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In the beginning God, unaccompanied,  
And unmanned, made light.  
Adam as yet unimagined.

Then the world unwound  
From heaven. The day unbuttoned  
From the night. The sea unearthed  
And the earth unfastened  
The grass and the trees unhusked  
Their seeds. Adam unhastened.

God created he him, Adam unfallen,  
Unpinned from the ground.  
Unhitched Adam. Adam unbound.

And in order that Eve could uncage,  
Adam unribbed, and both undressed  
And were unashamed.

But the serpent (more subtle), unheard  
From until now, unlocked and unappled  
Eve, and Adam unable.

Then the unthorned got thorns  
And the unthistled thistles, the earth  
Untoiled until then.

Adam unparadized—a song not  
Unsung, of life's uneasing,  
And Adam undone.
Kevin Prufer

GOTHIC: LEAVES

The leaves fell out of the trees
and feathered the grass.

The birds dropped, too, all morning,
their way-too-human eyes rolled back, then black
and gone—

So, stripped and, for once, visible,
the naked twigs—

hob-fingered, tack-fingered.

My mother in her rocking chair: best clean that up.

+

Don’t drive through piles of leaves, she said,
children play there.

She rocked in her chair. Crick, crick.

Heaps of leaves on the roadside—boys
buried in them, leaves in their brittle hair,

so they couldn’t speak—

+

Leafrot and bristle—

The mounds of leaves and bodies inside,
the wind grown chill and mean. Soon, she said,
it’ll be winter.

Best bring that dead wood in.

The naked branches tapped the windowpanes,
but never broke them.
THE PASTOR

I was a long pew of lonely men. The pastor said Kneel and I kneeled.
The pastor said Rise and Now we will sing.

Outside, parachutes tangled in the trees. Soldiers unhooked their harnesses
and dropped to the ground while the parachutes gasped in the sun like morning glories. The gunfire said Bang, bang, bang

and the pastor said Kneel and the old men kneeled. I kneeled. The pastor said Bow your heads.
The parachutes swayed in a wind and from the woods the sounds of sticks cracking.

A morning glory expands like a man who has jumped from a plane. Like a parachute.
The pastor lit a candle and another. The pastor touched his chest here and here. The old men swayed in their shoes.

I was a pewful of such men,
eyes rolled back in my head. Weak and trembly.
How lovely the parachutes in the churchyard, their cords twisting in the wind like a mission.
How lovely, the bells that rocked on dowels in the tower, the sounds that slept in the hammer.
The hammer that swayed like a soldier beneath the bell.

The gunfire said Surprise, said Ache. The pastor said Be seated,
then cleared his throat as though he had something to say, holding his book before him.

In the churchyard a young man knelt by a tree. Someone put a rifle in his mouth and the pastor said Amen.
The bell crashed through the tower.
Rosanna Warren

RUNES

I.

Memorial service, then the long, steely beach where we took refuge and rinsed our eyes in wind. We looked to the North Atlantic to interpret runes in foam, but small waves chopped them away. The marshy reeds behind us tasseled hair. Our mouths gulped gusts, we were hungry, had nothing to say, A. so very much not being there. When we ate at the rickety fish shack on the inlet dock, a stench rose from tidal wash, its poisoned sludge pricked our nostrils, tanging each decomposing bite of lobster salad. How then could we say goodbye, with our mouths full, our stomachs rising. We drove back to the city in edgy silence. Dusk clogged the lanes. The skyline a portcullis upside down.
Dawn reached in and strummed a full sweep of the hand across the vertical rods in the chair back, and struck another chord on the balusters along the balcony in the faded Matisse print on the bedroom wall. By now the whole room was humming and we had sprung awake. The beech tree dealt out a full deck, in flashes.

Who could read that day’s fortune? By noon, in the meadow, sweet william vied with day lilies, foxglove, and tall tufted weeds. Clumps of mist dragged jellyfish tendrils across the lake.

Nancy, from her wheelchair on the veranda, took stock of her childhood view and observed a dead branch half-fallen and trapped in the upper boughs of the white pine. John brought out watercolors and painted and repainted in puddles and eddies the mountainscape he has mulled over for fifty years. When will he get it right? Mist billows and drifts, lake water gleams like a blade unsheathed, the loon dives and seems likely never to re-emerge.

Inside, the ceiling paint flakes, its scrofula patches spread. I open an empty album and lay out, as in a vast game of Patience, snapshots from our last, unsettled years.
Donald Platt

SNAPSHOT

Tomorrow is my father’s
eighty-seventh birthday. He walks the halls of his nursing home’s
locked unit

in pink pajamas,

refuses to bathe, get dressed, or shave. In the end even the immortals
become
mortal. In the next-to-last snapshot I have of my father

before his stroke,

he stands in black slacks and white short-sleeved shirt
in front of a birch tree

by our summer house. The light touches
the left side
of his face and body and leaves the other half in shadow.

The birch tree
is the same color as my father. Shouldn’t we shut
our eyes to keep
death out? My father stares straight into the camera.
Father, close
your eyes. Touch the tattered flesh

of the birch,
its smooth bark starting to peel off in strips. My mother will thumb
shut your eyelids, wrinkled

as fallen star magnolia petals. Eyes closed, I hold again your thin
right arm

where a butterfly-shaped scar
has settled above the elbow. I must trace its white wings.
Alabaster: she glows in the dark. And it is very dark, here in the drafty chapel, where the ivory satin nearly yellows when compared to her body, and I would say skin—but there is no distinction between skin and bone. The veil surrounds her like an aura—like another source of light—over the appliqué of chenille and beadwork embroidery. Her face is nearly waxen, upturned—brooding, it seems—below the white plaster of hair gathered into a braid and pinned at the nape. She is very still—exceptionally still—as someone in an adjoining corridor ruminates over the way whales breed in their sleep. How do they maneuver? In that broad cradle of water, do they have identical dreams?

And when we leave it is evening, the air damp enough to chill. No. It is piercingly cold, in spite of the fresh-laid peat, the newly cut hibiscus—squat and oddly welcoming—, a couple of nectarines about to be planted and the camellia blossoms, whiter than the stucco behind them, opening their petals, exposing the central bud . . . and in the wan and graying sky, nothing but the white bride, stone who does not care for us, shrouded in her veil.
As if through glass, through windows, in a café, in the afternoon or early evening, in June, in June or November, month like a fetish of gray—a month of water hanging onto itself; until it drizzles, a month of dulled light—he is seen for a moment, accidentally, between appointments, in the middle of errands, walking down steps, the cement steps, say, of an old bank—old enough for granite, for columns—pulling his keys out of his pocket, or gripping the small black remote that replaces keys (which you can’t hear the sound of, behind all this glass), and approaching his car, so that for an instant you see his face unguarded—or as unguarded as you will see it—and you try to memorize it, but it’s too fleeting, so that now only the back of his head, and maybe the veins in his arms that you memorized before (the way his fingers go, his shirt)—or the waiter comes, the waiter comes by and asks if you’ve decided, the waiter comes by and asks if you’ve made up your mind—

but this is the opposite of confession.
Camille Norton

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(after Cardinal Paleotti, Rome 1597)

I. John in the Wild IV, Caravaggio, 1604

Who wouldn’t look at your lean, slouched beauty,
your shocking whiteness of body
seized inside the leafy tracing
of an obscure, dead wilderness?
You in your fur, in your red sheet,
your thighs parted and your eyes
turning away from my eyes
into your privacy, your
masculine power.

I was a boy those years I followed along the road
crying, take me, take me
into the wild, everywhere you go.
I dressed like you in suede fringed boots
and Levi jeans and muskrat fur
and a leather belt and buckle,
wanting your power, wanting to be
your Greek boy lover and you a man
wrestling me to the mat
or taking me in a field.

One night I painted you to look like a girl,
kissed you clean of the powders and shadows
by which we insinuate ourselves
into the contours of the bodies to come.
You saw through me then,
how I’d top you if I could
and tame you.

Then the other wilderness began.
I fell obscurely into my body
as all women fall when they are wild, feral.
We fought. We turned the sheets red from the wounds. We were untamable. We must have died then. We didn’t know how not to.

2. *Judith and Holofernes*, Caravaggio, 1599

I was nineteen when you went missing on the road for a week with Albert’s girlfriend. I wanted to call the police, but Albert said: *Don’t do that.* The way he said it I knew you’d screwed us both and Terri too. But we had to be cool because nobody owned nobody.

Each time you’d betray me, I’d fuck Gary, the Vietnam Vet, in revenge for your amours. I studied detachment, read Sartre and Simone De Beauvoir in our bed. All that wisdom and I wasn’t torn yet. I was learning to take it like a man who parses Nietzsche between blow jobs and lines of crystal meth.

Just when I’d begin to break down from dispossession and the longing to possess, I’d hear Bob Dylan singing meanly inside me: *just like a woman, just like a little girl*

and I’d spring back with my girl’s dagger and cut and cut your man’s mane, your blue-veined throat.


Like the boy Mario in Caravaggio’s *Medusa*, I look concave but am convex. My face pressed against the train window might be his face swimming behind the glass. I’m young as he was, twenty.
The landscape streams by in tapers
of green and white and bars of black.

The moment of leaving's a gash
smeared with fixative or maybe it's memory
that rubs it flat, that leaving, those eyes
cold and glittering as a peacock's,
the hair coiled into lizards of light,
the girl's mouth crying into a declivity.

How could you fear her? She's too little.
She's only a sprite or a speck on your retina
as you stand watching from this other field
of time. The fields are lush. You
have everything she's ever wanted.
Can't you wish her well?
She's already moved past you,

and only you know where she's gone to.
PARADISE

1. *Itzá Historian, Tayasal, Guatemala, 1525*

Cortés rode a wounded horse, Cortés the god. *We have not come to kill you,* he said. *Let us rest with you awhile in this green shade.*

Our brothers had run away, fearing the plague of whiteness, the hairy faces and flaming crosses of the cavaliers, but Cortés, Cortés

played for us on trumpets of gold and bone like thunder before rain, like our god Chac who makes the storms, and Cortés’s little tapir of a horse sat on the ground like a woman bleeding from her womb. When he left her behind, we fed her flowers, iguanas and cooked turtles,

but she could not live without him. And so we built him a new horse we called Tzimín Chac, little horse and god of thunder,

and we put her in our temple and worshipped her.

2. *Father Urbita, Tayasal, Guatemala, 1618*

I entered this green hell rife with idols, stone faces at the top of stone stairs and a statue of a horse sitting like a devil on the ground, in *no known equine posture,* shaped like a human or like a woman unnaturally hung with teats, covered in flowers.
How not to be filled with a holy rage
how not to seize a stone tablet in my hands
and smash to pieces the animal they adore?

The Indians swarmed over us with terrible faces
of cut stone, crying unintelligibly in the fiery tongue
they use among themselves, but Father Fuensalida

preached at the top of his voice and they let us go.

3. Itzá Historian: Arrival of Father Delgado, Tayasal, Guatemala, 1622

This Delgado had a fur face like the two who killed our god.
He wore the hair skirt and the beads, like them,
and carried the cross and came singing out of the forest

with eighty of our kind whom he had bewitched.
We greeted them joyfully with blind smiles
and waited for them to make music for their god

in the gathering place where they plant the cross.
We came on them then and tore out their hearts
but we did not eat them for fear of the poison.

We burned their hearts and buried them, we fled
far into the heart of the world where the tapir feed,
where the thunder gathers to make the rain

and where no white men ever come.
The shepherd followed the wolf here along deer paths. In doing so, he found the city of his birth in ruin. He had lost track of time.

When did the three fire-ponds silt in? When had the ax made its way through the nine orchards? How long had autumn lingered on the threshing floor? If he knew the wolf’s language, he would ask the wolf.
Then as now, the same whetted
light of March,
I can hear it hone
itself blue on the snow. With the sled’s
lurching chop against my ankles
the only thought in my head is home. And then scram,
get lost, you snotty little worms! The big
boys’ adolescent voices break
and echo, grinning like the weasel they say
hides in the sledding hill. Its gleaming gape
of bluish teeth could crush my heels
so they shatter like glass.
And like bones, like naked cartilage, then
as now, the snow is blue.
I hear March gnawing.
OPEN THE DARKNESS

Held tight in the hips’ lead mold and in wave after wave of darkness a stone ring around my neck

I’m pushed out over the deep

and open the darkness with my mouth a folded violet two leaves a cleft fruit releases its pain and my body opens in every membrane and out beyond all borders

trembling between my thighs a voice calls

which is not mine
THE MOVE

Can everything burn, can everything give light
after you died, father
I found an old cigar butt
on the planing-bench in your workshop
matches and avalanche

translated by Marilyn Nelson
A very serious undertaking, it is,  
the way the interior unflattens  
as we press our faces to the garlands  

and veils, over these  
better surfaces, better maps. So we  

motored on down  

for the evening.  

The trees that were around us were themselves  
for a moment. Later, I’m silver  
under the stars.  

And so was everybody else.  
We were no different.  

Silver trees over silver girls  
on these silver hills.  

It was horrible. But that’s just  
words. I could just as easily  
have said wonderful.  

Please.  

Don’t remember me like this,  
remember me some other way,  

some way I never was.
MY LIFE IN ALCOHOL

The things we did, long past the last opportunity to be someone else. Details in 90 seconds, with big adjectives. Now we hide everything, after the mistake. And people are in love anyway. A little scrambling may be necessary, as was the style then. And I’m in this poem, there in the 21st row, in the form of disembodied anger. Asymmetrical, but with balance of form. So what makes a life anyway, as now it’s getting further away. And within each category, there are many degrees of difficulty, of course. And the possible margin of error is all week. Back here, we’re busy fearing death, working from notes. The one labeled “Who Am I.” The one with my brother losing his eyebrow. And how we’re making it through our lives anyway, without consolation. The one where they’re thinking about numbers, and making announcements over loudspeakers. One so often doesn’t know where one is. Still to be named, they’ll be dredging this river for me in vain. For I’ve learned how to float, eyes blank, to the sea.
Largo Argentina’s cats yawn morning away in the sun. From here I see Boromini’s lantern spiraling the sky above Sant’ Andrea della Valle. When traffic starts to wrap its loud ropes round the city, cats feel the ground shudder under them but know their own safe keeping, safe as houses.

Under this perfect circle of light that is the sky roofing the centre-space of the Pantheon, once I stood with my father, looking up and listening to his wonder—no common moment for that man of sober nerve and nullity, on edge until the first beer of the day would settle him. But there we were, for once, at the center of the house of all the gods, and, imagine, marveling together, where now on a shaft of sunlight a butterfly becomes a fluttering double wing of white fire, a bit of angelbody made flesh or nearly flesh for us for an accidental minute, to be a brief blaze in our dimension, then rise up through that true skylight and keep on going back—back into its own invisible realm where stone and circle, flesh and spiral are translated into simple light, a single lifetime burning one big instant and becoming, look, infinity.
1. While all the stars through the starry
   night sky were radiant as always
   with the explosions of their great
   central nuclear fires, the men cut off
   the witch’s hair to assure the devil
   could not hide there.

2. During the outdoor concert
   of mandolin, harmonium and boys’
   choir taking place in the city park,
   and during the fireworks afterwards
   showering light in colors above the city,
   all during the applause and the people
   dispersing, the highest ice-field
   on Jupiter’s largest frigid moon
   was silent and absolute, pale
   against a bolder black, unmarred,
   pure, without monument.

3. As his horse stumbled up the muddy
   bank, the soldier’s spiked helmet fell
   from his head and rolled into the river.
   At the same time many zones away
   a student taking notes at a lecture
   wrote: a white dwarf is destined
   to drift in space for millennia.

4. Starlight, leaving Sirius A
   in Canis Major at the moment
   she publicly renounced her faith,
   reached her eyes eight years later.
In that instant, she remembered. Was this an echo coming as light? or light coming as memory? the past and present finally united? the same moment of the event or another?

5.
The horseshoe crab carries in the pit of each of its cells a sheer script composed in the beginning by its own created devotion, created before its compound eyes, bulbous brain, tubular heart, before seeking and decision, a devotion created before creation, when naught was the only sum. We can all remember that.

6.
If, at midnight on a summer solstice, you look down into a rain-filled bowl of any kind—flower or shell, hollow stump or half-skull—down past surface and descent, past reflection into sibilance and on, down to the first star-thrash of darkness, you will see how fathomlessly perfect is god's conception of your home.
CLOSER PSALM

the psalm is a voice
that calls your name

as you are stepping
into the street

if it wants you dead
it is only

to bring
you closer
UNWRITTEN PSALM

and we,
we who expected so little
of you
Assuming this is the last day of my life
(which might mean it is almost the first),
I’m struck blind but my blindness is bright.

Prepare for what’s known here as death;
have no fear of that strange word forever.
Even I can see there’s nothing there
to be afraid of: having already been
to forever I’m unable to recall
anything that scared me, there, or hurt.

What frightened me, apparently, and hurt
was being born. But I got over that
with no hard feelings. Dying, I imagine,

it will be the same deal, lonesomer maybe,
but surely no more shocking or prolonged—
It’s dark as I recall, then bright, so bright.
Apple alone in a bowl, and
then the sense-lit
apple
touched
(more on this presently)

And late at night I think I’m being followed: it
 is a bald child

in a white nightgown or wedding dress
which drags behind him
like the tides

The cat has no appointment
the bird no country
not a single
crumb

And did you notice the sky yesterday

It resembled a partially burnt sheet
of paper upon which remains
the fragment of a sentence I don’t even want to think about

Cradled in his arms a bald doll he’s pretending to nurse

Blood-colored shadow
of the rose: annunciation
to the wolves

Tell you what, I will translate this for you

but only if they teach me how
to read

Words of rain
FOR DONALD JUSTICE

There are happinesses gone forever
The days of receiving your letter
Or amidst blowing leaves, on the quiet
streets of small midwestern towns
late at night typewriter sounds.
THE KNOWERS

Little bird bones come back
as a bird, as a bird
loudly singing
again
in the dead leaves
come back as green
leaves: only
we
don’t return.
FLYLEAF

On the branch a finch tells me of seahorses, last night, spotlights of rain on the black shingle, through my father’s fingers curved into binoculars, pink petals will be opening an aqueduct will be flowing, creek in the plastic cup turning the toy boat to the prayer folded look the father and daughter are giving back to the water.
A child with the eyes of a dog
asked me one day
if it’s hard to become a writer.
It was winter and always raining
on the short path between school and home.
Garbage churned in the gutter,
frantically washing.
Even garbage yearned to be clean.
I could feel its delight when a puddle
caressed my feet through my worn-out shoes.
The milk hadn’t been delivered yet.
We stood meekly in line (oh, far too meekly)
but couldn’t stick it out.
It was too cold.
The neighborhood dogs began to bark,
the darkness grew thicker, and no one had gloves.
Not-a-Soul-Around lay across the entrance.
Power-Failure, too, with Gas-Shut-Off,
gossiping, growling in their corners.
Cold, biting cold,
cold and ice, disgust.

An orphan asked me one evening
on the short path between school and home
if it’s hard to become a writer.

One eye of a whipped dog
told the other eye of a whipped dog
to keep careful watch all around
until it learned to bite
and raise neck and soul—
stars above,
death near.
MESS KIT

You taught me to cross to the other side of the street
when the mystery in the teacup vanishes
and the poems’ flesh withers
right under my eyes sickened
from gulping down too many gobs of misery.
I wasn’t a good recruit.
I couldn’t get anything right—
exther the bullet’s range without a gun
nor the phantom metallic taste of the brain’s mess kit.
I supposed I’d vanquish each second that marches on the heels of
the last
and cram my rucksack full of verbs honed razor-sharp in the attic.
If stupidity hadn’t decked me out
with circus hoofs and a Turkish cap of ice.
I’d have said naïveté caused my ruin.
It’s only that, you see, though you no longer can see,
I’ve had my fill of drifting
in and out of the dark windows of your dreams.
I’ve had my fill of your endlessly prophesying my grave,
which I started to dig long ago.

Who then will heap the brain’s mess kit
with naive phantoms?
Who will proudly sit at the window
in Turkish cap, hoofs, stupidity, prophecy?

translated by Adam J. Sorkin and Daniela Hurezanu
And the hand going down  
with no sight of land  
points at “you,” exactingly over the water  
to your lips, regaling  
and informing the treacherous ear  
of the barmaid, your crony, or your date.  
I look for a dangerous  
secret, hoping to claim  
important silence.

One can’t talk  
sacred knowledge of the universe,  
its physics or its pastoralism,  
as a disciple must suck the tongue of Koumen  
the divine herdsman to learn those secrets.  
But this intelligence is war—navies  
fear even the pasture stream fisherman.  
His bait is dialect,  
stutter, or lisp, mere  
ripple or rapid of mention.

One may go around talking, go naming things,  
cat after the All-Knowing,  
self-consuming candles after saints,  
yet not misspeak.  
One may recite, to the stroke victim,  
the mosaic-bridge-to-heaven  
overtone-tongued ovations of Hopkins—  
yet awaken no assailant.
In the lyricism of crickets,
with allegiance vowed to evening freedom,
young men still drown
in slurred asides of offguardedness and beer.
We did not watch them by the edge of the pool.
They fell, eager.
Still, the poster’s trust stays true—
it leads us to our brink of words:

I talk,
spend my whole life faithfully
making talk, talk as originally
as I can about what I see—
and is it only a cutthroat who will listen,
is it solely a butcher who will believe me?
I mean read me,
that’s what I really mean . . .

Then you reach out for that
drowning hand. Your own is dry. You throw
your pen, small oar, to the wreck
and silent, speechless, hold on tight,
saving so many words.
Every Bolivian warp-faced patterned skirt or manta
Has a region where a weaver cannot fit the pattern in.
And you wear this: birds, chevrons, flowers, until
The blurry place is neither plain nor figured,
A pebbly stripe on the fabric otherwise motifed.
It is impossible to get the shuttle through the shed there.

It’s like the silent area no one warned us of
In a percussive parade—where we couldn’t imagine,
Sitting on the curb in Christmas frost,
Why every band went mute there,
Swallowed its brass as it passed us by,
Marching its held din towards the judges’ stand.
Play! Play! We’d see them coming and need their flair.

Taciturn, they played, but subsequent to our need.
Your afterlife’s incommunicado, if indeed you have one.
I hyperbolize to say breviloquent. I embroider.
Is it your struggle to hold horns down and quiet yarns?
Is it like my ending a hymn before the last-ditch chord,
To torture faith? Is it the time I do not have
My goose, my swan, my allegretto run,
Before I make hush-hush in the urn with you.

A break in the cochineal, in the Bolivian cat’s eye
Skirt border, a stop of the weaving sword,
Trumpets and majorettes. A lull against my breath.
Mum drums. Then they reecho.
Jangling of hangers, whisk and bowl, accent
Of shower, jazz of frying oil.
After long suspension I love again.
Needlework, valentines, a basket: I won’t embarrass myself for
the sake
of a poem. (Girls’ feelings are cliché.) To be big, by nightfall, on
the installment plan—
the industry is dreaming. Maybe I’ve persuaded people
to dreamland: but I deserve a house. I don’t deserve a
house. Dot
Secret
trapdoors in loveseats. Pep gallivanting from one of my
days
to the next. Great. If you give milk away for free then
the supply
relieves demand. Have we made good use of our time? The cat
screamed all day,
then gave birth behind the tire of my car. Every child at some
point says
she didn’t ask to be born
of the love-starved girlie-
girl-next door and her thugs. Mom spends all her money on
me
and the baby she names ‘President.’
SURLY PIGGIES

Luckily-crippingly—let’s highlight my well-being for a moment: This little self-actualized life-long friend.

This pretty baby unicorn

tucks me in. This shabby workhorse
breaks a promise. This little workforce waits for father’s wink—it is a penance—

this _hankered after_ paying its own way.
This little potency shares as much benevolence with the world as she can. This “No-fault” divorce unites my theory

with practice. For partnerships out of love’s reach. This little prophecy—what the New Masculinity should flush: this, strictly speaking, _wee wee wee_ through the church-contest. To the junctures of my metatarsals (I jokingly call “the wimps”). Or, my brave little

uprights.
lost to a short pencil, words like milk, 
eggs, celery, gone to the library, I 
fed the cats all flying through it, 
using it up. And that eraser coming down, 
those second thoughts, that how-do-you-spell-that?, 
those changes of heart—serious, be gone!—when 
a line drawn through whatever word 
would do. When a single shoe 
appears in the street, think 
of the scramble. Someone lifted, carried off, 
someone running, someone that 
distraught, that drunk or 
indifferent, that something. (Who’s right? 
my brother asked my mother 
before any overwrought TV.) No, erase. 
Delete. If we revisit 
the pencil, I’d write a few more words 
to wear it down. I’m all worn out, I heard 
again and again through my childhood. Three 
generations after supper. Such mulling 
for the night. Worn out? I thought 
of a tire—you can’t get a penny 
in its tread—or pants out at the knee, shirts 
thin at the elbow, never who 
we really are—life that 
seems unstoppable—never the small, 
hard eraser at the end of it.
SIMPLE MACHINES

The spoon, for instance, just
suggests in its small half moon, the size
of a good swallow, its weight
the first bare counter-weight
against a thing so huge.

Hunger, a machine too—

the red light switched on
to alert, alert, the humming
begun in any
similar steelbox.

The fork makes

further distinctions, the world
not to be gathered but seized, not
invited in
but pierced, dragged along. So we
absorb, refuel,
reset brain, heart,

the mercurial point-of-view
shifting with each bite, finally
omniscient now: oh, all of us sated, every last
glad living thing.

The bowl—just

a larger spoon for the little spoons
to visit, grow inspired, rising
to whatever lips. The plate—a white or blue
expanse, the dream we have
to the horizon line

at the edge of the table

where even the most unsinkable ships
might vanish because the world
is flat via the eye’s most clever first machinery. Everyone but Columbus knew that. And the knife.

Better not

think of the knife, its blade turned in for the moment, so spare in its beauty, between spoon and plate, resting too quiet in the shade there.
Gita Chattopadhyay

THIRTY-FIVE PARGANAS

A motorbike, sten gun, a dazzle of black,
the one who has just fallen down on her face,
  isn’t that India?
We got two harvests from our fields, not just wheat
  but gold from the mines,
now turned into sharp steel or a ball of fire.
Don’t the girls come to take water
  from the Satadru River any longer?
Cowherd sitting on the Kaveri’s banks,
  don’t you let drop your long fishline anymore?
The image of the goddess stopped unfinished in the Ganga’s clay,
  watch out, the boat’s about to capsize
  in the Brahmaputra’s current!
Whoever you are, putting in my hands
  the shattered thirty-five districts,
shatter me also into pieces and pieces
  and pieces and pieces...
A motorbike, sten gun, a dazzle of black,
the one who has just fallen down on her face,
  isn’t that India?

translated by Carolyne Wright with Paramita Banerjee
Hillel Schwartz

SURSUM CORDA

a housing development in Northwest Washington, DC

The hart leaps.

Through the bracken of Children’s Island, its sedge and mallow, through the brush and tangle of Stadium Narrows, the hart leaps.

Past the Canada geese gulls starlings sparrows & crows, past flea market flannels cottons linens corduroys, blooms of rust curling over cast-iron stump-legged stoves, teflon peeling off bundt pans frying pans & bake trays, the hart leaps.

Across grooved tailgates of pick-ups & second-life trucks & white scoop-lipped concrete deadweights of a Grand Prix track that roared once into the records & now sits silent, skirting winter-bald grass & a golf club’s loopy fence, indefensible, uphill on icebroken pavement & a bookhouse for bombed-out Beirut, past 19th & M where a five-inch blade five times five days ago was driven into a delivery man in busy daylight, the hart leaps.

Into seven-square square blocks of gridded deerpark moor, of hunting, coney-poaching, Crown lands & highwaymen, a wilderness for the staking and taking, neither National Arboretum nor oaks of Dumbarton but Sursum Corda, that they shall be lifted up, here in Jubal, glory & comfort, where more are fallen & dead more quickly than stroke, than shock, in this red square & plaza of promises, catholic talismen of fair winds & crossings for a Northwest Passage, for a land of lows, storm fronts, mortuary cold, a land
of the could-have-been, streets earstruck with seven-on-four
beats of blood in the hot walls of ears, blood like lichen
on stubble of old sidewalk & cyclone fence under
tundra skies of lost dominion, lost direction
from courtyard to courtyard, gravel to cement, through beer-
bottle grass to Coke-green glass to yellow-white to brown
to blue, the hart leaps.

Greatgrandmas look through torn curtains to see him rampant,
tearing through bushes, his horns flashing with raw bonelight,
an emergency of wonder, brown-red, ambulant,
their heraldic stag of tincture sanguine & fur bright
with sweat & flecks of foil. Now the children chase after,
fingers flared from their heads like horns, prancing in his wake,
or fists to their mouths for the loud brass of hunting horns,
dashing in greyhound frenzy & whippet crazy-eights.
What’s happening here? Who is running the tapestry
through the looms, the stag around the tight bends & charges
of the NW, over fine dust, spent shells, & dark green
mazes with ancient etched numbers & flowered marges?
What game is afoot? In their black-&-whites the Finest
hear the sightings crackle in over their speakers, call
for soft-poison darts, doctors, game wardens, riot vests,
revving their engines for what may come down after all
to high-speed pursuit, wrong-ways on one-way avenues,
dashes over medians & dividers. Copters
are circling now, networks covering this breaking news
as his hooves strike blue fires across the faulted curbs
of the Project, his horns lit by flashes & first hints
of sunset, his head twisting in a mounting panic,
his sense of true north lost among the bands of children,
the rush of rotors, district captains hustling manic
in their blinds, lips to bullhorns, blue flash red flash white flash,
lost among the pounding bass of boom-car double amps,
out of sight of tall trees, beyond salt lick or high grass,
he stops, breathing harder than first thunder, & stamps. Stamps.
The whippet-children stand stockstill, wary as old hounds.
Dealers drop their seal-tite bags. Traffic slows to a cough.
Copters hover in five o’clock suspense.... Bring him down,
hears a crouching man through an earpiece small as what’s left
of shooting & stars once they fall to earth, & the heart
leaps.
"FALLING WEATHER"

idiomatic expression, Texas Panhandle, from A. G. Mojtabi, Blessed Assurance

First the hawks
head down, sparrow
or red-tailed, then
the pocket gophers
burrow in, thirteenn
lined squirrels, rock
squirrels, never know
what’s coming in
falling weather: rain,
hail, hawks, snow,
stocks, bobcats, rockets,
certificates, bonds, good
women, so hunker
under heaven watching
with the grasshopper
mouse, badger, turkey
vulture for something
to fall . . . in
on, over, out.
Underground at Pantex
the final assembly:
warheads. Overhead: thunder,
manna, skunkweed, chaff,
pepperseed, cyclone, rumors
of grace, Barbary
sheep in slipgrass,
acts of falling
all and everywhere—
arches, the momentarily
sober, everyone that
did not converge,
and Newton’s old
wormed apple, London’s bridges, Ant Farm Cadillacs one after the other, nose down in cornfield at Egyptian angles, absolutely anything . . . curtains, ragtail bats, spent Monarchs. What befalls will be over head then done and gone quick as soufflé and sonic boom, after shock, some front passing through, leaving us at worst no more than we’d been from the start, falling into waiting hands wet and red and almost blind.
Pregnant women were to be referred to as “Books,” and women with children as “Receipts.” Men, on the other hand, were “Accounts.” Exiles were “Rubbish,” and prisoners undergoing investigation were “Envelopes.”

—from Gulag: A History, by Anne Applebaum

She felt at times as if she herself were a kind of gulag. Or the “Envelope” of a strategically metaphorical gulag such that the contents of her body were the site of a generalized panic in the form of virulent pockets of investigation.

“Rubbish” was the metaphor she was most steering clear of.

She had found that if her poem were allowed its own head it would begin to lead her to the thicket where the metaphor of “Rubbish” was waiting like a riderless horse.

*

She was drawn to Russians.

She found herself following them down the streets of Brookline, listening to their consonants as if each were a breadcrumb dropped in the terrible woods of history.

She felt like a “Good” “Book,” or a bird of prey.

*

It was a while before she realized that the breadcrumbs were leading her right back to the metaphor of “Rubbish” disguised now as a confectionary home.

Which brought up the question of the witch inside it, and who was to be held responsible.
She sat down on the doorstep while the Russians she had been following went right in.

* 

She understood that she was for the most part Goldilocks.

And thus of a different discursive species than the suffering metaphors of Russian history now lying in their beds like nesting bears laid out for the inspection of the secret police.

She fingered her candy cheeks.

* 

Yet it was true that the “Accounts” and “Receipts” had come home to the city of her own exile to roost.

And that each was a metaphorical “Rubbish” container with the intricate furnishings of terror arranged around its walls like the bones of domestic animals to which it was likely that she was related.

She went to the Russian store on Beacon Street and bought a witch mask.

* 

She began following Russians wearing the mask.

They were not interested, they were Americans now.

She took a bite of the mask, it was delicious.
BAIT

Light like a corrosive wiped
across the sky, 6AM—Crawford’s pond
is obsolete before we have time
to find it in a moonscape of half-decided
condos, the rust & yellow trencher
its claw down in burdock & snapped
alder, skids of 2x4s, skids
of greenish waferboard: Crawford’s
secret, his bass, we decide, biopsied
out & the pond’s feeder stream insinuating
liquid but meaning weak hormonal
dribble where it has enough flow to be
a symbol. 5AM—the pond is already lost
in Crawford’s penciled notes, in his neural
map. We drive dark roads. We see
in pieces: a farm ruin we are suddenly
in the middle of as gravel pops
in our fenders & the car slides, the farm
an idyll, a presumption, an ingenuous
arguing for our species, the farm’s abandoned
hop frames, the wire cagework our lights
articulate as we pass, as we shudder & grind
back into tree outlines or low brush,
continuing. 4AM—we load the car at city’s
edge. We can have our fish yet. The pond
is not yet tainted by irony. Crawford will sing

as he drives. How perfect the fish seem
as we talk bait!
LITTLE POEM

All day I fix the birds
the nails come bent

the old holes open—
the one for song & the one

for dung.
The next man can glue lips
to kisses. The next man can
put wings to despair.
THE EYE BUSH

The last eye opens, swimming with winter pictures.

I hang up the shears & bend close to watch

shadows cross a dark pupil: birds going south.

Overhead, real birds return. The gauze net is done

just in time.
A blackbird dives; another

whistles in the tongue tree, out of reach.
ON THE WANE

High up high
pale moon and I
and all the tempest talk below

hums hard

Here in the halt
the hilt in hesitation's
ounce of air

We go by turns
decaying taking sides
slowing to shadow

Separate
how it suits us
woolen and strange
DIGGING

Steel beams and struts
laddered the night sky

gathered the blind
where we dug down

into the suck of smoke
and leafdamp layers

into the graveled slide
of the rutted ground.

Lockbox and salt lick
you turned my pockets out

see how I glide: cold-
stroked quick and silver

a mineral strike flushed
from the heap and curve

of roughened earth
buckled borne down

on the stir of darkness
we’d gone digging for.
HEAT LIGHTNING

That to which we were beholden as children. I remember the silent flicker in clouds of gauze, how we, banished to a closet-sized room, lay flat-chested on iron bunks.

Voices outside. The scuttled car returning a grown woman to her home. The whole world desperate and she, in heels, clicked up the sidewalk and turned a key.

Maybe it was the mystery of her womanhood, her fullness, to be revealed with the next silent firework. Or perhaps what the heat meant was sweat, and sleeplessness.

It showed things as they were—dishes crusted over, pots black enough to take a flash of blue when we snuck down to the kitchen.

Each stroke of light dull as the moon hidden behind the sheet the woman would be lying under, in her grown-up house joined to ours. There the man would turn slightly

in his sleep, sensing her perfume, her lingerie, imagining she had been out with the girls, not bothering to wake or talk. She, our mascot, magnet, compass rose, might lie under the spell of idolatry for years.
So what if she never needed to tell the truth,
which was, after all, nothing more
than a blur, a white lie
leftover from a series of days
above ninety degrees.
FIELD THISTLE

Herb and spine,
the flat-fisted dream
of stars and dew
formed when he walked
with his telescope
through grasses spotted
by the spit bug.

A raucous noise,
the dawn of great beauty
and he with his tripod
matting the grasses as he walked.

I never saw him dead
on a bed of white down.

Never heard past
the death rattle,
and so, for me
he lives still
here in the ragged, noxious weeds
that make up North America.

He with his freely creeping root system,
milk-juiced,
the most persistent
of all my fathers
on arable lands.
Ellen Bass

LAST NIGHT

She’s fallen asleep for the first time
in days, sunk like a ship to the ocean floor.
So when she stirs, I grab the morphine,
slide the dropper into her slack mouth.

But I’m clumsy, startle her, amber
liquid spilling over her cracked lip.
Up, she croaks, frantic, wild to rise,
and I drag her to sitting,
swing her legs to hang over the side.
She leans against me and it’s almost
tranquil, almost like sitting on a pier,
the dark bay sloshing around us.

But hours go by and the sky
is no nearer to light. No more,
she whispers, and please and enough
each word pushed out on its own.
Mom, I try again, lie down.
I’ll lie down with Ellen, she says,
a wary edge to her voice.

I climb into the narrow bed,
my body just a breath away from hers,
my palm not resting its weight
on her bony shoulder.

I could tell you it was like rocking my infant daughter
through the night of scorching fever
or like finally laying my son in the crib
when the hospital released him.
But with children relief is burdened with hope.
Here, I’d crossed over
into a land of wanting nothing.
The way you came in and said hello, 
and stepped out of your clothes, your words 
(the next-to-last you took 
off was the word “darling,” 
and the last a smile; then 
you opened like parentheses, I entered, 
you closed them and I quivered) 
was how you left, slipped 
on a few flimsy words 
of good-bye 
and shivered.
“SHE WAS A CROWD OF SUNS. . .”

She was a crowd of suns
and hugged him with all her warmth
and light, and with both pairs of her lips.
And she kissed him with her nights. With all her forevers.
Where did she come up with all those things?
He walked through her words
as through a soft rain, and couldn’t live anywhere
else in the world, he wandered in love.
And she taught him to be unable to
say what he felt—but to feel.
How many legs did she braid around him
like so many snakes?
And how long did she take to tell a lie,
saying the word beloved?

It took months—that word was many months long.
THE RHINOCEROS

He's as thick
as a red-neck.

He's like the 20th Century
B.C., that suddenly stands up in history
and takes a little step
forwards,
he can't do much more.

He's made of slumping concrete,
as solemn as tenements collapsing
in slow motion, that's how
he sits, lies down,

ponders his inner being
as empty as a bunker
in which there have been no soldiers
since '44.
MAY EVENING, GENDRAY

How does it fall, evening?  
(Like drizzle, but without the drizzle?)  
A late maybug buzzes around, ponderous flier. In the distance, a car vanishes beyond its noise.

Slowly, the colza-fields fade in their golden poise.  
I hear milk pails clang in my uncle’s barn. The echo of white walls.  
In a trough, piss lingers like Guinness,

dark and foamy. The last remnants of the day.  
Minutes are over; here come the hours.  
The present may exist now without meaning. Double wonder: reality with, and without meaning any longer.

Father comes home from work. He brought someone along: uncle Evening, who sits with me at the table. Visits.  
After dinner, he’d like to read a book. Now and then, he says yes, yes. Guess he’s right,

he wrote it after all. It’s about today.  
When he’s finished, he begins again.  
—I’m startled awake: something’s no longer here. The maybug. I must have been dreaming. It’s nine o’clock.

Night sits heavily by the hearth.  
I hadn’t seen it enter.

translated by Laure-Anne Bosselaar and Kurt Brown
Today the sun is out which is sad.
Trees sad when rustling and when still.
Leaves that drop in July. When the lilies
open their widest, it is sad to be
alone in the house. Guests will come,
how strange to provide only foods they enjoy.
They don’t know he broke chairs
across the back of the table until the table
broke. It is sad that he slept
with those women, some of whom you
also fed at that table. Discussing it, civilized,
was sad, and the climb up
again and again to start over. Today you return
from a smooth sea, laughing
at the story you did not expect, forgetting.
You think, when you feel it return,
how loyal sadness is, how accustomed you are,
spreading its folds about you.
You are clean this morning as if becoming old
were the long, slow purification
of lives, as if what gets called heart grows in later,
as if witnessing wreckage
translates it into something else, lifts an image our
own, such sweep and color: how loss
could be art. We might stop here. But the day
is redeemed at a price. Among the waves
you wondered what it would be not to try, not
fold the triangles or plan baking time,
to be the person who didn’t come up.
Wednesday and you set another table. Admiring the green
of the salad, you notice the world
had promised you nothing, has broken no vow.
THE WATER SAID

It didn’t matter, didn’t mean anything. Too much hair, he said, and flesh, and cigarettes. He was drunk. She tasted bad. He thinks she faked it. Just what had appeared to be your life lifted from your hands and spilling, a little. You lay at the bottom, a still, speeding place. Of the cold like a trout, of the silence behind motion, you were less than the fish. But it waited for you—honey-colored shed, new timing belt, a fly with eyes like green fire—back in the air. You let go of the bottom where dead things rolled and the light broke back into your lungs.
DEER HUNTING IN RAIN

The sky is in the understory.
I’m sitting in my stand, soaked Zen.

A minor god keeps tapping his finger

If one comes,
I’m one with the idea

of killing it. It will make
two dozen meals to be thankful

over. I’ve achieved
the fifth level of wetness,

my coveralls darkened
like the trees’ bark.

This baptism has taken
all morning, but I’m

totally immersed.
Nothing arrives. Then spooks.
TIRES

Exhausted, they’ve been tossed behind the garage. They’ve gotten nowhere. Sure, they made tracks. They got around. They were once in the service of the Prince of Ohio. But no, they did not answer opportunity’s knock. And now, now, they slosh if tipped. Water runs their rut. They breed blood-feeders. They wail for their fate. O. O. O. O.
ON A PORTRAIT BY LUCIAN FREUD

Must it end like this? Desire
in his beat-up Oxfords and grey trousers
smarms off, does not look back.
Thus this boredom,
the body's naked own: same pie-crust flesh,
ripple of breast, pudendal curl.

Must the sofa unravel this way?
That the head finds a pillow
in the soft crook of arm
is no surprise, nor the ankle
blanketed with curdled thigh.
But must the light be so harsh in the room?
Must the footsteps?
Mary Ann Samyn

THIS IS NOT AN ENTRANCE

In the box called June 17th, 1440 minutes in which to retreat or advance.

“Whenever that’s happening, you have to ask yourself if you’re being brainwashed,” a colleague said too loudly.

My husband dislikes my sour face, I’ve been informed, but likes several of my others, thank goodness.

During sharing time, we clapped less during “Feliz Navidad” in summer than when the children experimented with balsa wood and you-just-never-know destruction.

If only all wishes came true so easily, I had said earlier, dreamy.

In real life, I hold up one hand to show my city. On the map, Michigan leaned a little drunk. Tipsy mitten.

“Just then” the storm we’d only heard about on TV.

Shortly thereafter, I opened my mouth to decide—

*Donald Justice has gone, taking his piano. There is no more music left in North America. So might a lament run, paraphrasing his “Variations for Two Pianos,” for the gracious, cranky, Iowa/Florida master of his art who turned out so many good poems and, during his years of famous teaching, so many good poets. But of course the music is still with us, embedded in this fine *Collected Poems*. And the teaching continues, for any careful readers of this volume, especially those curious to learn about the felicitous relationships that can develop between the textures and tones of American experience and the larger world of poetry in other languages.*

*Surely one of Justice’s enduring accomplishments is that of a translator. Not in the sense in which we usually use that word, someone who translates Dante or Homer or Mallarmé, but indirectly, as one who took often unorthodox paths and methods to mediate between his world and the worlds of other poets, especially those poets of other times and other languages. Whatever the model for this behavior—Pound may be cited, certainly—the result has created possibilities for our poetry that we are probably just beginning to understand.*

*Here is a poem from the 1987 book, *The Sunset Maker*:*

**SEA WIND: A SONG**

Sea wind, you rise  
From the night waves below,  
Not that we see you come and go,  
But as the blind know things we know  
And feel you on our face,  
And all you are  
Or ever were is space,  
Sea wind, come from so far  
To fill us with this restlessness  
That will outlast your own—
So the fig tree,
When you are gone,
Sea wind, still bends and leans out toward the sea
And goes on blossoming alone.

*after Rilke*

When I mentioned I was reviewing Justice’s *Collected Poems*, a friend of mine cited this as a favorite, a lyric of quiet perfection and astonishing grace. I found myself agreeing, and then grew curious about its relation to the original. In what sense is it “after”? How much of its excellence does it owe to the original?

In fact, Justice’s poem can almost be said to improve on Rilke’s. Curious readers can find the original German and a good translation in Edward Snow’s *New Poems [1908]: The Other Part*, pp. 112-13. I’ll illustrate what I mean by a glance at the ending. Rilke concludes with “O wie fühlst dich ein / tribender Feigenbaum / oben in Mondschein.” Snow renders this quite well as “O how you’re felt / by a burgeoning fig tree / high in the moonlight.” That’s good translation, something we can never have too much of. But Justice’s handling of the ending is a kind of alchemy that shifts the image from a fairly static and predictable Symbolist-era picture, the tree in the moonlight, to a dynamic realization of the world of process and change; he is importing insights from elsewhere in Rilke, particularly the *Duino Elegies* and the *Sonnets to Orpheus*, that transfigure the lyric and strengthen its power.

I emphasize this alchemy because I suspect that many readers approach this example and its implications blinded by certain stock prejudices: that translations are not as important as “original” poems; that “after” poems are a kind of oddity marred by a little cheating, an uneasy merger whereby we get neither a faithful version of the original nor an original poem that deserves respect. If you were selecting poems for an anthology, you would not, I suspect, include any “after” poems.

Such prejudices might then be strengthened by Justice’s modest note, which mentions that this and another poem that...
follows "came out of an attempt to write a play" based on the period of Rilke's life in which those poems were written. Thus we have a poem that "fails" to be a translation and "fails" to be an "independent" or "pure" Donald Justice lyric, and that is left over from a "failed" attempt to write a play. Justice makes it especially easy for us to ignore the difficult, smooth, breathtaking thing he has accomplished.

My emphasis, however, is not on the modesty of the poet's stance; it is on his exploration of poetry in other languages. In the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties, American poetry underwent a period of expansion and experimentation, a deliberate widening of its horizons. Robert Lowell turned away from his earlier style and, under the influence of William Carlos Williams, wrote his best book, *Life Studies*. Allen Ginsberg wrote *Howl*, Frank O'Hara wrote his lunch poems, Theodore Roethke wrote poetry that came directly from the depths of the primitive self, and Gary Snyder wrote Buddhist poems.

A great part of this included a new interest in poetry from traditions other than those of English, to surrealist poetry, to Asian poetry, to the work of poets in Spanish, German, French, and Italian. Robert Bly, editing *The Fifties*, which turned into *The Sixties*, wrote back when I submitted to tell me that my poetry was "bowed under the weight of English tradition" (I was in graduate school, reading Donne and Marvell and Milton). He was right, and when he urged me to model poems on work by poets in other languages, I recalled how struck I had been by a brief exposure to the prose poems of René Char. Eventually, I learned how to act on Bly's advice.

My point is that Justice was a quiet part of this revolution. "Sea Wind" is one piece of evidence, but the entire picture is much broader than one "after" poem can demonstrate. The real subject here is the complex topic of American experience. The exploration of other languages and their poetic traditions was part of a patient and gradual self-making whereby Justice accomplished the task of naturalizing poetry, finding it in the America of his own experience and lifetime. No two poets confront this
problem in quite the same way (think of Hart Crane!) and the process continues for each generation. My contention here will be that Justice’s solutions to the problem of American lyric poetry, particularly as it relates to the larger tradition of poetry in other languages and as it wrestles with the constant risks of sentimentality and nostalgia, while related to the activities of his generation and his time, are finally very much his own. They are also, I find, increasingly successful over the span of his career.

On the jacket flap of this book, Anthony Hecht calls Justice “the supreme heir of Wallace Stevens.” Supreme? Heir? While Justice no doubt admired Stevens—his poem “Homage to the Memory of Wallace Stevens” is a canny mixture of affection and exasperation—I do not think he can be called his heir. One does not imagine Donald Justice writing poems like “The Snow Man” or “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven.” Reading through the first volume collected here, The Summer Anniversaries (1960), and the group of early poems that accompanies it (1948-62), certainly does not bring Stevens to mind. The poems are carefully rhymed and metered, and the master behind them seems to me Auden, especially the Auden who was busy rewriting Yeats. If any American poet comes to mind, it is probably John Crowe Ransom, who fashioned lyrics about quaint eccentrics and bereaved lovers and parents in a kind of neo-metaphysical style during the thirties, forties, and fifties. But Auden’s is surely the dominant presence, and in having him as mentor, Justice was reflecting the experience of a number of his generation of poets (Hecht included), born in the twenties and, many of them, “discovered” by Auden as he edited the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

Then how did he gradually escape from it, to become both a more American and a more international poet? The second volume, Night Light (1967), shows him exploring prose, syllabics, and accentuals, all as alternatives to rhyme and meter. His deliberate widening of range in this and subsequent collections partly reflects the fact that he had begun to listen to Williams, not for technique but for subject matter, a more direct rendering of the life around him, in its dailiness and comedy and dereliction. At
the same time, while widening his base and adjusting his subject matter, Justice was far from repudiating traditional forms, as one of the more successful poems in Night Light demonstrates:

TO THE UNKNOWN LADY WHO WROTE
THE LETTERS FOUND IN THE HATBOX

To be sold at auction . . . 1 brass bed, 1 walnut secretary . . . bird cages, a hatbox of old letters . . .
—NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

What, was there never any news?
And were your weathers always fine,
Your colds all common, and your blues
Too minor to deserve one line?

Between the lines it must have hurt
To see the neighborhood go down,
Your neighbor in his undershirt
At dusk come out to mow his lawn.

But whom to turn to to complain,
Unless it might be your canaries,
And only in bird language then?
While slowly into mortuaries

The many-storied houses went
Or in deep, cataracted eyes
Displayed their signs of want: FOR RENT
And MADAM ROXIE WILL ADVISE.

This is very deft, and a part of our pleasure, as we take in its comedy and pathos, must come from the formal skill displayed in the quatrains, with rhymes like "canaries" and "mortuaries" and the enjambment into the last stanza, where the people are replaced by the houses as the leading evidence of change and decay. The question was whether such expert formal treatment would be a
consistently effective way of capturing the kind of Americana that clearly interests the poet here: the life of small towns, the melancholy of change that overtakes both urban and rural neighborhoods, something nearly everyone has experienced. And the answer, for Justice, was evidently a “no.” He continued to experiment with other ways of organizing poems, never fully abandoning his faith in rhymed and metered poetry, but restless, always, about his own horizons and possibilities.

If we move forward to Departures, his 1973 volume, we can begin to see where the solutions come from. An obvious place to linger and learn is at the poem titled “Variations on a Text by Vallejo.” By its title and epigraph—Me moriré en Paris con aguacero... —Justice makes very evident that by means of musical form, variations on a theme, he is taking a foreign poet (his note also mentions a Greek poet who had a similar motif) and adapting him, and his sonnet, for native purposes. Here is the final stanza:

Donald Justice is dead. One Sunday the sun came out,
It shone on the bay, it shone on the white buildings,
The cars moved down the street slowly as always, so many,
Some with their headlights on in spite of the sun,
And after a while the diggers with their shovels
Walked back to the graveside through the sunlight,
And one of them put his blade into the earth
To lift a few clods of dirt, the black marl of Miami,
And scattered the dirt, and spat,
Turning away abruptly, out of respect.

We know that this vignette is “derived” from Vallejo, “inspired” by the Peruvian exile’s original decision to write a comical, self-pitying poem predicting his own death. All the cards of derivation are on the table, so we can concentrate on the musical transposition that brings us into vivid contact with Miami, the canny repetitions of “sun” and “shone,” the hymn of the traffic, the color scheme that produces such brilliant black against such
white and brightness (Justice was, like some painters, a student of American light in all its forms). The indifferent world of the imagined Miami Sunday may ultimately derive from Auden’s "Musée de Beaux Arts," but it is now entirely Justice’s and entirely American.

If the Vallejo example is particularly obvious, it is also representative of a growing tendency in Justice’s poetry to fuse Americana with the sights and sounds of foreign language poets. Reading around in this Collected, especially if one is attentive to the notes, one finds them everywhere: Attila Jozsef, Wang Wei, Lorca, Alberti, Catullus, Rimbaud, Laforgue. It is evident that Justice was a voracious reader, using other poems as springboards to his own. And not just poems: we also run across Kafka’s diaries, Henry James’s notebooks and travel writings, the films of Bergman, the photographs of Walker Evans, and the paintings of Charles Burchfield. Always, though, the material is transformed into Justice’s own idiom, and, strikingly, into a rendering of American light, American loss and dereliction, American innocence and experience.

Here is a very telling note from the back of the book, about a poem in the Selected Poems of 1979:

"Memories of the Depression Years": The second section (Boston, Georgia) is a kind of imitation of a Wang Wei poem, which has been translated as "A Farmhouse on the Wei River." The third section (Miami, Florida) bears a similar relation to Baudelaire’s Je n’ai pas oublié.

Readers do not really need that information on any ethical grounds. All poems have models and predecessors, and listing them has never been an obligation. No one reading the poem in question is likely to say, "Well, that second section felt rather Chinese to me, while the third one felt rather French. I wonder what that can mean?" Most readers are not conversant enough with all the traditions in question, and besides, the transformations are too complete. Why then does Justice offer us this peek into his workshop? Because it’s interesting. For a working poet (and
maybe the notes are most of all for other poets), it's fascinating to see how a Chinese poem adapts to the here and now, and how a French poem can be transformed to pair with it. That result says something about the universality of poetry and confirms a giant conversation among poets and among poems, one that is always going on and that is never limited to the living or to one language, not if the poet is a good conversationalist.

Meanwhile, as he turns more and more to the subjects of his childhood and its landscapes, both rural and urban, Justice obviously runs the risks of sentimentality and nostalgia. His fascination with porches, attics, junk heaps, forgotten senior citizens, girls overlooked at parties, music teachers, tenant farmers, and other examples of American dereliction is artistically dangerous. The America in which he grew up, rapidly receding, calls out with a siren song, urging him to lament its disappearance and cherish its details. How to avoid overindulging the emotions of loss and recognition?

One does not solve the problem by avoiding such emotions. They constitute the risk poems must always run. If poets wish to move us, then they must work with materials that are emotionally charged, and that will always mean working in the neighborhood of excess, of sentiment threatening to turn overripe and become sentimentality. Thus, American sentimentality—a large topic currently under vigorous discussion among Americanists—can be seen as a specialized version of a recurrent problem that accompanies American culture even while it dogs, recurrently, the practice of lyric poetry.

One answer to the question has to do with technique. Poetic form and poetic tradition make available to us materials that help temper that risk of excess. So Justice's formalism is already at his service as a defense against sentimentality. But there is also, I am arguing, his sense of that larger conversation, a perspective on, say, the Great Depression that sets it in an enlarged context of human experience. That is why his notes and his "after" notations on the poems are important: they help us listen for the musical rigor of his translations/transpositions. His wrestling with the angel of American sentimentality is sometimes a draw and sometimes also a victory for world poetry.
By the time we arrive at _The Sunset Maker_ (1987) this poet has matters well enough in hand that he can turn back to his original expertise with forms like the sonnet:

MRS. SNOW

Busts of the great composers glimmered in niches,  
Pale stars. Poor Mrs. Snow, who could forget her,  
Calling the time out in that hushed falsetto?  
(How early we begin to grasp what kitsch is!)  
But when she loomed above us like an alp,  
We little towns below could feel her shadow.  
Somehow her nods of approval seemed to matter  
More than the stray flakes drifting from her scalp.  
Her etchings of ruins, her mass-production Mings  
Were our first culture: she put us in awe of things.  
And once, with her help, I composed a waltz,  
Too innocent to be completely false,  
Perhaps, but full of marvelous clichés.  
She beamed and softened then.  

Ah, those were the days!

This poem is part of a group in which the poet explores and invokes his childhood world of music lessons and cultural discoveries. Mrs. Snow will reappear two pages later as part of a trio of portraits, less formal and more intimate, but here she is as firmly fixed as a character in Eudora Welty (I am thinking of _The Golden Apples_), and I do not think many readers would judge the portrait sentimental or nostalgic. Rhymes as comical as "niches / kitsch is" undercut the rush of sentiment, as do details like her dandruff, a visual pun on her name. The isolated exclamation at the very end has its own built-in qualification, both from the rhyme (clichés / days) and through our sense that the triteness is deliberately acknowledged. The line "Too innocent to be completely false" may be the real payoff in this poem. A tribute by a teacher, to a teacher, loving but unglamorous.
The last third of this *Collected Poems*, then, with poems like “Cinema and Ballad of the Great Depression,” “Manhattan Dawn (1945),” “Lorca in California,” “Dance Lessons of the Thirties,” “Banjo Dog Variations,” “Pantoum of the Great Depression,” and “The Small White Churches of the Small White Towns,” shows Justice in full control of his art, an American master with a wide acquaintance in art and literature. He is still deeply attached to music, his first love, but he has also taken up painting, as the cover of this collection, reproducing four examples, demonstrates. The paintings are, of course, more Americana. And they are well-tempered too, though that is another story. All across the country his former pupils are spreading the word about poetic form and tradition, documenting the nation’s spiritual gains and losses. Donald Justice may indeed be gone, but he has left us with a firm sense of the value of his art, carefully practiced and gradually perfected over many patient years.

*David Young*
IN THE VOICES OF ANGELS

Sophie Cabot Black, The Descent (Graywolf Press)
Mark Irwin, Bright Hunger (BOA Editions)

The cover art of Sophie Cabot Black’s second book is “The Wounded Angel,” Finnish artist Hugo Simberg’s 1903 image of a luminous but downcast angel, blindfolded and being carried on a litter by two thick young men. It captures much of the spirit of this volume, which nurtures a preoccupation with climb and descent, journey and return, path and open space.

Such metaphors are created again and again throughout The Descent, each poem patterning them in different ways and yet retaining a family resemblance that gives the book the feel of one long poem, a series of meditations. Despite the poet’s connections to New York and New England, her work inhabits a Western landscape of mountain and high country, horse and cattle, cougar and coyote, aspen and bristlecone. The tone is simple, the imagery elemental, stripped down in a kind of ascetic fervor that gives the book its quality of witness by an intense and religious intelligence.

The tone is simple but the poems are not. “Home,” for instance, involves us in someone’s journey down from the high country, back to a former life. The personal pronoun is understated, nearly suppressed, so that the landscape (its ridges, snowmelt, cairns) is the main actor in the poem, playing out the story of the speaker to whom so much has happened that s/he fears that the return, though underway, is impossible.

HOME

Down from the search, the long recitals of ridge
Which are about solitude: cloudburst, a lament of wind
To vigil through, to move first by reason

Then grow wild in the thin grass, over fossil
And nowhere to lie without some animal
To find me. Perhaps too much has happened to return,

Or no one will ask. Down from the higher country,
Leaving steep meadows behind, the shifts
Of snow making a way to the river,
How stone by stone the cairns come undone,

No longer legible. And in the last light
The forest I must cross
Becomes many houses, a mist
Rising from each tree like hearthsmoke.

Reason has been supplanted by wildness; cairns, the signposts of civilization, have been undone. And in the final image, trees of the wild forest create the illusion of a town. Perhaps return is indeed impossible—or perhaps the fear is an inverted wish with which the speaker resists the pull of that “must” in the last stanza, resists the inevitable pressure of a metaphorical gravity requiring this downward journey. The ambiguity about whether the town is illusion or real (come upon at the far side of the forest) is powerful.

Such is the territory of The Descent—outside the known, in an untamed place of grave danger and great beauty. It is a place of postmodern angels, not glorious inhabitants of an azure firmament but puzzled creatures, slumped and furled but proceeding nevertheless, their terrestrial journeys lit by the intimation, not the fact, of heaven.

BEFORE YOU

I kneel down
To understand what happens. It begins
With the mouth, always

Searching toward
What takes shape; while the hand
Continues to stalk,
Small arrests are made.
Do not speak; let silence.
Light fails in this awkward place

And I am here as no one
Has ever been before;
The worst that I watch

Myself survive.
You would have me
Do this, you who are so far

From myself, who keep
Each road possible until nothing is left
To regret.

This poet is able to seize a large idea, such as the uniqueness of a self traveling through time, in a simple phrase that is not reductive, that honors the largeness: “And I am here as no one / Has ever been before.” That originality is reflected both in the language of particular phrases and in the poem as a whole, which is a prayer but such an unconventional one that it surprises and engages us.

Mark Irwin’s fifth book, *Bright Hunger*, is lighter in texture and more formally varied than *The Descent* (it includes poems of varying length and density, as well as as poems in parts and poems in one-line stanzas). Yet the two books share an intensity, an urgency about the evanescence of life and the various forces pressing on the human spirit and psyche.

Here is one of the poems with one-line stanzas:

**FUSE**

Most of what I do or read does

not help me understand what is
always going. I turn and the *was*

gets bigger, a blanket that has

covered many: I see bodies

kindle as they pass; their voices

hiss to nothing. Distance takes us.

We move through it until alas

we’re all horizon. Time works this

way. Love as many people as

you can. Remember them passing.

Here too is the large idea presented with striking originality: “I turn and the *was* / gets bigger.” A simple idea acquires the force of a revelation when it is phrased in such a new and accurate way. Such use of language is one of the pleasures to be found frequently in *Bright Hunger*.

Many of the poems here have a stronger narrative framework than Black’s, but the stories that are told are as mysterious as hers. And while Irwin too has a lexicon of recurrent words and images—water, larvae, sun and song, for instance—they are less insistent by virtue of being embedded in more complexity.

**BLUE**

Now they are gathering as they do each October
in the small yellow woods outside their cities,
gathering at dusk to stare at the blue
light only visible now, when leaves are the color of pears and the clear air feels cold as water to the touch. They crouch and lean as if toward ancestral fire, astonished by what they see or do not, and as they stare the blue light grows stronger, a blue whose form resembles the moon's shadowy figures, a blue that in a moment might crumble and go. Some say the blue light is what burns on the other side of fire. They would drink from its ash and listen, the leaded voice of blue. Here it's their excess that saves them, that light having mutated their feelings to what? Some say the blue light's filled with holes and resembles an animal or god. Larval the light seems in its becoming, yet a becoming vanishing toward ends, for when people speak in the blue light, words blur toward hum. Will they stay here till the wind tilts sky toward earth, and snow makes the blue light impossible to see?

The complexity in Bright Hunger is of diction, tone, and syntax. Black's spare, meditative style would not accommodate the "Wiffle balls and Hula Hoops" or the "Freely we gad about" of Irwin's "Rodeo," nor the extended wordplay of his poem "Go." Nor would we look to The Descent for moments of humor, as at the end of "Poem" when the speaker says "The future's a bore where those two / lovers are skeletons whose past was once cells dividing. / Therefore, let me pick thee some long-stemmed dandelions. . . ." In the flippant flip of time forward and backward, the substitution of weed for rose, and the modulation of tone with "thee," the poem smiles and winks.

While Black's poems work their way into the center of a solitary speaker's consciousness, Irwin's book is more peopled. He brings us cities, and crowds of people who collectively confront their fates, as in the poem above. He can blend multiple stories, too, as in this poem:
I think the body writes itself beyond. The calf
sleeps in warm spring light chorused with black-
bird trills. And when I enter your body you
birth me you sing. Stars bleed crystal

into a night sky: Heart, this great sponge
of emotion. It shunts and pulls the days

where a found stone sleeps like a fool's
kiss. I am your fresh slaughter of spring grass,

blue rivers veining the earth. I remember
touching bodies of water, opening

a dress of fire that went on walking before
me and that would never close. Now you are

the sweet, fast darkness of a church where I enter
on a hot day. "Backstraps of loin are best." The customers
couldn't believe it: I love you written in lipstick
hanging in the torn air. She was the checkout
girl, he the boy with blood on his apron.

The poem is lyric without being precious: the poet sees the blood
on our hands and in our veins. While the imagery is lovely at
first, the tone broadens at the end of stanza two, and the middle
of the poem weaves connections among images of death and sex-
uality. The speaker embodies, literally, the "fresh slaughter of
spring grass" that was the calf's fate; his entering a woman's
body rings against the image of his entering the church. The jump
from church to butcher shop is brilliant: the speaker steps aside,
and the momentum of his imagery collides with the scene of the two unlikely lovers. The love note juxtaposed with the “torn” and bloody air is dramatic in itself; in the poem, it is a compelling culmination of the evolution from sweetness to a kind of innocent wisdom.

The title of this book encapsulates something of Irwin’s energy and intention, as a good title should. His poems embody the brightness of hope against the unrelenting passage of time, the continuous pressure of mortality.

In comparing the two books, I do not intend to judge but only to characterize. Yes, the tonal range of The Descent is narrower than that of Bright Hunger, but that is essential to its powerful effect. Would I rather listen to an oboe solo or to a string quartet? Who could choose? Both Irwin and Black re-invent the lyric with their urgency and originality. I put the two collections before the FIELD reader, knowing that they have promising futures and will do extremely well. Or to return to my music metaphor, these are virtuoso performances.

Pamela Alexander
ALL WE HAVE OF WHAT WAS TRUE


Carl Phillips, one of his generation’s most serious, vital, and prolific poets, has been praised for the intelligence with which he explores desire both erotic and metaphysical, interrogates the present by playing it against the past, and maps the shifting ground between reason and passion. In his most recent collection, The Rest of Love, all these concerns and conflicts find further expression. Yet the note that strikes me most keenly here, with an intensity more apparent than ever in Phillips’ work, is elegiac—though of a particularly scrupulous and meditative kind.

The Rest of Love is overwhelmingly preoccupied with loss, with the effort to cope in a world of change and instability: “the only pattern is / that it changes; routinely, what was— / gets lost” (6). Or, as another poem early in the book puts it:

What keeps staying lost is not,
anymore, the thing itself, but the definition
it once provided,

as history does to what
occurs—to what has not, yet. (15)

Even the present moment is glimpsed as through a veil of its own transience: “Why does it seem / I won’t come back here? Why speak of it // as of, already, a place I miss?” (33-34). Yet, as always in this poet’s work, experience is mediated by awareness, and sentimentality is kept resolutely at bay. As in all three of these passages, loss is held up to scrutiny, turned inside out, filtered through a wide-ranging examination into the very nature of the self.

In some of these poems Phillips confronts a world so much in flux, so attenuated, that all matters of boundary and definition become open to question. Knowledge is tenuous and suspect, and both the perceiving self and the world it perceives can be known only by inference. Here’s a passage from a poem called “Trophy”:
Above me, what before had seemed entirely that to which my own passage—swift, coracled, resplendent, over the water—might stand compared

are clouds now,

now interruption,

the way that water is interruption, the land only ending apparently,

there, where not so long ago I pushed off from it, it does not end . . .

It seems I am rowing, it seems to the rhythm of a song there's nothing left of except the rhythm, no notes,

a broken line, the words, to—guessing—sing to, No, sing No, I'll have no other—

"Not so long ago" the boundary between land and water seemed fixed, but now the environment can be experienced only as watery instability. Seemed ... apparently ... seems ... seems ... guessing: existential uncertainty weaves its way through the effort to speak
and to know. Thought is fragmented by the frequent line breaks and one-line stanzas; the voice hesitates, interrupts itself, threatens to drift into silence. Yet what is dramatized is an almost heroic quest to chart the landscape, to make sense of the world by articulating one's relation to it. The broken song gathers itself into a statement of orientation and possibility, however tentative:

Say what you will.

Say all you have to.

I have looked to the water: there it was, of course, doing the water's version of pucker, then bloom, then sprawl.

I look to the shore as if toward everything that, once, I stood for, and—how soon, already—

almost, I cannot see it, I

look to the water,

I am rowing, it seems

Caught between sea and shore, the poet summons the effort to describe his relation to them. This is anything but easy consolation, but in the face of the watery void it feels hard-won and substantial.

Again and again, Phillips finds himself in a similar position, adrift in a world of uncertainty, longing for a prelapsarian condition of safety and wholeness. This nostalgic note is sounded from the first line of the first poem in the volume, a tour de force of tonal subtlety:
There is a difference it used to make, seeing three swans in this versus four in that quadrant of sky. I am not imagining. It was very large, as its effects were. Declarations of war, the timing fixed upon for a sea-departure; or, about love, a sudden decision not to, to pretend instead to a kind of choice. It was dramatic, as it should be. Without drama, what is ritual? I look for omens everywhere, because they are everywhere to be found. They come to me like strays, like the damaged, something that could know better, and should, therefore—but does not: a form of faith, you’ve said. I call it sacrifice—an instinct for it, or a habit at first, that becomes required, the way art can become, eventually, all we have of what was true. You shouldn’t look at me like that. Like one of those saints on whom the birds once settled freely.

Informed by Phillips’ background as a classicist, the poem regrets the passing of the kind of certainty that augury conveyed upon the world, when life and love were ruled by external verities and ritual assumptions. The “very large” canvas of epic drama seems to have been diminished in the secularized present. At the same time, the speaker recognizes that the ancient worldview was a response to the urgent desire for certainty; in that light, in a world bereft of ritual consolation, he looks for it anyway. The tone here is rueful, chastened, but also slyly triumphant: “like strays, like the damaged,” omens “are everywhere / to be found.” Whether through faith or self-sacrifice, one learns to uncover meaning in an act of creative vision, or what Wallace Stevens called the necessary fiction: “art can become, eventually, all we have / of what was true.”
In other poems the effort is more precarious, as Phillips confronts “a dark so unspecific, it seems / everywhere” (47). The quest to recapture the past through memory is open to doubt—“If I remember it, did it happen?” (42)—and the impulse to fix the world by leaving one’s trace on it is constantly foiled as the world itself metamorphoses:

Tattoo,

what changes as the flesh it
adorns changes, until
the image itself
has grown distorted past
all recognition save
that of memory... (43)

Or, as he says elsewhere, “Nothing sticks, that doesn’t // have to” (53). But Phillips’ response to the protean nature of experience is rarely gloom or bitterness; rather, his effort is to record that experience as faithfully and accurately as possible, and to give that record its own intense, precise music. I have been emphasizing the thematic coherence of this collection, but admirers of Phillips’ disciplined language will find much to appreciate here in its intricate tracings of the act of the mind. The effects of the syntactical precision are extraordinarily musical, reminiscent of sudden modulations in, say, Bach: as the line turns a corner and the contours of the grammatical phrase adjust and realign, the mode shifts from major to minor and back again, the theme reoriented and refreshed. The implications are also epistemological: the long, sinuous sentences double back on themselves, qualifying and undoing, embodying hesitation and discovery as the consciousness moves toward resolution, and in the process making intelligence seem almost visceral.

Some of the new poems, tighter and simpler in their syntax, raise questions of knowledge in a different way: often they begin by assembling details without specifying their context, evoking a particularly private or intimate frame of reference which the
reader perceives as from a distance. Here, for example, is how a poem called "In Stone" begins:

Their clothes; their rings as well, until
at last they wore nothing. All was visible:
flourish; humiliation; some things,
more than others, looking almost the same.
As if Not only torn but lavish let be
the angle all tearing starts at,
as if this were the rule, each
splitting open around, unfolding
from—so as, incidentally, to expose—
its wet center.

The narrative here is deeply sublimated: I find it impossible to
determine whether the scene is ancient or modern, and whether
the dramatic context is erotic, or a scene of ritual degradation, or
something even darker. The images play as though on a screen of
memory; the voice itself enacts the effort to understand and arti-
culate the experience. And as the poem continues, it becomes
clear that that experience can only be approached indirectly,
though metaphor and simile:

The kind of sweetness that
carries a room, but there
was no room. How at first a sweetness;
how, by turns, a gift, a darkness.
Very dark, especially, about the trees, where
trees were. Like being a child and told, all
over again, Think of Christ as of a pilot boat,
a launch delayed slightly, but reliable,
it will come— There, beside the shifting fact of
all that water. What’s done is done.

We remain in the world of dream (or nightmare), sweetness and
darkness interlocked and indistinguishable. Once again there’s
longing for the reliable myths of the past, the notion that the res-
cue boat will inevitably arrive, which here rings more than a little hollow beside "the shifting fact of / all that water." The almost aphoristic "What's done is done" that closes the poem seals off the past again as more solid and knowable than the present. And yet, as everywhere in this remarkable book, the effort to represent and articulate that tension is itself a means of coping with it: "what makes the truth so difficult / is also what / draws us to it: how clear it is" (37). As Phillips says in his penultimate poem: "it's // a human need, / to give to shapelessness / a form" (64).

David Walker
ELLEN BASS’s most recent book of poems, *Mules of Love*, won the Lambda Literary Award. She teaches poetry and creative writing in Santa Cruz, CA.

MARIANNE BORUCH’s *Poems: New & Selected* appeared in 2004 from Oberlin College Press. She teaches in Purdue’s writing program.

GITA CHATTOPADHYAY of North Calcutta, India, has published three volumes of poetry and verse drama and a critical work on the Bhagavata Purana. About her translators: PARA-MITA BANERJEE has published articles on theatre, women’s issues, and poetry in a number of literary magazines, and has translated two novels of the late Samaresh Bose from Bengali into English for Penguin India. CAROLYNE WRIGHT has published two volumes of translations of Bengali women poets, and another is forthcoming. Translation Editor for *Artful Dodge* at the College of Wooster, she currently lives near Cleveland and teaches at Cleveland State University.

MICHAEL CHITWOOD’s *Gospel Road Going* received the 2003 Roanoke-Chowan Award for Poetry for the best collection by a North Carolina resident.

Flanders’ leading poet, HERMAN DE CONINCK, lived from 1944 to 1997. Oberlin College Press will publish a selection of his poems in our FIELD Translation Series in 2006. His translators: LAURE-ANNE BOSSELAAR grew up in Belgium, where her first language was Flemish. The author of two collections of poems in English from BOA Editions, she teaches at Sarah Lawrence College. KURT BROWN’s fourth collection of poems, *Future Ship*, will appear from Story Line Press in 2005.


EAMON GRENNAN’s *Still Life with Waterfall* won the 2003 Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. A translation of *Oedipus at Colonus* (with Rachel Kitzinger) was published in 2004.

CHRISTOPHER JANKE’s poems have appeared in *Harper’s*, *American Poetry Review*, *Ploshshares*, and other journals.

ANN KILLOUGH has work published or forthcoming in *Fence, The Diagram, Salamander, Sentence, Poetry Ireland Review,*
and others. Her chapbook, Sinners in the Hands, won the 2004 Robert Phillips Poetry Chapbook Prize from Texas Review Press.

SHARON KUBASAK teaches at Baldwin Wallace College and has poems forthcoming in Verse.

DAVE LUCAS recently received an MFA from the University of Virginia, where he worked as poetry editor of Meridian. Poems appearing recently or forthcoming in Poetry, River Styx, Slate, and The Three-penny Review.

SARAH MACLAY’s poems, reviews and essays have appeared in FIELD, Ploughshares, Pool, Hotel Amerika, The Writer’s Chronicle, and Poetry International. Her debut full-length collection, Whore, won the 2003 Tampa Review Prize for Poetry. She currently lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches at USC, FIDM, and Beyond Baroque.

MARIANA MARIN, one of Romania’s most important poets, published five books. The poems here are from her 1999 volume The Mutilation of the Artist as a Young Woman, which won a number of major prizes. About her translators: DANIELA HUREZANU translates into French, English, and Romanian. Her book of literary criticism, Maurice Blanchot et la fin du mythe, was published in 2003. ADAM J. SORKIN published three volumes of translations in 2004, including two by Marin Sorescu, The Bridge and The Past Perfect of Flight. His translation of Daniela Crăsnaru, The Grand Prize and Other Stories, is just out (Northwestern).

SANDRA MCPHERSON’s most recent collection is A Visit to Civilization (Wesleyan, 2002). She teaches at the University of California at Davis and is editor and publisher of Swan Scythe Press.

CAMILLE NORTON’s first book of poems, Corruption, was selected by Campbell McGrath as a National Poetry Series winner for 2004. It is forthcoming from HarperCollins this summer. She is Associate Professor of English at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA.

ERIC PANKEY’s seventh collection of poems is Reliquaries (Ausable, 2005). He teaches in the MFA program at George Mason University.

Danish author and translator INGE PEDERSEN, born in Bronderslev in 1936, has published four collections of poems, two volumes of short
stories, and two novels. The winner of many Danish and Scandinavian fellowships and prizes, she taught German for many years in Jutland. Oberlin College Press will publish a selection of her poems in our FIELD Translation Series next fall. Her translator, MARILYN NELSON, has published eight collections of poems, most recently A Wreath for Emmett Till (Houghton Mifflin) and The Cachoiera Tales (LSU Press). Since 2000 she has been Poet Laureate of the State of Connecticut.

DONALD PLATT’s second book, Cloud Atlas, was published in 2002 by Purdue University Press as the winner of Verna Emery Poetry Prize. He is Associate Professor of English at Purdue University.

JACQUELYN POPE’s first book of poems, Watermark, won the Marsh Hawk Press Poetry Prize and was published in May 2005.

KEVIN PRUFER’s newest books are Fallen from a Chariot (Carnegie Mellon, 2005) and The Finger Bone (Carnegie Mellon, 2002), a finalist for the Laughlin Award. Editor of Pleiades and Vice President of the National Book Critics Circle, he lives in rural Missouri.

PATTIANN ROGERS has published eleven books, the most recent of which is Generations (Penguin, 2004). She has two sons and two grandsons and lives in Colorado with her husband.

MARY ANN SAMYN’S newest book is Purr (New Issues Press, 2005). She teaches in the MFA program at West Virginia University.

DENNIS SCHMITZ is a frequent contributor to FIELD. His book About Night: Selected and New Poems initiated the FIELD Poetry Series in 1993. His most recent book is The Truth Squad (Copper Canyon, 2002).

HILLEL SCHWARTZ has poems recently in Beloit Poetry Journal, The Fiddlehead, and Prairie Schooner. He has just completed, with Sunny Jung, the translation of a book of poetry by the contemporary Korean poet, Ko Un.


SARAH VAP is an MFA candidate in poetry at Arizona State
University, and the co-poetry editor for 42opus.com.

ROSANNA WARREN's most recent book of poems is Departure (2003). She teaches at Boston University.

NANCY WHITE's first collection, Sun, Moon, Salt, won the 1992 Washington Prize. She teaches at Adirondack Community College.

CATHERINE WING has poems forthcoming in Poetry and Prairie Schooner. Her first book, Enter Invisible, is due out this November.

FRANZ WRIGHT won the Pulitzer Prize last year for his latest book, Walking to Martha's Vineyard. His selected poems, Ill Lit, is published by Oberlin College Press.
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The editors of FIELD are pleased to announce the ninth annual FIELD Poetry Prize competition. The contest is open to all poets, whether or not they have previously published a book. Unpublished poetry manuscripts between 50 and 80 pages in length will be considered. Oberlin College Press publishes the winning manuscript in the FIELD Poetry Series and awards the winning author one thousand dollars.

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