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A MOTHER SPEAKS
OF HER POET SON

A rare fool, aging,
he'll find how easy it is
to be smart and outsmarted
all the same,
it's not all words,
the world needs oil
for its hinges,
he doesn't know where Kuwait is,
who would plumb our toilets
filled with fancy ideas?
He drives a vacuum
with bloodshot eye
and curses a world that cracks
too slow for thought,
lord, he mines the air
all day and still expects
someone to pay.

R.D. Lakin
WESTERN GOTHIC ROMANTIC CLASSIC

Moonlight slips a white knifeblade
inside the tepee door

the ground is hard & the man
whose lean hipbones hook with mine

is a stranger—mountain climber
he said, first ascent in the Andes,
cited Jefe, he said, Peace Corps, strumming
guitar by the campfire where I stumbled in

after a lonely hitch in the badlands
& the black hills. I’m thirsty.

Who asks where water comes from
after a long drought? I drink all night

from his fountain & he from mine.
He ropes me to his piton & I fall free.

At 3 a.m. I dream him as Orion
climbing the eastern sky with a sword of stars.

At dawn we wake & laugh, we’re caked
with dirt we beat out of the old sleeping bag.

He asks me to stay, to ride & climb
with him, and I say yes.

Through desert sage & rock we walk
back to the ranch house. Dry country.
Rattlesnakes, I think. One thin trickle piped into the horse corral.

Inside after stark sunlight
it’s hard to see—

cougar & bearskin on the bed,
.44 Magnum & ammunition belt

slung on the bedpost.
From a photo he is smiling

leaning on a rifle
wearing a green beret

Jane Augustine
MOUNTAIN DEATH-CAMAS
(hiking the Phantom Terrace trail)

(i) In marshy shade
    masses of ivory bells
    splinters of the moon
    around a gold star-center
    root, stem, leaf, flower
    all fatal

(ii) in sun mirrored
    off a glacial lake
    a young man
    sleeps on grass
    hair moonpale
    unprotected face
    reddening to purple
    I should wake him
    warn against the sun.
    At these cool heights
    we forget
    it burns

(iii) not my problem,
    this man who doesn't know
    the mountains
    he's brought a 10-speed bike
    new, emerald & chrome
    to 12,000 feet
    He must have had to carry
    what was meant
    to carry him.
bright technological sun
unquestioned,
we never look at you
we say we see
by you
even when blinded

(iv) warrior sun—the winner!
cannon to blast
the moon out of the sky
I protect myself
with hat dark glasses
longsleevéd shirt
rely on feet
to carry me past
the camas-laden meadow
& the sleeper
past treeline
where the path disappears
rocks only now
& boots
resisting

(v) I walk into the moon’s country
her fullness rises,
a cooled & softened sun
both eyes of the sky
clear strip
down to essential body
lose the flesh
of thought.
my white bones float
out to meet that naked
source by which
I see both dark & light

wildflower both beautiful
& lethal—
no illusion

therefore
no consolation

(vii) daylight

down again
to the clouded lake

the meadow ambiguously
starry
to hear
he'd killed himself

—the youth with
moonpale hair—

& boy scouts found
beside his shattered

skull a pistol new
& silver

as his 10-speed
racer—

a bad
dream

inexplicable loss
that life

consumed by its own
terror
not mine—
   I have two sons
one dark, one fair
who ask: which boots
are best, which packframe
lifts the load
they also need my words
can only hear
their own
(vii) cortege of motorcycles
bears away
the messy body-remnant
leaves tire-tracks
in the crushed camas
the web of death
hangs everywhere
not mine to weave
or to untangle
in it that pale hair
is twined with mine
choiceless
I choose the moon
as two in one
& deeper shadows form
under the cdgc illuminod

Jane Augustine
from The Woman's Guide
to Mountain Climbing
from APPARITIONS OUT OF THE LIFE
OF FLORENCE STRONG

THE THIMBLE

All day I hunt my new brass thimble
in bureau drawers
jewel-boxes

while maple leaves press their gold
palms against the leaded
windows

cold wind through Jersey woods
where Washington's men
executed one

of their own, a traitor

dry vines rattle on the grape arbor
where my eight-year-old son
sat in his

wheelchair before I had to leave
him in the hospital
too long ago

to think of
    I traveled then,
Paris, Milan, Beirut—	onight
no button on my winter coat
alone in the house
I sleep

at dawn on the bedside table
a fluted silver thimble
such as one

might have worn in 1775:
says to me mend! mend!
but vine leaves

have been embroidered green on linen
gold cannot be stitched
to lawns

the fabric of the past is seamless—
why do you bring a tool
too late?

I had no choice.

Alone in the western mountains
I hang up larkspur
monks-hood

to dry, flowers for winter
the brittle stems
whisper

in the cellar. The thimble
appears on the pink lip
of the washstand
WINTER NIGHT

Blizzard builds a wall
against my storm doors
Fire burns hotly
behind its screen
Snow falls again
the road
to Phantom Ranch impassable

Snowed in two miles away
that catty woman phones
a mountain lion’s down
prowling her pasture
our minister’s wife’s
divorcing him
says he beats her

I hang up. Silence
outside silence.
I never spoke for the
child’s sake
though I could have told
the judge plenty—
diamonds

replaced tears, I bought expensive
Paris silks, a blouse
richly crocheted, white
to start over in
—bride to myself alone
Are the doors locked?
the mountain lion

tracks down the loner or
the winter-weakened
travels fifty miles a night
as fast as gossip—
well, the altar silver’s tarnished
and the lode
has petered out
what then the worth of death
and silence?

This new husband that I can’t
live with nor
live without, who’s gone
again—but hush!
I rise, make tea, play
solitaire;

My sleep is hard

and blank. Pale morning finds
snow over all untouched
but my bedroom closets open:
the white silk blouse
is dangling from its cushioned hanger
ripped to shreds
as if by cat’s claws

Jane Augustine
softness

the reason i have traveled 573 miles
over some of the worst roads in 3 states
is the thought i had 10 hours ago
when i suddenly woke up
& got in the car & drove
which explains why my hair
is uncombed & you’re turning
away from my sour breath
looking down to see my untied shoes
as soon as i got the thought i knew
i had to tell you so excited
that i started off east when
i should have gone south
i thought about just driving up
in reverse instead of bothering
with the next jughandle so that
when i left i’d be pointing in
the right direction but the state troopers
frown on antic drivers & what i feel is
so important that i thought i’d dispense
with the dramatics just this once
what i have to say is so important
that i wrote it down no paper near
my bed i wrote it in indelible ink
on my pillowcase see here’s the pillowcase
the ink blurred but i think you’ll be able
to read it i wrote it down tho i know
it’s simple because i know i’ve had
this notion before but then the
window would rattle or the
faucet would drip or the telephone
would just sit on the floor or i
could feel last month’s newspapers
on the back porch yellow & i would
get distracted & forget so this time
i wrote it down in the dark & it’s good
that i did since i feel it slipping
from my mind as you stand there lovely
in your nightgown sleepyhead leaning
on the doorjamb & there's a spot
above your right breast where i used
to put my head that i just yearn to touch
but we don't have time to think about that
anymore so here it is i hope you can
read my writing i'm sorry you didn't
have to go any further than the title
of this poem when i originally got the
idea it was just ring your bell
shove my message in your hand & leave
no explanations offered & me gone
double time down the stairs driving
like hell back down the turnpike before
you could even ask.

Larry Zirlin
beyond apathy

the bottle is neither half-empty
nor half-filled

the vegematic is jammed on "Dice"
the baby plays in the corner
producing diced beets diced carrots
bibs pencils hats the cat barely
escapes but the donuts i was saving
for a midnight snack
do not

this baby now gleefully dicing up
the box of tampons. it is dicey
whether this kid is mine or not
the lady who lives here looks accusingly
at me all day as she stands
over the rabbit stew & that
is good enough for me

i sit in the cold part of the kitchen
flipping thru the paper amazed
at all the crimes i have not
committed GOES BERSERK IN BANK—
KILLS GUARD, TELLER, 3 DEPOSITORS
they can't pin that one on me

the bottle breaks on the floor
none of us were near it
sirens outside
the hawking & coughing of the old man
dying upstairs
the telephone lines heavy with bad news
the mailbox filled with regrets the night
which fell & never lifted

i don’t know
but i didn’t do it
kid i didn’t do it
lady somebody did it but
i didn’t do it

Larry Zirlin
MOCKINGBIRD

And then there are poets whose whole lives lie,
she said.
What shall we do about them?

In answer he replied
he also lies who sings the mockingbird's song.
But I suppose
there are many of us
who never would have heard the lark
had it not been
for the mockingbird.

Must we live with the lie
in order to live with the song?
she asked.

Not if the lie offends you
more than the song uplifts you,
he answered softly.

And if the lie
so hurts me
that I cannot hear the song?

Let the lie live.
Move on.

Mary McAnally-Knight
A VISIT WITH DON L. LEE

For a moment
he was vulnerable to us.
Gave me an answer
I wordlessly sought,
I felt affirmed with Etheridge in our love.

Then he turned away
into the day,
I recognized his pain.
It was familiar to me
and his need for inflicting it.
That too we shared.

Slow-motion photography
flower petals
folding back upon themselves
no pollen for the bee to steal
no honey for blistered tongues
life's thrust reversed.

He said:
I cannot deal
will not
do not will to deal
with this woman
this part of you
this essential truth
this love.

That warm Chicago day
an alien earth
thrust Etheridge and me
into our alien selves.

Mary McAnally-Knight
MIDNIGHT RAIN

The sky is singing tonight
like Apache voices

The sky is murmuring
like the voices of women

Tonight I am
alone with my soul

Soul of the owl and the cat
Soul of the raincloud

Tonight the cloud-horses
are neighing

The cloud-women are chanting
old lamentations

Tonight I make my song
out of darkness and water

My roof is a drum
and the rain-women are dancing on it

Sharon Barba
GOAT AND TURTLE  JESSE'S POEM

The little goat
comes out of the shell
The little goat comes kicking

The elves hold hands
to shape the elf-ring,
chanting in elfin voices

The turtle arrives,
bearing the sun on its back

Today the sky is very big
and blue as the cornflowers
and the bachelor buttons

Jesse, I waited for you all winter
Then two cats arrived, came and licked me clean

And a pup, red-gold as a new penny,
found me under a tree, found me
star-gazing and took me home

And I knew you were here
I heard the crackling of shells
I heard the milk pod

Jesse, a thousand miles and more away from you—
me in my desert home, you born to your green hill
my heart can hear you

And I love you before I ever
know you: My little goat, you with your new soul
Turtle-Boy: you with the sun in your heart

Sharon Barba
WATCHING SUBWAY ART

Stuffed inside the AA train, I consider
The artists who have fashioned my headache.
Do they sign their spray-painted work
With bold stroke no one can read?
Or is it a code harder to crack than Kaballah?
I wonder. Perhaps the next car will clear
Things up. But this is no museum with periods.
Here nothing comes to a stop or is something else
Their Art is a continuous line of squiggles
That defy both cops and entropy.
And I am on the other side, slowing winding down
To Fourteenth Street. Even the throbbing
Disappears when I burst into the sunshine
Like a darkened flower or petal from their bough.

Sanford Pinsker
photograph by Rudolph Robinson
GOD'S GARGOYLE

I was standing right over there by the closet when the idea hit. I was standing there knee-high in laundry considering my impoverishment of hangers when it came to me, flew out of all my pockets and perched on my ears and eye-lids. I was standing to the left of the dresser by the window where I leave the curtains closed, right here where I’m standing now. I was looking at those frayed cuffs and had just remembered how she would kneel at my feet and take scissors to jeans like these, how winter would fall around my ankles and she would climb up my legs to summertime.

I had been whistling to the radio, had just scratched my beard when it hit me, and I stood there, God’s gargoyle overlooking the piazza of my wardrobe.

Tad Cornell
MY INTRAVENOUS DAUGHTER

While you sleep beneath
I.V. bottles
the lights of city traffic
clover-leaf below the window
like old souls
circling the earth for
new bodies.
You are an ocean of
living cells barking
at phantoms.
You are tissue
of my tissue—
the same shade of blue
veins, the same
hands, empty now
like seashells, like
evacuated homes
that once were creeping
fist and fingers.
Your back curves like
my back curves.
Your scars
smile.
Your dreams
are elevators of glass.
While you sleep
I am making plans
to rob the graves of
great women
and bring you back the
first choice
of the last word
in body parts.

Tad Cornell
THE DEPARTURE

I suppose it’s all over now.
  Brief as a cloudless sky
  empty as my daughter’s mouth
you are flying home for Christmas.

    Back home
    I read this note:
  “Dear Tooth Fairy,
   Tonight’s the night!
   Tooth under her pillow.”

Your plane drones on.
I don’t even know where it’s taking you.
I replace Alysia’s tooth
with a shiny tin quarter.
  (She, so anxious. For days
   it just barely hung in there
   a dead white star.)

Under my own pillow
I dream fitfully
A sad, savage bird
    drops you
into an album of fading wings.

Come morning
I’ll be the only good fairy
left in town.

Stephen Abbott
HOW MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL WAS FOOLED

No one knows the age of Satan
when he fell.
Maybe he was just fourteen.
Milton says he was marvelous to view
& smart as a whip. We know that much.
Snakey boy!
Maybe he had long brown hair
which fell like a bruise around his neck
in ringlets, Medusa curls.
Maybe he was androgynous, a hustler
wanting to drag everybody down.

We don’t know about Satan
but we do know one fallen angel who lies
seductively before us now.
"Take me to hell," Beaver taunts.
"I been all over this damn town & I ain’t
found nothin I like so well
as a rough fuck." His misty eyes
dance dangerously. He laughs.
He’s syphilitic. We know that too.

The devil,
The devil smiles.
The devil draws back
his claws. "Give me all
& I’ll give you shit," the devil says.
Nobody’s as stupid as they look
except good angels.

Michael unsheaths his fiery sword
seduced to punish once again.

Stephen Abbott
URSULA STERNBERG:
portfolio of paintings
Un vent sacré vient des espaces profonds
Déloge la glace murée par les leçons de femme
Peuvent guérir l'approche à lui les grandes âmes
Pouvaient comme des leurs alchimier sapiens
Grande nuit
N'aurait-elle
Vois d'œil
Vues
Rêvant de ces esprits
Lent
Je t'aime-coin de toi, marquée éternelle.
Et par l'instinct d'amour, l'amour s'aligne.
Reviens vers toi, volage, abandon de ton cœur,
De tes yeux, de tes seins, comme un papillon, c'est,
Et grise de tanner dans ton ombre de FEMME.
Rente des jours éternels, en eux dans mer triste.
Cher ami,

C'est à toi que je m'adresse,

Je te demande de m'écrire

En y mettant ce cachet.
paintings by Ursula Sternberg

We are living in a time of innovation in poetry, a quest for the unique, which I feel is responsible for our interest in foreign poets and in their work. Thus, we are living in an age of much translation. Mark Strand argues in The Ohio Review, Winter, 1972, that “we read other poets in translation, oddly enough, for content.” What exactly does Strand mean by this? I think what he finds attractive is the vividness of the imagery, the sharp narrative concern for detail and the resonance of a simple, commanding language in translated verse. I would take Strand’s position one step further in stating Denise Levertov’s contention that as a reading public we are seeking a poetry which displays a greater concern for direct evocation than direct statement. Eugenio Montale, 1975 Nobel Laureate, is a man whose poetry meets these expectations.

Montale’s work displays a balanced evocation: cool, precise, objective—especially during the most creative phase of his life when he wrote the Xenia Sequence for his wife. The past and the present are kept in perspective by Montale’s concern for realism and truth:

38
We had studied for the hereafter
a token of recognition, a whistle;
I'm not trying to modulate it in the hope
that we're all already dead without knowing it.

Listening was your only way of seeing,
The telephone bill now amounts to very little.

for detail:

I've never understood if it was I
who was your faithful and distempered dog,
or if you were that for me.
For them you were only a myopic
insect lost in the babble
of high society. How ingenious
of those clever people not to know
it was they who were your laughingstock,
that you could see them even in the dark,
and unmask them with your infallible flair
and your bat's radar.

The realization that what is evoked is relevant to the past permits
Montale a greater objectivity on the present--here is his power and his
strength, the "detachment" of which some have accused him. It is not
detachment, however, so much as the power and will to access and
accede to what is. Montale's response to life, reflected in his work,
emerges through his candor and wit, through a moral and intellectual
response which allows him to explore and analyze his immediate en-
vironment and, in so doing, humanizes him:

I feel remorse for having crushed
the mosquito on the wall,
the ant on the pavement
I feel remorse but here I am in a dark suit
for the meeting or the reception.
I feel sorrow for everything, even
for the slave who advises me on life's
various activities,
for the beggar to whom I don't give alms,
for the madman who presides over
the administrative council.

("I Feel Remorse For Having Crushed")
For sure, every language has its own tonalities. While G. Singh (Montale’s translator) has not attempted to preserve Montale’s line arrangement, he has in no way distorted the rhythmic quality the poet intended. Singh wisely acknowledges that literary devices (rhymes, alliteration, assonance, double-entendres, etc.) do not translate easily or smoothly—idiomatic speech being peculiar to its own locality. Yet, from reading Montale’s poems it would seem that Singh has managed to keep intact not only the rhythm and cadence of the verse translation but also the meaning and content. How else could a poem such as “To Conclude” be so firmly espoused?

I charge my descendants (if I have any) on the literary plane which is rather improbable, to make a big bonfire of all that concerns my life, my actions, my non-actions. I’m no Leopardi, I leave little behind me to be burnt, and it’s already too much to live by percentages. I lived at the rate of five per cent; don’t increase the dose. And yet it never rains but it pours.

This, then is Montale’s doctrine of faith and acceptance—at the root of his life, at the root of his art.

reviewed by Karla Hammond
MUSINGS

The ardent adolescent, torn between her two demanding loves, poetry and dance, ashamed of being thought a dilettante, chose finally dance, where the discipline was more obvious, the path apparent, but allowed herself to continue to write “occasional verse,” particularly when falling in love, which was frequent, or when lonely. During a knee injury she gave more attention to poetry. She did workshops with Frank O’Hara and Leonie Adams. But as soon as possible was back to the rigors of daily class and rehearsals. She had some babies, stopped dancing, and thought perhaps writing would rush in to fill that space and she wouldn’t dance again. But when the babies had been born and nursed, it was easier to return to that more easily followed discipline than to create her own with writing. The performing began to be more and more satisfying. Perhaps she was getting better at it.

She started a journal again, after so many years. It gradually became more and more of a constant companion. At first it was friend and confidante—even therapist. And eventually she found herself terribly intrigued again (still?) with words. With the sounds and the images. With the designs. And once more poems began to occur. Late at night they’d come, and she’d discover them next morning, amazed at their messages. Did I dream that? She became increasingly interested in the accidents. Played games with words. Sent everyone she knew cryptic postcards whose messages were dictated by starting each word with a letter of the person’s name.

And still the dance. But she began to want to do more with improvisation. She saw the Grand Union and was intoxicated by their honesty and their knowledge. She began teaching improvisation, but had little opportunity to perform. Then she did a marathon improvisation weekend with a woman named Josie. Most of the other participants were therapists, and she wanted to be present as a person and not a trained dancer. She spent hours exploring awkwardness and playing clumsily with rising and falling and balancing, forgetting that she had ever learned a grinnness of movement, doing it all as if for the first time. And unbeckoned an image of water came—rain and evaporation in cycle, so that when her friend began to play his flute, she danced the dance her body taught. And late that night wrote a poem called “The Dance.” She wrote it on a large sheet of paper, intending two parts of it to occur simultaneously, followed by a unison, a coming together. She felt that the weekend had been rather magical—a joining of Ann the dancer and Ann the person.
The poetry was becoming more and more important to her. She
took a workshop with Brian Swann, learned to be much more critical
of her own self-centered sentimentality. She was gaining skills.
Brian did a poetry reading for which she agreed to improvise. They
chose a long Turkish poem which he had translated—roughed it out
together, and performed it. She didn’t invite her dancer friends, a lit-
tle embarrassed still by the idea of public improvisation. It was terribly
successful. They were asked to do more. But of course an audience at
a poetry reading might be delighted, if not actually relieved, to have
movement to watch. They decided it had been an extremely safe ex-
periment. They wanted to find out more about the risks, and to try to
work without expectations or goals or limitations. But two performers
seemed too few. They collected a group and met on alternate Sundays.
They were seeking that place from which poetry and dance spring.
Movement seemed the easiest medium for everyone except Brian who
was trying everything for the first time. They travelled through
separate spaces, eye contact, touch, support and sounds, words, dia-
logue, song and ritual, foolery, loving comfort, chaos. She always in-
sisted that there be no leader, no imposed rules or form. She wanted
to experience what would happen by itself. After one session she wrote
“Dance Improvisation” to simply record her experience. She cannot
easily remember much of what happened, although at the time it felt
very important.

She began to realize that losing herself into movement processes gen-
erated creative images, impulses, which could easily be translated into
words on paper. After a very rigorous and therefore satisfying ballet
class, she wrote “After Dancing.”

For many reasons she decided to stop travelling and performing with
the Limon Company. Her experiences with improvisation had taught
her to be less goal-oriented and to be interested in finding out what
she would do next. She found that for a while she didn’t feel much
like dancing. But she also found that she wasn’t writing! And that
when she did dance (or climbed mountains or made love) and wore her-
self out with physical exertion, she often stayed up late at night pour-
ing forth words in sudden new groupings.

She was working on a piece of choreography—spent some unreward-
ing time in a studio and then turned to her notebook to write “move-
ment / invention / evades me.”

She read an article by Allen Ginsberg in which he spoke of the
same mutual roots of dance and poetry that she was beginning to sus-
pect and occasionally to experience. And he also seemed dedicated to
seeking them out. So she went to Naropa to learn from him and from
the incredible collection of poets he and the mountains had attracted
to Boulder. She walked in the foothills, breathed great quantities of
Colorado air, and wrote ceaselessly. She was beginning to learn the
disciplines of that art.
She was invited to teach and perform at the Fox Hollow Dance Festival. She decided to teach a workshop that was geared towards eliciting written word responses out of improvisation. It was not totally successful—many dancers are predominantly non-verbal. For her part of the performance, she used six of her own poems as “accompaniment.” Each member of the audience was given copies of the poems, with instructions to travel to various sites to view the dances which were going on simultaneously. One poem was the accompaniment for their own walk from place to place. In each of the four sites structured improvisations were going on, without form in time. At one site the very rhythmic poem was being chanted. Most of the others were intended to be read silently by the audience. At a signal, the performers and audience moved together to the main performing area where the last poem was used more narratively, and a final section involved all the dancers and musicians.

She had originally gotten the idea from a quite selfish desire to exploit her reputation as a dancer to gain some exposure for her own poetry. But in fact she became terribly intrigued by this new, silent wedding of the arts.

by Ann Vachon
DANCE IMPROVISATION

I remember when I tried
to fly the light,
the string pulled taut in my left hand,
my body leaning away from its tug,
believing how important to hold it tightly,
and then
I let it go.
And the light stayed there
in place on the ceiling,
and the string swung in great and then
smaller arcs,
and I fell to the floor
bruised both knees,
and I forget what happened next
or maybe there was nothing else.

Ann Vachon

movement
invention
evades me.

feelings invade.
words.
images.
cravings.

I be better off fighting poetry.

Ann Vachon
AFTER DANCING

buoyancy is not always
honest
breaking sunlight over the cliffs of
clouds

ripped loose from moorings
torn or shredded
into flakes
foam fragments turning

light bounce off
break off
marbled
beads
sweet
sweatbloom on my lip
catch that leap in my
balloon
chest.

Ann Vachon
THREAD

for Richard

1. Trying not to think of you
   yet your face colors every contour of my mind,
   and every way I turn inside of a minute
   I collide with your laughter—

   I am wind
   and you are chimes.

2. Trying to keep cool in the winter,
   trying to be patient
   and not watch the slow calendar
   nor the sand dribbling like wax
   so closely with my hawk eye,

   my love eye traces
   the hemlines of the days.

   Think sometimes
   this is all
   just a fragile dream,
   a thin rain-streaked glass
   that a chapel bell or a falling leaf
   might shatter,
   and I’d find myself
   in the crux of the night.

3. Rain, rain if this is a dream
   don’t tap so hard on the glass.

   If this is real
   I don’t want to trust enough to know
   the floor will not collapse,
   the sun capsize,
   the moon explode
   a light bulb
   short circuited.
4. It is August I adjust
my instruments to,
check my internal compass,
fill my deflated sails
with the astral winds of your song.

I write letters
to keep us moving through the dark.

Letters as a way of giving you my hands,
reassuring you I won’t let go,
will hold fast, will be whispering
to the days and nights.
I’ll turn all the months
between this moment and August
into silver ships that travel faster
than light and sound.

So that it won’t seem so long.

So that one morning
instead of letters you can open my hands.
Read the inflection of every word
as a pulse from my heart.
Fold my hands into your own,
and put them
where you’ve been saving
my other words.

5. Don’t want us to be afraid.
I need letters from you
like a tunnel torch
or stars
so I can keep pushing
through the dark.
Don’t want us to be afraid—

you are wind
I am chimes.

Essex C. Hemphill
EL RIO

I. With pale dams

the tongue of the river
is cut and slurred.

The sea does not remember
this splayed voice

that claims
to have been born there.

II. The river backs up
in a storm of madness

and crosses the forbidden land.

Giving freedom to its anger,
swelling with curses at the white walls,

carrying towns off
in sacks slung over its shoulders.

III. The brown water reincarnates
in a glass I hold to my lips.

There is still foam
frothing around the edges of its rage

The fleshless
dismembered bones of the towns
are found later.

The sky clears,
the sun rises cautiously,

the river uncoils,
and the river moves on
through my spine

Essex C Hemphill
the radio
  announces
  the twenty—
ninth
anniversary
  of the
  hiroshima
  bombing
as if it
  were the
  results of
  the annual
betty crocker
  bake-off
won in
  1945 by
  enrico
  fermi who
baked an
  angel food
  cake over
japan.

Stephen Burke
TWO STATUES OF WOMEN IN GOLD

When Chantal’s grandmother came back here to her native land for a visit we showed her the Joan of Arc on the Parkway and she sounded like Tallulah Bankhead when she said Oh yes, we have one of those glaring things in France. At first I was disappointed that ours wasn’t the only one but then we already have so much in common with France, glaring tics from a body you expect better things from. Chantal’s grandmother is beautiful and I thought she’d like the statue: this is three-quarters a compliment to the grandmother but if you add that one-quarter of her against a glaring thing to three other people’s you already have one whole person against glaring things and that doesn’t just mean badly glaring but good ones too. Glaring things don’t often get the right exposure because of being taken in too wide or narrow, a prejudice, a whole popular affront to glaring things. We glare back and wait for them to avert their gaze and it’s no contest when constructed like that, there being so many more glaring back, from all sides, staring in shifts, having other things to do in the meantime, while Joan of Arc sits there with one look to match the numberless fast glances of blinding windshields in the daytime and headlights at night. They want an original glaring one to get so mad with all this waiting that it shocks it all. Joan of Arc had virtually ended and named the Hundred Years’ War and the king was content with what he had, even though Paris was still otherwise occupied. He ordered Joan to forget about it for now, but naturally she knew it was now or never, never again everyone being into the glaringly magnificent possibility of all of France being France in everyone’s lifetime, but it was too glaring a thing, more sparkling than the king, and so he stalled and she shucked it and went virtually alone and got captured which wasted even more time until now it was certainly never because the people got the chance to adjust their eyes to regular light and just couldn’t see giving a king’s ransom for someone who wasn’t a king. She lost the game during time-out and what else could she do but get burned up. American Dreamers do it on their own, which is how we get to say that Poe burned himself out.

Within everyone’s lifetime but theirs, Paris became part of France and America part of the literary world. Take it all in as the glaring contradiction of Joan of Arc’s having been burned as a witch but later made a saint. Later is the only way to do it: filter it with sunglasses that even allow you to close your eyes and still look like you’re glaring back. Look how long you could hold out that way.
photograph by Margi Ide
sculpture of Joan of Arc by Emmanuel Fre
By 1793 and the Reign of Terror sunglasses were so well made and popular that few things put a glint in the people's eye like Joan of Arc's armor. Three hundred and fifty years had gone by and the people were sick of waiting for spontaneous combustion so they put it over a fire. Maybe with the dark glasses on they mistook the armor for a roast. Maybe the 1% should go for food instead of art.

The Monell Building on Market Street channeled funds into Face Fragment, and if anything was left of the melted armor, it flowed into this. The people of West Philly see it from the bus. It's a perfect view from the bus and doesn't cost extra to sit there and look, which doesn't happen all the time. This is as lucky as finding a fragment, a lucky fragment, giving you so much of what you want to see now.

Who said?
One percent says that people want looking and talking and a lot of thinking where you don't see, not glaring right now since you're just waking up but a part of something rich that's gone through a lot and surely underground, not all jaded but still golden with opportunities, consistent with recycling, melted armor from across the sea and into a new thing looking antique but coincidental, making my old ticker flicker at the thought that the glaring Joan of Arc used to get off her horse and look at us faint soldiers just like that Face Fragment does.

Dennis Bass

photograph by Margi Ide
sculpture of Face Fragment by Arlene Love
WHAT IF THAT'S YOUR FRIEND ON STAGE?

When I first saw my friend Jerry-the-dancer on stage I thought Oh isn't it just like Jerry to make a movement like that? and Oh my there's Jerry dancing around with music playing and real dancers and the audience watching, and don't they realize it's just old Jerry? I didn't think this way about the other dancers, they were dancers dancing, but Jerry was Jerry dancing.

By concentrating on where the hands and bodies met, and expanding that until I was watching a dance, I managed to melt Jerry in. I waited for the term cowboy before justifying my cousin having gone out West. How nice of me now as I'm seeing the stage and the music and the other dancers, the range and the bandana and the other cowboys.

But what if just this minute a friend of yours expresses interest in getting on that stage, and you've always thought the earth stopped just west of the Mississippi, look how much imagination you'd need to give good advice. You've known this friend all your life and now the person has bought boots and a big hat. Your friend put out good money and you're asked to bare and enlighten your own head to the sun that the cowboy hat is for. My grandmother said How can this hot Phoenix sun be the same one as in Chicago? The budding of imagination. You can transplant it anywhere, it can bud and blossom anywhere, even standing where you are, watching the beautiful changes taking place in your petals or plumage or palette.
When my guitar-playing friend Michael put on his cowboy hat in a Chicago basement before leaving for a music job he was a rust-colored cactus blossom of imagination. He looked off into the sunset with his eyes slightly squinted against the wind on the mesa that the hat couldn’t shut out completely and when he turned to leave he said of course he won’t be wearing it while driving. A healthy imagination, but I’ve already admitted he plays music jobs on stage and so reading any more about Michael would be just a spectator sport for you, and this isn’t investigative journalism where the thing is so real already that only pretending could make you think otherwise, this is an essay, the thing so new not even the stage is there yet, when Michael is squinting and saying it’s not glasses he needs but a big hat, when Jerry doesn’t want biophysics anymore but dancing. They ask for your opinion and you essay to give it. Quick! Before it’s the time you can only pretend things haven’t turned out bad: before it’s investigative journalism.

After it happens, all of a sudden everybody knows facts and has opinions that easily pour out but where was all the speed and concern before, before the thing happened? Out of all the things that could happen, one thing happens. This is a fact. If you would have been one-person ahead of yourself you would have been the millionth customer and gotten the prize, but now after the fact you might as well have been twenty places behind or ahead of the person who won. You might as well have not even been there. This thinking is the occupational hazard of anyone wanting to make new facts, who wants a say in which fact will get there at the right time, a pain for the artist of any breed, the raw sensitivity to the facts that happen in one’s age, the too-much knowing that the fact before or the fact after always seems to get chosen, the risk of becoming as hard as the orphan who is never adopted.

But there are adoptive parents: poets of the people! Never forgetting that the proud heartbeat and pain in the ass are real though unphysical. You say Certainly, but when the expectant uni-parent of the artist asks you for support, you can look at the person sideways and say Be serious. I could have said this to Michael when he suggested that a big hat would cure his squint better than glasses, or I could have said Do whatever you want: cursing or blessing a baby before I abandon it.

Abandon means leaving something un-taken care of, and this makes you guilty, an adjective like queasy. Guilt is the delayed heartburn of having swallowed your imagination when asked for your opinion. Physical reality would catch up to Michael and as you see them riding towards the sun on the horizon you want to shout but all that comes out is the guilt-swill belch that’s been stewing for all the time since you gave no advice, and I’m sorry-I-was-wrong smells the same as I-told-you-so. It’s usually bad manners to treat an apology like that but really now, there was Michael alone in the desert for years, and just at
the moment the Coincidental Rider appears, the dilettantes in a helicopter drop in to celebrate. They could have bought a horse and been the Rider.

Riders and imagination, dilettantes and pretending. The Riders are real enough to influence Michael’s course wherever they’re coming from, galloping up on his terrain, adding strength and speed to his chosen direction or breaking him out of some vicious circle, and Michael trusting them, as if he had watched their campfires for seven nights of cold desert and hot days and knows they have something to say. The Dilettantes pretend they’re talking by patting him on the back from a rented helicopter.

An imaginator and a pretender are talking at a party about wanting to go on stage but after a few minutes notice how the pretender calls the imaginator pretentious. Reality ruins the fun. It doesn’t let you end with a high-flying comment, it expects you to get down to which cactus to break open for water, and the bugs, and is it worth it to go the long way to avoid this or that. The pretenders don’t want to know that their day-dreamt warrior goes to the bathroom before a battle, it would be too close to what the pretenders do without the battle part. The warrior gets off the pot and opens the door into the battle while the pretenders keep sitting, thinking they’ll just bide their time until the battle crashes through the door, as if the world were always fighting, always loving, always painting, as if the world were the continuous one-track background that each pretender fancies. Meanwhile the imaginators shimmer in front of any background, in the desert, in a bathroom, on the street, on the deck of an ocean liner, and so what’s the surprise if that’s a stage your friend is on?

Dennis Bass
The Pensive Man Contemplates Marriage
IN HIS LATER YEARS THE PENSIVE MAN BECAME

difficult, it wasn't easy.
He came to believe
in poetry, so he searched.
He found in Vermont an old woodpile,
the one described by Melville, by Frost.
The same one. He scooped
the mold and dust into one small sack.
It fit easily. In Tennessee
he found a jar. Into it
the sack fit easily. He
wasn't finished, not yet.

He placed the jar on an old post
next to a stop sign, along
a country road. He believed
in poetry but he wasn't
stupid. He knew it was only a matter
of time. Soon a barefoot kid
looking for robins, finding none,
would lower his sights, aim
his gun, and shoot the jar. No,
the pensive man was not stupid.

Joseph Napora
THE PENSIVE MAN!!!

THE PENSIVE MAN!!! could have been better than he was. Everyone agrees on that.

He sung paean to melancholy carefully forming each vowel. His controlled sadness caused him to cough-up the corpse of a magpie that won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

He composed poems to the masses but a cancer formed on his throat in the shape of a new car.

He wore a scarf and tried to whistle popular music.

He played mystic in the suburbs until the housewives sucked up his ego.

The peace movement turned his mouth into a fire engine.

He practiced magic on television to ease his addiction to money.

The angel of death sat perched on his mind. He tried to lose himself in crowds but people mistook him for the prime mover and debated whether or not something was wrong with his hat.

And just because THE PENSIVE MAN!!! could have been better than he was everyone agrees on that.

Joseph Napora
MILES

he went
where no one else
grew
and shouted primal
screams
into the air
but mostly
there were always
people around
and all he could
manage, without
appearing strange,
was a low-pitched
dying of his eyes,
if you looked
close enough to hear

Ann Menabroker
NIGHT POEM

my kimono
soft from many washings
begins a silent
tearing
from the hem
towards
the neckline

i must move
very slowly
and it will last
a little longer
than the mood
we so softly shared
one night ago

Ann Menebroker
COUNTRYWOMAN/SURGEON

Life is wild as straw.
Your feet are two inches thick in wool
—your kids sleep nude these early spring evenings.

You feel like a fox.
Tonight is a pouring place.
Your husband is a closed vault.

But green as a jar, countryside
comes up like a painting brought up from through
thick grime.

Our lives move,
two dark streams,
parallel, or diverging in this same town.

Rising with hip-pain
you go out back
with a hard joy for it all. Someday, maybe Britain

from Countrywoman/Surgeon
Britain
where rain bleeds & vivifies roses.
Now, life is wild as straw. Cut to the cut center.

Play solitaire, counting cold hard stars
betting on those cards
(while up the mountain, creatures are lambing.)

Roll stars like dice,
You fill with your own wild snowflakes
your laughing, winter in the midst of spring.

Love is in your thighs,
Winter’s gone.
Geese have flown overhead

you fill your fist with wildflowers
—not ones you planted—
for the kitchen table or patients in morning.

Coal, Firebrick are in your mind, turning it red.
It’s a birdless sky
a cold, cash-like dawn.

The heave of the hill will be against you
but you’ll be on time,
Though your body rebels. You grew up in a place the color
of hay.

After an earth-turning night
you turn back
into the house, to don the surgeon’s calm lamb-white.
INSOMNIA

—It was the full moon
that kept her awake
like poorly set bone,

or some slight misjudgement
with a patient that noon;
or a white lie told to her husband;

she rose,
dislocation—
went to the garden pond

quite black
saw her reflection
as under the knife    one face alive, one dying

and slipt back into the branch of her home
her room
under lit paint chips

lay back down
beside her sleeping husband
his breathing smooth as a vase,

    and the family
    dry, fragrant, as four dead lavender; on a plate,
    four bruised plums.
PHYSICIAN, METAPHYSICIAN

Physician, metaphysician
my love is changing
her position in the heaven of our home
with daylight saving

like the seabirds slipping west
like the sundial’s moving slower
over stone
or the rough palm, yours,
over the bruised motion of bone.

DOCTOR/GARDENER

It’s only a sorrow of the body.
So go weeding radishes
thick, clotted rubies.

The mind’s closure
can cope like a fist,
like the circle at night from a lit window, a harbor of hollow

calm

Not high-toned, or aloof,
you go about this thing alone.
Coming to the row that won’t be pruned,

or greened,
or cleaned of snails.
This is the grief that won’t yield to caress.

So you drive the spade in
to black velvet loam (broad-hipped)
—silver desert nightwinds licking about the metal tool.
like salt
seabreezes a small Greek island.
A PLACE TO GO ALONE

Not moody,
you leave this miniature dream, the polished phrase you’ve
been turning
to the destruction of winds:

"The two women saved spare funds
to build a greenhouse-wing
back of their kitchen."

The stars’ geometric stations roll on.
You laugh, then drive the black spade deeper
so greenhouse, carved like bow of ship, collapses.

Night follows you in.
Your pictures intensify,
(these are the 39 steps leading to the bombed beachhead in
Britain—last brutal front.)

You see the woman, arm in cast,
scorched by cobalt.
they stripped her veins

... as you turn the last iris under, open the screen
you see her flesh
blue as petals. The final greenhouse-wing flames.
LOGS

For a week my heart has pointed elsewhere
—Robert Lowell, “The Charles River”

No river runs under our window
and soon coventry will come
in the form of a countrywoman.

I love logs
& light one after another
thru all seasons.

They leech damp:
till wood burns white as cliffs of Dover, white as
chalk, or the star in the center of a filly’s forehead.

These logs are individual failures
burned:
the mis-diagnosis, intractable pain, failed operation

the asymmetric, but steady, searing of bone
not unlike stars, cutting within.
SHIFT

Whether it was a shift in the moon
or your hip flaring up—
earth seemed more white

the whole polished garden
came up calcium
—an albino child.

The dagger in the hip-shard
turned.
Whether it was the little fir trees

needed an extra hosing
—as recent winds had blown their soil
off into air—

or your own
earthy
feverishness, rising in a white shift of lung-thin

material,
you came
to tour the garden, both cloth and colors

of surgical gowns,
with hands rude enough
to graft rose to plum, graft wing
back on a wild torn swan.

Lynn Strongin
POETRY ON THE BUSES

For the second time, we are exhibiting new artworks from Poetry on the Buses which has grown from its origin in Pittsburgh, in 1974, to bring each year a new series of 11” by 28” multi-colored posters before mass transit riders of many major cities of the United States, including Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, and San Francisco. The concept of the program is based on the ambitious idea that quality poetry is to be the poetry of all people.

The project is innovative in its American mass transit context, but comes out of a long tradition of public art and has spiritual precedents in Egyptian and Roman friezes, medieval stained glass, wall inscriptions, and other serious non-commercial attempts at civilized communication in the midst of the human marketplace. Frances Balter, Executive Director, believes Poetry on the Buses will offer “mass exposure” for contemporary poets and artists “and help to make our society a warmer, more personal, and more human one.”

Each year approximately twenty short poems or poem fragments are accepted by a jury whose members work with both solicited and unsolicited material. The poets range from new voices to well established ones. And the artists also are selected to bring a diversity of backgrounds. Moreover, a number of poems are run simultaneously in English and other languages.

The program is administered through Carnegie-Mellon University and has support from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and private foundations, as well as from the transit systems themselves. Interested people may write to Box 26, Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA 15213.
and in the deep valleys of the hand.

Tiny birds are singing

...you see they are delicate cages.

Taking the hands of someone you love...

Taking The Hands...
March Night down by the River

Gently gliding up like pieces of shell
are the brown voices of the mud
The hundreds of squeezying sounds you hear.
Squeezing their eyes out into the air
To move the mud beneath them!
They use all of their elasticly bodges
To where the moon is in April
are pushing their bodies up
Frozen in river mud all winter,
Small brown knobs
I shall reach you yet.
To circle the great globe,
I send my blessing out
From far away.

Try to remember me.
Seeing the beaded leaf,
Or seedpods of the mist;
Think of the summer rain.

Adam
Guess, unspent charity
The world is a visionary
Wonders yet unknown, love not retarding,
The sun standing over the horizon,
With age approaching,
As the full mind stored with summers,
Nothing is so magnetic
Ophelene
ONE HUNDRED-FOLD

And I brought my anguish down
in a pail to the sea,
and tipped it there on the rocks
and poured it out

and night after night as I sit
on the side of the bed,
bartering sanity for sleep,
I hear the sea

open its mouth
below my window, hiss,

and give it back, give it back.

Daniel Lusk
JANUARY’S SISTER-WIND

Chinook. The very name
brings rain from smoke.

And snow goes tender.

Ice is falling from the roof,
rattling the eaves as if
love, with her clear glass horses,
were abroad, or

spring’s thaw. We feel
earth writhe in her sleep,
her breath decoded
into hope.

Call out, for rescue comes.
We are not dead here.

Daniel Lusk
YOU DONE US PROUD

(on the occasion of a poetry reading, 10/10/77,
by Ntozake Shange and Thulani)

No pastels here—
   Enter the Solids bold color, pure, bona fide

Not a sneaker in the crowd—
   But boots,
   bring on the thick souls, high-top
   serious walkers that were
   these women who took
   centerstage and stole our
   minds for safekeeping.

Without words,
it was what they said,
Spoke of camaraderie and romance
in single voice,
These poets,
made love with no regard for rumor
And anyone within a universal radius
could hear the primal scream of two
   who done us proud
   then mortal
   to pragmatic
   women
   who opened their visions like shirts,
   breast-baring before anxious virgins
   new perspectives,
   fresh nuance,
   the gen-u-ine Johnson.

Sometime later,
they returned us to ourselves
   now, somehow different.

Michelle Parkerson

78
EVENING CONSTITUTIONAL

We three sad drag
coattail blues behind us.

Dead dreams, deflated hopes
cling like un aborted children
to us
on our
talk walk.

Masquerading on our way,
we three balm
the limbo of our lives
with conversation ointment,
soothe sores of disillusion.

What we cover, covet
with chit-chat blindness
about the misery of others
is the sadness in our souls.

We lost
knock together like
chilled bones in winter:
Loveless,
Muddled,
Deferred.

We three see
just our footsteps before us,
screen out the struggle
around our eyes.

Michelle Parkerson

79
LYNN MOSKOWITZ

NIGHTMARES

part one
I abandoned myself in a ditch
at re-birth.

I wanted to be born a genius,
    but got instead sexuality.

In frigidity was my solace.
    In frigidity was my torment heinous.
In finger-laced weavings of fantasy
    my new genius displays itself unevenly.
Toothless, bitter, the black-veiled belly dancer.
In dreams I am an innocent, unacceptable,
likely to become eyes only, anxious as formless
colors enlarge and engulf me.

Sometimes I am washed clean
and find simplicity in the pleasure I can give another.
What will fulfill me remains a mystery.
part two
I want to confess to many things.
What causes me to be so fragile?
At a touch, one fingertip whisper of tenderness,
my cool self-possession trembles. I become hidden and
secretly plain. Humber and more contemptible to myself.
Many muffled, suppressed longings.
Please, please. Love and cherish me.
Even though I am lazy and despicable sometimes,
not a genius or especially lovely.
Please. More intense the urgency.

I never voice a plea to be taken,
to be rewarded somehow for being vulnerable
and imperfectly formed.

part three
There is some great sensitivity I want to rip
from within me. "Here. Love it."
Some great flopping thing of a consciousness,
a morbid curiosity shaped like
a atavistic fish-monster.
half gills, half water-clogged lungs,
webbed, confused, half blind.

This of me is hidden:
Dark growlings. An urge to rape
arrogant men. Secret
orgasmic sessions with myself: liquid release
of the slithery she-male.

I need lightning, thunder, rain.
This rapt dreamer covets nature's storms and
sweats in frightened endurance of her own sudden emotions.

Lynn Moskowitz
from FLICKS

IT HAPPENED IN KANSAS

It begins years ago in a small town
in Kansas. The name is not important.
It is a bright sunlit town
on top of rolling green hills
where these people of Kansas
live in perfect harmony with nature
and with each other. They act more like Chinese
peasants than the Kansas farmers we are used to.
They worry about seedlings and the weather.
They produce cattle and corn for gain and for good.
They produce children in the same way,
They know no passion except for the land.
They know no lust except for production.
They are all very happy in a peasant kind of way.
This life continues through the years
like a visit to a happily married couple
until one fateful night
deep in the heat of July
a seedpod after rolling dormant
through the empty rooms of space
finds a moist home in the dark sweet soil
of Kansas. At first the farmers
are fascinated by the technicolor plant
that sends its bright blue runners
through the fields like some
pumpkin gone berserk.
When the first purple fruit appears
the farmers hope for a new cash crop
so they test it and find it sweet.
But strange things begin to happen
after they eat the fruit.
They begin to eye each other
with a new interest. They find that breasts
are more interesting than milk bottles.
They find cocks more fascinating than ladies.
When they try to speak
they find their lips tangled together.
They no longer dream of corn growing loudly
in the night but of Mrs. Jones' ass.
They begin to devour the fruit:
on their cereal, in pies, arranged neatly
around a roast, raw right off the vine.
They go crazy.
They invent things like garter belts.
They watch each other go to the bathroom
They send each other dirty telegrams.
In the morning they are found
locked together like wildflowers
in the wheat.
They don't mind that they are starving,
that the plows are red with rust
that they are coming down with colds.
It is all too delirious.
But as we know from the Bible
this sort of thing can’t last.
So one day when the plant,
which by this time
has leveled the hills of Kansas
in its lust for soil,
stops growing, the farmers are frantic.
Nothing they know can get it to grow again.
There is nothing about it in the Almanac.
The remaining fruit is no longer
purple but shriveled and brown.
It tastes worse than anything imaginable.
But the farmers don’t care about taste.
The fruit no longer works!

The Kansas farmers are left bitter.
In the hollows of their gray eyes
there is nothing left
of their summer of fleshly delight.
They begin to eye each other jealously.
They worry about fidelity.
They worry about performance.
They walk their silent rooms
late at night
holding their dripping organs
hating the soil and hating Kansas.

Jack DeWitt
JINGLE

Spring, summer, winter, fall
swaddling clothes, cloak & pall.

Shirt & tie, shoes & socks
out of an egg; back in a box.

Passion, power, pride, war
we know no more than we knew before.

Power to ashes, passion to dust
wilt, wither, languish, lust.

Soldiers & farmers get used to the slaughter
but I'd rather sleep with the farmer's daughter.

Bird, beast, flower, fish
break my bones & make a wish.

Seeds make saplings, saplings, trees
bury these bones however you please.

Spring, summer, winter, fall
swaddling clothes, cloak & pall.

Steve Kowit
PROOFING GRID

*re Terry Riley*

a fresh experience
of the garbage cans
outside you

but the virtue of the recorded performance
is that
it is subject

Barry Alpert
FOUR ORGANS

via Steve Reich

punctuate by energy discharge
the piece of silence
and the programmatic

Barry Alpert
WE WILL BECOME MORE ATTACHED

via La Monte Young

to sound.
Precisely the right sounds
reinforcing the integral properties
resonating through structure.

“If people aren’t carried away to Heaven,
I’m failing.”

Barry Alpert
HOMAGE A PHILIP GLASS

The extraordinary formal musical synergy.

Taking a big volume of air and moving it around in a regular way.

Nothing’s a continuum and that’s true of sound as well.

Barry Alpert

drawings by Charles E. Yates
LOCAL EXITS
(from the written material that goes with the score)

for mezzo-soprano (or reciter) 2 vibes pno vln cello pre-recorded tape
tape delay set-up 39 hard boiled eggs 5 white plates 2 white candles
salt & pepper and electric metronome wrapped in 13 layers of white
cloth

(a family affair)

i was on my way to a bar mitzvah when i saw a sign that said “local
exits” it seemed to mean something i also saw another sign “hidden
drives” which seemed to mean something too one of those days where
everything seemed to mean something with both signs no matter how
hard i looked i couldn’t find anything the exits were very local and
the drives very well hidden clearly the signs knew what they were
talking about with signs the only thing that counts is accuracy

there was another day when everything seemed to mean something
and a series of flashes arrived at first they weren’t a piece they were
“in pieces” (a shattering experience) when i went back to pick up the
pieces they reformed themselves into this piece(s) composition is only
reconstruction—one always fails but it’s fun to try

the piece local exits is a kind of sign too made up of signs (pieces)
and (as above—so below) the signs are not the thing signed there are
no local exits (what’s a local exit anyway?) if anything the pieces
that make up local exits are indicated states of being (local knowledge
is hidden wisdom) each state a separable component a self-standing
element neither dependent on nor necessary to the existence of the
others the nature of the experiences the impulses coming at that time
was that each of them was complete they were knit together yet un-
raveling there was the weave (the web of events) and just as clearly
each thread a whole made up of parts that were themselves w(holes)
to peep through

since the piece local exits was in whole pieces (pieces of the action)
there isn’t one score it is presented as a set of co-ordinated scores
each with its own title and each capable of being performed separately
or simultaneously with one or more of the others (that is they are all
written so as to fit togetherpolyphonically)
the different pieces are

\texttt{what(?) for reciter & tape delay set-up}

\texttt{2 vibraphones}

\texttt{hidden drives 1 for vln & cello}

\texttt{hidden drives 2 for pno}

\texttt{cycles a meditative-participative piece for taped motorcycles}

\texttt{"chopper" tuning forks & a group of chanters}

\texttt{"you can't eat a still life" an eye-piece for 39 hard boiled eggs}

\texttt{5 white plates 2 white candles salt & pepper & electric metronome wrapped in 13 layers of white cloth}

some of these pieces are positional in nature the others are situational

the positional (posi-tonal) ones (what(?) 2 vibraphones hidden drives 1 & 2) fix positions and are in some sense like objects (the events follow patterns in accord with their being) the situational (situ-tonal) ones (cycles & "you can't eat a still life") are received contexts they are the frames (homes) that encompass (relocate) individual members all the pieces can be thought of as soundings—to sound until there is no sound (a sounding doesn't have to sound to be sound) if music's only music it isn't music

\texttt{what(?) came as a series of words that built up into sentences that almost meant something the longest one was "what we want to be is not what we are looking for" with it came the feeling it might still mean something in one of its earlier broken versions—"what we want is what we are" or "what we want is what we look for" these too turned out to be meaningless (a blind alley) always a mistake to look for meaning in words or sounds a mistake to look for meaning still the process seemed to mean something (i'm a hopeless case)

rhythmically the full sentence takes place on 7 beats (a meter of \(\frac{7}{4}\)) with a syllable occurring on each half-beat or eighth note the last eighth note being a silence (there are 13 syllables) so that each syllable has a predetermined unvarying time placement as well as a predetermined unvarying order

the text is recited (or sung) within a recurring time-matrix of 28 lines of 7 beats each (196 beats around the bush) the length of sentences within each matrix forms an arch (i.e. the first matrix has sentences of 1,2,3,2,1 words) each successive matrix has a build-up in the length of sentences so that there is an overall cascading or building up into larger waves (i.e. the second matrix has sentences of 2,3,4,3,2 words)

after the point where the full sentence is stated the process is changed a tape-delay system is turned on and single words are spoken (or sung) into a microphone and are repeated 6 times (a total of 7) each time at their precise point in the time matrix (mistakes will be hard to live
with) the isolated words by themselves form sentences & the tape-delay repetitions form sentences within the sentences (life goes on) after the 6th repeat the words fade into tape-hiss & become unintelligible

in solo performance an electric metronome will be necessary; it is to be set at 108 to 112 clicks/minute (the tape delay can be set by adjusting the distance between the two tape recorders so that the clicks into the microphone occur simultaneously with clicks played back) and performed to in strict counts; the metronome is to be wrapped in 13 layers of white cloth & held in one's lap during the performance. 13 is the number of the moon; it takes you out of the zodiac (besides then the metronome sounds better)

what(?) can be performed as sound/text piece—that is recited and not sung; it may also be done with "you can't eat a still life" and/or the tape part to cycles; if it is performed with any of the others it is to be sung

2 vibraphones kept coming so to preserve some order it became a pattern (otherwise it could go on forever) it's based on a kind of crossed doubling effect (double crossed?); like what(?) the pattern works (and works) with an overall cascading wave structure; even though it's hard (the trouble with doubling is that your errors are obvious) it should be played with soft sticks—softly; the complete form of the melodic line to what(?) when performed with 2 vibraphones along with the complete statement of the vibraphone phrase (p. 13 of the score) is

(the notes are doubles—often tripled—but not the lines; the pitch successions remain constant while the parts move independently (things don't change just stand differently revealed) the vibraphone patterns are derived from vocal phrases going on at that time using the same pitch sequence and the same number of beats as the words in the phrase)
a pertinent note to the singer on performing *local exits* (quoted from the score):

"what we want (sorry) for all this is to have a musing quality words are being repeated to see if that helps give them a meaning (it doesn’t; in this spirit don’t worry the notes are an abstract structure to be intelli- gently deviated from on occasion the trouble is this isn’t a song it isn’t theatre either so what do we do? the danger is that things’ll take on the air of a formalized truth (music) when they’re really just a private experience (like everything else) in other words let the voice break if it wants to rather than forcing it to do something that feels emotionally false just so as to hit a pitch or rhythm accurately"

for vibraphones (from the score):

“always play in a supple manner gracefully bringing out accents as you feel them never mechanically after all that’s already there so it needn’t be emphasized . . . the performance should come out as a sus- tained flash slowed down for examination the flow is that of expan- sion and contraction (opening up and being blocked off) always a problem (especially in dynamics the only thing to do is go with it without pushing or getting nervous it helps if you’re each amplified separately with the speakers spaced wide apart”

(2 vibraphones may be done as a duet with what(?) & with either or both of the hidden drives it probably doesn’t make any sense to do it alone with either or both cycles and/or “you can’t eat a still life”)

*hidden drives 1* (for vn & cello) is a slippery affair almost not a piece a pure process employing a methodical almost mechanical (even meditat- ive) working out of the pitch & rhythmic macrostructure of what(?) & 2 vibraphones both instruments do a steady progression of jagged glissandos gradually increasing their length & registral expanse until the limits are reached (they’re wide open)

*hidden drives 2* (for pno) on the other hand is a pure pulse (a non- hollywood heart throb?) that note by note chord by chord slowly con- verges on a center point going through the paces of every note in a 7 octave chord

what allows all these pieces until now to cohabit—their family rela- tionship—has a lot to do with pitch for some years now i’ve been working with a gamut of 5 octaves based on the pentatonic scale i’ve also referred to it on other occasions as a pentatonic expansion (which term is preferred depends on whether one wants to stress the melodic or harmonic) at any rate its origins are with a simple pentatonic scale (for ex. F-G-Bb-C-Eb) which in the next octave continues the interva succession of whole step—minor third—whole step—minor third (F-Ab Bb-Db- Eb) & so on unlike all familiar scales and modes in which the
same pitches are present in all octaves this one has a different pitch content in each octave until 5 octaves have been gone through the pattern is then repeated

the nice thing about using this approach is that above all the pentatonic scale has a simple direct appeal music using this scale is found in all cultures also it allows a flexibility of pitch center (any note can lay equal claim to centeredness if it chooses to) and there is an attractive ambiguity between the harmonic and melodic statement of material (if you sound all the notes at once of a given melody it'll sound dissonant like a cluster whereas with the pentatonic scale the chord will have a soft ringing consonance) being spread over 5 octaves with different notes in each octave avoids one defect which is the sing-song quality so beloved by hollywood arrangers when they wish to depict china the orient or "primitive" american indians finally it all boils down to the schoenbergian ideals (each note its own tonal center and a complete identity between harmonic and melodic space) minus wagner and expressionism so that in working with this material one can think of "activating" various areas or pitches as with a kind of sonic grid—a mondrian-like process of overall composition done almost playfully within a rigid clear framework

in performing what?(?) 2 vibraphones hidden drives 1 & 2 the significance of all this is that the 2 vibraphone parts & vocal parts are made up of three interlocking pentatonic grids by themselves this will never be clear by themselves this isn't even interesting however when combined with the hidden drives the different echoes or reverberations of the 3 grids are variously stressed by the pno or vln & cello—the pno for example will pass from non-relation (contrary pitches) thru relation (octave or unison doubling which brightens the part being doubled) to non-relation again in the course of its converging path

"you can't eat a still life" (an eye-piece) which i received while picking up the pieces seems to have something to do with the overall aura of the experience it clearly has a situ-tonal context a generalized sounding because of this and because visuals are often a problem in a music setting this "piece" may be left out of "complete" performances of local exits (keep the title in other words) after all performing spaces are situ-tonal too and some aren't always receptive

ideally all the ingredients should be set before the other pieces begin the 39 eggs are to be glued together in pairs (good luck) side by side they are to be all hard boiled and then randomly distributed (let the chips fail where they may) the box of salt should be dumped in one mound in an out-of-the-way spot where it can be seen and pillows or a chair back set on the floor for a singer with microphone the electric metronome is to be pre-set at 108 to 112 and equipped with a line switch to turn it on & off then wrapped with cloth and tied with ordi-
nary twine. Don't forget to dump the pepper just as you did the salt
the two white plates should have the candles affixed to them and then
be placed in suitable locations. Do not light the candles; ideally the
whole performing space should be white (or black) and softly lit in red
cycles (pre-recorded tape) is what was going on. It's a real-to-reel-piece
when it's part of the whole it is to be played back as not exactly part
of the whole in the distance always heard but softly

when done alone cycles takes on another life. It is to be done as a medi-
tative group chant; the elements being the taped neighborhood cycles
(motorcycles) and the special cycles produced in the back of each per-
sion's throat (a body pulse in the voice) almost like gargling. These
sounds are to emerge from the groin from the place where laughing and
sobbing conjoin (a full cycle). Beyond this the coexistence of man-
made and man's cycles the specific energies called upon are those of
tuning of striking a balance between the throb of the body/voice and
of engines that is to find in experience a stable point in sound between
ourselves within ourselves and the ourselves that dream of traveling—
getting outside ourselves. To assist in this the participants are all to be
provided with special "chopper" tuning forks (87.6 cps) used to tune
motorcycles. The process then is to play back the tape. Everyone works
to bring out certain resonant frequencies of the pitches produced by
the motorcycles. In time and with careful listening to the tuning forks
a group unison will emerge (enjoy it)

Local Exits was commissioned and first performed by the American
Artists Series at the Cranbrook Art Museum, Detroit on March 13,
1976.

Cycles was first performed in N.Y.C. at The Brook on May 13, 1976.

What(?) received its first performance with "you can't eat a still life"
at the Franklin Street Arts Center (N.Y.C.) on July 13, 1977. (and all
the lights in New York went out — you can see there is something to
the number 13)
what
what is what
what is what
want what
what want is what
want is what
we want what
we want is what
what we want is what
what want is what
what want is what
we want we
what want is we
what we want is we
what we want is what we
we want what we
what want is what we
what want is what we are
what we want is what we are
what we want is what we are
want is what we are
we want what we are for
we want is what we are for
what we want is what we are for
what we is what we are for
what we be is what we are for
we want to be is what we are for
what we to be is what we look for
what we to be is what we look for
we want to be is what we look for
what want to be is what we are looking for
what want to be is what we are looking for
what we to be is what we are looking for
what we to be is what we are looking for
what want to is what we are looking for
what want to is what we are looking for
what we want to is not what we are looking for
(turn on tape-delay)
want we

WHAT want we
what want IS we
what want TO is we
what want to BE is we
what want to be is WHAT we
what ... to be is what we LOOK FOR
what WE to be is what .. look for
... we to be is NOT what look for
we to be .. not what WE look for
we .. be not what we look for
we .. not .. we look for
we not we ..... ...
.. not we
.. BE ...
be WHAT ..
WHAT be what
what WANT be what
what want be what LOOK
what want be what look
what want be IS what look
what want TO .. is what look
what want to BE is .... look FOR
.... want to be is WHAT WE look for
WHAT .... to be is what we look for
what to be is what we .... for
what to be is NOT what we for
what to be .. not what we ARE for
what TO BE not what we are for
what WE to be not what we are ...
what we WANT to be not ..... are
.... we want to be not are
we want to be not WE are
we want to be ... WHAT we are
we want to be what we ARE FOR
we want ... what we ARE for
.. want IS what we are for
WHAT want IS what we are for
what want TO BE is what .. are for
what want TO be is .... WE are for
what want to be is WHAT we ...
what want to be is NOT what we
what .... to be is not what we LOOK
what TO BE .. not what we look
.... to be IS not what we look
TO be is not what we look FOR
WE to be is not what .. look for
we to be is not WHAT look for
we WANT to be is ... WHAT look for
we want to be is what ..... for
WHAT we want .... is what for
what we want IS what for
what we want IS what FOR
what .. want IS what for
WHAT want NOT .... we
what want IS not we
what want is not we
what want is not we
what want is not we
what we .... is not WHAT we
what we BE is not what ..
.... we be is ... what LOOK
  we BE be .. what we look FOR
  we BE be what we look FOR
  ... be what we look FOR
  want BE .... we look FOR
  want BE we look FOR
WHAT want be we .... FOR
what want be WHAT .. FOR
what want be WHAT ...
what want be WHAT
what want be WHAT
what .... be IS what
what .. is NOT what
.... WE is not what
we is not what
we is not what
WE is not ...
we is not
we BE .. not
we be ... WE
WHAT we be we
what we be we
what we be we
what .. WANT be we
what want be we
what want .. IS we
what want TO is .. LOOK
.... want TO is NOT look FOR
want TO is NOT look FOR
.... to BE is not look FOR
to be is not look FOR
to be .. not WHAT look FOR
WHAT to be not what .... FOR
what to be ... what we ARE
what .. IS what we ARE
what IS what we ARE
what IS .... we ARE
.... WANT is we ...
want is WHAT ..
want is what
want .. what
want what
.... what FOR
photograph of William Hellermann by Joie Gorchov
(1st performance of "what??")
PURPLE SEQUENCE

(i)
a moon has thrown a circle
over the window-grille

inside plants stir
a child stops and looks

the moon closes
the child still stays

the royal depth of the darkness
holds him now

(ii)
in the cellar the cat
has knocked down a jar

thunder starts up the boiler
blackberry paws land on the earth floor

the window flaps       a cloud
looks in through the opening

rain and prints flow
to the mouths of ghosts

Brian Swann
YELLOW SEQUENCE

(i)
the child cannot link
petal and plate
mustard all the way
to norwich cathedral doors
yellow soaked into the wood
gingerbread gothic carvings
the saints cluster on his plate
he pops their hot heads
into his mouth

(ii)
it is clarity tinted
not color
clarity stopping the eye
from being totally absorbed
stops its disappearing
gives it something to bite on

(iii)
it is the sounding board
for all clear voices
it is all voices clearing the earth
in its nimbus is all rain
the child’s hope climbs its ladder
it sends down angels to stone pillows
it is a gift without excess

Brian Swann

107
FOUR-PART HARMONY

(i)

Nightwatch
from the corner of his eye
another corner

what moved was the corner itself
not the eye

a long pause space built like home
a corner recomposed itself

the roof dissolved rain
ran buckets under roots

undercutting corners and their thin
connecting links

the eye provided doors the corners
moved out

the eye emptied of corners
began new cartoons on night's white wall

(ii)

Looking Out
he lay down
something lay down with him

he got up
something moved in his shoes

he walked
something looked out through his eyes

he looked out through these eyes
(iii)

Paradox
He said one word
never

the word came back at him
it said
never

he began to talk to the word
he was impressed by its reasonableness

he agreed
never

they both agreed

something had gone wrong

(iv)

Third Person Singular
I hate writing about myself
so I call myself he

but he is always seeking to call himself
I

two’s too much company
I seek a crowd

I swing both ends of the rope
he skips

I let go & stand back while the rope turns
he does fine till he realizes he’s riding

with no hands

Brian Swann

109
GUGLER'S LAND

Bob Gugler's sod house left a sink hole
beside the year-round spring in 4-and-5
We say he was a horse thief.
Bob used to stand in his dugout door
counting the stolen horses in that grassy basin.
What would he have done with them,
ridden them out through the Cayuse Hills?
He could have, it was lonely enough to the west,
three miles in deeds to a rodeo king.

I knew his brother Walt,
who traded farming views with my father
by the mailbox, a white haired packrat
who kept a boy's paradise
of metal tread tractors, declining rakes,
minor plows, and beaver traps
in his machinery lot.

After Walt died, his nephew started moving
a junk yard to the Gugler place.
For days we met Lamont coming and going
towing '52 Plymouths, '60 Impalas,
six or eight huks a day
eighteen miles into the hills
from the Musselshell River post office.
Lamont wouldn't sell a car piece by piece.
Any car you wanted a part from—he couldn't sell it 'cause
Sonny was going to fix it up.

From Bob's rimrocks you could see the rows
of pink, green, and two-tone chrome
glistening around the old dark core.

Lynn Adams Dierdorf
TWO SHEPHERDERS' MONUMENTS

The Raymie Fox band on Mud Creek
was the only sheep camp I ever saw.
The last herder in our country
pulled the wagon with its arched tin roof
behind his pickup. Just a few hundred ewes
grazed out of our sight most days.
We only knew they were gone
when the wagon disappeared.

While the sheep are grazing a herder has time
to stand on high ground and build
what we call shepherders' monuments.
I built one on East Horse Pasture Hill
above our place. My summit mark
was a foot high, held a cookie tin,
a pencil and a spiral book.
When I last looked, the rocks were down
around the tin and the book had been wet
so many times the names and dates were gone.

But the Simmons Creek monument
is tall as a chimney
on the peak of the ridge,
rocks fitted to stand in winds
loose from the mountains
running away onto the plains.
I can imagine the herder
sending out the dog
for the farthest sheep
grazing on the long dry slope
below his building site.
He notices the spread and wedge
of every lichened flake of shale.
This one for the west and south,
this one to shim it, this orange one
for the low edge on the east.
How slowly the ewes move.

Lynn Adams Dierdorf

112
IF YOU REALLY DID CONCEIVE ME, DID IT HAPPEN IN A THUNDERSTORM?

on that august night
was it humid and charged
in the northwoods,
did you come in from the fields
cursing sun and heat,
were your crops dying,
did you carry the hard
fear of the bank in your belly?

did you shove the bedsheets back
hating the wetness of your own sweat,
did the lightning do a torrid dance
thunder rock the foundation
setting the stones in motion,
and you?

when you look at me now,
do you still think of that storm?

M. Ekola Gerberick
THE HARIED VACATIONER FROM INDIANAPOLIS
ON A NORTHERN LAKE

there he sits,
rowing his small boat

in the bow
his wife, five months pregnant

in the stern
a child of three
next to a child of one

their shrill demands
rise about him

at this moment
with the water still
the moon rising

how he wishes that his penis
had lain quiet
undemanding
hibernating for all preceding time

that now he could ride the moon
catch his fish
in total, blissful solitude

M. Ekola Gerberick
O YOU, WHO CAME FROM MY WOMB

an anger heavier
than any other,
the summer air
hangs full

i feel half
myself at war
with the other half

my fingers
will not join my hands
my skin refuses
to cover my bones

i am ripped
heart from body
spirit from flesh

i am a woman
who walks in halves

M. Ekola Gerberick
FOREWORD

I

Ikagnak: With Dr. Kane in the Arctic continues the experiments with poetry as history/biography I began with a series of monologues spoken by people real and imagined who hear of Lord Byron's death. Byron Exhumed was published as a chapbook in 1969 and was later reworked and reprinted in The Poet as Ice-Skater in 1976. At the Cambridge University library, in 1966, I discovered a book on the exhumation of Byron's remains in the 1930's. The book was written by the vicar of the church where Byron is buried. Byron was apparently so well pickled for his long journey from Turkey to England he remains in a perfect state of preservation, and, in fact, has turned to "marble." The result of my meditations on this book was a series of monologues spoken by people who have just heard the news of the poet's death. In these poems I was seeking an alternative to poems relating my own personal pains and joys. The first six of my books present poems of this highly personal order: the tragic death of a son (Songs for A Son); life on an impoverished scrub farm in Wisconsin (The Sow's Head and Other Poems and Bronchial Tangle, Heart System); wrenched love-affairs (Connections: in the English Lake District; Red Midnight Moon; and Cool Zebras of Light).

In 1973, on my fellowships to Yaddo and the MacDowell colonies, I decided to attempt a full-length book on the life of Ann Lee, the illiterate Englishwoman who founded the Shaker religion in the late eighteenth century. That year and the following year I completed two manuscripts of over 100 poems each, in her voice. I unconsciously strove during the actual writing to feel that I was Ann Lee, my sense of her circumscribed always by the few known details of her life. Liveright, Inc., published The Gift to Be Simple: A Garland for Ann Lee in 1975. The second book, Shaker Light, continuing Mother Ann's life in America, has so far largely appeared in magazines. In 1976, I chose King Ludwig II of Bavaria for an equally ambitious treatment, knowing that a personage so dissimilar from the mystical Shaker woman would occasion intriguing creative problems. Again, I spent several months reading biographies of Ludwig and meditating on him. This past year I also visited his castles in Germany. The result was another work (written mostly at Yaddo), a sequence of some 180 poems, largely in Ludwig's voice, called The Picnic in the Snow.
II.

Ikagnak: With Dr. Kane in the Arctic presents a once immensely popular American hero (his funeral in 1856 was second only to Lincoln's in grandeur) who is now largely forgotten. The conceptual problems I met here were again different from any I had so far experienced. In various ways I had felt I was Ann Lee and Ludwig—Ann's loss of her four children (I began writing poetry as the result of my son's death) and Ludwig's bizarre driven inner life paralleled events in my own. But Elisha Kent Kane seemed remote... a public man almost exclusively. Yet, he, too, was driven by immense inner tensions: he suffered from rheumatic fever, caught in the tropics, which at any moment threatened to kill him. He died within a year after his return from Greenland. Kane was driven by his mortality to crowd his life because he knew it would be so tragically brief. Kane was trained in medicine, had a commission in the U.S. Navy, and regarded himself as a geologist and climatologist. He kept careful records in the Arctic even when it seemed his expedition was thoroughly doomed and would never see home again. His journals, superbly written, were published in 1853 and in 1856. These volumes have been of immense help to me.

Arctic Explorations: The Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin is so detailed and beautifully written I had to resist simply turning chunks of it into a form of verse. He is one of the master travel-writers of the age.

While adhering to the facts of Kane's voyage, I have, I think, written my own poems. Most of them are not, then, "found poems." Jeannette Mirsky's To the Arctic (1948) and Elisha Kent Kane and the Seafaring Frontier (1954) were helpful. Dr. George Corbin's Doctor Kane of the Arctic Seas (1972) provided helpful over-views and details. And I have been stimulated by Richard K. Nelson's superb Hunters of the Northern Ice (1969), which contains all anyone needs to know about Arctic Eskimo life, ice and snow, and Arctic flora and fauna. My hope is, of course, that my book will appeal to audiences of all sorts; I do not regard the life of this incredible man, so needlessly forgotten, as the exclusive province of poets. Once again my thanks to the Yaddo Foundation for its generous support of my efforts.

Robert Peters
Huntington Beach, California
PART ONE. KISSUK
from water-sky—a reflection of dark color
thrown by open water towards the clouds

POEM CONTAINING LINES BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1.
Announced by all the trumpets of the sky
the silvery storm arrives— the affrighted air
swells our brig to the heavens. Purple mists
knife and veil the world’s end.
The mainmast, the keel, the walkway cleats
turn slick. All normal human intercourse shuts out.
We huddle in terror.

2.
Come and see the north wind’s masonry!
A rage of snowy cymbals o’er the ocean’s fields
shaped and encrusted, spun up from Dis,
wrought from a chiselled ice-face, fiercely artificed,
sledged and knifed, booming. Roofed
destruction flings our fragile brig, its doors,
its frame, its every timber Smash! A berg’s wild work!

He cares nought for our number or proportion!
Our jib-boom crumbles, ice wreaths a quarter-boat—
it plunges into foam
fills with slush
and sinks, from stem to prow
hushed. Maugre our care,
maugre our belated heed
we are o’er-topped. Months, nay years,
my love, slumber in the deep.
We are hurled, mimicked, and despised
by the Powerful Architect in the skies.
KANE FASTENS TO AN ICEBERG

1. Distressed by loose ice, the ice-tables are demolished by waves. A bleached watersky ahead: a signal for open water—which we can’t forage through the ice to reach. We struggle, warp, heave, plant ice-anchors after eight hours we secure our brig to a berg.

2. Fragments of ice walnut-sized dot the water. First drops of a harmless summer shower. We cast off, as the face of the berg crumbles, crashing with the bellow of artillery. Lost: 360 fathoms of fine whale line, our jib-boom and shrouds, a quarter-boat. Saved: our brig, our lives.
BRIG-QUARTERS

Thirteen half-tame sled dogs
whiffle and snort, snuggle against
the furbag-encased bodies of twenty
men, crammed into a hut space
suited for ten-rimmed beards,
rimed moss under the eaves, drip
of foaming icicles from my beard.

EATABLES

At very low temperatures
our eatables laughably
consolidate; dried apples are
a breccial mass of impacted
angularities, a conglomerate of
sliced chalcedony. The best plan
is to cut up both fruit and barrel
with heavy axes, later thawing the
lumps. Sauerkraut resembles mica
or rather talcose slate. A crowbar
extracts the laminae badly.
Nothing but the saw suits
our sugar. Butter and lard require
a cold chisel and mallet; their
fracture is conchoidal, with an
haematitic (iron-ore pimpled) surface
Pork and beef are rare specimens of
Florentine mosaic, emulating the lost art
of petrified visceral monstrosities
treasured under glass
at the medical schools of
Milan and Bologna.
PART TWO

NAPASALIK

rough ice constituted of ice pieces
pushed up vertically

MIRAGES

Hans, today we have traveled thirty miles
by sleigh. My eyes are crystals.
A shimmer of light at midnight.

Less blind, you stop my rush
from the sleigh. You whip the dogs
into waiting on the edge
of a floe. "There are no seals,"
you say. "There are no
black, swaying, whiskered heads."

The light turns bilious.
Showers of green scream
as the ice-floe beneath us graaaks
and splits.

A LATE SEASON

Red snow
is late to blow.
A fast floe
for miles below.
Nowhere is an Eskimo.
We have lost our way.
HYGIENE

For sponging,
*Aqua Fontana*
is unknown to my men.
I persuade them
to bathe by a ruse.
I pour coffee and vinegar
into pure drinking water,
tell them it's medicinal,
will cure their scurvy.
Also, I force them
to air their bedding and freshen
the stinking cabin.
Dysentery and pur-puric extravasations!

A sailor with a stiff knee:
I enjoin him
to swing his limb continually
for half an hour. He lours
and mutters, and I know
he won't be cajoled.
So, I smear red wax on his calf
and affix metal. Then I seat him
near a magnet. He's forced
to endure
a curative muscular action.
For those sailors who despise
vegetable food (preferring salt-junk,
tinned beef, hard tack) I concoct
an elixir, a splendidly
curative mixture of
- juice of the lime
- oil of the olive
  (swallowed)
followed by raw potato
and sauerkraut pounded
with molasses
into a damnable electuary.
I order them to feast on this antiscorbutic.
THE ADVANCE Ices in,
NEVER TO BE RELEASED

In August we drop anchor
in Rensselaer Harbor.

O garden walls are passional
To bachelors and dames.

The cove is set with icy headlands,
walled in with great bergs seaward.

The hedge is gemmed with diamonds
The air with Cupids full.

Our little brig's in harbor
where it will see us through the winter.

Goodfellow, Puck and Goblins
Know more than any book.

By September 10th the ice has
cemented the brig in stoutly
an iceberg's frozen in,
sixty paces from the vessel—
an immense molar in this Arctic jaw.

Down with your doleful problems,
And court the sunny brook.

We are settled in for winter, our brig's
stores cached on a small island nearby:
Ohlson and Petersen erect a wooden housing
o'er the brig's deck. We have our accustomed
morning and evening prayers, much sober
thought and hopefully wise resolve. We
now live home-hours rather than ship-bell
time.

Robert Peters
SLIGHTLY AFTER THE MIDDLE

we'll get them grown up said florence and then
we'll go live in the southwest
like maybe in arizona
sip
we'll sip get sip them sip sip
and she fell right under the coffee table
amid the most perfect
decor

Walt Phillips
WISDOM HAS NO HOME

daddy she says it’s awful the way they bleed
what can you see to like about the fights?

a panther crawls into the ringside row and
steals somebody’s bag of popcorn

i mean she says
it must hurt they must get sick sometimes

a crane bats its head against the top
of the auditorium

daddy i can’t watch any more
it’s getting to me

pulling away from the curb they just miss a bear
about to soap up a package store window

Walt Phillips
THIS LOVE

it is almost
involuntary
the sliding of my hand
to his rump

he hugs me

his hands
rubbing my back
softly
sliding

my lips

nuzzling
his clean hair
the softness

this love

15 years
growing

from the moment
his fingers
encircled my thumb

Polly Joan
DRUMMER

this son
with dishwater hair
12 inches longer than my own
who kungfu's the refrigerator
who eats oat flakes and cheerios
like rare wine
who kisses me with an open mouth
who pats his puppy the same way

this son
eyes closed
freed by his own rhythm
who pounds white pearl drums
wood sticks flying
his leather muscles
controlling
a heady Chicago beat

this son
I used to rock
rocks his mom
on saturday nights

Polly Joan
OCTOBER NIGHT

the wind is full
of hands
unsettling the leaves
who are dying

her breath is urgent

blowing into my ears
her massive hand
grabbing at my hair

throwing it by fistfuls
to the moon

slipping under my teeshirt
baring my neck
tempting me

Icarus’ daughter

to drop my red and white dishtowel
on the marigolds

the full moon
encases all living
in her beautiful
ghostly mouth

I do not know
whether to let her
lick my mind

or flee
in terror

Polly Joan

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"FORM GIVES YOU THE METAPHOR"

We two work in the kitchen
brie ripens,
the oven warms french bread,
butter softens in a great grandmother’s dish,
an apple is ready and hard.

I uncork the wine, an extravagance,
too much too much,
and pour two glasses to the brim.
At the stove you drop a prickly artichoke into the pot.
Never did anything seem

so right, the wine beside the knife,
the blue and white checked cloth,
blue napkins bordering the white
Rosenthal plates.

45 minutes the heart cooks.

Simple things shine,
silence is more than words.
We’ll finish with dark strawberries.

Judith Rechter