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CONTENTS

Anne Waldman .................................................. 5
Allen Ginsberg .................................................. 9
Lynn Lonidier .................................................. 12
Paul Mariah ..................................................... 19
Tom Veitch ....................................................... 25
Elaine Kobernick ................................................. 29
Charles Bukowski ............................................... 30
Ken Bluford: book review ...................................... 32
Jerome Rothenberg ............................................. 37
Barbara A. Holland .............................................. 52
Exavier X. L. Wardlaw ......................................... 53
Gerard Malanga .................................................. 55
Maryllis Hughes ................................................ 60
Etheridge Knight ............................................... 61
Cornelia Veenendaal .......................................... 62
Aaron Shurin .................................................... 66
Andrei Codrescu ................................................. 69
R. Daniel Evans ............................................... 72

Mike Webb: cover

Rudy Burkhardt: photograph of Anne Waldman
Gerard Malanga: photographs of Allen Ginsberg,
    Paul Mariah, Tom Veitch, and
    Charles Bukowski
FARM

"We decided to go early so we'll mop tonight. If you're cold there's kindling in the woodshed. See you about 4."

creaky with winter, stiff & cold, face dripping—

a metal face whose sisters went out

Anne Waldman
FOUR CORNERS

DOYEN

Hot stuff confidant chemical tektite
stubborn corpuscles more emergency more
deliberate! now what is that? what’s camisole?
captious cacique barbarous Lady Bantu
highly visible invisible inscrutable (shifts)
being a Genius now sometimes she is & sometimes she isn’t

DRUNK (ECLIPSE)

Dreaming about Utah seen from a plane
finger lakes or muddy or helium glow
lost my cloud wisps
lost my fish spine
spent the day in a fluid volcano
but get chills when I think of you
Baby
—it’s night
SCHIAPARELLI

lunar oddities

“canali” on Mars?
chains of dried up river beds glisten
huge polar caps advance & recede over the Planet
swift dust storms (chains)
thousands of miles (chains)

A woman thinks of this & abandons her citadel
moves captured o’er the wistful sky...

JUPITER

A huge vacuum cleaner unconscionably stops
& you listen.
you’ve got stardust in yr hair!
space dust at yr feet!
The Atmosphere reels you up
on the iine

“gotcha
gotcha”

FAST MOONS

Anne Waldman
BEFORE YOU DROP OFF READ THIS

so you may know that
    my light attracts your light
    people mirror people
    beauty crystal eyes beauty
    umbrage more umbrage
    energy's going fast
    my skin against yours
    clit against yours
    to be ambiguous is not the point
    the brave still die
    cowards too

& you know
you know it's more than miraculous & true

Anne Waldman
HOSPITAL WINDOW

A gauzy dusk, thin haze like cigarette smoke ribboned past the silver plate fins of Chrysler Building tapering delicately needletopped, Empire State's taller antenna filmed milky lit amid blocks black and white apartmenting veil'd sky over Manhattan, offices new built dark colored in blueish heaven—The East 50's & 60's covered with castles & watertowers, seven storied tar-topped house banks over York Avenue, late may-green trees surrounding Rockefellers blue domed medical arbor—Geodesic science at the Waters Edge—Cars running up East River Drive, & parked at N.Y. Hospital's oval door where perfect tulips flower the health of a thousand sick souls trembling inside hospital rooms Triboro bridge steel snakey-spiked rafter tops stands solid, stone-piered over orange mansard penthouse roofs, chemical blood boiling floor under floor in research labs—Cancer & Herpes Vats testing the advance of Virus armies thru rich-blooded megalopo is sidestreets. There's a tinge of orange sunset spotted in the river and a few windows in Queens-Bronx some magnesium vapor brilliances spotted five floors above E 59th St under grey painted bridge trestles Way downtown along the river, as Monet saw Thames 100 years ago, Con Edison's smokestacks 23'd, 14th street, & Brooklyn Bridge skeined dim in modern mists—
Pipes sticking up to god nine smokestacks huge visible—
a little white sharklike helicopter stroboscope blinking
flapping noises descends for some rich invalid under
the Bridge?—“lands on the garbage pier, Department of Sanitation”
U N Building hung under an orange crane, & red lights on
the vertical avenues below the trees turn green at the nod
of a skull with a mild nerve ache. Dim dharmas, I return
to this spectacle after weeks of poisoned lassitude, my thighs
back belly chest & arms covered with poxed welts,
head pains fading in the back of the neck, right eyebrow cheek
and mouth paralyzed—from taking the wrong medicine, sweated
too much in the forehead helpless, covered my rage from
gorge to prostate with grinding jaw and tightened anus
not released by the weeping scream of horror at the robot World
or the robot ruler or the robot selves that unloaded
our billions of tons of metal grief all over the world from
Phnom Penh Saigon Nakon Thanom to Santiago Lisbon Teheran
A fresh warm breeze in the window, and a day’s release
from pain, now cars float downside of the bridge trestle
and uncounted building-walls & windows multiplied a mile
depth into the ash-delicate sky beguile
my empty mind. And a seagull passes alone wings
spread silent over all the roofs

Allen Ginsberg
RITUAL

They made the sacrificial victim
wear wings wings drooping
further and further
the higher he climbed

A great featherweight.
To touch ground meant "all free!"

Lynn Lonidier
AT UXMAL THEY ARE

Rebuilding a pyramid
one block at a time carried up on
the head of a stonesturdy Indian.
while he goes up,
his double comes down,
both heads busy with
when the day is done.
Neither looks down nor up,
stepsaws by heart
60 lb. blocks on their heads
give them bearing of priests
burdened with feathers.
Where impositions pivot,
they move their
millstone skulls
in pillar state
Their necks serve
as altars for the brain Sweet
beehive brain's forced dormancy.
Circumstance balancing on the
ball of foot. Civilizations
opening in their sleep

Lynn Lonidier
TEMPLE OF THE DWARF

Bought a mop from a blindman
for twice as much
as in the store.
He looked so straight
and tapped so tall
I bought
the finest mop
Crumbs glommed to it
in the dark. It meant
good luck like when
I bought my Mayan hat
from the hunchback in Merida
A string went around it
so that any hat
fit every head.
The man who walks
head higher than his eyes
better be blind
or it won’t come true.
What a wish—
affirmation. Privilege
to play with here,
to believe a hunchback
good luck, make
double sanctity
out of the both
crippled and blind

The hunchback,
the one with more than luck,
sells so many hats,
he’s well-to-do.
Would you trade
the blindman’s height,
strands of mop
borne erect at his shoulder
for straw of hunchback’s hat—
the role of Munchkin
in an Aztec movie—
the distinction
of having a pyramid
named after you?

Lynn Lonidier
SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE, 19__

The poetry teacher climbed under the table, leaving students to their own devices, but first, paced up and down the aisle hitting his head with his hand, repeating, “Oh my god, oh my god!” as the ground rocked and rolled. The poetry teacher climbed under the only table. Forgive him, he was a Jew downed in World War II. Nazis turned his tailgunner hair white. The man who loves poetry, hunts birds—and climbing under a table was what to do.

Lynn Lonidier
ADULT EDUCATION

I couldn’t take a class in self-defense for women because I couldn’t bend over and touch my knees. Class was held in a gym where sweat reminded me of standing in the shower with my clothes on, the water running (because a shower was compulsory) but never touching (I didn’t want anyone to see my barely breasts). C for attendance and deceiving P E. teachers with suspect cropped hair. I couldn’t take beginning Spanish because it was held in an ex-high school building with green walls, and the teacher made me know I knew I was slowest. F for not attending. F stands for Fine-with-me. I already have bachelors, masters, and 3rd degrees. When I teach English, the only lack of freedom will be no caciques* in class. “Cacique” does not mean “no army pants for women.” In Spanish, a cacique is a ruler. It’s not that he knows too much. In English in my class, a cacique is a man who dominates conversation and other things. What if a woman dominates the conversation? An A for favoritism.

*Mispronounce it “khakis”

Lynn Lonidier
A GROWING MONUMENT OF TREES

On Taylor Hill
The woods are thick with memories,
Students' ghosts
Arise every spring,
May, the 4th, 1970,
Wherein the shots
Settled in to four
Students, dead. Winged.
There is no marker
To place at the site
Of the shootings

Only the trees grow
And continue to grow
Without National guards

Paul Mariah
Kent, Ohio
WEIGHTLESS

We arise weightless
from sleep  Our dreams

SHAZAM!
has stilled our lives

With mercury heels
we leave for air

Paul Mariah

A PERFECT EXIT

To go away
While coming

Otherwise
known as
The Fucking Idealist

Paul Mariah
CAIN'S LETTER

I could write you a chain letter, a real
Letter / leather chain / a Bellerophonic
Prison letter from Cain, saying—

"He amado a otro, otro hombre. Le pido a Dios
Que me perdone por amarle, per si El no nos
Hubiese creados, nosotros no viviríamos."

How do you turn leatherhide into liquidlove,
The way between lines in censored letters
Where daily the cells writhe themselves out

In River dips, liked choked tongue-tips
"He amado a otro, otro hombre. " Neither fate
Nor reason can do away with chain, with fetter

Visible, invisible the bind is there. The escape
Through dregs to find the Eye? Where is
There a sacred seal besides the inevitable X?

The chain goes on and on, like white-topped shoals
Keeping heritage with land, with lapping tide.
Evidence is in living, not in breaking stone.

Paul Mariah
“SOLITUDE A DEUX”

I am here
you are there
the two

You are studying
Chaucer &
the wife of Bath

You think
because
you are alone

You cannot be
touched
in solitude

The spirit comes
so
soft, demure

You need
only
to lift, move
Your eyes
to know
you have

Been touched.
Witness
this

I transgress
and disappear
behind the well

Of words, sprite,
you there
I here

à deux
in solitude
ado  Ado.

Paul Mariah
PSYCHOSOMATIC MEDICINE

1. Keep your hands off that which has a black tail

2. Take a man, shave him, & drag him over the stone until his body dies.

3. A man dear to you will one day be a skeleton king ruling a boneyard at the bottom of the sea

4. Hamburgers are fried briefly on both sides to seal the blood inside

5. Bees swarm in a red sphere Spider behind red glass

6. When highly charged impulses cannot get into the head, they are channeled off into the musculature & organs

7. And he will give me wings and I will fly with her in the sky, and I will say “I live forever!”

Tom Veitch

25
AT THE MOVIES

Every person in the room was God,
and don’t you forget it

The room swirls & twists
on waves of emotion, embarrassment,
anxiety, wondering, waves of the personal
sweeping us into the ocean
of personality.

And over it all a shifting varnished sky
of words and descriptions.

Collect some vicarious consciousness,
chew it over at home

How does your one point word trip fit?
Do you always have to castigate
secret enemies, shove & chomp them?

Good people come to the movies
pay $3.00 or $2.50 or $2.00
to buy a piece of the latest image
flicker. Looking for the pictures
they need to do the work they need
to do.
(Finding totality)
Each one whirling around his own center,
looking for his own surge,
his own love and completion
Millions of them Billions of
trillions of warriors, heros,
gods, shining personalities,
all as good and holy as yourself,
in ways you never dreamed of!

No one is responsible for them.
Each fills a sacred place or
violates himself.
Room enough in each space to build
& destroy a trillion universes!
Each seat at the movies—
a swarm of planets & stars!
And Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers
never looked better!

Tom Veitch
THE BOY SCOUT OATH

A scout is loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, reverent, & in his cramped guts the knotted face of a baby animal

Tom Veitch

ELIAS

Jezebel was pissed, she wanted to kill Elias. Protected by the angel, Elias hid out on the Mountain of God. He stayed there in a cave until God called him to come out. A great wind tore up the rocks. After the wind an earthquake. After the earthquake a fire. But God wasn’t in any of these. Then a gentle breeze came along & when Elias heard it he stood at the mouth of the cave and covered his face

Tom Veitch
PASTORALE

A leathery eskimo woman
In the morning's hard salt wind
Crouched by the fire
While her man blew the coals
And they ate with silver forks.

Then she lay down on the blanket
And vomited ancient milk
While he examined
Her stone cervix. And the dry foetus
lay like a mummy in the sun

He rolled apish eyes
Red mountains crumbled into the sea
The wind pulled at a scanty fringe of green
The sea washed up a gleaming bit of tin foil
She kneaded it absently between her fingers

Among the piles of white bleached
Half burnt trees and bones
They rolled up together
And licked at each other's tears
Their hair falling into the sand

Elaine Kobernick
thoughts from a stone bench
in Venice

I sit on these benches and look out
at the sea, and the freaks and the
lovers

I need new eyes new mouths new
pillows new cunts new bathroom
floor mats

every old stud with half an eye in
his head loves to charm and ride
a new young calf

when I think of men mowing their
Saturday lawns and playing football,
baseball, basketball with their sons
I feel like vomiting across all the
horizons

the family stinks of Christ
and the American Stock Exchange
the family stinks of safety and
numbness and Thanksgiving turkeys,
the family stinks of packed
automobiles driving through
redwood forests.

I need new eyes new cunts new
ankles new sounds new betrayals.

I don’t want a long funeral
procession behind me when I die
I want to move on without weights
I want the sullen darkness I want
the tomb like these walls now
me here without digression—
solid, cranky, immaculate.
I hold me that’s what there
is.

Charles Bukowski

The selves revealed in *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* are particularly John Ashbery's—his consciousness, his selves. Beheld reflexively as the not-self reveals the self to self:

Thus your only world is an inside one
Ironically fashioned out of external phenomena
Having no rhyme or reason, and yet neither
An existence independent of foreboding and sly grief
Nothing anybody says can make a difference; inversely
You are a victim of their lack of consequence
Buffeted by invisible winds, or yet a flame yourself
Without meaning, yet drawing satisfaction
From the crevices of that wind, living
In that flame’s idealized shape and duration.

This stanza taken from “Fragment” in an earlier volume becomes:

this otherness
That gets included in the most ordinary
Forms of daily activity, changing everything
Slightly and profoundly, and tearing the matter
Of creation, any creation, not just artistic creation
Out of our hands, to install it on some monstrous, near
Peak, too close to ignore, too far
For one to intervene? This otherness, this
“Not-being-us” is all there is to look at
In the mirror, though no one can say
How it came to be this way.

Self-consciousness starts, paradoxically, with consciousness of Emerson’s “Not-Me”—nature, other people. But the knowledge is without “consequence” if the Not-Me is disordered. Order can be process, still its boundaries must be set. It cannot be open-ended. Then there would be no measure of comparison for values. The self would be without bounds—correspondent in insignificance. So that Ashbery’s “external phenomena/Having no rhyme or reason” spin into premonitions of limitation—“foreboding and sly grief”—premonitions that portend both the Not-Me’s transcendent order and the borders of the self’s sphere of action, death’s demarcation of its province. Death’s imminence is this is this Not-Me. This otherness that alters the self’s intentions. As words alter the worlds his selves can know:

So there is whirling out at you from the not deep
Emptiness the word “cock” or some other, brother and sister
words
With not much to be expected from them, though these
Are the ones that waited so long for you and finally left, having
given up hope.
There is a note of desperation in one’s voice, pleading for them,
And meanwhile the intensity thins and sharpens
Its point, that is the thing it was going to ask.
One has been waiting around all evening for it
Before sleep had stopped definitively the eyes and ears
Of all those who came as an audience.
Still, that poetry does sometimes occur
If only in creases in forgotten letters
Packed away in trunks in the attic—things you forgot you had

33
And what would it matter anyway,
That recompense so precisely dosed
As to seem the falling true of a perverse judgment.
You forget how there could be a gasp of a new air
Hidden in that jumble.

Ashbery’s skeptical perception of these words that are his hold on
his worlds, his selves—his sense of absence, the emptiness from which
world, word and self emerge, are complicated by his sense of presence,
the fullness as the void distributes itself, the pattern of the world’s di-
versities, which can satisfy the self since the world, like the word, is
“Too pronounced . . . /To be that meaningless.” This is what the self
learns through “reticence,” passivity, an anticipatory acceptance of the
Not-Me. Consciousness submits to otherness to realize its disposition—
the integrity of consciousness comprehended not by the will, not by
the imagination, but by faith. By hope in the music of these spheres—
“new air/Hidden in that jumble.” By “the charity of the hard
moments,” as he has phrased it elsewhere.

This is a faith altogether more religious than Romantic, but attrac-
tive, for the most part, at its most Romantic—in his descriptions, for
example of day turning into night, winter into spring. His depictions
of suburbia. And when he moves from the Not-Me to his personal
sense of emptiness in middle age—his “Fear of Death”:

What is it now with me
And is it as I have become?
Is there no state free from the boundary lines
Of before and after? The window is open today

And the air pours in with piano notes
In its skirts, as though to say, “Look, John,
I’ve brought these and these”—that is,
A few Beethovens, some Böhmces,

A few choice Poulenc notes . . . Yes,
It is being free again, the air, it has to keep coming back
Because that’s all it’s good for.
I want to stay with it out of fear

That keeps me from walking up certain steps,
Knocking at certain doors, fear of growing old
Alone, and of finding no one at the evening end
Of the path except another myself

Nodding a curt greeting: “Well, you’ve been awhile
But now we’re back together, which is what counts.”
Air in my path, you could shorten this,
But the breeze has dropped, and silence is the last word.
What compounds the complications of Ashbery’s sense of absence and his sense of presence is the familiar American dread of outside influence, the fear that someone else patterns his life—his sense of conspiracy. As his sense of presence displaces his sense of absence, so his sense of conspiracy returns him to a renewed sense of absence. The limitations that let consciousness define itself, confine it. The “boundary lines” create a void as the fullness distributes itself. His passivity becomes his death wish.

Which is fine in *Rivers and Mountains* and *The Double Dream of Spring*—his best volumes to date—in poems like “The Skaters,” “Fragment,” “Soonest Mended,” “Evening in the Country.” Poems in which the intricacy and beauty of his style capture the contradictory inclinations of his consciousness with a weird serenity and intelligence of imagination. But here, as in *Three Poems*, his previous volume, assertions about experience serve in place of the event. Effect is confused with cause. The title poem can be called the corpus delicti.

“Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror” is an extended commentary on Parmigianino’s *trompe l’oeil* masterpiece. Complete with description of the painting, meditation about the soul, body, language (“there are no words for the surface, that is, No words to say what it really is”)—variations on themes sounded elsewhere in the volume. Positioned at the end of the book, “Self-Portrait” is compared implicitly with “The Skaters” and “Fragment,” which occupy the same position as summata in *Rivers and Mountains* and *The Double Dream of Spring* respectively. But those poems, honed to a keen edge on the whetstone of his male menopause, are expressions of a process of observation, thought, memory and emotion.

“Self-Portrait” is an argument aimed at: evaluation of the Parmigianino portrait and establishment of aesthetic principles. It is art criticism, more an article for *Art in America* (where it was published) than a work of art. More like art criticism than like “The Skaters,” “Fragment,” or the poems in this volume that move from description to self-definition—stimulated by an aspect of “external phenomena” to solve private problems or public ones. “Self-Portrait” refers to Parmigianino’s portrait as a critical act. Directs the attention to it. Poems like “Fear of Death,” “Grand Galop,” or “Voyage in the Blue” in this volume embody that attention. They invest it with form.

Ashbery’s systematization of his experience in *Three Poems* deprived his poetry of much of its ease and harmony. But the best poems in this volume revivify that authority and assurance. Impart new life to his consciousness by their glance beyond the ideational and rhetorical world of Wallace Stevens, which he has inhabited since *Some Trees*, his first book, into William Carlos Williams, whose feel for variety and remarkableness of the commonplace world seems closer to Ashbery’s perception of pattern in the world’s diversities. A poem like “Mixed Feelings” eases toward Williams and to Ashbery’s companion New York poet, the late Frank O’Hara. They are finer poets than he, if only because they see the risk of intelligence as he does not. But “Mixed
Feelings” and the other most subtle and precise poems of Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror are no small potatoes:

A pleasant smell of frying sausages
Attacks the sense, along with an old, mostly invisible
Photograph of what seems to be girls lounging around
An old fighter bomber, circa 1942 vintage.
How to explain to these girls, if indeed that’s what they are,
These Ruths, Lindas, Pats and Shellas
About the vast change that’s taken place
In the fabric of our society, altering the texture
Of all things in it? And yet
They somehow look as if they knew, except
That it’s so hard to see them, it’s hard to figure out
Exactly what kind of expressions they’re wearing.
What are your hobbies, girls? Aw nerts,
One of them might say, this guy’s too much for me.
Let’s go on and out, somewhere
Through the canyons of the garment center
To a small café and have a cup of coffee.
I am not offended that these creatures (that’s the word)
Of my imagination seem to hold me in such light esteem,
Pay so little heed to me. It’s part of a complicated
Flirtation routine, anyhow, no doubt. But this talk of
The garment center? Surely that’s California sunlight
Belaboring them and the old crate on which they
Have draped themselves, fading its Donald Duck insignia
To the extreme point of legibility.
Maybe they were lying but more likely their
Tiny intelligences cannot retain much information.
Not even one fact, perhaps. That’s why
They think they’re in New York. I like the way
They look and act and feel. I wonder
How they got that way, but am not going to
Waste any more time thinking about them.
I have already forgotten them
Until some day in the not too distant future
When we possibly meet in the lounge of a modern airport,
They looking as astonishingly young and fresh as when this
picture was made
But full of contradictory ideas, stupid ones as well as
Worthwhile ones, but all flooding the surface of our minds
As we babble about the sky and the weather and the forests of
change.

reviewed by Ken Bluford

36
TOTAL TRANSLATION

an experiment in the presentation
of american indian poetry

In the summer of 1968 I began to work simultaneously with two sources of Indian poetry. Settling down a mile from the Cold Spring settlement of the Allegany (Seneca) Reservation at Steamburg, New York, I was near enough to friends who were traditional songmen to work with them on the translation of sacred & secular song-poems. At the same time David McAllester was sending me recordings, transcriptions, literal translations & his own freer reworkings of a series of seventeen “horse-songs” that had been the property of Frank Mitchell, a Navaho singer from Chinle, Arizona (born 1881, died: 1967). Particularly with the Senecas (where I didn’t know in the first instance what, if anything, I was going to get) my first concern was with the translation process itself. While I’ll limit myself to that right now, I should at least say (things never seem clear unless you say them) that if I hadn’t also come up with matter that I could “internalize,” I would have floundered long before this.

The big question, which I was immediately aware of with both poetries, was if & how to handle those elements in the original works that weren’t translatable literally. As with most Indian poetry, the voice carried many sounds that weren’t, strictly speaking, “words.” These tended to disappear or be attenuated in translation, as if they weren’t really there. But they were there & were at least as important as the words themselves. In both Navaho and Seneca many songs consisted of nothing but those “meaningless” vocables (not free “scat” either but fixed sounds recurring from performance to performance). Most other songs had both meaningful & non-meaningful elements, & such songs (McAllester told me for the Navaho) were often spoken of, qua title, by their meaningless burdens. Similar meaningless sounds, Dell Hymes had pointed out for some Kwakiutl songs, might in fact be keys to the songs’ structures: “something usually disregarded, the refrain or so-called ‘nonsense syllables’. . .in fact of fundamental importance. . . both structural clue & microcosm.”

So there were all these indications that the exploration of “pure sound” wasn’t beside the point of those poetries but at or near their

A slightly longer version of this article, without accompanying song transcriptions, appeared in Stony Brook 3/4, 1969, edited by George Quasha.
heart: all of this coincidental too with concern for the sound-poem among a number of modern poets. Accepting its meaningfulness here, I more easily accepted it there. I also realized (with the Navaho especially) that there were more than simple refrains involved. that we, as translators & poets had been taking a rich oral poetry & translating it to be read primarily for meaning, thus denuding it to say the least.

Here’s an immediate example of what I mean. In the first of Frank Mitchell’s seventeen horse-songs, the opening line comes out as follows in McAlister’s transcription:

\[ dzo-wowode sileye shi, dza-na desileye shiyi. \]
\[ dzanedi sileye shiya’e \]

but the same segment given as spoken reads:

\[ dzjadjí sili shi dzjadjí sili shi dzjadjí sili shi \]

which translates as “over here it-is-there (&) mine” repeated three times. So does the line as sung if all you’re accounting for is the meaning. In other words, translate only for meaning & you get the three-fold repetition of an unchanging single statement, but in the Navaho each time it’s delivered there’s a sharp departure from the spoken form. thus three distinct sound-events, not one-in-triplicate!

I know neither Navaho nor Seneca except for bits of information picked up from grammar books & such (also the usual social fall-out among the Senecas “cat,” “dog,” “thank you,” “you’re welcome,” numbers one to ten, “uncle,” “father,” & my Indian name). But even from this far away, I can (with a little help from my friends) be aware of my options as translator. Let me try, then, to respond to all the sounds I’m made aware of, to let that awareness touch off responses or events in the English. I don’t want to set English words to Indian music, but to respond poem-for-poem in the attempt to work out a “total” translation—not only of the words but of all sounds connected with the poem, including finally the music itself.

Seneca and Navaho are very different worlds, & what’s an exciting procedure for one may be deadening or irrelevant for the other. The English translation should match the character of the Indian original: take that as a goal & don’t worry about how literal you’re otherwise being. Lowenfeis calls poetry “the continuation of journalism by other means,” & maybe that holds too for translation-as-poem. I translate, then, as a way of reporting what I’ve sensed or seen of an other’s situation: true as far as possible to “my” image of the life & thought of the source.

Living with the Senecas helped in that sense. I don’t know how much stress to put on this, but I know that in so far as I developed a strategy for translation from Seneca, I tried to keep to approaches I felt were consistent with their life-style. I can hardly speak of the poetry without using words that would describe the people as well. Not that it’s easy to sum-up any people’s poetry or its frame-of-mind, but since one is always doing it in translation, I’ll attempt it also by way of description.

38
Seneca poetry, when it uses words at all, works in sets of short songs, minimal realizations colliding with each other in marvelous ways, a very light, very pointed play-of-the-mind, nearly always just a step away from the comic (even as their masks are), the words set out in clear relief against the ground of the ("meaningless") refrain. Clowns stomp & grunt through the longhouse, but in subtler ways too the encouragement to "play" is always a presence. Said the leader of the longhouse religion at Allegany, explaining why the seasonal ceremonies ended with a gambling game: the idea of a religion was to reflect the total order of the universe while providing an outlet for all human needs, the need for play not least among them. Although it pretty clearly doesn't work out as well nowadays as that makes it sound—the orgiastic past & the "doings" (happenings) in which men were free to live-out their dreams dimming from generation to generation—still the resonance, the ancestral permissiveness, keeps being felt in many ways. Sacred occasions may be serious & necessary, but it doesn't take much for the silence to be broken by laughter: thus says Richard Johnny John, if you call for a medicine Ceremony of the mystic animals & it turns out that no one's sick & in need of curing, the head-one tells the others: "I leave it up to you folks & if you want to have a good time, have a good time!" He knows they will anyway.

I take all of that as cue: to let my moves be directed by a sense of the songs & of the attitudes surrounding them. Another thing I try not to overlook is that the singers & I, while separated in Seneca, are joined in English. That they have to translate for me is a problem at first, but the problem suggests its own solution. Since they are bilingual, sometimes beautifully so, why not work from this: instead of trying to get around it? Their English, fluent while identifiabley Senecan, is as much a commentary on where they are as mine is on where I am. Given the "minimal" nature of much of the poetry (one of its strongest features, in fact) there's no need for a dense response in English. Instead I can leave myself free to structure the final poem by using their English as a base: a particular enough form of the language to itself be an extra means for the extension of reportage through poetry & translation.

I end up collaborating & happy to do so, since translation (maybe poetry as well) has always involved that kind of thing for me. The collaboration can take a number of forms. At one extreme I have only to make it possible for the other man to take over in this case, to set up or simply encourage a situation in which a man who's never thought of himself as a "poet" can begin to structure his utterances with a care for phrasing & spacing that drives them toward poetry. Example, Dick Johnny John & I had taped his Seneca version of the thanksgiving prayer that opens all longhouse gatherings & were translating it phrase by phrase. He had decided to write it down himself, to give the translation to his sons, who from oldest to youngest were progressively losing the Seneca language. I could follow his script from where I sat, & the method of punctuation he was using seemed special to me, since in letters & such he punctuates more or less conventionally. Anyway, I
got his punctuation down along with his wording. In setting up the result, I let the periods in his prose version mark the ends of lines, made some vocabulary choices that we’d left hanging, & tried for the rest to keep clear of what was after all his poem. Later I titled it Thank You: A poem in 17 Parts, & wrote a note on it for El Coro, where it was printed in English & Spanish. This is the first of the seventeen sections:

Now so many people that are in this place.
In our meeting place.
It starts when two people see each other.
They greet each other.
Now we greet each other.
Now he thought.
I will make the earth where some people can walk around.
I have created them, now this has happened.
We are walking on it.
Now this time of the day.
We give thanks to the Earth.
This is the way it should be in our minds.

Even when being more active myself, I would often defer to others in the choice of words. Take, for example, a set of seven Woman’s Dance Songs with words composed by Avery Jimerson & translated with help from his wife, Fidelia. Here the procedure was for Avery to record the song, for Fidelia to paraphrase it in English, then for the three of us to work out a transcription & word-by-word translation by a process of question & answer. Only afterwards would I actively come into it, to try to work out a poem in English with enough swing to it to return more or less to the area of song. Example. The paraphrase of the 6th Song reads:

Very nice, nice, when our mothers do the ladies’ dance. Graceful, nice, very nice, when our mothers do the ladies’ dance . . .

while the word-by-word, including the “meaningless” refrain, reads:

hey heya yo oh ho
nice nice nice-it-is
when-they-dance-the-ladies-dance
our-mothers
gahnoweyah heyah
graceful it-is
nice nice nice-it-is
when-they-dance-the-ladies-dance
our-mothers
gahnoweyah heyah (& repeat).

In doing these songs, I decided in fact to translate for meaning, since
the meaningless vocables used by Jimerson were only the standard markers that turn up in all the woman’s songs: hey heyah ya to mark the opening, gahnoweyah heyah to mark the internal transitions. (In my translation, I sometimes used a simple “hey,” “oh” or “yeah” as a rough equivalent, but let the movement of the English determine its position.) I also decided not to fit English words to Jimerson’s melody, regarding that as a kind of oil-&-water treatment, but to suggest (as with most poetry) a music through the normally pitched speaking voice. For the rest I was following Fidelia Jimerson’s lead:

hey it’s nice it’s nice it’s nice
to see them yeah to see
our mothers do the ladies’ dances
oh it’s graceful & it’s
nice it’s nice it’s very nice
to see them hey to see
our mothers do the ladies’ dances.

With other kinds of song-poems I would also, as often as not, stick close to the translation-as-given, departing from that to better get the point of the whole across in English, to normalize the word order where phrases in the literal translation appeared in their original Seneca sequence, or to get into the play-of-the-thing on my own. The most important group of songs I was working on was a sacred cycle called i'dos (ee-dos) in Seneca—in English either Shaking the Pumpkin, or more ornately, The Society of the Mystic Animals. Like most Seneca songs with words (most Seneca songs are in fact without words), the typical pumpkin song contains a single statement, or a single statement alternating with a row of vocables, which is repeated anywhere from three to six or seven times. Some songs are nearly identical with some others (same melody & vocables, slight change in words) but aren’t necessarily sung in sequence. In a major portion of the ceremony, in fact, a fixed order for the songs is completely abandoned, & each person present takes a turn at singing a ceremonial (medicines) song of his own choice. There’s room here too for messing around.

Dick Johnny John was my collaborator on the Pumpkin songs, & the basic wording is therefore his. My intention was to account for all vocal sounds in the original but—as a more “interesting” way of handling the minimal structures & allowing a very clear, very pointed emergence of perceptions—to translate the poems onto the page, as with “concrete” or other types of minimal poetry. Where several songs showed a concurrence of structure, I allowed myself the option of treating them individually or combining them into one.

Take the opening songs of the ceremony. These are fixed pieces sung by the ceremonial leader (hajawas) before he throws the meeting open to the individual singers. The melody & structure of the first nine are identical: very slow, a single line of words ending with a string of sounds, etc., the pattern identical until the last go-round, when the
song ends with a grunting expulsion of breath into a weary “ugh” sound. I had to get all of that across: the bareness, the regularity, the deliberateness of the song, along with the basic meaning, repeated vocables, emphatic terminal sound, & (still following Johnny John’s reminder to play around with it “if everything’s alright”) a little something of my own. The song whose repeated line is

The animals are coming by heh eh heh (or heh eh-eh-eh heh)

can then become

\[
\begin{align*}
T & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
the & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
The \ animals \ are \ coming \ by & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad U \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
nimals & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
& \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
& \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H
\end{align*}
\]

& the next one:

\[
\begin{align*}
T & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
the & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
The \ doings \ were \ beginning & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad U \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
\quad & \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
& \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H \\
& \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad E \quad H \quad H \quad H \quad E \quad H
\end{align*}
\]

& so forth: each poem set, if possible, on its own page, as further analogue to the slowness, the deliberate pacing of the original.

The use of vertical titles is the only move I make without immediate reference to the Seneca version: the rest I’d feel to be programmed by elements in the original prominent enough for me to respond to in the movement from oral to pagnal structure. Where the song comes without vocables, I don’t supply them but concentrate on presentation of the words.

Behind it all there’s a hidden motive too: not simply to make clear the world of the original, but to do so at some remove from the song itself: to reflect the song without the “danger” of presenting any part of it (the melody, say) exactly as given: thus to have it while not having it, in deference to the sense of secrecy & localization that’s so important to those for whom the songs are sacred & alive. So the changes resulting from translation are, in this instance, not only inevitable but desired, or, as another Seneca said to me: “We wouldn’t want the songs to get so far away from us; no, the songs would be too lonely.”

42
SHEET MUSIC

SLOWLY & GENTLY

1. The a-ni-mals are coming

... a a a a ... the a-ni-mals are coming ... a a a a a a ... the a-ni-mals are coming ...

... a a a a ... the a-ni-mals are coming ... a a a a a a ... the a-ni-mals are coming ...

(MAINLY BREATH)

*IN EACH VERSE THE VOWEL IS TAKEN FROM THE SUBJECT NOUN OR PRONOUN.

2. The doings are beginning
3. The doings were begun
4. A she-loon too soon
5. A he loon soon too
6. She drifts on the water
7. He drifts on her water
8. Caw Caw the crow comes at us
9. Caw Caw the crow who's there

TRANSCRIBED BY CHARLIE HARMON
The XIIIth Horse Song of Frank Mitchell

Key:

FARELY

1 Some're love-ly N nawu mnnn but some're
2 Some're love-ly N howz nawu mnnn but some're
3 Some're love-ly N hawz nawu mnnn but some're

and are at my hawz nawu winN wen bahees-
and are at my hawz nawu

...winning nahht baheen-wing but beek yessum
...winning

neat-gwing NNNGOOW be-cause I was go-
ing from the

...gahn I was the boy ing-side the dawn but
house the w- w- wide-shel how-an-ome but

some're at my house how winN wen bahees-gwing and by
some're at my how-ineow N wen bahees-gwing and by

...and go on, this melody goes until the last three lines which are like the first three.
Learn the melody and always sing from the text.

Transcribed by Charlie Morrow

44
Some’re lovely N navu nnnn but some’re & are at my hawuz navu wnn N wnn baheegwing
Some’re lovely N hawu nnnn but some’re & are at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
Some’re lovely N navu nnnn but some are & are at my howzes navu nahht bahyeenwing but bahyeesum nahtgwing

NNNOOOOW because I was (N gahn) I was the boy in inside the dawn but some’re at my house now wnn N wnn baheegwing
& by going from the house the wwwideshell howanome but some’re at my howinow N wnnn baheegwing
& by going from the house the darkned hoganome but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
& by going from the swollen hoganouse my breath has blown but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
& by going from the house the hioly hoganome but some’re at my house N wnn N wnn baheegwingnnng
& from the plays of jewels we walk (naht gahn) (p)pon but some’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
with prayersticks that are white (nuhgohn) but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
with my feathers that are white (nnmh gahn) but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
with my spirit horses that are white (nuhgohn) but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
with my spirit horses that are white & dawn (nuhgohn) but some’re at my house N wnnn baheegwing
with those spirit horses that are whiteshell navuNgnnnn but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
with those howanorses that are whiteshell navu but some’re at my howinouse wnnn baheegwingnnng
wiiiiingth jewels of every kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn but
some’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
with cloth of every kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn but some
’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
with sheep of every kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn but some
’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
with horses of evree(ee) kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn
but some’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
with cattle of every kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn but some
’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
with men of every kind d(go)nN draw them on nahtnnn but some’re
at my house N wnn baheegwing
in my house of precious jewels in my back(acka)room (N gahn)
where nnnn but some’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
in this house of precious jewels we walk (p)pon (N gahn) where
nnnn but some’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
& everything that’s g(h)one before mmmmore we walk (p)pon but
some’re at my howinow N wnn baheegwing
& everything that’s more ( .. ) won’t be (bel) be poor but some
’re at my house N wnn baheegwing
& everything that’s now & living to be old & blest rhau but
some’re at my howinow N wnnn baheegwing
because I am the boy who blesses/blisses to be old but some
’re at my house N wnn baheegwing

Zzmmm’m’re lovely N nawn nnnn but some’re & are at my howinouse
N wnn baheegwing
Zzmmm’m’re lovely nawn N nnnn but some’re & are at my house N
wnn baheegwing
Zzmmm’m’re lovely N nawn nnnn but some are & are at my howzes
nahht bahyenahtnwing but nawu nohwun baheegwing
My decision with the Navaho horse-songs was to work with the sound as sound: a reflection in itself of the difference between Navaho & Seneca song structure. For Navaho is much fuller, much denser, twists words into new shapes or fills up the spaces between words by insertion of a wide range of “meaningless” vocables, making it misleading to translate primarily for meaning or, finally, to think of total translation in any terms but those of sound. Look, for example, at the number of free vocables in the following excerpt from McAllester’s relatively literal translation of the 16th Horse-Song:

(nana na) Sun- (Yeye ye) Standing-within (neye ye)  Boy

(Heye ye) truly his horses
(‘Eye ye) abalone horses
(‘Eye ye) made of sunrays
(neye ye) their bridles

(Gowo wo) coming on my right side
(Jeye yeeye) coming into my hand (yeye neywwo
‘ei).

Now this, which even so doesn’t show the additional word distortions that turn up in the singing, might be brought closer to English word order & translated for meaning alone as something like

Boy who stands inside the Sun with your horses that are abalone horses bridles made of sunrays rising on my right side coming to my hand etc.

But what a difference from the fantastic way the sounds cut through the words & between them from the first line of the original on.

It was the possibility of working with all that sound, finding my own way into it in English, that attracted me now—that & a quality in Mitchell’s voice I found irresistible. It was, I think, that the music was so clearly within range of the language: it was song & it was poetry, & it seemed possible at least that the song issued from the poetry, was an extension of it or rose inevitably from the juncture of words & other vocal sounds. So many of us had already become interested in this kind of thing as poets, that it seemed natural to me to be in a situation where the poetry would be leading me towards a (new) music it was generating.

I began with the 10th Horse-Song, which had been the first one Mitchell sang when McAllester was recording him. At that point I didn’t know if I’d do much more than quote or allude to the vocables: possibly pull them or something like them into the English. I was
writing at first, working on the words by sketching-in phrases that seemed natural to my own sense of the language. In the 10th Song there’s a division of speakers: the main voice is that of Enemy Slayer or Dawn Boy, who first brought horses to The People, but the chorus is sung by his father, the Sun, telling him to take spirit horses & other precious animals & goods to the house of his mother, Changing Woman. The literal translation of the refrain—{to} the woman, my son—seemed a step away from how we’d say it, though normal enough in Navaho. It was with the sense that, whatever distortions in sound the Navaho showed, the syntax was natural, that I changed McAlister’s suggested reading to go to her my son, & his opening line

Boy-brought-up-with-the-Dawn
It is I, I who am that one

(lit. being that one, with a suggestion of causation), to

Because I was the boy raised in the dawn.

At the same time I was, I thought, getting it down to more or less the economy of phrasing of the original.

I went through the first seven or eight lines like that but still hadn’t gotten to the vocables. McAlister’s more “factual” approach—reproducing the vocables exactly—seemed wrong to me on one major count. In the Navaho the vocables give a very clear sense of continuity from the verbal material, i.e., the vowels in particular show a rhyming or assonantal relationship between the “meaningless” & meaningful segments:

‘Esdra shiyé’ e hye-la ‘Esdra shiyé’
The woman, my son (voc.) The woman, my son

whereas the English words for this & many other situations in the poem are, by contrast to the Navaho, more rounded & further back in the mouth. Putting the English words (“son” here but “dawn,” “home,” “upon,” “blown,” etc. further on) against the Navaho vocables denies the musical coherence of the original & destroys the actual flow.

I decided to translate the vocables, & from that point was already playing with the possibility of translating other elements in the songs not usually handled by translation. It also seemed important to get as far away as I could get from writing. So I began to speak, then sing my own words over Mitchell’s tape, replacing his vocables with sounds relevant to me, then putting my version on a fresh tape, having now to work it in its own terms. It wasn’t an easy thing either for me to break the silence or go beyond the narrow pitch levels of my speaking voice, & I was still finding it more natural in that early version to replace the
vocables with small English words (it's hard for a word-poet to lose words completely), hoping some of their semantic force would lessen with reiteration:

Go to her my son & one & go to her my son &
one & one & none & gone
Go to her my son & one & go to her my son &
one & one & none & gone

Because I was the boy raised in the dawn & one
& go to her my son & one & one & none & gone
& leaving from the house the bluestone home &
one & go to her my son & one & one & one &none &
gone
& leaving from the house the shining home &
one & go to her my son & one & one & none &
gone
& from the swollen house my breath has blown
& one & go to her my son & one & one & none &
gone

& so on. In the transference too—likely enough because my ear is so
damn slow—I found I was considerably altering Mitchell's melody; but
really that was part of the translation process also: a change responsive
to the translated sounds & words I was developing.

In singing the 10th Song I was able to bring the small words (vocal
substitutions) even further into the area of pure vocal sound (the differ-
ence, if it's clear from the spelling, between one, none & gone and wnn,
nnn & gahn): soundings that would carry into the other songs at an
even greater remove from the discarded meanings. What I was doing
in one sense was contributing & then obliterating my own level of
meaning, while in another I was as much as recapitulating the history of
the vocables themselves, at least according to one of the standard ex-
planations that sees them as remnants of archaic words that have been
emptied of meaning: a process I could still sense elsewhere in the Horse-
Songs—for example, where the sound howe turns up as both a
"meaningless" vocable & a distorted form of the word hoghan = house.
But even if I was doing something like that in an accelerated way, that
wasn't the real point of it for me. Rather what I was getting at was the
establishment of a series of sounds that were aisonant with the range of
my own vocabulary in the translation, & to which I could refer when-
ever the Navaho sounds for which they were substitutes turned up in
Mitchell's songs.

In spite of carryovers, these basic soundings were different for each
song (more specifically, for each pair of songs), & I found, as I moved
from one song to another, that I had to establish my sound equi-
valencies before going into the actual translation. For this I made use
of the traditional way the Navaho songs begin: with a short string of
vocables that will be picked up (in whole or n part) as the recurring
burden of the song. I found I could set most of my basic vocables or vocable-substitutes into the opening, using it as a key to which I could refer when necessary to determine sound substitutions, not only for the the vocables but for word distortions in the meaningful segments of the poems. There was a cumulative effect here too. The English vocabulary of the 10th Song—strong on back vowels, semivowels, glides & nasals— influenced the choice of vocables; the vocables influenced further vocabulary choices & vocables in the other songs. (Note: The vocabulary of many of the songs is very close to begin with, the most significant differences in “pairs” of songs coming from the alternation of blue & white color symbolism.) Finally, the choice of sounds influenced the style of my singing by setting up a great deal of resonance. I found I could control to serve as a kind of drone behind my voice. In ways like this the translation was assuming a life of its own.

With the word distortions too, it seemed to me that the most I should do was approximate the degree of distortion in the original. McAlister had provided two Navaho texts—the words as sung & as they would be if spoken—and I aimed at roughly the amount of variation I could discern between the two. I further assumed that every perceivable change was significant, & there were indications in fact of a surprising degree of precision in Mitchell’s delivery, where even what seem to be false steps or accidents may really be gestures to intensify the special or sacred powers of the song at the points in question. Songs 10 & 11, for example, are structurally paired, & in both songs Mitchell seems to be fumbling at the beginning of the 21st line after the opening choruses. Maybe it was accidental & maybe not, but I figure I might as well go wrong by overdoing the distortion, here & wherever else I had the choice.

So I followed where Mitchell led me, responding to all moves of his I was aware of & letting them program or initiate the moves I made in translation. All of this within obvious limits: those imposed by the field of sound I was developing in English. Take the beginning of the 10th Song, for example—right after the chorus. The distortion of the word in the second position is very strong (yil’naaya hye’’ ne yane) & there are a couple of minor changes in the third & fifth position words, all before you get to the fixed vocables of the refrain. It’s obvious too that the hye’ ne yane substitute is drawing on sounds from those refrain vocables (nane yeaye’e), & that the other, minor changes (postpositional ye & medial yi) can also be linked to the refrain sounds. I translated accordingly, for heavy distortion up front, lighter further along, linked to the key sounds of the refrain:

Because I was the boy raised the dawn...

& the refrain itself.

... NwnnN go to her my son N wnn N wnn
N nnnn N gahn.
Throughout the songs I've now been into, I've worked pretty much that way—the relative densities determined by the original, the final form by the necessities of the poem as it took shape for me. Obviously too, there were larger patterns to keep in mind, when a particular variation occurred in a series of positions, etc. To say any more about that—though the approach changed in the later songs I worked on, towards a more systematic handling—would be to put greater emphasis on method than any poem can bear. More important for me was actually being in the stimulus & response situation, certainly the most physical translation I've ever been involved in. I hope that that much comes through for anyone who hears these sung.

Translation is carry-over. It is a means of delivery & of bringing to life. It begins with a forced change of language, but a change too that opens up the possibility of greater understanding. Everything in these song-poems is finally translatable: words, sounds, voice, melody, gesture, event, etc., in the reconstitution of a unity that would be shattered by approaching each element in isolation. A full & total experience begins it, which only a total translation can fully bring across.

By saying which, I'm not trying to coerce anyone (least of all myself) with the idea of a single relevant approach to translation. I'll continue, I believe, to translate in part or in any other way I feel moved to; nor would I deny the value of handling words or music or events as separate phenomena. It's possible too that a prose description of the song-poems, etc., might tell pretty much what was happening in & around them, but no amount of description can provide the immediate perception translation can. One way or other translation makes a poem in this place that's analogous in whole or in part to a poem in that place. The more the translator can perceive of the original—not only the language but, more basically perhaps, the living situation from which it comes & very much so, the living voice of the singer—the more of it he should be able to deliver. In the same process he will be presenting something—i.e., making something present, or making something as a present—for his own time and place.

Jerome Rothenberg
WITH THE AID OF THE MOORS

After Haroldo de Campos

Hoardes of Saracens
swarming in circles like fragments
of leaves on Autumn air
between one’s head and the ceiling

White plumes
spouting upward
like forced jets of water
from the brows of turbans.

Burnooses whipping at ankles
Scimitars
breaking up light as space
gasps wounded

Calligraphy
carved by Caliphs from the night
curls down
in inky ringlets
on paper.

at the whim of one’s ancestors,
fallen in poems

astounding the sunrise.

Barbara A. Holland
THE RELUCTANT DEVORCEE

It was an unceremonious spring, without fanfare, without that new and hoped for love, it was annoying. A nuance of the vague, though vast differences between the winter of need and the summers of fulfillment, it came, it went, like a mongrel passing unnoticed through a crowd. And there he was, displeased with himself, sitting on the steps, perspiring like a slave in pain, his clothes uncomfortably sticking to his back, closing a book.

It was pleasant to bathe, softly alone, warmly to oneself, beneath the halo of a 40 watt bulb—squeezing the water from a comfortably worn brown wash cloth, feeling (with a sigh) the water rolling the sweat away, from shoulder and from arm.

Alone, smiling. Listening to the harmonies of a dusting apartment, the subdued fanaticisms of the water splashing against the sides of the tub, the running humming of the toilet in the background with its cracked water closet, keeping pace like a Latin rhythm section and, off in the dark bedroom Dick Cavett's polite babbling on, to an audience of millions of people, far in other rooms—and a mellow brown spider off, in somewheres sacred crotch, timidly spins a barren web, peripherally illumined in the down of conversational light, flushed, grayly as a television set, somewhere.

Exavier X. Lowtricia Wardlaw
GERARD MALANGA

"Εσπερη μύρ μου, Μούσαι 'Ολύμπια δόματ’ εχοντα—
υμείς γὰρ θεαὶ ἐστε, πάρεστε τε, ἵστε τε πάντα,

Homer, The Iliad, 11 485

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MUSE TO THE ARTIST

What I know
and what
I do not know
the same

The psychic energy
of crow,
owl, tree, cat, flows
into me, into
the heart, asking
to be loved.

Many lives
lived as one,

respond to other lives

Look at them,
they enter you.

You are alone
You are various

They become you
in a sense,
completing sense.

How much of this
you know
or want to know
is not made clear,
or if it is
you are not clear
of what
you know.

This knowledge
of a kind
that is not
easily recognizable,
as the need goes
further than what it is
I have to say
to you.

What will I know
or will not know
that causes me
to be aware
of you?

The knowledge of
a restlessness
in your face,
or the silence after
death
becomes
actual,
as if
nothing
had happened—

I don’t know you
nor think to
know you

The process
rightly called
creative
goes on in you
You walk out into
a field of voices.

A sense of place occurs
You turn away
wincing
snow crushed
against the
shoe’s instep
and then
the damp mud
You make footprints
as clues
to come back to,
if a way exists.
The poem defines you,
touches you
and you are changed
which is to say
all these things affect me in some way.

You meet someone
and he becomes
part of your history
or you of his
One-hour Twenty-minutes.
The whole life
like some poet’s dream
A person, a book

Tomorrow some thing
or someone else occurs,
so that there's no
going back, no going back to what I know,
but to go
forward, out into
the day
and as I am
to be in it,
in some way
to know I am
alive in it.

Listen to the trees we live among,
the bark that falls from them,
the squirrel who does not come
around again because there is
this sense of violence in the air

passages of brief, dark
flashing wings
at autumn's end

the ruffle of them,
poised on the edge of fear.

Sing what you hear.

Let it be clear
and simple,

but the wish itself
is not simple
nor would it be

What are we—
a man silent
and alone with himself
at a desk in the lamplight
with his hidden life,
alone knowing this

someone in the adjoining room
pulling in her stomach
the way the moonlight
falls on a tight-drawn rib-cage
by the window.

It is mythology,
sensuality

It is complexity

a history unfolds
and folds

The many sums of it.

Now you occur
in the mind,
 occur there,
evoked
in such a way
you become
the image of
looking inward

This is the room
inside the window
that is the window
where the sun
chooses to begin,

where the sun is silent,
and does not move

Last month
Last weekend.
Yesterday.

What window? What room?

Gerard Malanga
for Suzie
27:xii:75/12:1:76
THIS BED

"You can die from seasickness or falling off a horse"
my daughter says
in the morning sunlight
"What is being dead like?"
I play a game
hold her snubby nose shut
push her eyelids down
move her lips together
and roll her wriggling
laughing, into the bedclothes

dead teases us like
black night, a book of old biographies,
my father's ashen face.

"I've only a few years left" he said

Last week when he called in my sleep
I entered his dream
covered his bony shoulders with white linen
and lay down beside him
dead propagation, his mummified doll!
Beside us, empty space
I tell you, anyone dying
could fill this space
my mother
my bank managers lips sealed like banknotes
my lawyers skull blocked with a petition
my analysts ears shut with her own dread.
They will receive a bill from Vital Statistics
that their children will answer.
Like a grey animal crawling backwards
on all fours, death comes
hovering over my eiderdown
an invisible shadow.

Maryllis Hughes

60
“Nixon really did us a favor, in a way. ‘Cause nobody can sit back now and claim ignorance about the evil.—Why—man, if him and his buddies had gotten away with it, they would’ve made Hitler and his gang look like Sunday School teachers.”

—Overheard in a Barbershop

Comes now the red madness,
And words like “law’n order” and “peace
With honor”
Roll and rattle thru the electric air
And fall like sheet
On the neat lawns and white picket fences.

Inside our rooms we sweep
The last flakes of dirt under our golden doors,
Flick off the lights, creep into our feather beds
To sleep. And our fear, like a lover,
Lies with us Wide eyes
In the darkness

Comes now the mad men,
Who mount the stump and the thrust
Of their bodies
Blot out the sun,
Their shadows fall across our feet
And stake the sign
Of the Swastika.

Comes again the mad men,
But we must not, not this time,
Turn to our homes again,
Not when our lawns are screaming with blooms.
We must not, not this time, let pain
And fear conspire
To lure us to our rooms
To sit
With our feet to the fire.

Etheridge Knight

61
LIVE AND LET LIVE

Straw hat
long wrinkled mudstained gown
(all the colors of the soul)
grimset jaw

Shaved head
and his brother

In the Garden
redbeard settled with a radio

At the trash on Brimmer
aquiline nose in air
she speaks a madstream of gutterals,
he guards the rear.

Matted hair
a voice out of a doorway

In plastic bags
in plastic bags
(all the colors of the soul)
is all they ever shall possess
in this world

Cornelia Veenendaal
THANKSGIVING

It was cold last night
I slept knotted up. The cats
had to sleep at tangents
since I gave them no hollows.

This morning sun fills the pantry,
falls on the open cookbook.
A boy with a backpack
slowly passes the window

Not so long ago
I was outward bound,
riding a bus to Holyoke
reading Daisy Miller, or Hamlet
and looking through the darkening glass
for a face I loved.

Yesterday an old man told us
he once owned a property in Taos,
an adobe on the Plaza.
But since he did not live there,
thieves broke in and he had to give it up
He kept only a painting
of a dancing, deer-headed man.

What shall I say when we sit down together?

Thank you for the backpack journeys,
for the renewing of our lives in Taos,
now for journeys out of the sun—
by no timetables—
where familiar inhabitants,
when looked at searchingly,
may have blank faces
or savage.

Cornelia Veenendaal

63
REGISTERING TO VOTE: LAST DAY

At the first landing looking back
I see, among raincoats in a long line
a man and a woman
standing on the gangway of a ship,
a blandly quizzical face under a brim
and profile of a dark-haired woman
saying something ironic.

At the second landing
does it matter?
We are all here registering to vote,
climbing the back stairs
of the police station,
even the mist has crowded in.

At the third floor
I declare myself
resident and citizen, employed
(the blue-eyed Irish woman
who trust[s] me without proof
of residence in this town,
writes faithfully in a book,
now a shade of doubt
crossing her face),
divorced.

Their image is on the dark
going home. I think they are
my husband's father and his new wife
leaving Djakarta
after the war.

Cornelia Veenendaal
UNDER THE JUNIPER

Stretched out
along an infinitely straight line
I am found to waver.

Those hats,
claycoated magazines
weren't what I needed,

I have spent all on error.
My eyes are open on a fine-ground lens
close up to terror.

Hear me! That space I wanted
makes me dark, tonight my shoulders
are winged with fever.

Too late to make my way
among periwinkles
over rock splashed with lichen.

I may never sleep again
after this waking,
may never speak

but through this crack.
I firmly clasp your hand.
Be well and happy.

Cornelia Veenendaal
FABULOUSLY ALONE

You come to me with all your treasures mouth open.

         Cave of obsidian
bejeweled.    I will not enter.

They offer each other hearts in their hands, dialogue of blood. Whew! So much addiction in their swollen lips.

Not fear, not cowardice, not bitter herb. The brew I drink laced with steps like a ladder. Honeyed milk, mango, lobster eyes. Secrets of the trade bubble-up. Past acts, done and undone, weave into themselves, mirror.

         There, illuminated

next move
for my single foot.

Aaron Shurin
MIRROR FALLS FROM THE SKY

That cold that started
in his nose, rose to
his psychological mem-
branes
    thighs got runny.
He ran
    from every approaching
shadow, crossroads
of constant departure.

A mandala
where all the seekers after him
hold each other's tails
by the teeth, swing by him flashing
open hands like scimitars.

Who brought these people
suddenly to life? He was
painting the sky and it
    shifted color.
He sketched-in mountains
and the floor cracked.
    Down into the poem he dropped
and it spat in his
face like something
he was afraid of.

Aaron Shurin
ON THE WAY OUT

You rap on my car window, wave
a cheerful hello. Aren’t you a little
late?
I burned
everything you touched months
ago, letter by letter dropped
sizzling into the toilet-bowl.
Baby, you were crisply
done away with.

Now you wanna
talk my lips are sealed
with ashes, nothin to say.
Used to be
I could get hard just grazing your skin

Aaron Shurin
THE DIFFERENCES

When it comes to sentiment, as it will, you can’t compete
with the bourgeoisie, or with the radio.

* It says, on my diploma  sheer irresponsibility with a
touch of cruelty  the man is licensed to practice.

I’m really shy
and deep
inside
I don’t give anyone the eye
enter the
nude
bride
descending
the spiral
staircase
On their knees, people say funny things. I always tell them. You will speak normally, when you recover!

One more inch and you’re out of a job!

If a fleeting impression is the whole performance, the fact of something nameless enters the body of the fierce yolk, endlessly urging the egg to scramble itself.

You are intelligent, my heart goes out to you.

The trees may be scary but hidden among them is your house

I am St. John the Baptist, my work heralds the birth of Jesus.

Future delights are an attack on their sources, only miracles are relevant

You got somethin horrible
And God said that you must die
So you return to poetry
And begin to cry-eee

There is economy in the unconscious. The horses of Apocalypse are on a ration of hay. Heaven is not running out of miracles but there are fewer Distributors. I am offering you a job.

The degenerate vampire

haunts the out-skirts of the hemophilia camp

The man is a woman, the woman is a man, their child is silent between them like the lights of a strange city underlining the vast differences
She lived in a bottle of Black & White, he lived in her closet. Their children, the blackbirds, swooped down on them in the winter, and flew away in V flocks, their feathers staying behind as pillows, mementoes.

The employment of difference is not a big business, the universe looks with indifference at evolution.

He refused to let them cover his eyes and as the volley began he shouted. Vive la difference!

The devil's sense of humor spawned photorealism while impressionism tended to favor god.

The objective observer lay his rifle on the wrong side of generalisation, and sleep took him apart like a watch.

Daytime, an arbitrary variety of.

Degeneracy is the fruit of sympathy. Us healthy animals—we like to kick ass.

Andrei Codrescu
AUSCHWITZ

Birches
thrust up like prisoners’ hands
line the main gate.

"Arbeit Macht Frei"
Work Will Make You Free

the trees hide
endless barracks
on a peaceful summer day,
row upon row
of thorn and nail
twisted into barbed wire
quietly slash
the cloudless blue sky.

cut human hair lies
buried in glass cases.
a can spills
cyclone-B crystals
dull colored, jewel sized
each bead ready to kill.

Empty wooden watchtowers &
chimneys bayonets
roll call to the
Book of Death
jews. socialists. homosexuals.
four million murdered here.

Outside
how strange to walk
free.
how it smothers,
this air
that like a giant hand
once stifled
death cries all day long.

R. Daniel Evans