up against the trunk of the tree

4 Too Many Apricots
They have stuck together
In sticky leather between my toes
Our paper bags have been filled
It's time to go home now
I'll save the drying of the apricots
For another poem

Mary McGinnis

7
Some days a fruitful, cautious longing comes over me
to love and kiss affection on both cheeks,
and from afar there comes to me,
demonstrative, a wish, a different wish, to love,
allowed or forceful, the one who hates me,
the one who hates me,
the one who tears up his role, the little boy,
the girl who weeps for one who has been weeping,
king of wine, slave of water
sprouts, the one who hides in his own wrath
the one who sweats, the one who passes by, the one who
shakes his self within my soul
The pleasure to arrange the locks of one who talks to me;
the soldier’s hair,
the great man’s genius; the small man’s greatness,
I want to iron a handkerchief at once
for the one who cannot weep
and, when I’m sad or when good fortune pains me,
to patch up geniuses and children.

I want to help the good man be a little bad
and have an urge to sit
on the right of the left-handed, answer the dumb,
trying to be useful in what
I can, wanting very much
to wash the cripple’s foot,
and help my one-eyed neighbor sleep.
Oh, this love of mine, this world-wide love,
interhuman, parochial, fulfilled!
It comes just right,
from the foundations, from the public groin,
and coming from afar it makes one want to kiss
the singer on his scarf,
to kiss the sufferer in his roasting-pan,
the dead man in his serene cranial murmur;
the one who gives me what I had forgotten in my breast,
on his Dante, on his Chaplin, on his shoulders.

To sum up, I should like,
when I am on the famous verge of violence,
or when my heart is brave, I should like
to help the one who smiles to laugh,
place a little bird square on the scruff of a villain’s neck,
nurse the sick by provoking them,
buy from those who sell,
help the killer kill—a dreadful thing—
and be at peace within my self
with every thing.

César Vallejo
from Poemas Humanos, 1937
I WAS BORN ON THE DAY GOD WAS SICK

I was born on the day
God was sick.

They all know I'm alive,
that I'm vicious; they don't know
the December that follows from that January
on the day I was born
when God was sick.

There is an empty place
in my metaphysical shape
that no one can reach:
a cloister of silence
speaking with the muffled voice of its fire.
On the day I was born
God was sick.
Brother, listen to me, listen . . .
Oh, all right, Don’t worry, I won’t leave
without taking my Decembers along,
without leaving my Januaries behind.
Well, on the day I was born,
God was sick.

They all know I’m alive,
that I chew my food . . . that they don’t know
why harsh sounding winds whistle inside my poems,
the narrow uneasiness
of a coffin;
winds disentangled from the face of the Sphinx
who holds the desert for routine questioning.

Yes, they all know . . . they don’t know
the light getting skinny
the darkness is gorged . . .
they don’t know Mystery joins things together . . .
that he is hunchbacked,
musical, sad, standing a little way off and foretells
the dazzling progression from the limits to the Limits.

I was born on the day
God was sick,
gravely.

César Vallejo
from Los Heraldos Negros, 1919
OUR DAILY BREAD

for Alejandro Gamboa

Breakfast in excess . . . Humid earth
works of the cemetery giving off fragrance of precious blood
stains. City of winter . . . the mordant crusade
of a cart pulling behind it
emotions of fasting that cannot get free!

Wish I could beat all the doors,
and ask for some body, and then
look at the poor,
and, while they wept softly, give
bits of fresh bread to all of them.
Plunder the rich of the vine yards
with these two blessed hands
blasting nails with one blow of light,
飞行 away from the Cross!

Eyelash of morning that wilt not rise!
Give us this day our daily bread,
Lord . . . !

All my bones in me belong to others,
and maybe I robbed them,
I came to take some thing for my self that maybe
was meant for some other man,
and I start thinking that, if I had not been born,
another poor man could've drunk this coffee.
I feel like an evil thief . . . Where will I end!

In this frigid hour, when the earth
transcends the human odor of sweat and is sad,
I wish I could beat on all doors
and beg pardon to anyone
and make bits of fresh bread for him
here, in the oven of my heart . . . !

César Vallejo
from Los Heraldos Negros, 1919
translations by Gerard Malanga
part I—Philadelphia

the air is like
an amazon backwater
sleeping bag or
the furry hot wrap
of a lizard’s tongue

the tropical inside
of willy penn’s
hatband kisses the
perspiration beneath
betsy ross’s breasts—

ah, colonial
eroticia weather.

part II—Boston

the thunderstorm broke
abruptly at dawn
coming along like
paul revere in 1775
waking the citizenry
with hoofbeat lightning
and thunderclap yells
everyone getting up
for work and pulling
out their umbrellas
like muskets.

Stephen Burke
WORDS ON CHIRICO’S
OSTALGIA OF THE INFINITE

Plural Nos as OUR in French
   Nos   talgies
   Nos   talgias
   Talgias  no

Me memento
when Talgia played
lawns and silent hose

yeses and nos
Talgias stayed

a sigh lent
her breath to a blade

which cut the rose
rose toll small
rose toll
rose

Coco Chirico
Singular Son is his in French
Son neteer
Son in-law
and outlaw go
to cut the sun
that rose on tall

Son of rose
Rico la Rose
tall as a d
in English zede

Nostalgias of the alphabet
s removed from end
end words send

roses of the infinite
talgias so

Coco Chirico Fini

Colette Inez
POLARTONE I

Shrill, blue hunter humming blood,
clubs the silence, Light’s retort
on a distant floe.
I rattle his name from a frozen box,
Wolves close in.
The moon, the moon

on the orchard in summer,
I cannot reach
his echoing. Blueness, blueness,

loghouse,
birch tea we drank
in the orchard heat.

I must fix him north,
a buckshot in the snow fired into whiteness.
My crumbling waltz in quarter time.

Cold mazurkas,
Wolves close in,
my famished smile,
spines of ice,
bones of the tundra
cracked in my voice.

Colette Inez
POEM FOR JEFF KEDS

our paths cross like black cats
on the trick
with you its loose margins
    and reckless
    a woman jinx    a cat’s eye marble
    your name runs like a sneaker
cross references to everything
it takes place away from the gooey world
    all’s left of the
11 o’clock news is a pair of lips
moving like mating ducklefish
even the weather map disappears
they say it’s like this
if you been through Valentine’s day alone
bannisters get funny    the key turns golden
it shines exclamation points
it opens everything
    the security guards
    walk off the job
    only their shoes show

Susan Weiner
CRAZY POEM

for Ana

I'm crazy right now
I thought I was just
"crazy about you" or
"crazy for you" but
I'm really crazy now

it's 1 20 PM June 10th
in the year 1974 or
if we remember years
the way the gypsies do
it is the year Candy
Darling died of cancer
and I met you, love

I wanted it to be
always something special
all of a sudden it was
so special I can't work
or breathe right or eat
everything in sight as
I am famous for doing
all I can do is "muse"
I better stop smoking
dope too I can't "control"
it anymore, or anything
Saturday night June 8th
was possibly, probably
the finest night of "love"
I've ever experienced
when just brushing your
lips with mine felt like
fucking for a year or
coming all over myself
for days, buckets full
I loved you that night
like I never loved anyone
just dreamt of but never
really believed could be

now what? Joann called
I kissed my typewriter
"classical" music sounds
suddenly abrasive and
I want to throw out all
my shoes as some sort of
gesture only that doesn't
seem to be enough and
burning them would only
add to my fears that I'm
really going mad

goddamit

I REFUSE
to let what I've always wanted
keep me from having what I've always wanted
only
I don't know what I want

Michael Lally
I LOVE YOU
I LOVE YOU

I cant even tell
if you're female
or male it doesn't
matter to me but

it does to others
they tell me it's
post revolutionary
behaviour in pre
revolutionary times
not to prefer one
or the other but

these are the times
into which I have
been born and what
matters to me is
so have you

Michael Lally
WHAT MATISSE IS AFTER

The straight in a curve
is what Matisse is after
two lines
one veering in,
an invitation to
the rest of space,
the other
a long gourd
swelling
out of bone
an arm sings
that its reach
rounds
into a heave
of loving
the line of a thigh
on its departure
toward returning
in the teeth
of our dying
what elegant
flying
He exhales paint we need
to
breathe

Diana Chang
"I AM ALWAYS BURNING"

Don’t tell me—
I know,
My face is ebbing.

Sheltering sounds of rain
wear us away.

But the land stays.
It elbows me.
Do I take up too much of it,
smaller and larger than thought?
It knows me like a lover, like a thug,
I love and dread it well.

“I am always burning,” Jennie Tourel said,
Vermont in October
devoured by red.
Mountains throw torches ridge to ridge, out to kill.
Blazing lungs murder breath.
The air, too, is famished for us.

The sky leans into me, like the land,
callous after desire and the flights of birds.
Do I take up too much of it?

If I could sing
I would burn
into a single note

and try to hold it
a single stab
on wings
at everything

The sky reaps
and sows its rain
and brings us low.
The land knows.

Diana Chang
RHYTHMS

The landscape comes apart
in birds
A horse
detaches himself
from a fence
A criminal of love
breaks away
The child drops out of a tree
A ship uncouples
from the street
The canal, unhinged,
proceeds
Cars are pieces of the world
tearing away
But the crows
collect
in heaps
And stone
and sky
poised with being
grow steep
before
they faint
into the wind
and things
fly
again

Diana Chang
PART OF THE PROBLEM

As if there were no history
before we existed. As if

the grand marinater had asked
the fish to stand still. As if

you spoke to me with a sink full
of dishes at your command, & this

sunset earlier than usual. Cobwebs
linger above the trundle bed, I love

your dark wall hanging.

Terry Stokes
FOR JIM, AGAIN

The ledges we can’t cut across,
goddam it, Jim, I open up my arms
& fail. The snake fences keep
the observers from falling into the
depths of their own dying eyes. Will
we drag, drag the bottom
until we pull them from the depths,
until their hearts spill over,
until we confuse our lives with rabbit meat,
voice box, our brothers.

Terry Stokes
EXPERIMENTAL BIRD NUMBERS ONE AND TWO

The sun coming in
the leaves waving slowly in the light
winds,
The aspen leaves spin into wings,
An experimental bird waving good-bye,
good-bye to this and good-bye to that.
Another day,
shadows and sunlight
making curtains of the half light
that slips in around the room,
Dust motes in the afternoon,
The sun’s up
through the window
fingering over the hill into a fist.
Still, nothing moves,
going on.

This poem may also be read by combining the first and last lines, the second and then next to last lines, the third and fourteenth lines, and so on.
The sun coming in
going on,
the leaves waving slowly in the light.
Still, nothing moves,
Winds
finger over the hill into a fist.
The aspen leaves spin into wings,
through the window
an experimental bird waving good-bye—
the sun’s up
good-bye to this and good-bye to that.
Dust motes in the afternoon,
Another day
that slips in around the room;
shadows and sunlight
making curtains of the half light.

Jeffrey Shear
ANNUNCIATION

"The soul, like the body, will heal herself
in her own time"

Wheeled thru the corridors,
no strength to blow out a candleflame—
I kept whispering,
"Remember to phone back the sister at St Anne's."

Is someone slipping me an orange?
It's only ammonia,
I lay my head forward
on this plinth, now that one
now share one with another woman. The crush—

I envision girls
a host
in ammonia-pale dresses
slipping off to first communion

oranges in their fresh-scrubbed palms
like girls in a garden,
The sun's stern, strong
the pungent air parting—slashed from stern to stern

in a wave of light
at their coming
as if they were trim ships
(all sails clipped) sailing close to wind.

split to facets of diamond
warm globes of the world in their hands
lighting these corridors
already white beyond white, bright beyond bearing:
Is this True Annunciation?

Lynn Strongin

28
DRAW OUT ONE MORE CANDLE
TO LIGHT THE NIGHT NURSE’S FACE

not the day one’s
the matron’s
whom we thumb our noses at.

For she is quick to see us
on the right hand & the left hand
to stoop down
to retrieve dropped pencils & other things.

Her falcon is tethered, rides on back of her hand
her face all colors grey & pearl
as she’s passing us, our cots
beating—but not blurring.

Lynn Strongin
OPAQUE DISEASE

or transparent?
The bulletbee thrums above the rose.

The drone hovers,
But the bone alone knows
whether it multiplies, or diminishes.

Darkly-wise
like churchpews after nightfall
the celldoors—close.

Cubiclomate
your furious gentleness is gone
who nourished yourself upon wafers of flesh, iron, bone

But the life-force
is will still glowing, iron
drawn forth by dark tongs.

Sister—twin
we were separated by a parchment partition
till sun poured thru that charred honeycomb

Fire & air were one at the end.

Lynn Strongin
THREATENING WEATHER

Overhanging the sea,
clouds: one is her body,
one her music, one
her chair.

Her body is disappearing,
her music is silent,
her chair empty,
clouds
overhanging a sea,
waveless and
waiting for the storm.

Kathleen K. Wiegner
Turtle Island, by Gary Snyder. New Directions. $1.95.

In Turtle Island, Gary Snyder’s poetry streams back to the dark currents and darker crosscurrents of Regarding Wave. Receding into the elements, the elements as wilderness, the wilderness as woman, engendered by love. Love engendered by the luxuriant chaos of the unconscious.

Both books set technology against the “mother stuff” of being. Mother Earth versus the motherfuckers. But Turtle Island surrenders the deceptive, contemplative tone that enveloped Regarding Wave:

the 4-wheel jeep of the
Realty Company brings in
Landseekers, lookers, they say
To the land,
Spread your legs.

As always, Snyder’s celebration of nature takes root not only in ecology—which attracted his attention twenty-five years back, and has engaged it ever since—modern psychology and anthropology, but in Oriental (particularly Buddhist) and American Indian lore. Moreover, as in Regarding Wave, this celebration proceeds beyond delineating a “dharma revolution,” one that revolves on truth, what Emerson called a silent revolution of thought, to describing a course of action. It enacts the plan proposed by “Buddhism and the Coming Revolution”: “The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both.” So that Snyder intended to lend support to “any cultural and economic revolution that moved clearly toward a free, international, classless world.” In other words, he spurned the social passivity of his earlier
work (collected in A Range of Poems and Earth House Hold) and adopted the activism and communitarianism of the sixties.

If East and West were equally merciful, this transformation would have been little short of extraordinary. But surely they’re not at all symmetrical. Buddhism could translate bum into bhikkhu, a monk, a revolutionary vagrant and poet. But revolutions in the West have moved only from one social form or fashion to another without magnifying one whith the scraggy glory of man. The “mercy” of the West has been merciless, fearfully, frightfully merciless. And Snyder shows less compassion here for his enemies — who are, after all, the balance of the “civilized” world, no matter how unbalanced — than ever before. Not just strip miners, not just whatever commerce and industry divest Mama Earth, but dislocated street-corner schmucks too, whose metaphorical meat they beat into the land, Onan-style. For them, Snyder has learned from the “mercy” of the West a new language of contempt, a new and more scornful, more disdainful demeanor:

The ex acid-heads from the cities
Converted to Guru or Swami,
Do penance with shiny
Dopey eyes, and quit eating meat.
In the forests of North America,
The land of Coyote and Eagle,
They dream of India, of
forever blissful sexless highs.
And sleep in oil-heated
Geodesic domes, that
Were stuck like warts
In the woods.

And the Coyote singing
is shut away
for they fear
the call
of the wild.

Snyder cannot convey the moral certainty of his earlier poetry in the historical and political categories of his later work. Turtle Island ultimately runs amuck, compelled by crankiness, cracking into “Plain Talk” — position papers written in his usual screwball prose. But even more disturbing is the manner in which his best poetry breaks into gauche cliche, forces the mysteries of human feelings into formulae, formulae of furor, fancy and fascination, a siege of legendary heebie-jeebies. His allies — his wife, Masa Uehara, and their children and
friends—seem as much creatures of obsession as his enemies. The natural imagery emerges unnaturally. Often it is merely ceremonial. Or delirious. Suggesting in its screaming meemies, blue Johnnies, pink spiders and snakes in the boot—what he calls “creepy-crawlies”—the vital and dizzy presence of D. H. Lawrence, who is in many ways the tutelary spirit of this book as Thoreau was of Myths and Texts.

Snyder, like Lawrence, hectors his readers here with a peculiar vocabulary of word and symbol that staggers belief—philosophically dubious and poetically problematic—yet transmits a special sense of life. A dark destructive emotional drive, an explosion of temper that can burst into passion. As in the contrast between the Navajo and “Black Mesa Mine =1”:

Wind dust yellow cloud swirls 
northeast across the fifty-foot 
graded bulldozed road, 
white cloud puffs, 
juniper and pinyon scattered groves
—firewood for the People
heaps of wood for all
at cross-streets in the pueblos,
ancient mother mountain
pools of water
pools of coal
pools of sand
  buried or laid bare

Solitary trucks go slow on grades
smoking sand
wrenches around the tires
and on a torn Up stony plain
a giant green-and-yellow shovel
whirls and drags
house-size scoops of rock and gravel

But the title itself adumbrates the ponderous, pompous, all-thumbs method of most of the poems inside. Snyder tries to explain:

Turtle Island—the old/new name for the continent, based on many creation myths of the people who have been living here for millenia, and reapplied by some of them to “North America” in recent years. Also, an idea found world-wide, of the earth, or cosmos even, sustained by a great turtle or serpent-of-eternity.
Actually, the primordial turtle that Snyder speaks about is a symbol of passive and inert material existence, a kind of concentrated stagnation, and not of any phase of transcendence or creativity, any aspect of the spiritual development that he has associated with the “back country,” the natural sources that he has attempted to restore. In short, it is an apt symbol for “North America” as it already is—an appropriate emblem for fossil-fuel dope fiends like Exxon, Texaco, Mobil and Snyder’s other opponents.

Which approaches with other American poets—Duncan and Ginsberg in particular—have known, but that Snyder refuses to accept. Modern society, with its entropic loss of all distinction, differentiation, individuation; its pervasive blurring of fact and fiction, is sinister, yet it is as well a distorted, perverse reflection of that state of quietude which also betokens the end of all individuation and distinction—nirvana. Bliss and perdition, hope and despair, are reciprocal. Despite himself, Snyder realizes this not in the structure of his argument, but in its texture. He has abandoned the architectural riprap of words, the “tight cobble patterns on hard slab,” for a more fluid medium, as in Regarding Wave. It is closer to the grain of the Chinese poetry that he has prized and translated from the beginning. (Of course, Chinese grammar, being completely uninflected and relatively free of inflexible parts of speech, is naturally fluid.) Even his enemies—the American thickwits, with their hostile stupidity—enter the “energy-pathways that sustain life” in the best of these poems, because Snyder, for all his moral dudgeon, like Lawrence, can acknowledge clean, honest emotion and yield to it in imagination, if not in doctrine. He is true to his own uneven “energy-pathways” at the moment of writing, quick to respond to the power of opposing modes of being and evokes them vividly, and this is what invigorates his book. When he is good, Snyder is too good to believe in himself:

A waitress asked us
    where are you from?
a country-and-western band began to play
“We don’t smoke Marijuana in Muskokie”
And with the next song,
    a couple began to dance.

They held each other like in High School dances
    in the fifties;
I recalled when I worked in the woods
    and the bars of Madras, Oregon.
That short-haired joy and roughness—
    America—your stupidity.
I could almost love you again.

reviewed by Ken Bluford
SONYA DORMAN

MAGIC MUSIC
("The shamaness exorcises baleful creatures.")
—after Li Ho's "Piece for Magic Strings"

The sun sets. Hills darken
Wind-horses tread the clouds.

From the bats' cave rises
a faint music of rabies,
flute notes skittering away.

After a hundred years
the owl becomes a new spirit.

So do the toad, the snake,
the carved totem with a dry throat.

Through cold wind, cold autumn dust,
I step out in my long skirt.

The god of rain rides into the lake,
At last, old nests and burrows
brim with my green flame.

Sonya Dorman
OPEN THE DOOR

homage to Apollinaire

Open this door where I knock laughing

I carry on my left arm a gold hut
so that I may sleep warm
any place I choose to stop

a little white knife always with me
cuts and cuts the loaves
of farmer's bread to share

muskrats follow me from their marsh
fish-fed cats from the town pier

open this door where I knock laughing

my right eye is a slingshot
aiming blue stones at rabbits
that get away

my left eye furnishes the woods
with wild grapes

haven't you seen the oats follow
me to the big mill where a giantess
grinds the sun for porridge

she'll open her door laughing
when I knock

Sonya Dorman
A PAPER RAINCOAT

Even a small journey is notable.

We set out in bad shoes, 
destination unknown, perhaps only 
an odd dream directed 
by a tale-telling parent.

We’re old journeyers, wanderers 
like my father, come a long road 
from green Carpathia.

Confirmed in my way 
by windy winter dark, 
I leave at any time.

Hello and goodbye as the path 
rises and falls. Our knees 
crack in the cold. Summer’s 
blue lake sleeps in the past. 
Over the hill, spring’s windmill 
turns. Travelling, we dream 
how the water left behind 
is pulled up before us, 
over and over.

I, too, carry this paper raincoat.

Sonya Dorman
AUTUMN POEM II

Today
A sharpened breath penetrates its dynasty,
Our desires abandoned, we protect bones
With bones.

Last night was the masterful
Salesman who offers everything
And charges almost nothing,
Last night the moon strutted
Like a blind dove, and the stars
Fled to another sky,
Last night flints lit beneath your feet
Opened the path before us,

Now dawn appears like a sponge,
Soaking up the residue of your voice,
Turning everything into black and white.

Claudia Greene
A CHANGE OF ADDRESS IS A CHANGE OF KINGDOM

for Marcel Duchamp

The air is full of TV.
This is what the Wicked Witch of the West saw
before she got squashed like a tomato.
Dorothy's house in freefall looked no bigger than
a Monopoly house
an envelope of bad news fluttering down the mail chute
a black square of cake
a pillow midair in a pillow fight
a flatbottomed boat swinging in a whirlpool
the underside of a Chevy
a shadowblot on Munchkin Land
fear at the edges
an old black witch crept inside herself
Kansas flattened her out like Perma Press.

"This don't look like Kansas, Toto."

Any change of address is a change of kingdom.
So a puff of smoke is a dog
chasing its tail
Shoes become Model T Fords
A Clark Bar is a bus
An umbrella stand is art

At the exact center of every Kansas is Oz

Tap of the Ruby Slippers
the elephant skin
of the old lady
is
the smooth skin of a girl.

Norman G. Lock
WOW!

WHAT A WORLD/WHAT A WORLD

The Wizard of Oz came
high in his bright balloon
selling medicines &
tornado insurance

A tornado ripped through
the editorial offices
of THE ONLY MAGAZINE IN AMERICA
that wanted to publish my stuff.

Hot damn.
What a circulation.

Thank God I don’t believe in insurance.
They’re reading me all over Kansas!

Norman G. Lock
MATHEW

Miss Brown, my woman, died
in a blazing fire in New Orleans,
1863. Dumb child dropped the oil lamp,
I gave her child, a sick girl,
to Miss Harriet, in Jackson.
Went out to Wyoming,
became a bounty hunter with Joe.
Joe got shot in Denver,
cheating at cards.
White man shot 'em,
I spent 6 years rustling cattle
in Texas and New Mexico,
Today, I am old.
Never thought I'd go back
to the South East, but
can't stop wondering about my mama.
Nevada, though, is a hell of way
from Waycross.

Clarence Major
OUTPOST

The hungry dogs out back eat their own mess,
I cut enough wood two days ago
to last till the end of the week.
Blacky brought soup from Ma Match,
The Craw Stage Coach from Dead Point won’t get here
before tomorrow noon, I can’t leave anyway.
My horse got the fever. Had to shoot her three weeks ago.
A bunch of Negro cowpunchers rode through
late yesterday. Probably headed for Boxhorn.
It must be 50 below.
And though the snow stopped this morning,
everything is covered with ice.

Clarence Major
He complains he has not received his just desserts

You rebuked me for teasing, called it cruel,
You wanted me to see no more
than you showed me on slides and glossies,
to hear only the words and never the silence
and what weeds grew there
out of cracks between the paving stones,
a lid on the rich and common dirt.

You wanted to be a bronze general
leading a lonely charge of pigeons across park benches.
You wanted me to receive you like a borrowed watch
winding you carefully each visit.
You wanted to be dead in my love
like a saint's relic, a bone in crystal
I would polish with my tears
and shine with the oil of my hair.

I go on my knees only to plant and weed,
I let people into my life
if they want in, I have a big round table
lots of mismatched plates and plenty in the garden.
You fed with good appetite but began to complain
too much basil, too much pepper
never enough sugar.

You think love is a banana cream pie.
I think it is bones for soup,
I think it is dark bread and meat.

Marge Piercy
FOR A BRAZILIAN ‘BANDIT’

You are
no stronger than me
your back hurt,
I lay down to show you
my morning exercises,
prayers of my body to survive,
the slow stretching
that strengthens my weak back.
When you tried
you shook with effort.

You are
no larger than me:
when I embraced you on parting
my arms doubled on your back.
I could lift you to my knees.
We could trade clothes.

The rifle is your weapon,
the typewriter mine.
Your way is harder.
My way is fatter.

You are no stronger,
no taller.
As I read the newspapers
I will remember.
Every time it is necessary
to do something hard
I will remember.

Your back is weak
your hands are small
your breasts are low and apart
your ankles are delicate
like mine.
We are fighting the same battle
and you also love roses,
write poems.

Marge Piercy
WHAT LOOKS BACK

Out through the pores she
is leaking slowly
while she sleeps and from
the bathroom mirror in the morning
how they yawn,
suckling mouths of babies,
gaping mouths of nestlings,
feed me!

Tracks in the dunegrass,
ripple of snake belly,
tictac of mouse foot,
zigzag of rabbit hopping.
The flesh is drying
into sand blowing.
The sand is hardening
into gravel, the silt
builds up in her throat.
Cataracts of despair
grey her eyes.

The mirror is a pit
more caustic than lye.
Its calculating scan
prices the flesh.
Only the young smile at it.
To them it makes glass promises
on which to cut the fingers
and the throat.
On its pale slate damage
is figured, the erosion
of pain, the cost of laughter.

On its ice the eyes skate
meeting themselves
with a shudder, mating
like paramecium, exchanging
some of each substance,
some blood on the mirror,
some ice in the blood.

Marge Piercy
THE WHITE SHIRTS
for P.N.

I
The money
Under the sign of money
The cross turns turns and turns again
They stand
Their hands held out
Rapidly looking around
Rapidly

Then the interview

II
Raise the money, argue the money, promise the money, write the money, hide the money, mail the money, send the money, hold the money, caress the money, suck the money, rub the money against your skin, dribble the money, push the money against her thighs, the money, complain in private, share the benefits, look out the window, search for concealment, yell at the exceptions, call the office.

The man in the white house, the white men, we know them. We have seen them publicized in all the papers, we have admired the blonde wife sitting cross-legged holding the lie between her parted lips, we have photographed the new couple. Hold the Bible in your hand, the money-leather Bible, hold your head erect bask in the light of someone’s protection. He is speaking.
A scientific community, a community of businessmen, socialists of a converted kind, those who played in college, and refused to cross the picket lines, and now play again. We count on you.

Economics and statistics, job bombs, school bombs, torture bombs, pleasure after a televised death, bombs of penny money kinds, bombs of splitting body kinds, bombs with colors on their pretty body kinds.

Who will phone in the money, who will speak for the money, what animal will be caught in its claws, bleeding and thirsting for money, who dares to be alone in the night? who dares to be alone in the night?

III
I asked them to refrain from using starch.
They did so. Now will you hand them over?
Your bags are on the bed. Put all of them
Inside, Even the ones without buttons?
Not those. And the regimental ties,
Fit for my sweet warrior. Off to fight
The Democrats! Sweet warrior. You’re my
Unsung hero. You’re my handsome maiden,
You’re my Yale graduate. You’re my Smith fuck.

Read this note before you go.

IV
Gentle men, men of solid families, men of good families, men whose names are not familiar, whose fame becomes our familiarity, men who deny flamboyance, men who are sober, men who are true to their ranks, men with true names, who have ritualized murder, who have destroyed the earth, who have crushed children and burned their descendents you, who are in excellent physical shape, you who once a year attend your class reunions, you, clean-cut, clean-wived, clean-childened, you who change white shirts twice a day, give me your attention.
V
Hands that greet as you step off the planes
Eyes and ears that are attentive to the voice
The unheard command that crowds the mind
Instructions read in phonebooths and secret
Toilet meetings, where the eye and the hand meet.

Guards off-duty
Men out of uniform
Policemen cruising
Retired Marines on business trips
Chauffeured limousines
Parked illegally like foreign diplomats
Agents plotting counter-plotting
Spies eyeing spies
Corrupting like Babel’s Tower
Our Temple
Our Priests

Our text assassinated.

VI
We are left alone
In the long hideous noise
Even the rain does not calm us
We remember all their promises
Tracing our paths through the maze
Like rats left without food or drink
All promises remembered.

VII
On the Tennis Court in the middle of New York
With flood lights in the middle of the night
We stand silently, aiming our rifles
There stands the man in white
Carefully combed, neat as John Dean.

Serge Gavronsky
40. At the moment of writing this
   Pebbles are turning into sand
   Watercress that I cannot see
   Pushes its way up
   Steps on Renaissance staircases
   Wear at the touch of the foot
   And without deliberate meaning
   All around (this globe) such are
   Perhaps the proper forms of damnation.

41. A sort of confluence
    interference/crossing
    of one with the other
    sometimes an image. the spider and its web

    And then the writer and his text
    Undecided in the air (the page)
    turning, suspended, catching
    transparent when most successful
    as soon as the night sheds its darkness
    in obscure corners

    The spider/the poet
    then the strategy begins/the victim invoked
    however, it is a tyrant

    A brush of the hand
    the turning of a page
    all is over
    there is nothing left
But, of course, the hand
but the spider

In any case (typographically speaking)
I have won, or at least, the poem is
Finished.

If in doubt, start again, and when the sun shines, after a
night of material action, note precisely the effects at the
top of the page; the work done by the spider—the poet,
and all this without the slightest acknowledgement to
some secret passion, but rather to a secretion, nurtured.
If, by the end you have not found it to your liking, the
web is broomed aside; the poem is crumbled similarly
and disposed of, at that time, then, indeed, there is
nothing left.

42. Tin soldiers

Lead soldiers/this time
lead conscientious objectors
thin as a Giacometti

pacing our lives out in Canada or somewhere else, in
Sweden, for example.

Soldiers nevertheless. Some of them "deserters" seeking
the desert
Like some forgotten saint soon to be martyred.

Lead men. In the double sense.

Our love (affliction?) of power
We who seek our own destruction

Sportsmen in the arena of death.

Sometimes, a few steps in a right direction.

But the weight of our bodies

Sometimes, almost undefinable: a terror-struck look
into the abyss of the sun.
At night, when they stand mutilated
  you can barely hear them talk
  then the noise becomes significant all we have left.

Lead men, Leading us.

43. Indifference or perhaps in excess
    A translation of emptiness

44. At the bottom of it all
    We argued for propriety

    Games in the other room
    Pleasant voices grouped

    A sense of beauty: a still-life
    More appropriate in French. *une nature morte*.

45. Two bodies kneeling within each other
    Shussing as in an art nouveau *affiche*

    To penetrate their mystery, calmly,
    At the antipodes, other forms

    The slightest rearrangement would throw
    The couple out of gear

    We sped toward *Nîmes*
    Covered by a bamboo hat

    She hugged my waist this time
    In a sitting position

    When the motorcycle hit the rock
    Both of us leapt up like spray

    I cannot recall another painting
    A fragrance, or even a score
    That would equal that moment.
46. Our whole self in a defined universe
   Held together by the latest dictionary

Compose yourself
Choose the right expression
Articulate.
   I can write nothing more on this subject.

47. But to express time
   all you have to do
      is move your eyes
      along these lines
   and further, if you will,
   look carefully in a mirror,
      your lines
Marshalled like troops walking at an even step
We are far more mobile than a painting
But if I choose it, I can become a block
That is, a reflection, too, or for other
   Purposes
     a flight of wings
     the Concorde
   a flight of wings

Everything then depending on the progress,
Without any connotation, from left to right,
Of that Time, I am sure. A form of static existence.
   Ecstatic, in its way.

48. Some cities hold their buildings
Close to themselves, like rain
   On the river. Marking time.
   Not far from where I live
Trees broken by the wind
Stones batted down.
Nothing but echoes
And this voice.
49. Colors
   As if the cosmos had parted itself
       once again/a limited edition

   Marked passage
       somewhere

   blue perhaps green
       and it has spoken

   We have our diction and our direction
   With extreme elegance and often a sort
   Of precision around the edges
       An imitation
          (Flaubert was a Platonist)

   I have never questioned or else it would not have been
   Art ubiquitous this field of vision now separate from its origin
       We are held in a trance
          these lines on this text

   But also works that hold their space immaculate
   I would let them wander and tolerate
   The various seasons that they reflect,

50.

   But also like Versailles
   The mark of power and adroitness

   Through the royal courtyard
   Such a procession of figurines

   The galeries mirroring each other
   Living rooms, one after the other

   Chambers of the heart where they wept
   Discreetly, enclosures, secret walls, theatres

   They all performed in this solarium
   Like precious Chinese vases.
II

And chapels ringing the palace,
Had Bossuet been forced to speak

He, too, might have given up the ghost
Holy, but not for long, not for that long

Besides, the gardens were so hypnotic
I saw a lady swoon in the arms of a Roman

Perhaps that was a sign of life
Now so close to the warring years

The ceilings grew intensely
Around the terrific clash of swords

We stood, immobile, our heads raised
By that song: a classical one.

III

The palace was also a coherent mechanism
Locks, keys, chains, rivets, cement

Stones cut from a larger stone
Poised in their perfection

Only the wild grass split them apart
But then a noble grass

Powerful as a tree root
Unmaker of kings and assuring the poet his stature.

Serge Gavronsky
XANADU

i
turn on
with just
poems
(Primer)

Ancient oriental peace pipe
and tar baby,
King Kong on the skyline—
Solomon’s eye
burning out the forehead,
Dreaming ape
following an underground river,
following it out
to cloud-banked sea,
Scenting agriculture.
loose black dirt
running ten miles,
trees full blossom
drawing bees,
and old trees
been there forever.
And down one slope
a broken place split back
    rocky cunt
bending the air.
(Shade woman crooning
    under some far moon
    for a shaggy lover)

Out of split rock
blue geyser
climbing the air,
dropping back
coming again
water panting
and broken chunks of rock
    riding it
dancing rocks
and wild cat-
aract.

Five miles outland the river
    snaked,
headed
for the flat oiled sea,
Down through crevices,
Under the oiled top water.
    And in it—

voices
of apes (looked around and withered
and gone)
howling war!
    Shadow pushing at tear-winged fog
    and coming in low
    a tight packed sun patch,
    in it the beat
    from the geyser and caves
Sun yellow and blue ice shot through.
Black girl. Black girl.
Spiral belly button.
Playing guitar blue fingers
singing a mountain,
King Kong grunting
"trying to remember" hum—
if i could pull back that tune
catch hold
wind it into a solid line
and weave a sunny patch.
Sweat loose, Suck ice.
Apes coming to look and shout,
"Look out! Look out!"
"His eye's on fire!"
"His hair is spikes!"
"Better walk on around him,"
"And keep your eyes shut;"
"He's smokin'."

Hey!
Shit
gotta go see
my Avon lady.

Gene Fowler
THE NIGHT TABLE

The stains on the old night table
I bought at the auction
Faded with scrubbing and sanding—

The rings which only come
From gallon wine jugs,
The cigarette burns, the drops
Of hot coral nail polish,
The crayon scrawls on the sides
Near the floor—

But the smell did not, the odor
Of stale fire and water that imbued
The wood,
I wondered over it,

And suddenly I heard her cry,
The cigarette flamed on her polish-wet
Fingers, and her blouse was on fire,
She tired to sit up in the bed,
The baby on the floor was screaming,
She said
Jesus I gotta get outta here

Patience Merriman
"Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman ... whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness."
—Eliezer, 1st century rabbi

ELIEZER'S DAUGHTER

and what is the religion of my fathers
but a dance of veils?
I went to the well for water once,
leaned over to fill my jar
and a pharisee resting his hand
on the rim of stones
turned up his fingers to my breasts
they shrunk from him like doves
at the altar of sacrifice

oh my father has told me
nothing at all about the Torah
it doesn’t matter I know
about it anyway just the way
you know the flowers are full
of honey by watching the bees
dip into them

oh I am jealous of the Torah
and the lamps and scents
attending upon it at dusk
I watch the men in clean robes
mount the temple steps to worship
in my own father’s hand
is a coin that buys
a sacrifice of doves yes
what is the Torah but a woman
like myself? who if I kissed
and called my sister
would split the fragrant cedar
walls of her room
and come running past the men to join me
smiling and shedding her veils

Patience Merriman
TO A NEW MOTHER

You bleed in bed
Like a log axed at both ends,
Green shoots sprout from
Your toenails unasked.
Red ants are streaming down your legs.

The newborn stirs in his blankets
Like a dinner that came alive.

Fastidious men
Wearing black tuxedoes
Under their skins
Stop by with flowers
On their way to marry
Other women.

Sleep pouted in the corner of the room,
The jealous first child,
He is going away with a young girl.
His ransom is the next five years.

Leaking milk has pasted your nipples
On your nylon nightgown. Dried,
It hurts to pull away the cloth.

A memory of great pain is evaporating,
An expectation is condensing,
Two cold drops of dew
Like the eyes of a toad
Are fixed on you.

Patience Merriman
THE VICTIM

The white lamb grazing on the green meadow is in part my dear brother, he doesn’t know his fate and doesn’t see the knife lifted above his neck.

I am unaware of nothing, I even pray Fate will fulfill itself in me, I desire the thing from which you veil your face, it’s fine to have one’s hands in shackles; whipped you don’t cry, dying is less bitter to you too for the God you believe in watches you from the clouds and your blood stamps roses on the ground.

In me you see a youth dear to your childhood dreams: you see Isaac, without God’s saving arm.

Umberto Saba
OLD CITY

Often, to get back home,
I take a dark street in the old city.
A streetlight is reflected yellow
in a puddle, and the street is thronged.

Here among people coming and going
from tavern to home or brothel,
where goods and men are the debris
of a great seaport,
passing, I find again the infinite
in the humble,
Here prostitute and sailor, an old man
cursing, a wrangling hag,
the dragon seated
at the fryer's stand,
the riotous girl crazed
by love, are all creatures of life
and grief;
in them, as in me, the Lord stirs.

Here in the company of the humble
I feel my thought grow
purer where the way is viler.

Umberto Saba
Translated by Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann
Electric is my own body, made up of several different parts. The brain is the center of several vital functions, including the control of breath and diverse sensations. The nervous system is the conductor of these functions, reaching all parts of the body through nerves. The blood carrying oxygen and nutrients is essential for the life of the organism. My blood is made up of red and white blood cells, as well as various proteins and minerals necessary for survival.

Alpha, Beta, and Gamma are the three main types of waves in the electromagnetic spectrum, each having unique properties and applications in science and technology.

Amag,