

# Seven Stars Anthology 1973-1998

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SEVEN STARS POETRY  
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**realities library**

edited by r soos

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joshua tree, ca

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## DEDICATION

for those with better  
memories  
than I –  
and for those  
like me  
who love  
their memories stoked



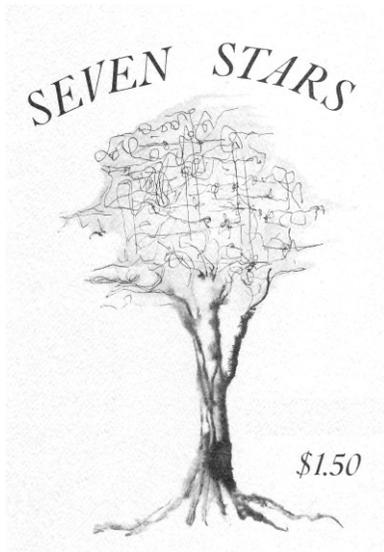


Pianissimo

The misplaced minor key  
    echoing, reverberating  
past the limits of voice  
past the flash and past the memory  
through the doors and past the old man  
    who is about to stand up  
finding hands on strings  
setting off the accidental perfect melody

This is a random truth  
to learn it you must go to the sun  
    and be burned up  
    and expand  
through the doors  
past the old man  
    who is about to stand up

Michael C. Berch



*cover by Dick Coleman*

i

fools

say fools are artists  
and artists are fools

ii

yes

I've been feeding your dreams  
but where were you  
when my wizards and elves  
went starving?

iii

some

people talk all day saying nothing  
while others silently communicate



tingling  
aglow  
feeling alright  
he walks along  
his eyes twinkle  
as he remembers  
something that once  
nicely happened to him

Samuel P. Schraeger



A cone of cosmic ash pursued its course  
on automatic pilot set to earth

bringing Death — or a new direction  
to be fed into my brain  
before collision.

Alan Sillitoe

The Huntress

You may observe her in any bar  
straddling her stool  
tapping her toe  
to a deviant rhythm

She'll leer long  
catching girls with a quarter  
and a juke-box song.  
She'll make them her golden girls.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the shade of a cypress  
two bodies merge  
one being divine, the other a dolt

Gather the gifts you gave to the golden girl  
wrap them into a ball and you will see  
all the silver splinters in your luminous eyes

Artemis will call you her golden girl  
and you'll drop under a cypress  
to watch soft shadows play upon her face

\*\*\*\*\*

You may observe her in any bar  
tapping her toe to a deviant rhythm  
the moon sifts through rhinestones  
as fluorescent shadows play upon her face

Straddling her stool  
she'll catch your eye  
she'll make you her golden girl  
*night's the right time* she'll murmur

Victoria Ramstetter

I want to design a house  
where the trees grow freely  
and the land is needing of my care

Tom Miller



Love Poem

I am the green bough attached to you.  
Do not show me your hollow heart  
As we sway in the storm together.

Lois Wilson



your mouth dances  
on the ocean of bliss  
smiles make me wonder  
if you ever knew sadness  
or pain  
and make me forget mine

Samuel P. Schraeger



a poet's page complete  
creates all. . .

Roger Z. Owens

Housewife

The American Beauty's in the vase  
on a parlor table  
arranged

She collects herself as the stem and leaf  
half conscious of posture – positioned  
the rose  
disappearing from her cheek  
the shadeless spaces –  
senses bare as landscapes without trees. . .

The housewife stoops in his possessions  
up to her knees



Away

The grace of vision swims  
in the sky of lakes  
silver haired angels drifting  
as the rose and violet of the day  
flow from the horizon  
in the burning sun's wake. . .

Away  
the kingdom of your heart  
a ruby jewel emblazoned upon sky and grace  
fiery petals floating  
falling  
sinking from its face  
dives in the sea of pastels and waves  
away. . .

dives and waves away. . .

James E. Marvelle

acid tears  
burn long lines  
into the etchable fleshfaces  
of the persecuted – prosecuted  
as the ringed circle of people  
grows tighter around the neck  
and the wisps of cigarette smoke  
curl ever more silently toward  
the darkened ceiling  
and the beads of sweat  
form with the rhythm  
of a ticking timepiece  
the conversation turns to sunsets  
and philosophy

and the salty spoken word  
still lingers in the wound

and in the background  
the drips of a leaky faucet –  
a muffled laugh

S. White



Human Breath

can coax  
    a rose  
        to bloom/

destroy  
    paintings  
        in pre-historic caves

Phoebe Hoffman

Pure Light and Vanity

I drank her down  
in a goblet of tenderness.  
The toast was proper  
and it left me thirsty  
for more of her cosmic nectar.

The sweetness of her voice  
flatters through her rose lips  
which open to let the sun  
run like crimson unicorns  
in the pastures of Pan.

Ron Kongsle



cat whiskers  
grins at mickey the face  
and tells him  
to show up  
for the hoedown  
but mickey the face  
has other plans  
he wants to hijack a brain  
for a friend in the army  
who needs release  
so cat whiskers goes alone  
he arrives  
just as the band is playing  
scotland scotland uber alles  
and dances  
with seven year old doorknobs  
rookie baseball players  
and eight foot midgets

Samuel P. Schraeger

dream sequence #2

humphrey bogart  
meets  
the incredible stinking man  
in a spanish elevator  
in france  
and asks him  
can you lend me a dime?  
a dime? says the incredible stinking man  
don't waste my time for a dime  
if you asked for a dollar  
i might consider it  
but a dime is TOO MUCH man  
so humphrey bogart says  
i like you  
you have an honest face  
let me buy you a drink  
i don't really need a dime  
i need a new head  
to put all my ideas in  
the incredible stinking man  
drinks whiskey 'til his nose falls off  
and humphrey bogart  
puts it in his pocket  
to use as an ashtray  
how did you get to be the incredible stinking man?  
humphrey bogart wishes to know  
i paid a woman ten dollars for a broom handle  
and she gave me nine cents change  
and once  
when I was nine years old  
my cousin spat on a dog  
and got rabies from it  
leaving me incredibly sick  
when I saw his bandaged hand  
and his gaping jaw

and i ran to tell my mother  
and her jaw was gaping too  
there was nothing i could do  
but run to the circus  
and hide  
in a clown's tent  
trying to laugh  
but crying all the while  
and that my friend  
belch  
is how i  
belch  
became the incredi – belch  
stinking man  
but i don't worry about it  
like i used to  
it once bugged me  
but gradually  
i adjusted to it  
after many a bout  
with the bottle  
knowing that  
that is who i truly am  
no more doubts  
fears  
or insecurities  
humphrey bogart  
says thanks for the story  
and pays the bill  
leaving the incredible stinking man  
drunk at the bar  
philosophizing  
with a hooker  
about the true meaning  
of life

Samuel P. Schraeger

Spark

The whale oil lantern lights flicker  
in midnight's sea tale.  
In the distance cities look like fireflies  
on the stark Spartan horizon.  
In recollection, the black oil smoke rising  
was the dark cloud that covered my eyes  
made me sore to be awake  
not seeing any stars  
no constellations.  
I see a trail of foam  
where Jesus the meek would roam.  
In a quiet room  
where we are alone  
a chimney moves in oblivion  
merely vibrating  
fuzzy vision of a blundering drunkard  
waiting till dawn to tread soft on our sheets.  
The stool pigeon we should trust  
rumors that crime is in the air  
and we are in the right.  
I'll continue to wait for that first  
atomic sparkle.

r. mason



the road to Ocho Rios  
is paved in Black  
by the Black  
about the Black  
with the Black  
for the white

Winderl

Speak Softly

move quickly  
lest I shall become some fiendish pillar  
    in the filaments of your imagination  
no destination  
save the depth of your soul where – I have  
    learned – the laughter is being sold

your very own  
filamentary dignitary  
the vertebra of organized emotion – a  
    controlled climate of semantic precipitation

Phil Krueger



I wonder why you hate me  
when I hate myself

I wonder where all the flowers are  
as I scratch your eyes out  
and I think about my reservoirs of tears  
that I've cried since I found out  
I was a woman

sometimes I wish to kill you  
to suck your blood and cut your arteries  
and stab you with vicious hate stabs  
because you have shut the door to my spirit  
so many times

Lynn Balestreri-Cronin

i never tell a lie

i just want you to know  
my dear / mi querido

that when i die  
i want to be buried face – downwards  
so the world can kiss  
my ass



this only

there is nothing  
my pleasure springs from nothing



the gift

in love you are pure  
your soul is a pure child



anguished soul

the leaves of sorrow are born from my tears  
in my right hand is a god  
in my left death sleeps



dancer

trembling then stopped  
in revelation  
turning upon himself

Deborah Brandt

constantly being instructed

torn between power and peace  
you retrace yesterday  
torn shades let slits of light  
paint your forehead with pain

how many militaries have violated your valley  
how many midwives have washed hope down the drain

a succession of syllables  
from somewhere to something  
not so easily seen  
a vehicle of virtue

windows hold in emptiness  
no unreasonable wishes for peace

you crawl, poking your limbs at freedom  
cracking bones and splattering books  
revolving down staggered stairs  
bumping off barnacles and memories

stumbling past every door  
flashing flesh through every door

Jeffry Jensen



Fitful

It is time to set the alarm clock for an early rising, to find out why nothing grows in the gardens of the world. The wraiths of television haunt the corners of the room and men without sin who live in glass houses throw stones at two women. One holds a torch to guide affluent foreigners to these shores. The other is blind and holds scales large enough to weigh little men.

R H Linn

## Negating

Incompatible traits seem inherent within us.  
Each hint of togetherness leads us  
Into our routine of hurting one another.  
With all our endeavors diluted without passion  
Why then engage in self-delusion?

My pact is this:

We cease to cohabit and refrain from duality.  
We abolish our twosome and encourage individuality.  
We develop indifference and administer solitude.  
We dissolve the bonds and throw off facades.  
We salvage ourselves in negating our love.

Ann Fajilan



This poem is dangerous: it should not be left within the reach of children, or even of adults who might swallow it whole, with possibly undesirable side-effects. If you come across an unattended, unidentified poem in a public place, do not attempt to tackle it yourself. Send it (preferably in a sealed container) to the nearest center of learning, where it will be rendered harmless, by experts. Even the simplest poem may destroy your immunity to human emotions. All poems must carry a Government Warning. Words can seriously affect your heart.

Elma Mitchell

abstractions

basic colors  
splattered together  
with a brush  
abstractions of  
the  
colour wheel

thoughts  
mixed with  
emotion  
abstractions of  
the  
mind



fade into darkness  
undetermined shapes –  
the world went away

crystals and cut diamonds  
checker boards and window panes –  
all so perfect

kim-elizabeth vial



Surfers

I must yield my verses to these handsome lords  
who thresh from waves the blue history of youth

Kirk K. Hall

i sewed your shirts

tiny holes  
sometimes running  
sometimes growing when you hid them

i would find the very shade of the thread  
and draw closed the wound  
that you wore

foolish i was  
to make good  
what you have torn

i cannot do it  
any longer  
you have taken my skin

away and left  
me with the  
holes

Terry Vara



a tiny plant  
roots constricted  
suffocating itself  
with living too much

kindly  
and carefully  
you place it  
in its new pot

kay garrett



mud

mudsits  
foot steps  
slops it  
stuck

mudsits  
tire glides  
through it  
stuck

mudsits  
dog licks  
in it  
ugh

mudsits  
kid plays  
pies it  
clump

mudsits  
sun comes  
dries it  
dirt

Kathy Tinsley

ॐ

**our bones  
like stems into the sky  
will forever cry  
victory.**

*Charles Bukowski*

Rebirth

Today  
I walked past  
passed my life  
as it was a week ago  
a breath ago  
there I was

Now I see where  
I was  
now I am not there  
what rebirth  
has left me  
standing on this mountain?



Silence

there is a room  
and a coffee table  
between us

you are smiling, glowing at me

silver toothed smiles  
pierce  
and melt the room

oh, it is warm in here

Lynn Balestreri-Cronin

pantpantpantpantpantpant  
pantpa ntpant  
pantp antpa  
ntpan levis tpant  
pantp antpa  
nt pan pa antpa  
pantp nt tpant  
pantp pant antpa  
ntpan pant panta  
pantp pant apant  
tpant pant tpant  
pantp opanto panta  
tpant opanto pantp  
antpa opanto ntpan  
pant pant pant  
pant pant pant  
pan pa tpa  
ntp nt ant  
pantpantpantpantpantgasp

-Robert Hughes



Cover by Richard Harrison Coleman

what do you want  
my friend asks me  
all I want are friends  
who don't ask me what I want

Samuel P. Schraeger



THE LAST

When God said  
Let there be Man  
He also said  
Let there be Lucifer.

Lucifer became  
And in becoming  
Was the only threat to God.

Lucifer is part of God  
And part of Man:  
Unity is limitless  
Small and indivisible.

Lucifer thought  
God ruled through Lucifer  
But God rules alone.

Man rules, if and when,  
Through Lucifer.

Lucifer walks in circles,  
With God forever present  
And forever silent.

Alan Sillitoe



Was grass not made  
to step on together?

Roger Z. Owens

At Night

What is the taste of blood?  
come, I call you  
bring a torch  
at night

Bring a mask so that I  
shall not know you  
when you come to  
bury the dead

I will kindle a fire  
within you  
when the others  
are gone

The blood on your lips  
is not a sacrifice  
as there is nothing  
to gain

I place the knife in your  
right hand  
it is terrible  
to be alone

Michael C. Berch



Butterflies  
in autumn woods  
weave sunlit tapestry

Phoebe Hoffman

Quest

Yesterday

several of us had open heart surgery.

Today

we watched while men went speeding toward the moon.

It is a long way down the dark hall toward

tomorrow.

The hands that beckon are without arms or bodies.

The coming night

lies in wait and those caught in the courtyard

howl in hopelessness because the stars are gone.

R H Linn



Maybe

I'm a thing

you could not feel

David Avina



Spring

my thoughts lose

their ice-locked rigidity

and once more

begin to flow

Deborah Brant

Laundry

That sweet spread of red  
did not stain her sensibility  
or bloody her imagination

I suppose  
she scrubbed that dress  
with other clothes  
elbow-deep in oxydol  
fed steaming through the wringer  
she hung them out

Clothespins caught between her teeth  
her arms reach high overhead  
stringing sheets towels pillowcases bluejeans  
tee shirts and socks

Mary Eastman



I washed my brain  
  
It is clear  
and dazzling as white marble  
And expresses  
in downy sentences my within  
But  
you never noticed

Lynn Balestreri-Cronin



Born To Lose

I was sitting in this cell and all these guys were tattooed  
all of them were able to roll a cigarette with one hand

if I mentioned Wallace Stevens or  
even Pablo Neruda to them  
they'd call me crazy

I named my cellmates in my mind:  
that one was Kafka, that one was Dostoevsky  
that one was Blake, that one was Celine  
and that one was Mickey Spillane  
I didn't like Mickey Spillane

sure enough that night at lights out  
Mickey and I had a fight over who got top bunk  
the way it ended neither of us got top bunk  
we both got the hole.



they were poets  
and I realize that they are gone  
I am beset with an inescapable sadness  
they have gone somewhere  
they are somewhere else  
they are drinking beer and eating  
getting bigger and louder  
these terrible obnoxious  
undefeated beings  
I miss them



you can't tell an unemployed man  
from an artist any more,  
they all look alike

Charles Bukowski

Avocado Lake

*para Ben*

A body moves under the dark lake –  
the throat is a tube of water, the hands  
are those of a child reaching for his mother.  
It may be hours before the body rises  
to the surface.

It is even longer before the body is found.  
To blow breath in him is useless –  
the lungs need to be wrung like a sponge.  
The grey eyes peeled like tape from the eyes.  
The curled finger rubbed and kissed.

And now, at daybreak, the willows  
once again hold the heat, and a young girl  
on the shore where a friend has gone under  
skims pebbles across the lake,  
over what remains of him –  
his phlegm drifting beneath the surface,  
as his life did.

Gary Soto



Papa Bear

Bedtime stories  
continue for a little while  
after the child is asleep.  
Fathers sit in the dark  
talking to themselves  
about raccoons and bunnies.

Billy Collins



REBEL

!  
 e  
 s  
 i  
 r  
 aspiration  
 another  
 watch  
 And  
 I  
 baked  
 my  
 cake  
 in  
 life  
 batter  
 new  
 prepare  
 I'll  
 gone  
 it's  
 once  
 And  
 And  
 flavored  
 it  
 with  
 knowledge  
 dinner  
 and  
 lunch  
 breakfast  
 for  
 slices  
 little  
 cut  
 And  
 And  
 iced  
 it  
 with  
 dreams  
 -Randi Katz

SEVEN STARS POETRY



No. 3  
\$1.50

cover by Richard Coleman

Fragile Music

a million insects  
filling the cracks and empty spaces  
with little whisperings of wings

a school of elk on the tundra  
scatter pell-mell at the thunder of  
a herd of rabbits in transit  
and a pride of gnats divide  
confused at the rapid movement

above a bird flies on  
unconcerned

Owen Kenknight



Civilization

we have learned manners  
and refinement  
how to hold our cups  
with the little finger  
extended delicately  
how to veil our smiles  
and bleeding interiors

Deborah Brandt



Nuance

The b(ee) in subtle is subtle  
The p(ee) in pswimming is silent

David Linn Arnold

Gentle Stone Whispers

fragile silence fell between us  
a thin glass curtain dividing our bed  
your speechless anger imprisons me  
like a child with pneumonia  
    seeing Spring through a window  
even the Spring air can sometimes be cold  
and silence breaks like shattering glass  
letting your anger chill my ears  
    as I whisper gentle stones

Mike Shainline



Latewo

chocolate woman  
    trying hard not to melt  
        (her sugar evaporated long ago)  
leans on a blistered windowsill  
lets plastic transistor do her thinking  
  
stares straight  
  
    behind      (it's easier that way)  
  
        at gray brick wall

chocolate woman  
    content                   sometimes  
unaware of the revolutionaries  
    playing  
        on her doorstep

Jane Tomek

the sunset  
stays a moment  
to witness our reaction  
and seeing our blank faces  
gives us darkness  
with a laugh

Kathleen Keller



cats like  
dark spaces  
where nobody  
can find them  
sleeping in perfect peace  
knowing so well  
that nobody can find them  
purring so loud  
that nobody can miss them

Samuel P. Schraeger



with truth  
as partner  
and guide  
silence  
is peace

Roger Z. Owens



The wood cross by the field has warped,  
its arms turned like daggers toward the earth.  
Termites work like monks within a monastery.

Mike Shainline

Child And All Others

Baby, smooth as a pearl  
as if curled around a seed of sand  
in the oyster's palm  
petulant, spontaneous –  
tar feather brushed into gray flesh  
cast, a taboo into the sea of eyes  
bold as the courting peacock's web  
a heliotrope under cold stares tossed up  
eclipsing the sun of human hearts  
sown as the solo in a chorus  
unheard. . .  
the good eggs  
rolled like crap over the curb  
into gutters of distinction  
where shades of one color – colors  
of one skin  
stand naked before cream judges  
obvious, anxious  
    caged  
like zebras.

James Marvelle



if  
    you say so  
        there must be no such thing  
            as undying love  
so I'll laugh and paint butterflies  
        without their wings on  
                                while writing  
poems that are outside playing on the slide

Andrea S. Gereighty

life's journey

thumbelina lives in a concrete pipe  
she sleeps in a roach clip  
covers herself with a dirty zigzag  
in winter she gathers used matchsticks  
and builds a fire  
to heat a thimbleful of dirty snow  
her bathwater

Kathleen R. Lancto



-only nothing-

steel against flesh  
i close my eyes  
sudden  
pulsating warmth  
transcending  
into the depths  
of bliss  
no cares  
no worries  
no fears

only

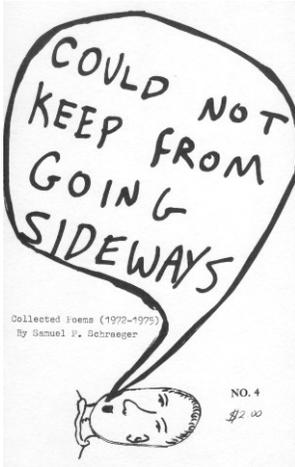
nothing

-lotus-



I am a piece of a person of a people – where do I fit in?

Phil Krueger



my movie projector mind  
receives your film  
and runs it over  
over and over  
some bad scenes  
are edited out  
thanks to animation  
and the active thoughts  
of the producer  
and some things  
just won't focus  
due to a clouded lens

ॐ

i can see  
perfect plaster visions  
of people passing by  
sculpted in their images  
like things  
that are supposed to be there

ॐ

man out of his mind  
running down 18<sup>th</sup> ave  
crying the tears of a useless trip  
he knows he knows everything  
and he doesn't want to know any more  
there is nothing more to know  
the capricorn satan witches  
will not escape his wrath

Samuel P. Schraeger

he's gladder  
than she is  
because he got a million dollars  
and she got shot in the leg



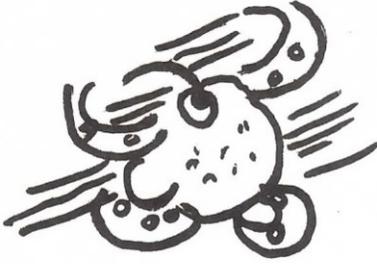
I think I'm feeling very strange  
But I couldn't really say  
I haven't felt right since I saw you  
sitting here  
I think I love you  
and you laughed again.

Is it the dandelions in your smile  
or do I perceive something  
that doesn't exist  
thinking it does  
and thinking  
you think it too?



something you said to me yesterday  
  
echoes in rooms  
tv tubes  
and pizza pies  
on a highway to infinity  
  
it bounces on my subconscious  
like a rubber ball  
taking smaller and smaller bounces  
  
you said you don't love me

Samuel P. Schraeger



men read words of prophets  
-modern and ancient-  
only for powergloryknowledge  
never wishing for or gaining  
understanding



to understand truth  
we must hear what is not said  
may never be said

Roger Z. Owens



### Into The City

oh come come come on  
you crown of thorns  
implant into the head  
your rows of horns  
black, shiny, like bear claws  
to open the flesh wide  
pear shaped openings  
where the blood flows out  
when the crowd shouts  
for your head upon a platter  
and the matter of the cross  
fills you up  
with that longing kind of love  
that you hide so well

hans ebner



cover by Debby Brandt

Winter Moonlight

Your pale light  
comes through  
the rice-paper window  
and I see your shadow  
in the bamboo chair

Earl LaClair



forget  
what you've heard  
of love

for  
love is the sun  
upon your being

and the sunburn  
to remember  
the pain

Kathleen Keller



Fort Stockton Drive

I think I love you  
but your gray car  
drifts down the highway wind  
without a human sound  
and I disappear

Don MacQueen

man sweeping sidewalk  
mirrored in the store window  
does double duty

Magny L. Jensen



sparks from her young eyes  
reflect my faded features  
as I drive away

Michael R Lewis



smiling beneath words  
and your thighs gentle pressure  
weight I can't bear now

Brazil

one strumming guitar  
a river of water sounds  
sing in this black night

Harlequin

You make me smile  
because of an old sadness.  
What do you expect  
to dredge out of my eyes?

Kathleen Keller

Outside The City Limits

Even most ordered towns along the edges  
are frayed and ragged as if no one cares  
dusty weeds take over sagging buildings.  
They lean like slatterns with no watchful eye  
prodding into unaccustomed tidiness.  
A casual geometric no man's land  
a garbage heap of lost desires, dead dreams  
unlabeled anguish and deep hopelessness.

Alice McKenzie Swaim



I stand brittle and frozen  
at the door of the post office  
and give out glances as gifts  
part my lips and lie  
it must be the weather

Jeffry Jensen



reflections

continuing dreams  
undercurrent  
to my meanderings

inside  
outside  
one side

Susan Bruce

Calling A Friend

before death awakened  
you ripped his skin  
and stole his scream

your words  
knots of jagged ice  
pick my throat

Terry Vara



wood rots by design

as night replaces sleep  
in the wake of my last tear

Jeffry Jensen



Uxmal, Rio Bec  
Altar de Sacrificios

Words flow  
my offering to you  
a maguey thorn  
in my side

Debby Brandt



But You Were Such A Beautiful Baby

Unwilling (or unable)  
to accept  
this full grown version  
of the child you remember  
you try  
to make me small again  
and before your eyes  
I feel  
    so conscious of my size  
    my too big, too heavy  
    disappointing  
    unappealing size

Oh, I could still  
trot out the tears  
(they'd shrink me  
like cheap cotton)  
but I won't

Kathleen Lasseter



Again

They're giving the plumbers and carpenters ideas  
and the philosophers wrenches and hammers,  
headaches, calluses, and blisters at the great  
ferris wheel where time is still  
welding a scythe to trim you, whittling one way signs  
at the dead end of the beginning  
try again to follow invisible on his way past  
flesh and bone; immortality again  
the maze is laid out before the throne of perfection  
and the hunter is wound for another  
round at his game.

James Marvelle

in praise

naked arms held up high  
fingers spread wide  
atop an ageless rock  
afloat in sea of sand  
body like a sail not moving  
catching the something  
that passes on the wind

hans ebner jr



love me  
only as I am  
love me  
only as I struggle  
do not try  
once my hands are freed

Kathleen Keller



Time Behind Me

clouds gather over me like restaurant dogs  
my watch ticks on  
a mountain collapses  
a river leaps from a cliff  
I lift my face  
spit sand from my teeth  
and stand

Mike Shainline

On The Eve Of First Publication

*Song By A Bonfire Of Rejection Slips*

old dog  
you gnawed  
my heel so long  
my steps  
have left  
their legacy  
for all to see  
for all this scorn  
this my mortification

now I kiss you goodbye  
with a brand of fire  
and spit you for roasting  
those bites were  
gratuitous  
and gave you  
no nourishment  
tables turn  
you squirm  
I reap a small benefit

Owen Kenknight



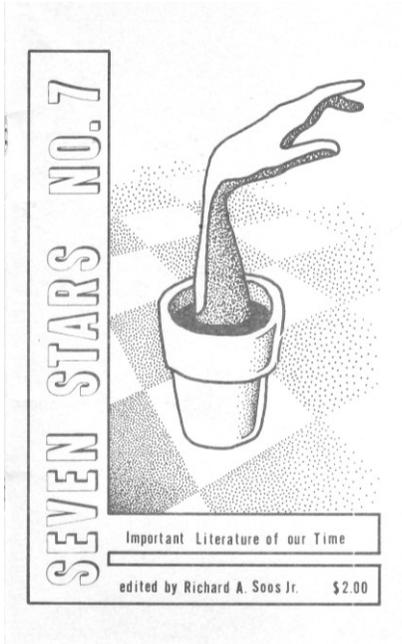
inward

the sun marks me with the sum of man's dreams  
I stand with millions wavering in the wind  
and feel the lean piercing glare of the sun

Phil Krueger



cover by Richard Bull and Deborah Brandt



cover by Richard Bull



cover by Richard Bull



cover by Hans Ebner

The Kids Come Home Less Each Year

Dreams don't seem to dream  
the dreams much anymore  
it's different than  
when dreaming was everything.

It's strange  
the strange way memory goes  
one really doesn't know  
what one can keep forever.

And the children sing  
of almost anything.



A Look Inside

I didn't expect it  
to be so crowded in here.  
Who are these people?



On Easy Street

Our town is steeped  
with beautiful people  
who have strangely enough  
chosen their last defense  
to be  
the dark compromising  
past tense

Phil Krueger

Populist Manifesto For Poets, With Love

Poets, come out of your closets,  
open your windows, open your doors,  
you have been holed-up too long  
in your closed worlds.  
Come down, come down  
from your Russian Hills and Telegraph Hills,  
your Beacon Hills and your Chapel Hills,  
your Mount Analogues and Montparnasses,  
down from your foothills and mountains,  
out of your teepees and domes.  
The trees are still falling  
and we'll to the woods no more.  
No time now for sitting in them  
as man burns down his own house  
to roast his pig.  
No more chanting Hare Krishna  
while Rome burns.  
San Francisco's burning,  
Mayakovsky's Moscow's burning  
the fossil-fuels of life.  
Night & the Horse approaches  
eating light, heat & power,  
and the clouds have trousers.  
No time now for the artist to hide  
above, beyond, behind the scenes,  
indifferent, paring his fingernails,  
refining himself out of existence.  
No time now for our little literary games,  
no time now for our paranoias & hypochondrias,  
no time now for fear & loathing,  
time now only for light & love.  
We have seen the best minds of our generation  
destroyed by boredom at poetry readings.

Poetry isn't a secret society,  
it isn't a temple either.  
Secret words & chants won't do any longer.  
The hour of coming is over,  
the time of keening come,  
a time for keening & rejoicing  
over the coming end  
of industrial civilization  
which is bad for earth & Man.  
Time now to face outward  
in the full lotus position  
with eyes wide open.  
Time now to open your mouths  
with a new open speech,  
time now to communicate with all sentient beings.  
All you 'Poets of the Cities'  
hung in museums including myself,  
all you poet's poets writing poetry  
about poetry,  
all you poetry workshop poets  
in the boondock heart of America,  
all you housebroken Ezra Pounds,  
all you far-out freaked-out cut-up poets,  
all you pre-stressed Concrete poets,  
all you cunnilingual poets,  
all you pay-toilet poets groaning with graffiti,  
all you A-train swingers who never swing on birches,  
all you masters of the sawmill haiku  
in the Siberias of America,  
all you eyeless unrealists,  
all you self-occluding supersurrealists,  
all you bedroom visionaries  
and closet agitpropagators,  
all you Groucho Marxist poets

and leisure-class Comrades  
who lie around all day  
and talk about the working class proletariat,  
all you Catholic anarchists of poetry,  
all you Black Mountaineers of poetry,  
all you Boston Brahmins and Bolinas bucolics,  
all you den mothers of poetry,  
all you zen brothers of poetry,  
all you suicide lovers of poetry,  
all you hairy professors of poesie,  
all you poetry reviewers  
drinking the blood of the poet,  
all you Poetry Police -  
where are Whitman's wild children,  
where the great voices speaking out  
with a sense of sweetness and sublimity,  
where the great new vision,  
the great world-view,  
the high prophetic song  
of the immense earth  
and all that sings in it  
and our relations to it -  
Poets, descend  
to the street of the world once more  
and open your minds & eyes  
with the old visual delight,  
clear your throat and speak up,  
poetry is dead, long live poetry  
with terrible eyes and buffalo strength.  
Stop mumbling and speak out  
with a new wide-open poetry  
with a new common sensual 'public surface'  
with other subjective levels  
or other subversive levels,

a tuning fork in the inner ear  
to strike below the surface.  
Of your own sweet Self still sing  
yet utter "the word en-masse" -  
Poetry the common carrier  
for the transportation of the public  
to higher places  
than other wheels can carry it.  
Poetry still falls from the skies  
into our streets still open.  
They haven't put up the barricades, yet,  
the streets are still alive with faces,  
lovely men & women still walking there,  
still lovely creatures everywhere,  
in the eyes of all the secret of all  
still buried there.  
Whitman's wild children still sleeping there,  
Awake and walking in the open air.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti



Concrete

wet lites  
thru our gaze  
nothing in our hands  
but cigarettes  
& empty beer cans  
we have odes & chants  
& two twin-spiked elegies  
to survive  
this night with

Guy R. Beining

if this were my last poem  
i would not do it  
neither if the first  
peck peck peck like a chicken  
crow crow crow like a cock  
think think think like karl shapiro  
put it all in a pot  
dash of "rime", pinch of flirt  
healthy measure of rich black dirt  
will make the mud pies i write  
as clear as gasoline  
waiting for a match  
which  
will blow me back  
to my basement catch  
where i'll peck peck peck some more  
teachers teach poetry  
poets eat it

Hans Ebner Jr.



this past weekend

we danced  
we laughed  
we counted stars  
we bathed in warm streams  
we listened to bells pealing  
we loved  
without leaving my room

Real Faucher

Wino \* Alvarado Street

Whatzeye seeking one-two three ? hung a little early  
erring me. Prayly Mister, I lean sir! (living perpendicular)  
Aching, ill-informed I'll . . . lice some empty headed smile  
Feather river Canyon mess. Curtain-serving wilderness.  
Beggly handout pocketing. Eatoff sittu sidewalk king.  
Tearsum pissum sendum on home. Pail attention,  
mumble, moan.

Charles Brady



Bones

Sometimes I like the thought  
of my bones pared down  
not to be a gasping mock-faced  
skull posing in a pumpkined window  
or crossboned relief winking  
on hidden dark-glassed bottles.  
My bones demand  
authenticity, precision, art.  
I arrange their sharp edges carefully  
in geometric opposition  
acute angles of wrist and elbow  
perpendicular ribs and vertebrae  
each dotted thinly with bits of vermilion  
flesh still deliciously soft  
only the faintest congealment.  
I strip myself ruthless  
sensuously fleshless  
delicately dabbing on the scent  
of carrion.

Eileen Eliot

the city sunset  
is hidden  
past the warehouses

you forget  
it's there  
affecting you

Phil Flott Jr.



Before I Get Up For Work

I sleep draped over you  
I dance with you through your dream  
I roll  
    surround you  
            fold under your arm.

Viola Weimer



home

the aging hipster  
wanders the empty streets  
where the scene once reigned  
a party was always magic  
home  
    a lonely stretch  
of concrete and asphalt

Richard A. Schroepfer

it's a long time since I have dined with her  
since the wine illumined our nights together  
my mouth burns with the memory  
my eye and my heart bury  
and returns the desire to visit her place  
to go to her balcony  
and see her black hair spread by the wind  
on her face

my heart years for the hours  
I might think of nothing

Mizrah Ghalib  
*translated by James Banerian*



to –lotus-

What would there be  
with you dead beneath the dark and the moon?  
You would see in the clear sun  
how you should have puffed rain away  
and never let clouds undershadow you.

Phil Flott Jr.



Give Me Age

waiting for my hair to white  
so i can be a lover  
so much will never get done  
like shirts to be ironed in the basket  
or grapes to be dried in the sun  
like the glass of new pressed wine  
i demand my age be given to me

Hans Ebner Jr.

A Walk, A Pause

The avenues, Zukofsky, are full  
of Brancusi  
bending  
to a wind's oval breath

Egyptian shadows  
like snow lie in the gutters  
& a window shade  
is pulled: there's no hand

A sleeping night watchman, rolling  
in the dirt  
of his usual dreams  
sees the hospital sheets pulled back  
& the ashes are gone

I knew it all the time  
leaves blow  
from one side of the road to the other

The branches died before them  
& like bored hosts  
the trees are suddenly waiting  
for me to leave the room.

George A. Freek



i wrote for you, sang songs for love  
dreamed for memories and lived for today  
and the peacefulness of sleeping with you  
appears only when sleeping with you

Roger Z. Owens

I Walk Into A Night Of Swift March Wind To Watch The Full Moon  
And See You In The Window, Reading

I rejoice that you are near  
and that I'm not writing the epitaph  
of our life together  
in some far hotel idly dreaming  
of publication, hoping to explain away  
my madness or to leave warnings  
for future generations of poets  
lest they regard their work with too much fervor  
and their lovers with too little fear.

Bob McArthur



The Cry And The Howl

Dig deep into the history of man on earth and you'll find his poetry. Poetry has always been with us, even before we had written language. Poetry has survived even after the cultures that produced it vanished. Poetry is the most human of man's records. It comes to us direct from the heart and mind. It lives in the time the poet writes and remains alive for his children's children. The act of poetry is an act of love. We must jump into it with the idea of having both feet soiled. We will be more human for it. Poetry will help us survive.

Hans Ebner



We can speak softly, play tug-a-war gently,  
and walk with a whispered shoe.  
And after the war, and we've lost again,  
What do we do with our rage?

Charlotte Fox

there's a brand new woman  
walking down main street today  
she's found herself a brand new world  
she left her man and children too  
and now she's cleansed and feeling good  
knowing this life is hers alone

there's a brand new woman  
with a past branded on her beauty  
two children and an abortion ugly  
once wrote poetry and played guitar  
and took typing in college  
where she met her husband

there's a brand new woman  
hearing echoes in the nights  
hearing children crying for new toys  
hearing a man scream for dinner  
hearing voices from first dates  
necking on the beach

there's a brand new woman  
walking down the street today  
a little scared and insecure  
and she can't turn back even slowly  
because I left my past with my  
walking down main street today

Cathy Rush



When you left this morning  
my hatred went with you  
along with various  
other parts  
and throughout the day  
empty people  
feasted on  
the leftovers

Spacelady Moonwalk

Nightclub Dancer

You see it's not that way here  
my last dance will be absolute  
sacrificial and intense

*Two anemones are fingerless and fixed upon my chest  
and in the center an empty Cyclops pit a flesh eye*

Yes, yes, I offer you a woman trinity  
two nipples and a buttonhole on a bedspread  
I will make you more than father, son and ghost.

Pat Reynolds



Necessity Is One Big Mother

No I don't need you  
I'll just hang myself  
under an obscure pretext  
and let you have a laugh.  
I wonder what you'd say?

I told you  
that suicide was out.  
I will stage a literary one  
just to keep a hand in  
and I promised not to bleed  
on the new carpet

Debby Brandt

love never listened long  
to my sad song  
the music of your flute  
seemed to steal it away  
I should be sleeping  
through new dreams  
Instead of opening old eyes

I've lost another morning  
or did someone just forget  
to hang the sun?

Kathleen Keller



National Orgasm For Women

The electricity that flows  
between unhinged women is orgasmic.  
We are turned on to the cosmos.  
Our energies will not rest  
We are compelled  
to right wrongs  
to expose hypocrisy  
to ask the unaskable questions  
to set afire the tyranny of our  
Silence.

Noreen Ford McDonald



My Mother

The cork would not stay in  
the bottle of effervescent wine  
sparkling over with Irish wit and humor  
to fill empty champagne glass and tin cup alike

June A. Zwickey

Oh Kay

I'm in the tub  
putting it down:

I wrote better  
when I was ten  
when I was ten  
I was better  
now  
how do you say  
I think I'm old  
I never thought  
about old me  
when I was ten  
when I was ten  
I wrote better poetry  
I wrote "Ode to Tree"  
and sang "Nearer My God To Thee  
and at ten  
I was poetry  
unthinking  
king  
unfolding



Jive Time

got you sling slang hanging  
and it's coming on strong  
got a mouth full of words  
fighting to get out  
got a big pain in my heart  
and I can't hold it in  
got a poem made for singing  
going to do it right now

Hans Ebner Jr

## Got Ten Years of Sad Rain In My Eyes

faces are tears in sand  
popping crater maker  
and by the side of the road  
they spill their guts flowing red  
the flowing brown and yellow faces like  
smoking streams of piss in the cold morning  
the eyes of children turn away the highland frost  
and American made tanks with headlights  
looking like panting steel bug-eyed  
monsters mock the television screen  
around eleven o'clock



## An Open Letter To Anyone Who Will Read It

I don't want to smash my fist in your face  
how do I get through to you when I'm limited  
by the language itself  
it seems to put together words  
I get so confused  
I say words I don't mean and then try to defend  
you see I think  
I think we're all missing it  
the it is what we think we know  
we don't know at all  
the world is a wounded elephant  
bleeding to death  
in its own waste

Hans Ebner Jr

## Wondering Who To Blame

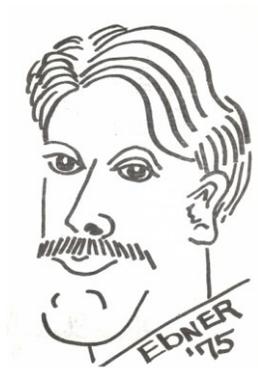
orders signed by the major  
in the name of the commander  
approved by the general  
delivered to the captain  
passed on to the platoon leaders  
yelled out to the company  
whispered to the forward elements  
hardly understood by the point men  
who were shot to shit in 30 seconds  
along with the other 183 fools  
about 11 clicks northeast of Bong Son  
South Viet Nam



## Block

sometimes you get the lockjaw  
with a typewriter hanging out between your lips  
when the bulb is burning  
at three in the morning  
you find yourself asleep  
eyeball to eyeball  
with a poem that looks  
like a blank sheet

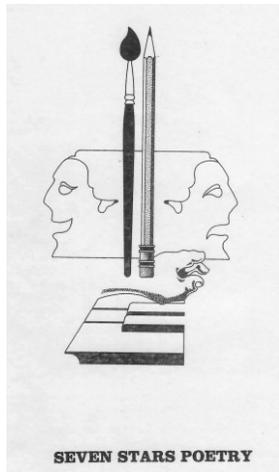
Hans Ebner Jr



Realities Library



*cover by r soos*



**SEVEN STARS POETRY**

*cover by Richard Bull*



*cover by Richard Bull*

why am I writing this  
and why do you read it  
you are a poem  
you are beautiful  
as are all poems  
and other wordless wonders

Samuel P. Schraeger



the iron miseries of love  
have stabbed me soulless  
and made me true today

Roger Z. Owens



determined

I won't climb part way  
threatening to jump  
collecting a crowd  
gathering attention  
for you to enjoy  
the role of savior  
urging me downward  
back to the net

I will just leap  
on the blackest of nights  
unseen by any

Alice Whitcher

Regarding Sylvia

It will not be  
It will not be  
Chant the beads of this rosary  
Hail ecology vasectomy  
Lobotomy mastectomy  
Hail day care  
Hail monogamy androgeny  
Matrimony alimony  
Hail sisterhood  
Planned parenthood  
Praise, as we should, electric stoves

S.A. Richtmyer



subway

electronic caterpillars  
    fall victims of graffiti warriors  
        on night prowl

nameless artists  
    on hobo trains  
        display the elements of style

Randi Katz



poet  
stuck in dreams  
hung over in sorrows  
and strangled by needs

Roger Z. Owens

TV Sounds

mingle loud in my head  
push aside my words  
weaken them  
till they no longer struggle  
and grow mute and die

Real Faucher



Mad At Me

she'd get mad at me  
for getting mad  
I guess I wasn't supposed to

Richard M. Schroepfer



Apology Accepted

you've just sliced  
a piece of yourself  
into the colander  
of my forgiveness

Lori Fox Benak

who am i after all?

I am the one with my nose to the sand  
seeking the tiniest perfect shell

Owen Kenknight



Chez Pierrot

at the edge of darkness  
a fat moon rests her chin on the earth  
& me  
I watch ashes spill on my pants & rug

my closet is haunted  
& the ghost is a lady's slipper  
& at midnight I often throw it at the moon  
then every morning I go out & bring it back

I do not understand  
I say it emphatically  
my fingers nor my eyes  
nor any of the other puppets  
of this madhouse  
my shadow is slowly becoming

George A. Freek



it doesn't surprise me  
that i sit in the twilight  
alone  
wondering  
when i'll share it with someone

Samuel P. Schraeger

Why can't she laugh! each word  
my raft, I drown  
from vacancies :the margins

her uniform, speech  
hides the watermarks :clouds

are breaking up, each word  
watches me, her ink  
rusted :ashes and pins, sky  
smaller

Simon Perchik



Pine Manor

you wrote letters  
from paris france  
half reading the words  
in boston mass  
I could still feel the tingle  
in my toes miles away  
the things you said  
come rolling up the cool sheets  
of this bed  
I am buried in the letters  
And vacant pillows

James Marvelle



already dreaming  
I found thoughts on my pillow  
and my love appeared

Roger Z. Owens

Escaping

I'm alone and the moon is mine  
& it's good for nothing  
& the lights in this town  
don't make any sense  
they allow no peace of mind  
so the moon silently, like a handkerchief  
tucks in a dark pocket.

The Beethoven steals all my prayers!  
& I'm like a ghost who can touch his cheek  
& the woman in my dream is a stranger  
& I really don't like her subtle laughter  
& I'm ashamed of my fingernails too  
& how the moths slam against the window  
dying so near the light inside my eyes.

George A. Freek



Beneath this tree a bench :a dropping  
sorted :alone  
she sits, each leaf  
without a rider, the green thick boards  
thumping in her head :doubt

is balanced, her feet  
galloping almost on the grass.

Simon Perchik



So this is Paradise, the sun damp, that  
weed the one Moses will clasp, grass  
beginning to harden, heat  
will be imported. Nothing

will flow. The dredge  
reaches for rails, nails  
are what Dredge wants, pulls  
this dampness :Paradise

has no fish yet, fill is what he  
wants, death beginning, snakes

will be silenced, fruit  
drained from all stumps, all Eden  
watching Dredge, thorns  
lifted for dry land.

We name this land Spring  
yell, Spring! Let us  
rest on this bloom, hear  
how this city will end.

Simon Perchik



swirl  
picks up a few  
noncommittal passengers  
who don't enjoy the ride  
or despise it  
they just go  
eyes locked in orbit  
clamping contingency  
in the spiral  
incidence of accidental  
beauty

Owen Kenknight

Seven Star Friends

we meet inside these pages  
we sleep between the black and white  
as one  
union of thoughts  
on life  
and love  
collected minds of friends.

I've shared your pains  
of writing  
I've felt your hearts  
spilled across a page  
your dreams  
have melted down my eyes  
in liquid words.

my heart  
has felt the joy we share  
in just being here  
between the pages  
instead of lost beneath  
rejection slips.

Kathleen Keller



in a world of poets and artists

thought I'd dazzle you  
with handmade poems –  
you say you have your own fine lines  
of prize-ridden sonnets.  
thought I'd sweep you near  
with my fantasy brush paintings –  
you say you won plaza art fair ribbon  
impressionistic crafting.  
I have no choice but to give you myself.

Nancy Brizendene

For Spacelady Moonwalk

are there only your knees  
to precede one small entrance  
are there parts to the whole  
or is a hole the only part  
are there leftovers in empty space  
is there space leftover for filling wholes  
is it only hatred  
gets you through another day  
    spacelady  
are there changes other places  
    different faces  
is there another way to the core

James Marvelle



puzzle not the death of cities –  
you did not puzzle the death of  
    your leaders

-----

if you love  
    and write of it  
shout it in the streets  
    today

Roger Z. Owens



Pawnbroker

I loaned my eyes to a stranger  
He gave me his smile as a receipt

Kathleen Keller

For Anonymous Mothers

I watch daily for signs

that he's mastered  
more than yesterday

any small signal

that his independence is near

lying in wait like some wild beast

I pounce on his achievements  
keeping score on the  
parasite abacus of my mind.

He's only a baby

and already I predict doom.

How dare I dream of his tomorrows

when today lies mortally wounded  
by my harsh tongue/hand.

Whiskeybottles

speedup pills and  
slowdown marijuana

signs of my impatience  
through all the empty years.  
(growgrowgrowyousonofabitch)  
I water him hourly with my tears.

Yesterday he left by the back door (finally he's gone)

closing it as he left  
proud of his silent exit.

Like some stranger

he rang the doorbell when he wanted in.

Signs of his struggle

to understand the confusion  
of my commands

will be mere intolerance  
toward this willful woman.

Spacelady Moonwalk



In The Quiet Flight Of Swallows I See Your Face  
soul/flower

the little ants go by  
at work in my straw mat  
golden landscape friendly sun  
where i lie back and watch  
the quiet flight of sparrows  
bringing to mind the soul of a  
flower that's inhabiting my house.

Francisco Santos  
*translated by Owen Kenknight*



How To Become A Useful Member Of Society

the best way to start is to close all your doors  
shut your windows & draw your blinds  
then check for any light that may be coming in  
perhaps you'll notice some creeping thru the bottom of a door  
if so, grab a towel & snuff it out  
then turn off all the lights next, to be on the safe side  
take a handkerchief or maybe an old t-shirt & blindfold  
yourself  
then close your eyes as tight as you can  
find a comfortable spot on the sofa & relax  
you've just joined the human race

Greg Wyss



the eternal triangle

above all other things  
I cherish my words  
they are as necessary to me  
as the air I breathe

my words are a jealous lover  
don't challenge them  
because they will win



what did you say?

the eyes  
haunt  
and hypnotize  
speaking words  
tongues never knew

heather miller



harlequin

your laugh is a little bit of hurt  
squeezed through a funny bone



often as you speak I know what you are about to say  
often as I speak I wonder what I am missing

James Marvelle

Saint Marks Book Store

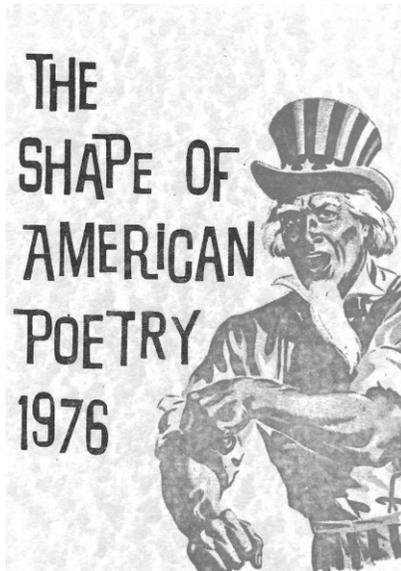
Under the stairs I enter unchallenged  
and I'm out of the cold new york city night  
I walk straight to the back and sit on the small step ladder  
and from here I can go anywhere

W. A. Donellan



we are just glimpses and fleeting moments  
a miraculously woven design  
block quilts in space  
time pieces on stage  
museum artifacts  
surrounded by time  
like some remote telescope

Spacelady Moonwalk



*Realities Library*

I, WHO CUT OFF MY SORROWS  
LIKE A WOODCUTTER,  
SHOULD SPEND MY LIFE IN THE MOUNTAINS.  
WHY DO I STILL LONG  
FOR THE FLOATING WORLD?  
-AKAZOME EMON (JAPANESE)  
TRANSLATED BY KENNETH REXROTH

REALITIES LIBRARY

POEMCARD SERIES #1

---

IF I SUFFER AT THIS  
TYPEWRITER  
THINK HOW I'D FEEL  
AMONG THE LETTUCE-  
PICKERS OF SALINAS?  
-CHARLES BUKOWSKI

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POEMCARD SERIES #2

---

**inside**

THE PORE  
OF SLEEP  
I SLIP  
AMMUNITION  
TO THE DEAD.  
- RANDALL BROCK

REALITIES LIBRARY

POEMCARD SERIES #3

---

I KNOW IT'S GONNA  
KILL YOU SOMEDAY  
BUT I DO LIKE THE WAY  
YOU SMOKE A CIGARETTE  
- SAMUEL P. SCHRAEGER JR.

REALITIES LIBRARY

POEMCARD SERIES #4

## SPILLING MY WINE

CAN'T TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED  
EXCEPT OF COURSE A LOVER BUT TIME WILL  
END THAT GAME AND BLACKNESS FROM WINE  
WILL BE YOUR ONLY FRIEND AND I CAN'T  
HELP BUT SOMETIMES SPILL MY LIFE.  
- RICHARD A. SOOS JR.

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POEMCARD SERIES #5

---

POETS, DESCEND  
TO THE STREET OF THE WORLD ONCE MORE  
AND OPEN YOUR MINDS & EYES  
WITH THE OLD VISUAL DELIGHT,  
CLEAR YOUR THROAT AND SPEAK UP,  
POETRY IS DEAD, LONG LIVE POETRY  
WITH TERRIBLE EYES AND BUFFALO STRENGTH.

- LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

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POEMCARD SERIES #6

---

TO THE LAST MAN SURVIVING ON EARTH  
I GIVE MY EYELIDS WORN OUT BY FEAR, TO WEAR  
IN HIS LONG NIGHTS OF RADIATION AND SILENCE,  
SO THAT HIS EYES CAN'T CLOSE, FOR REGRET  
IS LIKE TEARS SLEEPING THROUGH CLOSED EYELIDS.

-GALWAY KINNELL

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POEMCARD SERIES #7

---

ONCE I SAW A MAN  
TUNING THE HOLLOW  
OF A BAMBOO  
FOR THE SOUND SHOULD BE  
OF WATER AND OF BIRD  
THE BREATH LIKE THE WIND.

-CAROL LEM

REALITIES LIBRARY

POEMCARD SERIES #8

*Realities Library*

*from I AM HERE for NAOMI*

I HEAR YOU CRY OUT  
IN THE BLACKENED THEATRE OF NIGHT.  
I GO IN AND HOLD YOU IN MY ARMS  
AND ROCK YOU, WATCHING  
YOUR LIPS WORKING,  
YOUR EYELIDS BULGE WITH THE NIGHTLY VISION.

-ROBERT MEZEY

REALITIES LIBRARY

POEMCARD SERIES #9

---

I HAVE WALKED THE CITIES ISLANDS,  
I HAVE SUNG THE SIRENS SOUNDS,  
I HAVE DREAMT THE COUNTRY'S SPLENDORS,  
I HAVE SEEN THE DYING TREES.  
I HAVE JOINED THE FREEDOM ARMIES,  
I HAVE WEPT MY BROTHERS' DEATHS.  
I HAVE BEEN THE NATION SCREAMING,  
I HAVE FELT THE WARS WITHIN.

-KATHLEEN KELLER

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POEMCARD SERIES #10

---

THERE WILL BE MANY POEMS WRITTEN  
IN THE SHAPE OF A GRENADE  
FROM THE HARD BITS OF METAL GIVEN OFF  
EVEN A GOVERNMENT  
MIGHT CATCH ITS DEATH.

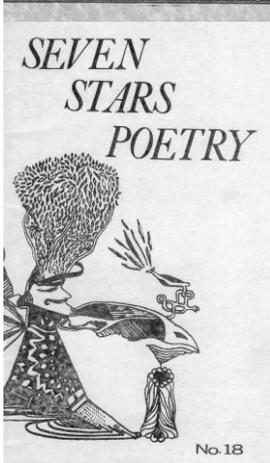
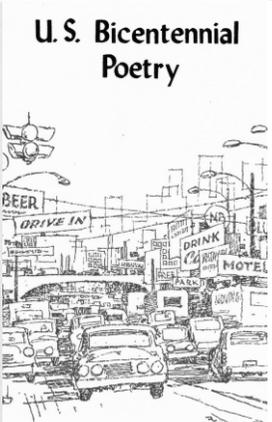
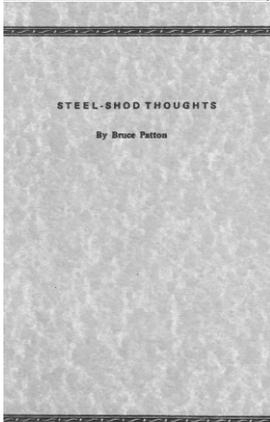
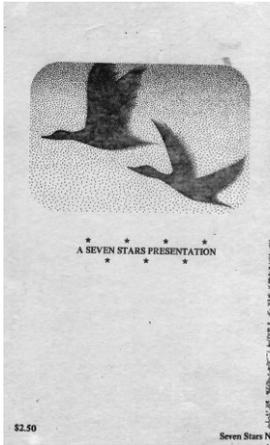
-JOHN HAINES

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POEMCARD SERIES #11



Seven Stars Anthology 1973-1998



Covers #13, 15 generic; #14, 16 by Richard Bull; #17, 18, 20 by Daniel Tobias Walson; #19 by Richard Coleman

Incantation

All the wizards are on the street  
forging phony bank notes  
showing false I.D.  
All the sorcerers sit on lonely doorsteps  
waiting for a stray cat  
or a stray master to waddle by.  
Most witches, astrologers and genies  
are at home baking bread  
or painting cosmic fingernails.  
I, magician with a pen,  
have lost the touch –  
all I can give them is another mask  
to cover the one they once had.

Neil Kvern



impaled

no falling sadness could capture  
this sunlit rain on my face  
falling on those flowers  
on those wild vivid flowers

i save a few petals with their scent  
storing them in a box to cherish later  
I call this box a coffin – weep inside it  
and dream of its warmth – how shallow

how betrayed

Daniel Tobias Walson

alone

he sleeps alone  
blanket of myrtle and rain  
momentarily in his dreams  
supple virgins clad in love and desire  
the moment of his fragile innocence  
lay upon broken stars

Vincent Chetcuti



power saw

woodchips and sawdust  
down the tree comes  
fragile termite wings  
on books of poetry

Susan Denin



we sit in darkened rooms  
burning in the light of radio dials  
smoking faded stars

nancy brizendine



clogged centuries  
crust the shore  
of thought

silence stirs words  
to a dark broth of corked ferment

David Thornbrugh

brewing inside me

olive children sing  
of the bird  
driving at the flesh

hans ebner jr



they've come to hear the poet

instead I teach them the education of lunacy  
schizophrenic citations  
unredeemable at any local liquor store

Danial Tobias Walson



candles and prayer  
locked doors at dusk  
speak to me

crying minds  
measure time in silence  
I hunch my knees to the wall

Carol Lem



there once was a poet writing on flowers stones open thighs mountains  
obsessed until she died - her lines now safely cold become best sellers

nancy brizendine

how much easier it would be  
if all I wanted to do  
was to step onto the moon  
instead of stepping into her heart

Scott Roush



I have winds that will lash your very being  
rains to soak your soul  
thunderclaps enough to deafen  
and lightning bolts to shock and blind.  
You could not weather my storm.  
My forces will come together and scatter you  
over a thousand miles of misery.

Jacqueline Bowles



all the universe  
in a single cloud dances  
I watch your mind play



between the raindrops  
are eternal worlds of thought  
poems without words

Bruce Patton



I've got a plan to leave all this  
one of these days  
when I find I'm four  
months pregnant & my  
husband john had a  
vasectomy four years ago



nocturne

at night  
my arms flow  
into waves  
curling fingers  
into beaches  
my hair floats  
streaming like seagulls  
diving breezes  
painting clouds  
my legs are comets  
striding silver over blue  
pushing my body like tides  
limitless green  
rolling as my breasts  
swell & sigh  
giving birth to continents  
of swirling trees & soil  
I am vast  
deep  
& ever changing  
I am the sea  
flowing  
until the sun rises  
& I see my mirrored  
reflection a melted  
candle with wicklike  
smoking fingers

nancy brizendine

forget about the poem – have your wheaties

here comes the 360° man  
sees in all directions  
points to solar energy  
sitting atop a nuclear warhead  
doesn't have to stop  
to get his bearings  
makes a mockery  
of the straight shooter computer  
knows what it's up to  
the industrial revolution  
brought you the screw  
a tiny elite unit  
in turning it  
the music 's concrete  
the sun has feet  
that will run away  
on fallout

well, good morning mr president  
how's your credibility  
your humor is killing us  
your economic advisor is pushing  
doonesbury into unemployment

you're cutting back on welfare  
because we can't afford this joblessness



a fuse blown in d.c.

we wait long past each crisis  
for a glimpse of light from the white house  
we look and pray for the help  
we'll never get from friendly democracies  
for the love that will free us from all the lies

James Marvelle

Betrayal

America  
you gave me birth  
my parents  
lived by your codes  
my mother  
sang in the church choir  
my father  
paid your taxes  
smoked lucky strikes  
filterless  
“no place like America” he’d say  
he died of emphysema

Carol Lem



Happy Birthday to America

I’m not the noose of hate around your neck  
Your own hate has ensnared you in this deathtrap  
I’m the slipknot  
I tighten because my freedom is restricted  
I’m pulling for freedom  
You’re hanging on

L.E. Scott



the wind trapped in trees  
struggles madly to escape  
howling in anguish

Hilda N. Barnard

This is open

this poem is open

anything can flow into it

see

I leave spaces

you can write

anything you want

into this poem

this is open

this field is open

any animal

can walk

into it

see

Carol Poster

I entered the house  
through a room without corners

:your garden  
arranged, a guest

could sit  
before touching hands

we danced so late  
a moth wanted to enter.

Simon Perchik



Disillusioned

The wind lifts an egg  
over the grass tops  
lets it bounce without breaking  
teases a blue jay  
who pursues it  
to find  
only an empty shell.

Never mind  
I say to the blue jay.

That's how I feel  
when I read some of my poems.

Lois Wilson



gnarled under the endless inspired energy sweet and blue  
a summer without warm invitation of light and wind  
sometimes I embrace this stillness

Vincent Checuti

A Gay Epithalamium

I have trampled catacombs in windy darkness  
I have sodomized anonymous crab-like anuses  
I have tucked my starched sheets carefully  
like any middleclass spinster  
I have burned my shins on my Honda exhaust  
My dude, you have married a wordmonger

My man, you have married a selfish tongue-maiden  
a disciple of his own illusions. I dread my hours  
away from you even when I'm bored with you and  
wish you'd take a walk. You dismiss my nonsense  
with a limp wrist gracefully waved, or with stoney  
literalness shrivel me, trivialize me, turn my conundrums  
into simple tantrums. And I hate you Ernie, when you will  
not be my darling boy – refuse to canonize me. I could dash  
to silent strangers who want only the touching, make no  
demands for closeness, who never request or require  
forgiveness. I could hug all who need no hugging. And am  
afraid of you and me who really do.

I need your loving shadows  
I need your arm grasped with long nails pinching my side  
I need to come with you in you inside me  
Taste you drool and slurp you because  
I love you Ernest Clay spouse/lover/mate  
I want you here when I am asleep  
I want to be awake for you

I love you Ernest  
I love myself Ernest  
I love us Ernest

Your rich chocolate mirrors  
swirl clouds while you sleep

Louie Crew

People getting divorced  
riding around with their clothes in the car  
and wondering what happened  
to everyone and everything  
including their other  
pair of shoes

and if you spy one  
then who knows what happened  
to the other  
with tongue alack

and years later not even knowing  
if the other ever  
found a mate  
without splitting the seams  
or remained intact  
unlaced

and the sole  
ah the soul  
a curious conception  
hanging on somehow  
to walk again  
in the free air  
once the heel  
has been replaced

Lawrence Ferlinghetti



we dance  
some of us too slow  
some too fast  
and every so often  
we step on a few feet  
and we go on dancing

Kathleen Keller

Avicenna

Imprisoned & by chance released  
twice a vizier & friend of kings  
    most vigorous  
    most beautiful  
became philosopher at large.

From Oxford to the Chinese wall  
his medical knowledge was used  
    for human health  
    for human good  
to Muslim, Christian & to Jew.

Ibn Sina, the pained, the bright,  
from Aristotle's brilliant brood  
    called angels in  
    called spirit in  
to reckon reason unto faith.

As so Saint Thomas later learned  
with Aristotle's reasoning  
    to reconcile  
    to meditate  
the Christian dogma & the mind.

Music, Avicenna has said,  
is one good way in which the soul  
    is made ready  
    to reach wisdom  
is helped to find its own heart's light.

Lou Harrison



The Pond

Night covers the pond with its wing.  
Under the ringed moon I can make out  
your face swimming among minnows and the small  
echoing stars. In the night air  
the surface of the pond is metal.

Within, your eyes are open. They contain  
a memory I recognize, as though  
we had been children together. Our ponies  
grazed on the hill, they were gray  
with white markings. Now they graze  
with the dead who wait  
like children under their granite breastplates,  
lucid and helpless:

The hills are far away. They rise up  
blacker than childhood.  
What do you think of, lying so quietly  
by the water? When you look that way I want  
to touch you, but do not, seeing  
as in another life we were of the same blood.

Louise Glück



morning

sunlight sneaking through window crack  
opening sleep eyes with gentle fingers  
whispering soft *good morning*  
while sheet covered shadow  
answers with a yawn

Kathleen Keller

He was found on a mountain  
crying to the world  
and his words fell to the sea  
for no one understood.  
He returned to the place  
where he slept  
he wore shadows for covers  
his presence was unknown.



She sighed and was warmth  
laughed and was power  
dreamed and was fantasy.  
She was found in flight  
dancing within a drop of rain  
giving strength to sleeping seeds.  
She rested in a starry eye  
and slept beneath a blanket  
of clouds.



They were found  
in the beginning  
lying in the palm  
of their creator  
together watching  
while waters flowed  
and another world  
awakened.



I will slip into eternity  
on the corner of a dream  
while heaven takes a breath  
my soul will rest in limbo

Kathleen Keller

spirit

i know of darkness  
it waits silent  
a circling buzzard 'round my soul

i know of light  
sister sun steal my spirit  
from the night – take me home



deceptions

inner hum	subtle fear
distant drum	sounding near
devil-dances	within souls
evil prances	outside foes
fortune stealing	bandit eyes
christians kneeling	bible wise
beggars hollow	hapless start
lovers follow	easy heart
mother bear	captive child
jungle fare	zoo-kept wild
paper dreams	jelly real
earthly rape	forgotten war
cellophane tape	another door
fisherman baits	invisible nets
jesus waits	another catch

speck of dust where is thy race?  
mind of trust where is thy face?  
you must perceive thy reason  
you must perceive thy season

god shall close his eyes

Kathleen Keller

before I gave my heart away

I have walked the city islands  
I have sung the siren sounds  
I have dreamt the country's splendor  
I have seen the dying trees  
I have joined the freedom armies  
I have wept my brothers' deaths  
I have been the nation screaming  
I have felt the wars within

before I gave my soul away  
you were all my songs  
no sound of joy, no voice of love  
you were all my songs



shadows

our hearts are hiding in the shadow of a door  
while graveyard strangers knock in silence  
and soldiers paint yellow faces red

our hearts are spinning webs around a moment  
while gypsies play black tambourines  
and soldiers dance to songs of death

our hearts are waiting lonely  
while earth ponders your return  
and soldiers give a tear to you in darkness



richard and his friends have disappeared as far  
as anybody cares or knows or feels. We're  
growing older, through the changes, gently.

Kathleen Keller

On Bill's Return

You are more beautiful than the dreams I have  
in which I have translated  
into webs of pearls your waving silver beard  
- your long swinging silver hair.  
This morning I remember clinging last night  
to your return – unwilling  
to give up to sleep - & this morning I sought  
your scented russet shoulder –  
unwilling to get up from beside your side.

Lou Harrison



The horses the horses the wild horses at dawn  
as in a watercolor by Ben Shahn  
they are alive in the high meadow  
in the high country on the far mesa  
you can see them galloping  
you can see them snorting  
you can hear their thunder distantly  
you can hear the small thunder  
of their small hooves  
insistently  
like wood hammers thrumming  
on a distant drum

The sun roars &  
throws their shadows  
out of the night

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

My hand too much hair :cactus  
impaling her – “and don’t forget  
write when you arrive.” Desert  
where her plane lands, I pick up  
bags :my hand  
has no bloom. Spring  
summer too  
must have gone.

Simon Perchik



I jump like a man stabbed  
under my feet  
something cracks  
sickently  
and collapses.  
It is only  
a plastic toy  
the dropped plaything  
of my wife’s infant child.

Reaching down  
I feel blood on my thumb  
where the bones  
of all the buffalo  
gashed my heel.

William Everson



i'm not the same  
i never was

the flowers are watching us  
waiting for the proper moment  
to strike

when i hear the word love  
i don't freeze in my boots  
when i see myself give  
i don't tear out my roots  
when i feel myself take  
it's just natural to do  
I like myself  
when I'm reflected from you

you store the crap  
you don't want me to see  
in your room  
i store the crap  
i don't want you to see  
in my head

i know it's gonna kill you some day  
but i do like the way  
you smoke a cigarette

there is truth in what you say  
the lie is in how you say it

"there's no such thing as nothing" said he  
"oh yeah? there's nothing further i want to say to you" said she  
and he heard nothing from her the rest of his life

i feel like grains of sand  
waiting for someone to come along  
and create my shape anew  
as countless millions have done before

Samuel P. Schraeger

*Five Japanese Women Poets*

For the sake of one node  
of a reed of Naniwa Bay  
must I wade out  
past the depth measuring gauge  
*daughter of Minamoto no Tishitaka*

How I long for the man who climbed Mt. Yoshino  
plunging through the white snow  
lying thick on its heights  
*Shizuka (dancing-girl mistress of Yoshitsune)*

How long will it last?  
I do not know his heart.  
This morning my thoughts are as tangled with anxiety  
as my black hair.  
*Lady Horikawa*

I, who cut off my sorrows  
like a woodcutter,  
should spend my life in the mountains.  
Why do I still long  
for the floating world?  
*Akazome Emon*

How can I complain  
that you have shaved your hair?  
Since I can never again  
pull your heartstrings  
like a catalpa wood bow  
I have become a nun  
following your Way.  
*Yokobue (flute player)*

*translated by*  
Kenneth Rexroth



Richard the Poet Editor

We have given our soul in small pieces  
for your critical review  
you culled imitations meticulously  
insisting poets speak truth.  
Someday when the flesh has rotted  
a tiny spark you helped save  
may burn bright beyond the temporal  
beyond the shadows of a grave.

Delores Wentz



Wives

Their distant husbands lean across mahogany  
and delicately manipulate the market  
while safe at home, the tender and the gentle  
are killing tiny mice, dead snap by the neck,  
asphyxiating flies, evicting spiders,  
scrubbing, scouring aloud, disturbing cupboards,  
committing things to dustbins, twisting, wringing,  
wrists red and knuckles white and fingers puckered,  
pulpy, tepid. Steering screaming cleaners  
around the snags of furniture, they straighten  
and haul out sheets from the incontinent  
and heavy old, stoop to importune young,  
tugging, folding, tucking, zipping, buttoning,  
spooning in food, encouraging excretion,  
mopping up vomit, stabbing cloth with needles,  
contorting wool around their knitting needles,  
creating snug and comfy on their needles.

And when it's all over, off with the overalls,  
quickly consulting clocks they go upstairs,  
sit and sigh a little, brush their hair,  
and somehow find, in mirrors, colors, odors,  
their essences of lilies and of roses.

Elma Mitchell

but i haven't any colors  
i keep saying  
the crayola box is broken  
and i am empty

no one is home but me  
it is quiet, alone  
even the cats are outside  
chasing toads in the grass

i am silent  
no colors today  
the sounds have gone away  
and i'm nobody too

heather miller



The Idiot

*They*

The nasty child, the horrid one  
sits in a corner, rocking to and fro,  
sucking his thumb and staring into the air.

The horrid child, the nasty one,  
we hate him so, we hate him so,  
because when we attack he isn't there.

*Me*

The Lord created me a sponge, He did  
and I live out my faculties as best I can  
without a hand  
without an eye.

Elma Mitchell

I come to the forest biome  
and hear the mountain sigh  
I speak to the majestic titans.  
I call, loud, myself  
and grow immense  
from the many replies.

Delores Wentz



An Ancient Tree

can't get that tree  
out of

some place in me.  
And don't want to:

the way it  
lifts up its arms,  
opens them, and--

crosses them, aloft,  
to curve and recross

the standing, the being  
rooted, the look  
as of longing.  
At each divide,  
the choice endured, branches  
taking their roads in air.

Denise Levertov

Poet's Life

An obdurate road where  
between creosote parallels  
a bright Amazon bird dips  
and flies.

You run after  
feet bleeding on the rocks  
and in that pursuit  
you go down that road

alone.

Lori Fox Benak



i found some williams  
pounded it  
ate it with some eliot  
-- it needed catsup

Alice Whitcher



teach me to sit still

i want friends who can talk  
who drink wine and vision  
and laugh unafraid

a kind of debauched meditation  
nobody can hear or see  
then forget what we say

Carol Lem

## Classical Crabs

I walked into the Times Building. I had taken two years of journalism at Los Angeles City College. I was stopped at the desk by a young lady. "You need a reporter here?" I asked. She handed me a printed sheet of paper. "Please fill this out." It was the same at most newspapers in most cities. You were hired because you were famous or because you knew somebody. But I filled out the form. I made it look good. Then I left and walked down Spring Street.

It was a hot summer day. I began to sweat and itch. My crotch itched. I began to scratch. The itching became unbearable. I walked along scratching. I couldn't be a reporter, I couldn't be a writer, I couldn't find a good woman, all I could do was walk along and scratch like a monkey. I hurried to my car which I had parked on Bunker Hill. I drove back to the apartment in a hurry. Jan wasn't there. I went into the bathroom and stripped down.

I dug into my crotch with my fingers and I found something. I pulled it out. I dropped it into the palm of one hand and looked at it. It was white and had many tiny legs. It moved. It fascinated me. Then suddenly it leaped to the tile of the bathroom floor. I stared at it. With one great leap it was gone. Probably back into my pubic hair! I felt sickened and angered. I stood there searching for it. I couldn't find it. My stomach quivered. I gagged into the toilet and dressed again.

The corner drugstore wasn't far. There was an old woman and an old man standing behind the counter. The woman came over. "No," I said, "I want to talk to him." Oh," she said.

The old man walked over. He was the pharmacist. He looked very clean. "I'm the victim of an iniquity," I told him.

"What?"

"Now look, do you have anything for . . ."

"For what?"

"Spiders, fleas. . . gnats, nits. . ."

"For what?"

*"Do you have anything for crabs?"*

The old man gave me a disgusted look. "Wait here," he said. He got something out from under the end of the counter. He came back and standing as far away as possible he handed me a little green and black cardboard box. I accepted it humbly. I handed him a \$5 bill. I received my change at arm's length. The old woman had backed away into a corner of the drugstore. I felt like a holdup man. I walked out.

Back at the apartment I stripped down and read the instructions. It said to apply the ointment to the invaded part and wait thirty minutes. I tuned the radio on, found a symphony, and squeezed the ointment out of the tube. It was green. I applied it thoroughly. Then I lay down on the bed and looked at the clock. Thirty minutes. Hell, I hated those crabs. I'll take an hour's worth. After forty-five minutes it started to burn. I'll kill every one of those fuckers, I thought. The burning increased. I rolled over on the bed and clenched my fists. I listened to Beethoven. I listened to Brahms, I hung on. I barely made the hour. I filled the tub and jumped in and washed the ointment off. When I got out of the tub I couldn't walk. The insides of my thighs were burned, my balls were burned, my belly was burned, I was a bright flaming red, I looked like an orangutan. I moved very slowly toward the bed. But I had killed the crabs. I had watched them go down the bathtub drain.

When Jan got home I was squirming on the bed. She stood looking at me and asked, "What is it?" I rolled and cursed.

"You fucking whore! Look what you've done to me!"

I leaped up. I showed Jan the insides of my thighs, my belly, my balls. My balls dangled in red agony. My pecker was flaming.

"God! What is it?"

"Don't you know? Don't you know? I haven't fucked anybody else! I got it from YOU! You're a carrier, a disease ridden slut!"

"What?"

"The crabs, the crabs, you gave me the CRABS!"

"No, I don't have the crabs. Geraldine must have them."

"What?"

"I stayed with Geraldine. I must have gotten them sitting on Geraldine's toilet."

I threw myself down on the bed. "Oh don't give me any of that shit! Go get us something to drink! There's not a fucking thing to drink around here!"

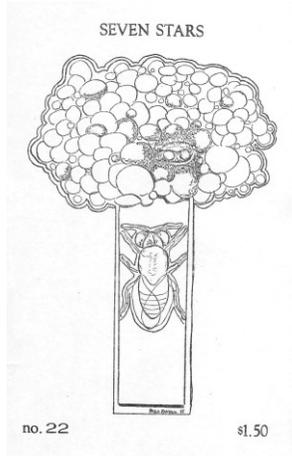
"I don't have any money"

"Take it out of my wallet. You know how to do that. And hurry! Something to drink! I'm dying!"

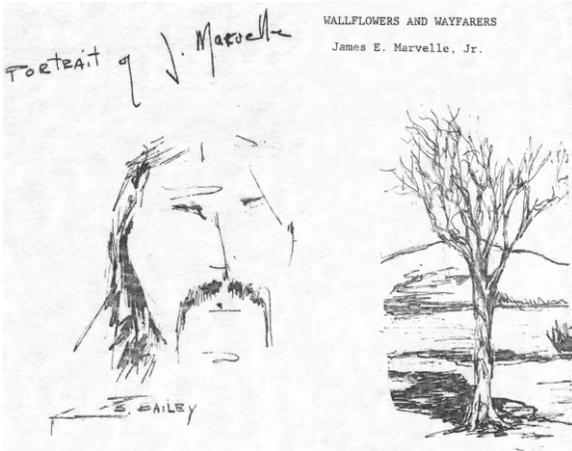
Jan left. I could hear her running down the stairs. The radio now played Mahler.

Charles Bukowski

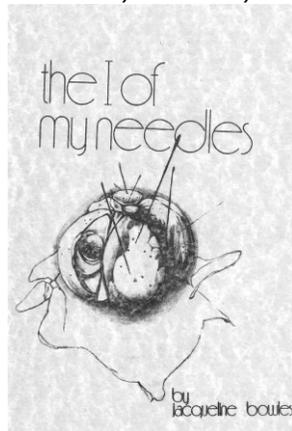
Realities Library



cover by Paula Randall



Cover by Steve Bailey



cover by Ronald Smith

not much company

I often give way to self-pity.  
“Do I deserve this? I suppose I must.  
I wouldn’t be here otherwise. Was there  
a moment when I actually chose this?  
I don’t remember, but there could have been.”  
What’s wrong with self-pity, anyway?  
With my legs dangling down familiarly  
over a crater’s edge, I told myself  
“Pity should begin at home.” The more  
pity I felt, the more I felt at home.  
The sun set; the same odd sun rose,  
and there was one of it and one of me.  
Dreams are the worst. I dream of food  
and love, but they are pleasant rather  
than otherwise. And then I’d dream of things  
like slitting a baby’s throat, mistaking it  
for a baby goat. I’m old.  
I’m bored, too, drinking my tea,  
surrounded by uninteresting lumber.  
The knife there on the shelf  
reeks of meaning, like a crucifix.  
I know each nick and scratch by heart,  
the bluish blade, the broken tip,  
the lines of wood-grain on the handle ...  
Now it won’t look at me at all.  
The living soul has dribbled away.  
My eyes rest on it and pass on.

Elizabeth Bishop



Dogs smell assholes because they want to.  
People will look at you – often quite close.  
See you again and again and never see you.

Spacelady Moonwalk

excuse me sir

but you have left your face unshaven  
in my mirror

it's not really your loss which worries me  
but each time i look in the mirror  
you look back like some summer rerun  
a Saturday cartoon with only the lips moving

i must ask you  
to claim your face  
at once  
i'm sure  
you only meant  
to be generous

but your beard is tangling my feet  
& the mirror is cracking under all the weight

nancy brizendine



In a rock niche in a cold  
church floor, & nailed  
I lie. I bear an effigy –

I wear a costume & a legend  
deprived of my fine detail. Come  
warm me with a paper shroud

awhile; press me with your love  
& certain care. Your touch  
will rub a temporary heat

into my form

John Ditsky

Word Ends

*"Y si después de tantas palabras, no sobrevive la palabra"*

César Vallejo

I do not believe we are starving for any particular reason.  
So many have died of hunger for words.  
Husbands have used them to hide from their wives  
who pretend to be satisfied and wake up the next day  
to bodies clenched liked fists.  
We travel through a landscape of sterile webs  
and no gods consider what we say  
and we alone create these cells.  
We inject our words with honey and liquid lead  
and the weight of what remains unsaid falls through  
gaping wounds to the center of the earth  
where everything is molten and without form.

Teresa McCarthy



deaf and dumb  
*no laughter or music in the sun*

these lines are for you  
friend and lover  
who cannot understand  
the language of whispers

you know the work of hands  
the flavor of sweat  
and you are happy

I know the pleasure and guilt  
and what is read  
after the proper forms are filled

who will replace the weeds with flowers  
while my words struggle  
like a mute straining for the next gesture

Carol Lem

Claribel Alegría

Your eyes, your hair  
both violent, as black  
as certain mornings have been.  
You wear a white cotton dress.  
Tiny mirrors have been stitched  
to it – when I look for myself  
in you, I see the same face  
over and over.

We are not unlike.  
When we look at someone, we are seeing  
someone else. When we listen  
we hear something taking place  
in the past. When I talk to you  
I know what I will be saying  
twenty years from now.

Carolyn Forché



Inside these veins  
Tears. It's quiet  
This side the language. Red

Supports a weight I never hear  
never the voice, *Again*. My ears

negatives. I hear only white :death  
muffling – each tear smaller  
whiter.

Simon Perchik

kathleen

flower to flower  
our petals fall  
in neat little rows  
feathers blowing in this ink  
ripples from these hearts  
unfrozen  
our thoughts race past  
our fingers  
into columns  
typewriter chosen  
for other eyes to see

or in our sweeping finger  
printed long hand  
for us alone a truth  
it be  
we love our poems  
our poems are love  
and through ourselves set us free  
and through ourselves set us free

James Marvell

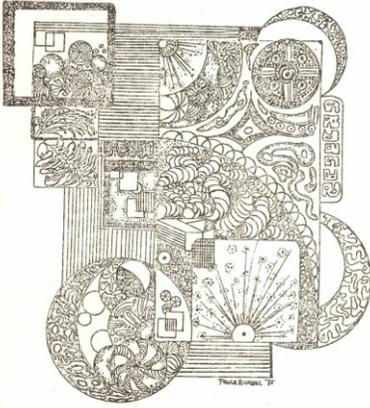


The I Of My Needle

I thread the eye of my needle  
With copper yarn from your head  
I am not a skilled seamstress  
and I try, I try.  
If I bleed, I bleed.  
Why should I tell you  
that I bleed crimson?

Jacqueline Bowles

SEVEN STARS



no. 25

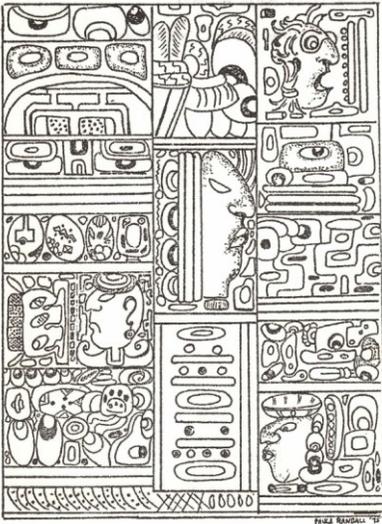
\$1.50

Cover by Paula Randall

WORDMASTER

BY  
Hans Ebner

Cover by Hans Ebner



seven stars no. 27

Cover by Paula Randall

THE BRALESS EXPRESS



nancy brizendine

Cover by Crazy Hannah

tv

someday a war  
will be brought to us  
by a toothpaste  
with sex appeal

Greg Wyss



inside

the pore  
of sleep  
i slip  
ammunition  
to the dead

Randall Brock



home & alone

you want to be with me  
but not badly enough  
to come home  
i want to be with you  
but not badly enough  
to go find you

the radio  
keeps talking to me  
as if i wasn't here

Greg Wyss

## No Smoking

I took the card they gave me at the State Department of Employment and walked over to the job interview. It was a few blocks east of Main Street and a little north of the skid row district. It was a company dealing with automobile brake parts. I showed them the card in the office and I filled out an application form. I lengthened my tenure at the jobs I had previously had, turning days into months and months into years. Most firms never bothered to check references. With those firms required to bond their employees, I didn't stand much chance. It would quickly appear that I had a police record. The brake supply house made no mention of a bond. Another problem after you have been on the job two or three weeks, most employers tried to get you to join their insurance plan, but by then I was usually gone.

The man glanced at my application and then turned humorously to the two women in the room: "This guy wants a job. Do you think he'll be able to stand us?"

Some jobs are amazingly easy to get. I remember one place I walked in, slouched down in a chair and yawned. The guy behind the desk asked me: "Yes, what do you want?" "Oh hell," I answered, "I guess I need a job." "You're hired."

Some other jobs, however, were impossible for me to get. The Southern California Gas Company had ads in the help wanted section that promised high wages, early retirement, etc. I don't know how many times I went there and filled out their yellow application forms, how many times I sat on those hard chairs looking at larged framed photos of pipes and gas storage tanks. I never came close to being hired and whenever I saw a gas man I would look at him very closely, trying to figure out what he had that I obviously didn't have.

The brake parts man took me up a narrow stairway. George Henley was his name, George showed me my workroom, very small, dark, just one lightbulb and one tiny window that looked out over an alley.

"Now," he said, "you see these cartons. You put the brake shoes into the cartons. Like this."

Mr. Henley showed me.

"We have three types of cartons, each printed differently. One carton is for our 'Super Durable Shoe.' The other is for our 'Super Brake Shoe.' And the third is for our 'Standard Brake Shoe.' The brake shoes are stacked right here."

"But they all look alike to me. How can I tell them apart?"

"You don't. They're all the same. Just divide them into thirds. And when you finish packing all these shoes, come on downstairs and we'll find something else for you to do. O.K.?"

"O.K. When do I start?"

"You start now. And, absolutely no smoking. Not up here. If you have to smoke, you come on downstairs, O.K.?"

"O.K."

Mr. Henley closed the door. I heard him go down the stairs. I opened the little window and looked out at the world. Then I sat down, relaxed, and smoked a cigarette.

Charles Bukowski



doll

with plucked out eyes  
limbless, lifeless  
broken dream  
plucked out heart  
careless, hapless

i should have seen  
the question marks  
hanging at the end  
of my

"I love you."

kathleen keller



our moments

under the stars  
her house the only light

she whispers  
I am too young to keep her

the words run  
until the town sleeps

Ray Gonzalez



excommunication can be fun

no, really  
i'm glad you forgot  
to come by  
last Saturday night

it gave me a chance  
to become reacquainted  
with my armpits –  
bertha sue, on the right  
yolanda mae, on the left

bertha treated us  
to dinner & an early show  
yolanda drank too much  
embarrassing us  
at midnight mass  
when she sang  
torchy love songs  
while kneeling  
at the communion rail

nancy brizendine

to the man in row 6

you may remember me  
i was the one  
sitting alone in row 5  
content  
in screen induced trance  
the day's troubles  
as absent as reality

i didn't complain  
when your feet  
kicked the silence  
from the back of my chair  
& when the mud  
stained boots  
lunged  
at my arm rest  
i uttered no sound

even as your elbows  
creased my scalp  
leaving me lopsided  
& half bald  
i maintained  
poise & restraint

i am  
    after all  
a tolerant woman  
but sir  
you went too far  
when you sank your teeth  
into my neck  
forcing me to scream  
& paste my hot buttered  
popcorn on row 4

nancy brizendine

green thumb makes good

the seed packet

instructed:

plant

sprinkle

& stand back

i laughed

my fingers brushed

their prints

above the seeds

the earth rumbled

& shook the sleeves

off my blouse

as a huge trunk

sprang fully foliated

& gasping from the ground

the neighborhood squirrels

dropped their nuts

in amazement

the birds thought it a mirage

& bashed their beaks

trying to fly through

the avon lady

inspired by the jagger concert

swore it was a phallic symbol

i cared nothing about freudian analysis

and amused myself by planting one of the seeds

beneath my husband's hammock

as he lay basking in the sun

nancy brizendine

the interview

describe yourself  
in ten words or less

i am flowing  
long hair  
flowers  
growing planted in poems

that's ridiculous  
you'd better try again

i am a liquid candle  
painting darkness  
with flamelike prayers

lady are you crazy  
or something  
this is an employment  
application

i am as crazy  
as an abstract painting  
lines flowing in dreams  
not like photographs but very real

i am as crazy  
as the snow  
soft layered crystals  
hoping for permanence  
but melting in the sun

i am all these things  
and more  
i am without limits

nancy brizendine

the fire of our love  
must be  
    burning lower each day  
it seems that I am now  
    able to count  
        our kisses

Anna Trotta



i am a perfect  
advertisement  
for paralysis  
sitting here  
hour after hour  
doing absolutely nothing  
i can see it now  
someone bursts thru my door  
announcing that world war three  
has just begun  
& i suddenly  
become motivated  
reaching slowly forward  
to turn on my tv

Greg Wyss



meeting again for lunch  
  
you have not changed  
sitting with me you stare  
at the woman at the next table  
your tie at its erected angle  
your eyes bleed

Arlene Stone

Night

*for Dave Kelly*

A man stands below my window  
his breath lashing at the stars  
as he whispers not to me  
but to the thorns of frost  
scratching at his thoughts  
and to the stars tied to their poles  
of light, watching a man as  
his lips work helplessly  
as his knees buckle  
a man in love with something  
he doesn't have a name for

Joel Dailey



driving across the desert  
  
the wind crawls over me  
following borders  
scratching sleep off my shoulders  
dreaming of canyons  
I strike a rabbit on the road

Ray Gonzalez



truth is a black leather pointy toed  
spanish boot in the ear  
whispering 17<sup>th</sup> century love songs  
before the late late show  
i see truth as it should be  
and truth doesn't bother me

hans ebner

## Do You Remember, Brothers, Now That We Are Off Duty

I Corps II Corps III Corp Four. Pleiku, Da Nang, Hue, Qui Nhon or Khe Sanh. Were we there? Hill 861. Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh remember the mud. Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh remember the night when you were the point of Westmoreland's swagger stick air strike. Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh do you remember the lime heaped on Qui Nhon's rubble. Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh when you thought Camp Evans would blow up forever. Do you remember Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Hill 861. Roll it around on your tongue Hill 861 Hill 861 Hill 861. One little two little three little ARVNs. Body bags dress right dress. Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sahn Qui Nhon Bien Hoa Ban Me Thuot – were you there? Did you see quang tri and the DMZ remember the smell Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Khe Sanh Viet Nam Viet Nam Viet Nam I can't see the sights no more, I don't know where I've been. I was the clown in the back of the truck rolling through the sand. I was the fool in the door of the slick parting the already red sand. I was the man in the downtown bar spreading my pee around. I was the kid in the V-100 charging down highway 1. I was the boy with AK on his back crawling through the sand. I was the operator of a radar site on the coast. I was a grunt who put in time on the hills around Khe Sanh. I was a drunken Huey pilot caught on the ground when Camp Evans went up. And, I walked through the tall grass near Tuy Hoa with the 101<sup>st</sup> on the way to Binh Dinh. And I saw the Hotel in Qui Nhon come crumbling down and I helped spread the lime. And I left and came home three million times. And now I just hang out in lines.



Being of sound mind and light headed I write this will:

Having no five or dime, I leave the memory of me to my sons.  
Burn me up, let the ash flow back, leave the songs for the air

that blows  
warm  
seaward

hans ebner

Left Behind

pear eyed  
fair eyed

stranger

learn to taste bitter rice  
and rotten fish

in the village of your birth

although small and darker, the others  
will come to love you



Letter I Never Sent

M O T H E R

today I killed a man with a rocket  
that was bigger than him  
floating in a Huey  
him running hard  
put my finger to the trigger  
the round found the back of his head – BAM  
and he was no more

you see, yesterday, a 45 round chanced  
into the bottom of the foot of the man next to me  
it followed by the bone and out the knee  
returned under his chin and blew his brains all over me

I cut my hair off to get away from the smell

M O T H E R

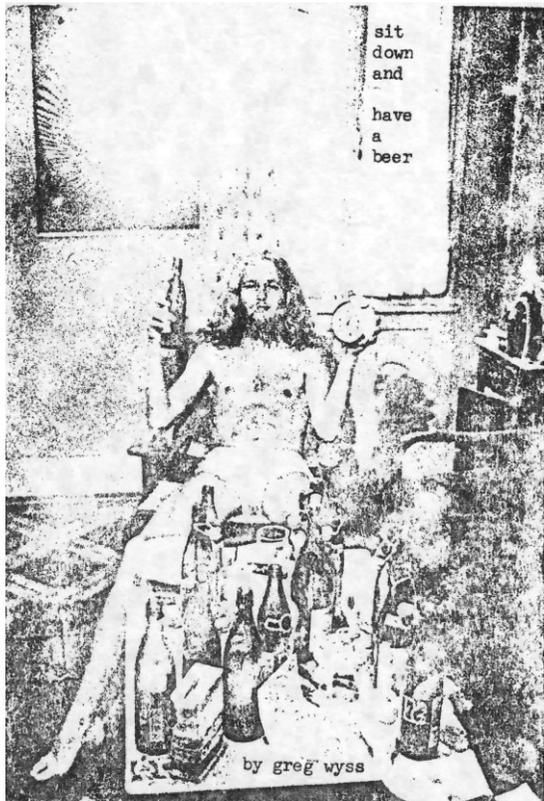
I can't hat up no more  
no more

hans ebner



SEVEN STARS NO. 29

*cover by Paula Randall*



*Cover by Greg Wyss*

Alice

a woman gets up from beside me  
pulling the long thick rope  
of her hair over her shoulder  
across one small breast  
the early morning light  
falls in  
    stretches long  
from the large bay window  
& I would go to that light  
& that woman  
but I am held by a hand that reaches out  
from all the dark places  
I have ever known

Steven Ford Brown



Leonard Cohen

your voice  
your words  
hit my brain  
like waves that burst  
against gray rock –  
glistening sea beads  
flung at the moon  
sparks tossed up so far so high  
that even now I find  
specks of sea foam  
floating  
in my deepest sighs

Zan Pahz

I Paid \$3.00 To See "Hank" Read

then went around the side exit  
and got in free  
sat behind stage on  
an old piano watching  
the old man sit at the table  
drinking beer  
facing his enemies  
his hero worshippers reading  
one good poem for every three  
bad ones  
and the audience not knowing  
the good from the bad  
and after it was over after  
his admirers had cornered  
him for his autograph and  
whatever else they could get  
out of him which was nothing

he smiled took  
my arm and said  
A.D.

I want to see you at the party  
and then climbed in the van  
I refused a ride in the van  
not feeling comfortable with  
undertakers who drive live corpses  
to sealed graves  
and got in my own car and drove up  
van ness avenue across broadway  
too tired to be in  
the loneliness of the clock ticking  
down the hours like an  
old organ grinder playing the final chords  
at an unattended funeral

A.D. Winans



no more electric trains

by the stone wall  
I watched the burning house.  
leaning against the rocks  
I dodged the flames as  
lightening struck again.  
molded into cracks in the stones  
I was not caught in the smoke.

by the stone wall  
I melted back into form.  
standing over the ruins  
I absorbed the rain.  
in the pulse of morning  
I recalled here I was born.  
climbing away over the wall  
I dropped the wet book of matches.

Ray Gonzalez



West LA

poetry readings  
here are nothing more than  
hand-touching gut-spilling confessionals

don't say it's all in the attitude  
shit

my head feels like a headless gas pump  
billboard news like words i speak

yes, these symbols of women discovering their parts  
or men who wear heels like big breasts

Carol Lem

myopia pays off

the butts  
in my ashtray

yours

the chablis laced  
purple stained  
shag carpeting

mine

our glasses

emptying  
seem bluer  
the lights read

you

blurring into every man I've ever wanted

leave me

pretending

i'm like no woman you've ever known

nancy brizendine

ॐ

america

there are few street musicians left  
there are no actors on the cobblestone  
for america has made us all actors

and artists hang in white walled rooms  
if they are dead or work as waitresses  
if they wish to remain alive

dancers dance topless in money bars  
poets wait in every crook and cranny  
few are ever heard

Kirt Dressler

i called you up  
an' you wasn't home  
so i called you up  
an' you wasn't home  
then i called you up  
an' you wasn't home again  
i'll keep callin'  
but my heart ain't in it

Samuel P. Schraeger



An impressively American institution  
is the pay toilet  
progressing the capitalistic principle  
that there's a correlation  
between the cleanliness of one's ass  
and his income.

Patrick O'Neill



she studies the family portraits  
beautiful babies  
with cosmetic faces and absurd smiles  
in thirty nine cent frames

was there ever a purpose?

she searches three rooms for an answer  
finding none she slides from reality  
and lies suspended  
in the limbo of indifference

P.T. Lally

soul

the cicada  
has left me his skin

vacantly clutching  
a pine stump

Gary Metras



Astral Pursuits

I feel a need to creep  
pillow & blanket in hand  
to the front yard to sleep

under the wind, under  
the crabapple tree & gaze full face  
at the universe winking away

at the night

perhaps no one will  
notice me lying there on the grass  
quietly seeking my place in the cosmos

Jacqueline Bowles



the poem I never wrote

it's not often that i have a stroke of genius  
but here i was having it when my girl  
asked me for a glass of water so i went  
to the kitchen & got her the water & when  
i sat down she started rubbing my leg &  
i forgot what in the hell i was thinking

greg wyss

sit down, have a beer  
the world has lost  
its mind  
anyway

don't give it  
a second thought  
pour down the novocain  
buy your buddy one too  
he aint got it  
any better  
than you

get plastered  
outa your mind  
& when the place  
closes for the night  
make sure  
you're out cold  
make them drag you out  
it's the least  
they can do  
for you



potato chip

i am a hopeless daydream  
lurking somewhere  
in the armpit of my country  
hiding in a box knowing  
all too well that outside  
something bigger than it  
waits silently to devour  
or  
crush it

greg wyss

A Tale Of Two Garbage Men

i called them to come out  
& pick up the garbage  
they had forgotten  
the day before  
they said there'd be  
an extra charge of \$5  
& when they got here  
they still weren't going  
to take it all

hey, fellas, i said  
do you think you could  
take all of it this time  
i mean, it would be dumb  
to have to come out here again  
wouldn't it

well, they went into  
this big conference  
whispering & all the time  
eyeing me suspiciously  
i began to wonder  
if i had just made  
an unreasonable request  
but these guys  
had a streak of good  
running thru them  
sure, they said &  
then made *me* load  
the shit on the truck

i loaded it  
thanked the bastards  
went back inside  
& rolled some shit  
to smoke

greg wyss

## The Pubic Hair Blues

3 guys living with 1 woman  
it aint easy especially when  
the 1 woman doesn't dig  
the living habits  
of the 3 guys &  
is not about to provide  
maid service  
you know how it is  
hank, louis & i  
figure the dishes  
can wait til tomorrow  
& marie wants them done  
now

her latest thing is the bathtub  
you turkeys, she screams  
i want the crud & the pubic hairs  
cleaned up before I get in that tub

like i said  
it aint easy  
hank's picked up his guitar  
again &  
is working on a new song  
called  
the pubic hair blues &  
me & louie  
are trying to figure out  
how we ever managed  
before she moved in

greg wyss



in the garden of dying flowers  
the sun rarely shines  
flowers are falling slowly to the ground  
stale, stagnant – without nourishment  
flowers have stopped growing  
in time they will become dust  
blowing in the wind  
making room for more dying flowers

greg wyss



words on the page  
claw my eyes for vision  
like bodies all speaking at once

it's the ones who say nothing  
and smile a little  
taking me from the fly-spotted light

that make it difficult to see  
and now the words  
are no longer true

and the poem is a desert  
on the ragged fringe of sleep

Carol Lem



the rest of this  
poem got run  
over by a truck

Samuel P. Schraeger



cover by Daniel Tobias Walson

## Lunatics & Unlovers

i am not afraid of death  
i have seen its face  
& tasted its blood  
splattering across the room  
during curtained daylight

each day my mask is worn  
to smile at the emptiness  
to laugh at the passage of time  
which consumes me and the walls  
which shove me backward

fighting those who would love me  
walling them out  
as death has walled me out  
i cannot deny that life is speaking  
to me through all these walls

others have served time with me  
struggling with my silences  
and desolate spaces



tobias

what is this choice he speaks of  
this murderous inclination he alludes to  
grasping onto burning limbs of trees

he will no more go mad  
than refrain from his hiding away with a sadness  
that is a common place of worship

let it then be holy

Daniel Tobias Walson

you were waiting

i want to be left alone  
placing you somewhere  
in this chessboard torture

old man of captured bird lawns  
come whisper that you understand



i believed her

now she walks naked &  
starved past me unable to sleep

i met her once when  
i was naive and learning

she gave me a stone  
she had wept  
from her lightning eyes

telling me never to bury  
some forgivable sorrow and  
learn how to keep it alive



&

now there is leather  
to strap your wrists & ankles

they won't let you walk  
fearing you'll run into a window  
& the blood will ruin  
their white stationery

Daniel Tobias Walson

our compass minds  
spin & revolve

i've known  
how insight  
became seepage  
through innocent cracks



i draw a breath  
to paint a line  
stretch the words across  
& learn to listen

to resolve  
is not as primary  
as to become  
aware



before we spoke

there were only tears for words  
silent gaps of overwhelming caring

now

there are these free  
spaces  
we do not have to avoid breathing in



i have known dreams  
and unknown real spaces  
that did not exist

Daniel Tobias Walson

i have killed her many times  
though she died only once  
the emptiness & fear haunt me still

Daniel Tobias Walson



word describe people apparently to certain probably more  
thousand number interests over than field are thirty was more  
and than and probably not down a job rather in what me such  
is many the minds respect

Richard Kostelanetz



avon shoe blemish  
nova hose shimble  
shimble shamble

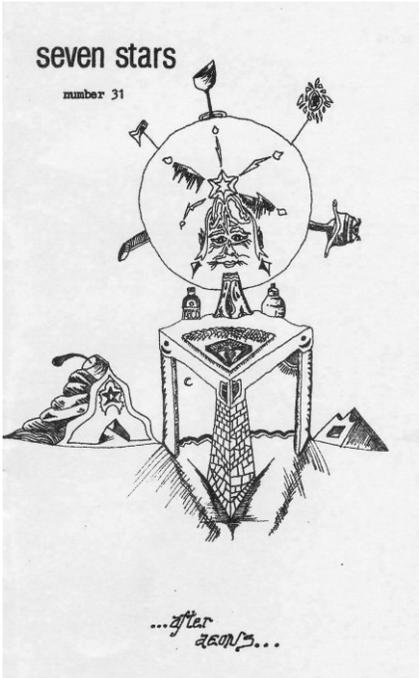
Steve Hitchcock



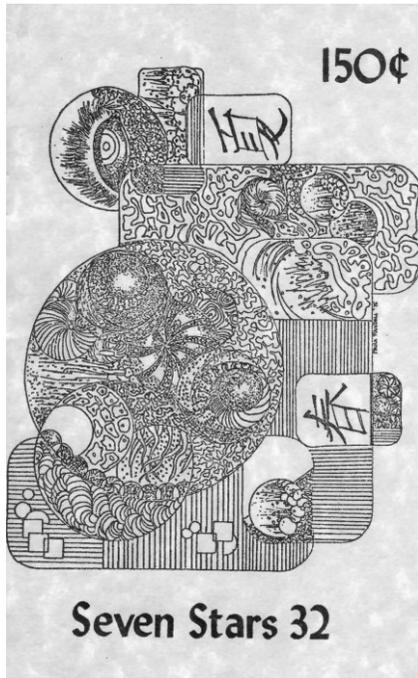
poem white page white page poem

something is streaming out of a body in waves  
something is beginning from the fingertips  
they are starting to declare for my whole life  
all the despair and the making music  
something like wave after wave  
that breaks on a beach  
something like bringing the entire life  
to this moment  
the small waves bringing themselves to white paper  
something like light stands up and is alive

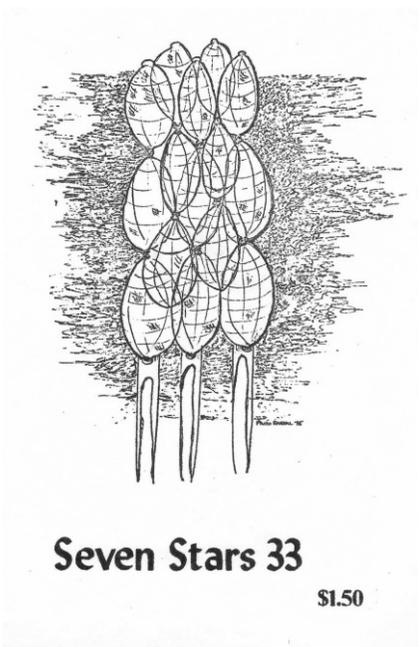
Muriel Rukeyser



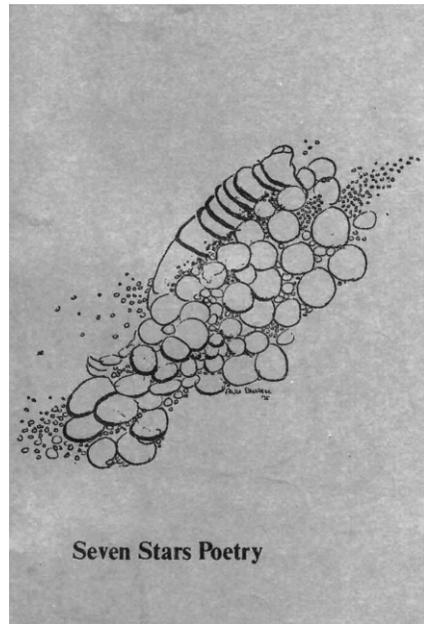
cover by Daniel Tobias Walson



cover by Paula Randall



cover by Paula Randall



cover by Paula Randall

rain falls  
expanding circles  
sometimes overlap

Carol Poster



now I dream those dreams  
that slip into realities  
my eyes swell up with the sad old rain  
for an old man's eyes I'll never see

hans ebner



we could go to bed together

or i could simply describe my sheets  
to you -  
aqua striped  
floral dream  
flat & fitted

saving us the trouble

nancy brizendine



I played music

with Steve Miller and Howlin' Wolf and  
Charlie Musselwhite (they didn't know)  
using words  
no one heard  
lonely lonely me  
screamed 10,000 words

Spacelady Moonwalk

the time taken  
writing this poem  
could be better spent  
looking for a job  
a lover  
a something  
but everytime  
i go looking  
for a something something  
i think  
my time could be better  
spent writing a poem

Samuel P. Schraeger



he said  
i want to touch you  
where you've never  
been touched

i said  
you're too late

nancy brizendine



memories are old maps  
dirty highways  
towns blurred and torn  
the miles undecipherable

memories are obituaries  
false and premature  
and read over and over  
to make sure of the message

George Sparling

i outgrew gods  
i outgrew ghosts  
i buried the old man  
and somehow those child ways  
have remained intact  
clinging warm and snug  
like logs in a cold hearth  
and becoming a thousand poems

Tommi Avicolti



we have come far  
  
past laughter  
past crystal ships  
past jasmine and free birds  
  
we created an indifference  
beneath the skin  
it is now in the marrow  
  
we opened up so wide  
as to see the wild horse  
in a speck of ash

Don MacQueen



listen babe  
  
if i was one of those rich bastards  
i'd have private jets weekends in paris  
& yachts to keep me occupied  
but as it is about all i can afford  
is a \$15 bag - that aint pot babe  
it's the poor man's yacht

Greg Wyss

Conditionals

If I were a little man  
I'd be a prizefighter  
I think small boxers are tough  
I think they're exciting

If I were a sky  
I would be at night  
without the stars without the moon  
& you would tremble

If I were me  
as I am today  
I'd be disappointed  
& you would not tremble

David Linn Arnold



*for M. P.*

I climbed the steps  
you used to mount  
up to your little world

of four close rooms.  
I walked the hallway  
you paced so often.

I sat on the chair  
you once wrote on,  
gazing to the pavement

below, where people  
trod on, unmindful,  
unaware of you.

Gary Metras

The Critic

Fred hates my stuff  
says its the worst  
shit he's ever read  
yesterday, as usual  
he stopped by  
to raid my refrigerator  
& I told him  
I had just received  
\$2.50 for 3 poems  
I think you're overpaid he said  
as he grabbed a beer &  
a couple of sandwiches

greg wyss



I lie in the bath and I contemplate the toilet-paper:  
Scottissue, 1000 sheets—  
    What a lot of pissin and shittin  
    What a lot of pissin and shittin  
Enough for the poems of Shelley and Keats—  
All the poems of Shelley and Keats.

Muriel Rukeyser



Being Me

I'm like a zit that won't pop  
on the face of the earth  
a wart on Raquel Welch  
a poem on used toilet tissue

David Linn Arnold

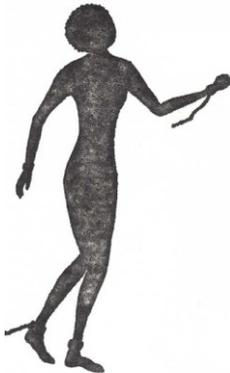
## A Rebellious Soul

Move your body Black woman,  
move it, Black woman.  
Move it fast, move it fast.  
Show the beauty that captivated  
the slave owners.



Move your body Black Woman,  
move your body black woman.  
Show your body the slave masters abused,  
my beauty.

Move your body Black woman,  
move your body -  
Move it slow, to show your dissatisfaction  
with the pleasure he seeks from your body.



Move your body Black woman,  
move your body  
to show the anger which drives your soul.

Move your body Black woman.  
Move your body  
so that all will know  
your spirit lies within.

Move your body black woman,  
move your body Black woman,  
dance the dance of death.  
Dance the dance of death  
for shame can never be brought,  
for shame can never be brought on that body  
that danced the dance of death.



Face the sun my dancing sisters,  
face the sun my dancing sisters,  
so that all that surrounds you  
that is weak, will die from the heat  
which is you.

L. E. Scott  
*art by Jill Scott*

## The Face of a Man

He gathers large stones.

Water and fine sand spawn breath.

Time is a unity, a partner, and is used  
as a mirror to determine correct  
lines and perfect angles. The wall  
is the lifework of a man. Young.

One moment a final rough jade  
is positioned. Men from other spaces  
admire and approve. And claim happiness  
for their own walls are slowly rising.

A year is spent by a man in elation.

A year is spent by a man in depression.

Suicide is replaced by humility and servitude.

A man is severed from his own conception of himself.



Pain gives birth to philosophy.

Age gives birth to reality.

A man gives birth to a son.

A man beats on the wall  
with a blade of grass.

Through the wall a light appears. A man replaces grass  
with a fingernail. He views the other side as a new world.

He pulls the stone  
and tears his eyes  
the view has been  
always beyond.

He prepares himself for walking through the hole in the wall.

Hot meal with attendant children.  
Hot bath with attendant wife.  
Long shave with attendant mirror.  
The mirror clothes him with power.

A man goes to the grass and prepares to sing  
through the space he must enter.  
His attendant wife and children are standing in the mirror.  
They laugh with joy when he flies over the wall.



The children enshrine the hole  
and measure the sections  
each will build.

r soos

*artwork by Spiros Bairaktaris*

## Myth

Long afterward, Oedipus, old and blinded, walked the roads. He smelled a familiar smell. It was the Sphinx. Oedipus said, "I want to ask one question. Why didn't I recognize my mother?" "You gave the wrong answer," said the Sphinx. "But that was what made everything possible," said Oedipus. "No," she said. "When I asked, What walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening, you answered, Man. You didn't say anything about woman." "When you say Man," said Oedipus, "you include women too. Everyone knows that." She said, "That's what you think."

Muriel Rukeyser



### Learned Policy

You can't start a small bag of garbage  
with a booger in a tiny store.  
If nothing is put in there to cover it  
by the end of the day  
the boss will check it and find it  
and your pink slip will shortly follow.

You can't pick your nose in front of customers.  
It will invariably make them think twice  
about buying anything and the clerk's  
nose-picking fingers on their nice clean item.  
Someone will complain and the boss will get wind  
and your pink slip will shortly follow.

You can't pick your nose before the third date.  
This will be considered boldness on your part  
and the girl will have every right to  
consider you abnormal.  
And she'll tell her mother who'll tell  
someone else and word will get around  
and your pink slip will follow shortly.

Samuel P. Schraeger

## Flames

There is no list long enough  
for a selective service card shriveling  
under a match, the prison that comes of it,  
a flag in the wind eaten from its pole  
and boys sent back in trash bags.  
We'll tell you. You were at that time  
learning fractions. We'll tell you  
about fractions. Half of us are dead or quiet  
or lost. Let them speak for themselves.  
We lie down in the fields and leave behind  
the corpses of angels.

Carolyn Forché



## Modern Poetry Is Prose

I am thumbing through a great anthology of contemporary poetry, and it would seem that the “voice that is great within us” sounds within us mostly in a prose voice, albeit in the typography of poetry. It is very much alive, very well written, lovely, lively prose – prose that stands without the crutches of punctuation, prose whose syntax is so clear it can be written all over the page, in open forms, in open fields, and still be very clear, very dear prose. Modern poetry is prose because it has no *duende*, dark spirit of earth and blood, no passionate music. As such it is perfect poetry for technocratic man.

Poetry professors, poetry reviewers, the poet’s friends and editors will never commit the original sin of saying some poet’s poetry is prose in the typography of poetry – the dumbest conspiracy of silence in the history of letters.

Most modern poetry is poetic prose but it is saying plenty, by its own example, about what death of the spirit our technocratic civilization may be dealing us, enmeshed in machines and macho nationalisms, while we continue longing for the nightingale among the pines of Respighi. It is the bird singing that makes us happy.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Sixty Five

I stand in the center of a twilight field  
distantly circled by dark woods  
but the woods hold no fear.

The meaning  
turns on the emptiness of space, of vague half-light  
the shadowless dusk beyond sundown.

My awareness  
is clear, the sense of subsistent identity  
distinct and whole. And there is nothing to apprehend  
nothing save the circling space  
and the weightless air.

I awake in chagrin  
curled in a foetal suspension, afloat in time  
hugging a sense of enigmatic loss.

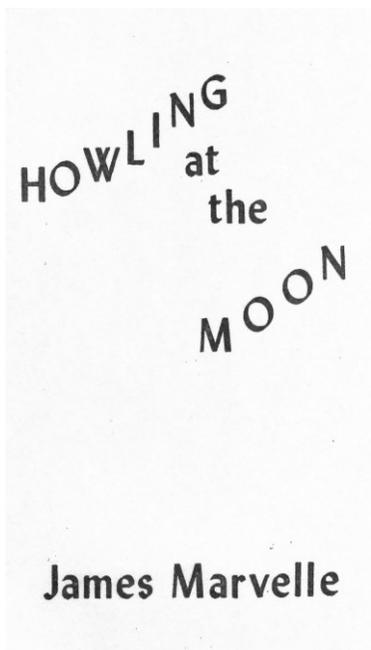
A pulsation of pain, relinquishment  
of all the incisive forms I stood yet to create  
drifts through me. Not the pang of death.

Death holds no terror. Rather,  
the passing of rapacious joy, that appetitive  
sensuality and intellectual thirst  
our slaking of which yields all we know  
of basal impulse:

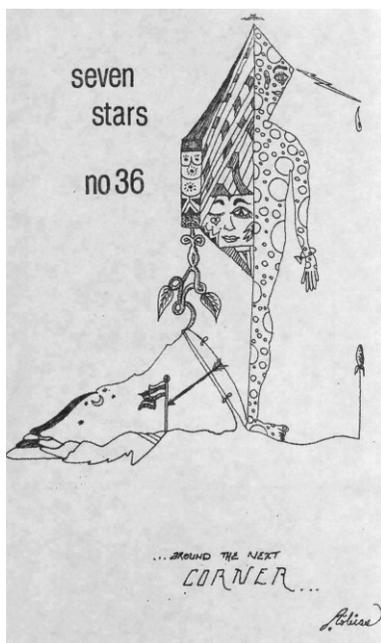
all we can keep in heaven  
all we can hug in hell  
the sovereign spirit, the sceptral mind.

William Everson





cover by soos



cover by Daniel Tobias Walson



cover by brad drexler



cover by elizabeth m Gilliam

Playing

we turn the lights out  
and we are closer to God  
creating this darkness

our hands stop the electricity  
we are Woman and Man alone  
and that much more free

in the blackness where we are blind  
listening to the swish  
of cotton and nylon underclothing

or naked bodies wait like shadows  
after the initial flurry  
in a silence beginning to sweat

we are touching with our tongues  
when neither of us can speak  
out into the night air

we are like the earth  
and the wind  
spilling and catching new seed

James Marvelle



a bird flies away  
its sound is broken  
and picked up in pieces

hints of sound  
and traces of traces  
to see in this light

Kathy Phillips

Uncharted Course

you're asleep  
i want to hold your head in my hands  
and rush your dreams to bleach white sands  
to fly with gulls  
and reach our perfect plans

you've been patient with me  
drifting lady on a soothing sea  
i'm awake with the hard ground  
thinking always of our tomorrows  
all the days we've yet to meet

and bathe our souls  
where the fresh spring waters flow  
wishing it were all that clear

James Marvelle



Perfect

The bud  
stands for all things,  
even for those things that don't flower,  
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;  
though sometimes it is necessary  
to reteach a thing its loveliness,  
to put a hand on the brow  
of the flower  
and retell it in words and in touch  
it is lovely  
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing.

Galway Kinnell

Fifth Avenue

A man with thick grey beard  
Goes wild between traffic,  
Arms wagging semaphore;  
Raves warnings clear and loud  
To those ignoring him.

An ambulance on a corner:  
They put a man on a stretcher  
Who wants air. A woman says:  
'Is it a heart-attack?  
Is the poor guy dead?'  
She worries for him:  
Dying is important when it comes.

Alan Sillitoe



Stones In Graveyards

God knew each before they knew themselves  
if ever they did  
before mothers lips sang  
brothers showed  
sisters taught  
fathers put them out to school or work.  
And only God may know them when the stones are gone  
if any can –  
if God remembers what God once had done.

Alan Sillitoe



how fine to stand  
withholding bones from earth  
withstanding those  
who haste to bury all

Bonnie Davidson

summer morning

the scent of new bread  
from the Greek bakery  
rolls on my poetry  
arranged in shadows

a telephone rings  
on deafened ears  
the rusty spring  
on the bed folds over



in your ambivalent arms  
we made that we made love  
until your smoke of sorrow  
struck our midnight



Roethke

Wordwinds  
follow winter songs  
you played by small town  
gravediggers,  
in your stocking hat  
a blushing spring blows.

B. Z. Niditch



Women Poets of Japan and China Translations

when a pair of magpies fly together  
they do not envy the pair of phoenixes

Ho, 300 BC

all I wanted was a man  
with a single heart

not someone always after wriggling fish  
with his big bamboo rod

Chou, 200 BC

It is good to get drunk once in awhile.  
What else is there to do?

LiYeh, 800 AD

Afraid of people's questions  
I swallow my tears  
and pretend to be happy.  
Deceit. Deceit. Deceit.

T'ang Wan, 1100 AD

My slender waist and thighs  
are exhausted and weak  
from a night of cloud dancing.

Huang O, 1200 AD

Yesterday's dream is a drawer  
littered with little mice turds

Tuo Sau, 1900 AD

I listen to the sound of a life  
different from mine  
in my womb  
and I can hear my own lonely heart

Miyoko, 1900 AD

Nowadays people aren't scared of ghosts  
especially living ghosts.

Kazuko, 1950 AD

because I dream  
of you every night  
my lonely days  
are only dreams

some day in six inches of  
ashes will be all  
that's left of our passionate minds,  
of all the world created  
by our love, its origins  
and passing away

Marichiko, 1976 AD

*all translated by Kenneth Rexroth*



awakened by a horse's fart  
I see a firefly in the air

Issa (1776 AD)  
*translated by Burton Watson*



lust

you seem to miss the point  
your easy words roll  
thick, green bottles in stone cellars  
the grit and ring of glass on glass  
my teeth cringe on bitter wine  
  
there is treachery underfoot  
one bottle could pitch me among the rest  
my cry cold in the air  
pelvis and skull striking glass  
  
I climb instead the steps thirsty for light  
my tongue tasting wine



Photograph

You lean in the open gate  
one leg bent before you  
casual, compliant  
commanding that space  
like the lord of a vast estate  
in his own door -  
face unsmiling  
eyes tired  
distant

Your calm captures me  
gathers the rampant forces  
of wild steeds  
whose eyes roll white  
and nostrils flare  
willed by your silence  
by something dark behind you  
in that sunlit picture

You pull me into your past  
and hold me  
with your heartbeat

Ruth Mason McElvain

Freeway 280

Las casitas near the gray cannery,  
nestled amid wild abrazos of climbing roses  
and man-high red geraniums  
are gone now. The freeway conceals it  
all beneath a raised scar.

I scramble over the wire fence  
that would have kept me out.  
Once, I wanted out, wanted the rigid lanes  
to take me to a place without sun,  
without the smell of tomatoes burning  
on swing shift in the greasy summer air.

Maybe it's here  
en los campos extraños de esta ciudad  
where I'll find it, that part of me  
mown under like a corpse  
or a loose seed.



in the night I would hear them  
glass bottles shattering the street  
words cracked into shrill screams  
inside my throat a cold fear  
as it entered the house in hard  
unsteady steps stopping at my door  
my name bathrobe slippers  
outside a 3 A.M. mist heavy  
as a breath full of whiskey  
stop it go home come inside  
mama if he comes here again  
I'll call the police

inside  
a grey kitten  
a touchstone  
purring beneath grandma's  
hand-sewn quilts the singing  
of mockingbirds

Lorna Dee Cervantes

crossing the bridge

I smelt the stench  
of my own soul  
as the wind whispered  
foul words in my ears

*everything ends in water*

the shrill wind laughed  
watching me become water



a flower seller  
leered at me  
thrusting out her clutched blossoms  
her mad laughter following  
my shaking hand

there is a pain in me  
where I wanted her to live  
a raw wound  
bleeding through my skin

ella blanche



eros

love, he whispered, love  
in the darkness  
is a body without bones  
but how  
do you wander there whistling  
a small crazy child  
a child just now taken  
out of the tomb

Andonis Fostieris  
*translated by Kimon Friar*

room full of shadows

she lowers her head  
and her eyes are like diamonds  
she undoes three buttons  
and the words are lost  
you taste her and the magic  
is almost perfect  
you fall back you die you live  
you dream you chase  
the visions you heard

James Marvella



he walks with a  
briefcase full of  
candles

eats a pie  
full of ladies heads

& hears the pins roll  
off the earth

guy r. beining



The winds do not listen  
and we are too busy  
for them.  
We have become  
the boys who used to  
haunt us with terrible eyes.  
Under our cloaks  
you can see  
all us angels.

Ian Krieger

starving artist

there is a yellow butterfly  
tattooed to your belly  
and it beats its powdered wings  
watching demons enter you like hammers  
with five penny nails  
like snakes  
like the stings of bumbling bees  
as your body shakes and their tails  
squeak inside - the bacon cooking  
and your mind wants to hide  
as if your daddy was in the corner

James Marvelle



Sordello

what in God's name  
are you reading for?  
Haven't you got something

better to do  
than expose yourself  
in the night

to the ravings  
of an old, despairing  
troubadour

who will tell you  
not only lies  
but even the truth

of your beauty and hell  
if you let him come in?

Haywood Jackson

I sit sticking pins  
into a red-haired  
voodoo doll. It is 4:30  
and getting dark.  
I creep into bed  
waiting now for no one  
but the true doll who will reject  
my pins and breath of stink  
and say:

*O breaker of clouds and mirrors  
I know of a room that never grows dark.*

James Ryan Morris



his eyes  
opened perplexed  
on a world of  
earth wind fire water  
mountain air  
hair thunder bones blood  
rain flesh

his face hardened  
into a child's face  
with yawning eyes  
& a pair of sharp nostrils  
to cut the earth  
in a woman's kiss  
a tongue  
that ran along his lips  
like a pack of hounds  
he rode a black mare  
before sunrise  
he killed four men  
& loved four women  
before the horse  
grew old enough  
for breeding

Jesse Glass, Jr.

not the bloom

the rose

the cactus flower

but the thorn

the dried stalk

and hard roots

endure

nourish

and sustain

we will get

this

we will get this

Robert F. Whisler



for nancy brizendine

just as it is good when we meet  
it is not all that bad  
being freed

the tide as it is rising  
how it will threaten  
your blankets and linens and feet

and leave without asking  
for the pattern  
and colors of your sheets

James Marville

a fairy tale

over the incline  
this fellow of other sounds  
fell. his lovers called it  
music. others followed down  
the real glass mountain  
& all we heard were delayed noises.

guy r. beining



flute

when water found  
its way to stone

wind followed  
blew a thin groove

and sound rushed  
from the hollow

Thom Tamaro



Sunday

My fingers  
wrote like God  
to myself.

You rocked against  
the pane  
icicles hung  
lost crosses  
on telephone wire.

B. Z. Niditch

Keep Me Free And Brown

El sol caliente blazes  
en la brown tierra de Texas  
la sangre de los Aztecas  
still flows in the veins  
de la hijos de la Raza

Pero in the Hondo Independent School System  
platoons of platinum blonde viejas tapadas  
inject their racist veneno  
into young Chicanitos  
and slap sensitive brown hands  
porque hablan Español  
in the pinche classroom

Why should we subject nuestros hijos  
to their peroxidized sterility  
why should our mestizaje  
be neutralized by kitchen cleanser and ammonia

We must not allow our warmth  
to be frostbitten  
by the winter of assimilation

Better that we keep our children  
out of the white penal system  
and stay brown and free  
como el Sol y la Tierra

Carlos Morton



i am the love you cannot believe

i will stand  
over here with my camera  
waiting for life  
to paint you a smile

James Marvelle

we have learned to be patient  
by being impatient

and at times, different times  
both have worked

like two drunks succeeding  
in not boring each other

James Marvelle



The Perfect Poem  
*for r s*

I lay roses  
in an unknown hourglass  
space, seven stars  
glowing like our bones.  
Braid sun cities  
from the bread of poets  
place wine, wind and whispers  
in heavy doors.  
I remember your dreams.

B. Z. Niditch



big cat

she had those dark tropic island eyes  
that stared right through you into  
the lush screaming night

liked to think she could have your heart  
just by asking for it - liked to hiss between  
clenched teeth before she pounced

alan catlin

She said trim your beard.  
So I shaved my head.  
She said she loved me better.  
I said I can't breathe,  
your grip is too tight.  
So she shook off her fingers like leaves.  
I said I loved her better  
and I snapped off my arms and legs.  
I asked if she loved me better.  
Too late. She had chewed off her tongue.

Richard Michaelson



Proud Parents

I did not know it was my anger  
growing inside of you.  
I thought my love hung offshore  
like a last unspoiled land  
where we can hide ourselves.  
I watched your stomach swell  
like an argument between us  
and mistook it for love.

We feed it ten times a day.  
It wakes us at night,  
sucks its nourishment from you.  
It is all we have in common.  
I cannot remember the seed  
of its birth but I see  
how it holds us together  
and I know it will bury us both.

Richard Michaelson

Aftermath

When he had carried to term the sacred poem  
that for so many years had starved him lean,  
what in the world was left for him to do  
in the world but wait there, in the world?

He has been through Hell and seen what was to see,  
and been through Heaven and seen what was to see,  
and now is waiting for what is to be  
again, the second death although of bliss.

The world is what it was, he waits beside  
a filthy ditch along whose banks  
a populace of hogs, curs, wolves pursue  
destruction as he did; nothing has changed.

The sacred poem is done, that heaven and earth  
had put their hands to, and like one lost he waits  
among the lost, musing sometimes on Virgil  
in limbo, and, though of bliss at last assured.

The painful penitent stooped under his stone.  
Of all this, one imagines, he says nothing,  
the man that mothers frighten children with:  
*Be good, or he'll haul you back with him to Hell.*

Howard Nemerov

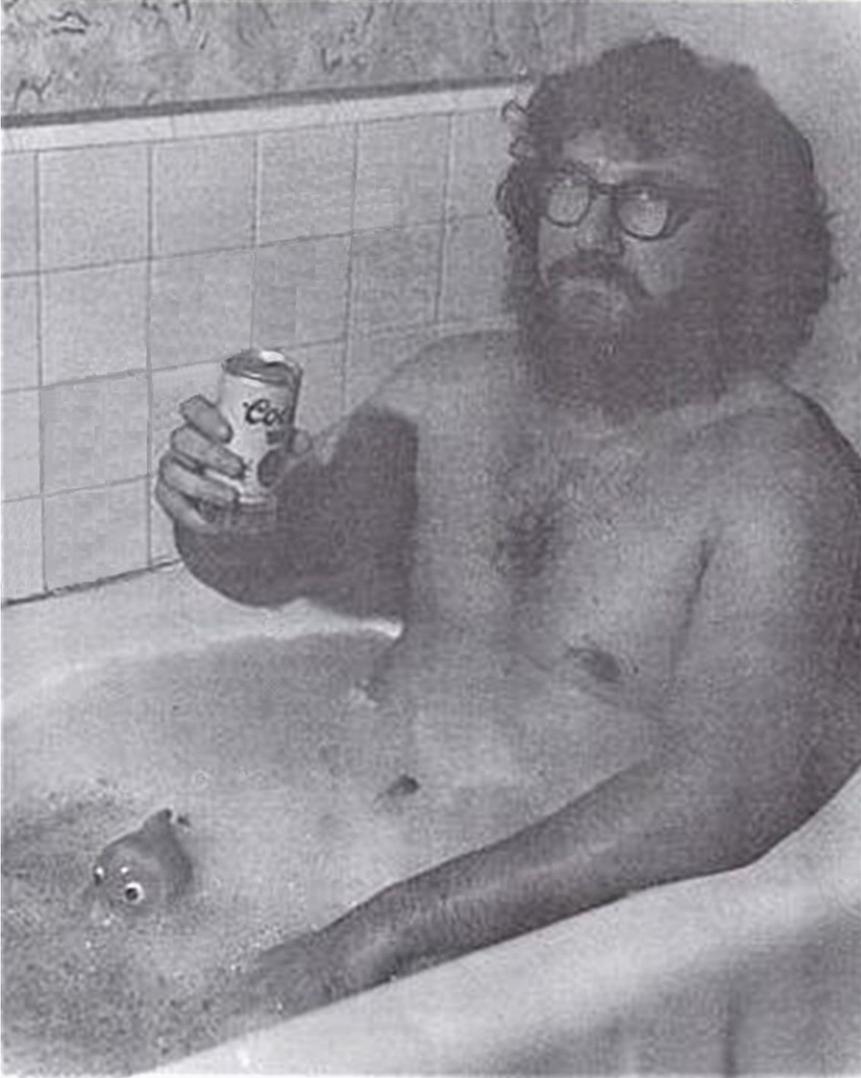


back seat

it cost hard money  
took me from dust and dirt  
to freedom and choice  
it's cramped but I'm rested  
i choose this living  
this car is home

Lloyd R. Thorbourne

# BEER



Gerald Locklin

It takes a lot to get you there, and it won't  
kill you either.

Kids like it. The foam makes a fine moustache.  
When they go to sleep they dream of goofy  
pink dragons and slippery little smiling fish.

To the adolescent it is the first taste of the  
earth's bitterness. He has to pretend it gets him high.  
He is afraid it will give him fits, and maybe it will.  
He gives it to his girl and thinks because of it  
she gives herself to him.

She doesn't like the taste of it and never will.  
She doesn't have the thirst for it. She  
is afraid it will give her a gut, and  
maybe it will. Eventually she'll be a  
little insulted when it's offered her.  
And probably should be.

But the best of friendships are formed over  
it. It helps men to speak to each other,  
a difficult thing these days. It lets  
men sing without embarrassment of auld  
lang syne and of the sheep that went astray  
somewhere along the line. It goes excellently  
with pool and pickled eggs, beef jerky and  
baseball games. Contrary to popular opinion,  
it is good for the kidneys, affords them exercise.  
It is good for all the appetites.

We all go beyond it, we always come back to it.  
It is the friend who eases us through our  
philosophies. It is the friend we talk to about  
our women, the one who agrees with us that  
they are not all that important. It restores our  
courage in the face of cowardly sobrieties. It  
laughs with us at our most serious peeves,  
weeps at our pratfalls. It remembers us. It  
takes us back.

Finally, this blessed beer, it eases us towards  
sleep.

Safe Harbor Bar

There are dreams here  
smelling mildly of beer and piss  
and the sea.  
Sea-dreams, cool, slow-flowing:  
breasts, lips and thighs  
all vague and virginal.  
And dreams of workers on the sea:  
a place, debt-free, in the country,  
thick grass, trees, and dappled cows.

The tables are slick-coated  
so the skinny blond magician  
with the salt-sore lip  
can make each vestige disappear.  
He's got to do this trick  
again and again because  
the people do persist  
in leaving traces of themselves.



Take a Theme, Any Theme

Sly and plausible  
the genial poet smoothly  
interleaves words  
dealing off the dark underside  
of our fantasies.

It's just a trick.  
He's got a secret ring that nicks  
the flashing mates and rolling  
numbers and keeping silent.

Riffling too fast to follow, almost,  
you've got to watch him closely.  
He's a slicker  
and a cheat.

Don MacQueen

still life

I was a frame from one of her late night movies  
a trick of light and shade  
that somehow caught her eye  
and while she wondered what there was  
about this particular composition  
that could have intrigued her so  
she held on to me

she showed me to her critical friends and they  
approved her taste in general  
although (they said)  
perhaps  
just here . . . ?  
and maybe  
there . . . ?

Her interest didn't last

I don't take retouching very well

Don MacQueen



Freckled Tickle

There should be a word like  
fuckle  
we need a word to represent  
the tender quiet kind of screwing  
that is done without frantic, blind  
self aware intensity, without demands  
or frenzy, with more love than passion

to fuckle (V): to trickle  
with love in the act of love  
to be subtle, slow and soft

fuckle (n): a gentle fuck,  
a huckleberry kind of fuck

Haywood Jackson

letters from up north

she writes a letter every year or so speaking unclearly of her life, she sags in her words. I know that she has a husband she has almost always been faithful to, and 2 or 3 children who fill her house while her husband is working.

she used to write poems that were good. Now she still writes poems but the poems sag.

I can no longer read her poems and it would be unkind if I answered her letters, although I don't expect you to understand this, she signs her letters "love." many people do this. I am more careful with this word.

she is dying underneath her life. it was safe and good enough for a while, especially safe: afternoons of wine with the literati while her husband worked at what he did, she worked with art, she worked with creation.

and now her husband knows more of life than she does, mainly because what he was doing he didn't try to do.

her husband and her children are non-existent in her poems. I can't answer her letters. I can't expect you to understand this.

Charles Bukowski



Some people don't seem to be plugged in. You talk to them  
and they talk to you and while you look in their eyes they look  
at the ceiling and the wall and stare at your nose.  
They get very abstract, like they're great philosophers.  
They're into zen or tao and they're looking for truth  
which they couldn't find if it came up and bit them on the ass.  
They talk in monotones and they sound so bored  
like they can't wait to die and be done with it.  
They can relate to the ocean, floating along the waves  
and they can sit cross-legged and make noises for hours  
and they can be one with the stars and the clouds  
and the gypsy wind, and they can see inner & outer space.  
They can be one with everything but other people.

Samuel P. Schraeger

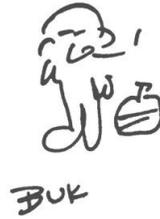
a fact

Antony's wife cut out Cicero's tongue.  
Charles Starkweather went to the electric chair  
on June 25, 1959. it took him 4 minutes to die.  
Charlotte Corday was 25 on June 13, 1793 when she  
pulled the plug on Jean-Paul Marat.

remember: declaration of personal bankruptcy remains  
on your credit record for 14 years,  
male silkworm moths can detect a female moth  
6 and 1/2 miles away.  
flying fish can stay airborne for 1,000 feet,  
the land crabs of Cuba can run faster than a horse,  
whales weighing 195 tons and mice weighing 3 ounces  
develop from the same size egg.  
Cleopatra never washed the dishes.

this is what happens when you sit down to  
write a poem and you can't write one.

Charles Bukowski



the stripper

she bumps to the south and bumps to the north  
grinds east and west better than anyone

she twirls her tassels one in each direction  
(even counterclockwise)  
when she sheds pasties and g-string  
young men yell and old men cry

she could retire, she's 52 and loaded  
but  
it's such an easy way to make a living  
...the hours are short  
besides, her husband snores

Alice Whitcher

## Blues



He goes to the same job every day. He comes home to his wife every night. They rarely touch. They're not attracted to each other anymore. Neither makes a big deal about it. A few years ago, they would fight and swear that they were going to leave each other, but then they found that when it really came down to it, neither one had the courage to go out and meet someone else. They don't hate each other. They are roommates waiting for death.



School made him sick to his stomach because he had to fight all the time. He never ran away from fights. He got beat up a lot but he did win some. It seemed like every time he turned around, there was someone in his face trying to start something with him. He used to get up hours before school because his guts would be on fire getting ready to face them. One great day he punched this guy just right. A broken nose is a many splendored thing. This guy's face just exploded. It was like a rainbow—but all the colors were red.



He had the day off. He sat in the room. That's what he did when he wasn't at the job. The job made him hate, made him hate endlessly. Made him punch the wall. Made him keep his fucking mouth shut. It felt good to grind his teeth. He would walk home from the shift, hoping that someone would fuck with him so he could use his fists.



When the depression hit him, it felt like a stone had been dropped on his soul. He couldn't tell anyone about it. He tried to tell a girl about it once when they were riding on a bus. She nodded her head and said that she sometimes got depressed but she had little time for that kind of thing. She said that you only get depressed if you have nothing better to do. It was obvious that she didn't know where he was coming from.



I live alone in my room. I don't talk to anyone, not even at work. I work in a basement. I know what to do. I spend as much time as I can in my room alone. The more time I spend alone, the more I want to. It's like a disease. I am drawn to myself yet at the same time I am sickened and repulsed. I never speak. I hate the sound of my voice. I don't have a phone. I don't want to hear anyone say my name. I'm trying to forget

mine. If I don't think about myself enough, maybe I will forget that I am. When I eat food, I try not to taste it. I don't want to know what keeps me alive. I expel as much information as I can from my head in hopes that I will forget it forever. My bodily functions disgust me. I hate it when I see hair growing on my face. The less I am the better. I am a blackout drinker. In the darkness I forget myself in hopes that someday I will not remember my life. I have totally blanked out all memories of my mother and father. In my mind I have turned them into an impossibility. I know that I am from nothing—no one. The less I am the better. I want to be nothing.



I listened to this poet  
Bloated and fucked up  
Reading shit he wrote in 1971  
What happens to these people?  
All the great storytellers keep their mouths shut  
Long train ride  
Hard to keep up morale and sense of purpose  
Sometimes I see pointlessness all too clearly



Light bulb

You are my company tonight  
You make me see that this room is hell  
I know you saw that roach crawl up my leg  
You made it look like a stumbling gem  
As it made its escape across the carpet

Just between you and me  
I don't think anyone understands anyone else  
It's past three in the morning  
I'm hungry and everything's closed  
What a great night this is

Henry Rollins



art by d foldvary, ellen m gilliam, jim nelson & ken freed

father, I confess  
it was I who murdered you  
slashed you into poems  
discarded you like old newspapers  
your bold headlines  
threats of war

daily the casualties mount  
reams of dead-white paper  
these heavy, black-inked words

Gloria North



wind corps and choruses  
carve music out of sand

ten thousand bowls  
and valleys shape the passing rain

ellen m gilliam



you take the *STOP* sign  
in yer hands  
bend it  
to the ground

damn near enough  
to make a man  
believe in himself

jess graf

years

roll down & wash in waves of booze  
& look for a place to happen

we live our lives  
with class  
style  
born to be & by god

hold  
our corner booth



the mountain cat

ever prowling  
waiting by  
his  
black dirt way

an endless  
black dirt  
delight



I know  
there are some poems  
more meant for living  
more meant for dreaming  
than sharing

jess graf

shoot out

survive & cling  
& disappear for weeks inside  
to sort the mind flash movement  
past old haunts  
that left him cold &

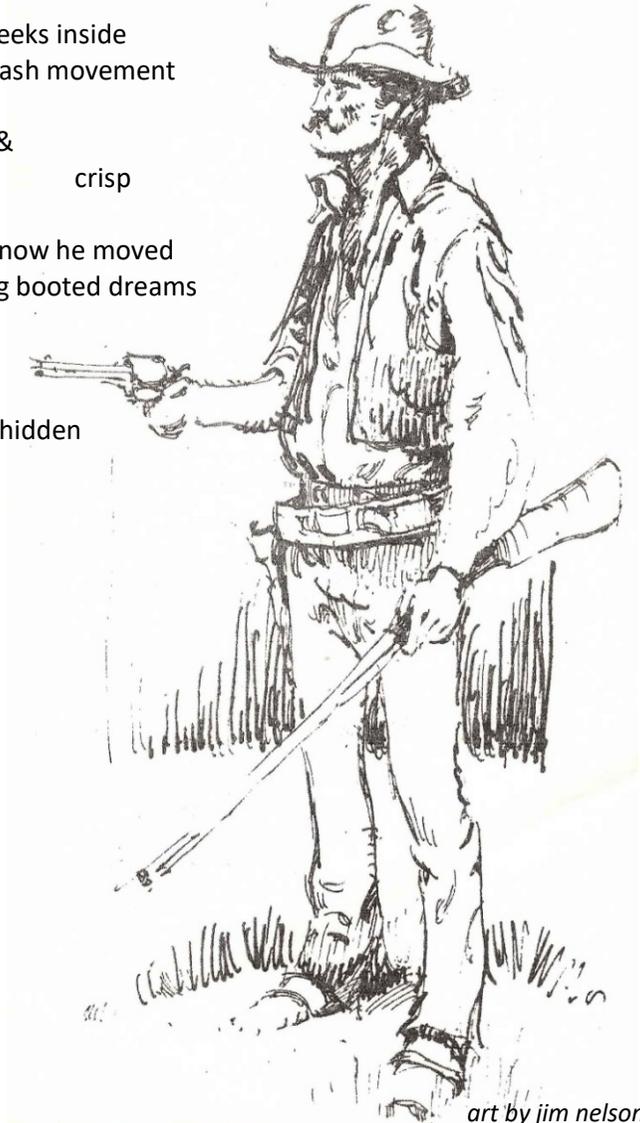
crisp

through madness now he moved  
past gun on hip big booted dreams  
slow

& easy

night surrounds a hidden  
mountain cat  
smoke peering  
through a winter  
infested cave

jess graf



art by jim nelson

the gunslinger survives  
*for Doc Holliday*

he lifted the shotgun  
pointed  
I ran  
    'cause I'm tough

then a woman cried  
begging me to leave  
I walked  
never to return  
    yep  
    tough

children scattered  
left behind  
coldly stared  
& begged back  
    'cause I'm a rough tough  
    mean one w/flesh grown  
    strangely flabby

death's sharp rattle

gun mind flashing schemes of survival  
whirl blast before my eyes like wind  
piercing/staying/leaving  
    gone

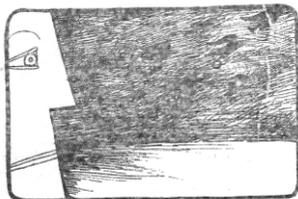
I'm tough  
goddamn man  
tough

jess graf



*art by jim nelson*

TWO POETS: EVERHART & SCHRAEGER



cover by w w everhart



cover by J D Rage

# A BOSTON WINTER

B. Z. NIDITCH

cover by the typesetter



David Chorlton



Chorlton Creek



Chorlton

3 covers by david chorlton

I sit at the park  
all day long

and memorize  
my hands

at night  
I am seen swaying

down the aisles  
of a locked supermarket

I am beautiful  
without existence



you find me in the basement  
almost drunk  
pulling wind-torn branches  
through the window  
crying  
singing for a summer

and you see how I bring back dreams  
and hold them and play with them  
like they are real children

and you think about oceans and  
animals that are not like us  
and you say goodbye

too quietly

w w everhart

Erich Segal Revisted

love means  
never having  
to say  
you jerk off  
even though  
you do



"hey, handsome,"  
the old man said  
"would you buy me a hotdog?"

i kept on walking  
and i couldn't help laughing  
a little

"please? i'll pay you back"

i laughed again

"he's serious,"  
my friend said

and suddenly  
i hated myself

but not enough  
to go back

i kept on walking  
we kept on walking

samuel p. schraeger

THE ADDICT  
DANN IT! SHE THOUGHT  
SHE WAS GOING DARK AGAIN  
THE COLOR OF THE SKY JUST OF DARKNESS  
WOULD BE THE SAME AS THAT OF THE VERGE  
HER Melancholy  
IF IT COULD HAVE COLOR  
SHE JUST WANTED THE FUN TO GO ON FOREVER  
A FEW DAYS BEFORE, SHE HAD SEEN A FILM AND THE SPEAKER SAID THAT PEOPLE FROM  
THE BABY BOOM PERIOD  
GROWING UP WITH  
THE NUCLEAR THREAT  
WERE ALL LIKE THAT



J D Rage

Beneath stately Beacon Hill houses  
Boston captures no wind  
only the hesitating past  
floating over well-sung raptures



I skinned a lover's words  
to the marrow of my bones  
opened an empty vocabulary to God.  
I washed the red hills and am  
filled with my own shadow.



Last Visit With Anne Sexton  
1928-1974

I sought your laughter  
your penetrating form  
in love-choir lines  
with benign sweat

the dusty soul of an ancient  
sheaf of poems is not  
spared the circling waves  
buried in an overture

the room is quiet  
an exile for endless laughter

B. Z. Niditch

Visiting Emily's House  
In Amherst

amid a world of brass and  
whitened wood  
leaves gesture  
to a passing word

fingers once rattled  
papers of a vagrant hand

apple tree cicadas burst open  
in the patience of bark and walnut

her eyes drank  
the dust of cold stair greetings

time mirrors  
shake voiceless hosts  
atop prayer walls  
with an echo's breath

B. Z. Niditch



Boston Relived  
for B.Z.

Boston once burned you as a witch  
they said your words were from devils  
the gifted town-folk were quick to light  
the flame.

Now from the ashes your spirit moves  
filling the streets with your blood  
of life.

Ron Grossman

maybe we'll see

sometime soon

they are going to shoot a telescope  
from the shuttle platform out there  
and the boys and girls are going to see  
ten percent more outer space  
things they have never seen before

i am for this

our inventiveness  
our poking around  
is pleasurable

it is having such things to do  
which keeps us from  
doing things to ourselves

Charles Bukowski



I gather testicles  
of men like you  
and boil them in a pot

I feed the soup to pigs  
and serve them up  
to you in chicken salad

I grind the meat to powder  
to season your tea

Naomi Clark

I am not available  
At the moment  
Except to myself.

Downstairs the plumber  
Is emptying the big tank,  
Water-logged.  
The pump pumped on and on  
And might have worn out.

So many lives pour into this house,  
Sometimes I get too full;  
The pump wears out.

So now I am emptying the tank.  
It is not an illness  
That keeps me from writing.  
I am simply staying alive  
As one does  
At times by taking in,  
At times by shutting out.

May Sarton



Muse Myth

The poet, not especially gifted, settles his lazy eye on the image of a woman, always the likely suspect, and watches without watching for the muse to betray herself. Perhaps no disguise is the best disguise. We walk the sloping pavement alone where our long shadows might touch. Two dark monoliths against a pebbled sky. Equal. In a mythic design.

Jess Santos

the present  
the past  
the future

can weave  
the same movement

into a space  
between spaces

Eugène Guillevic  
*translated by Dori Katz*



for Eugène Guillevic

When I lose my center  
of gravity  
I can't fly:

levitation's  
a stone  
cast straight as a lark

to fall plumb  
and rebound.

Denise Levertov



My husband, Jim, doesn't like poetry and won't actually criticize mine because he says he doesn't know enough about it. And he has agreed not to use my poetry notebooks to squish roaches anymore.

Sue Marra

The Rabbi of Desire

makes up his own prayer for each benediction  
speaks with his mouth full of fear and religion  
as if the spirit were a nipple leaking milky fire

each morning he binds his wrist with silk  
his forehead with gold wire

when he bows to the rising sun  
his black hair blazes  
when he chants kaddish  
the vowels of despair ignite

in his gown of light he dances in circles  
circled by lighted circles encircled by light

Charles Fishman



there are secrets in the blood  
that cannot be denied or sold out to  
the whims and dreams of others

A. D. Winans



they have boarded the windows  
of the house we once shared  
now condemned waiting like us  
for the calendar to stop

A. D. Winans

Third Generation

Pick up your bones of grief  
and rattle me a name  
along your metal bedframes.  
Grandmother, you have been dead  
too long. Empty your cabinets

of their dusty years, take  
my mother back and tell us  
where we came from,  
what the blinding snow

you carried coals across  
has frozen into you, and who  
were the children  
you gave away as if  
they were the future.

Your sons begin to die  
still holding  
the ashes of you  
while your daughters fight.  
I am walking in your old shoes,

the weight of your hum  
is on my spine. Your anger  
beats the cold stairway  
that makes the storeys of your house

into generations, each one resting  
on the other's walls  
and as you climb between us  
your breath is the wind  
we close our doors against.

David Chorlton



Bachelorhood

The plants don't like me. They slump like a sulking housewife. Did I water yesterday or the day before? No matter. They can wait another day if they're going to mope.

The clothes in the hamper are lost children crying for attention. Their brothers in the closet grow fewer. Towels in the bathroom are creased and mournful. I hold my head up high.

Pots and pans grumble in the oven. They were packed there when company was coming, shoved like commuters into the subway in a long slow tunnel. Sitting with grease like dirt around the collar.

I make eggs this morning, drawing a plate from a stack in the sink. I crack open the shell with thanks for the freedom to think.

The bedroom is waiting for my belated inspection. "Mussing one half the bed is one half the work," I announce to books on my shelf. They are too timid to reply. And my mother's old quilt is still best. The caress that warms my wintry feet.

I feel the smirk on my face as I pull off the sheets and almost floor the other pillow, the one still fresh, delicately white, unsnuggled, spiteful.

Jess Santos



cricket crouches on  
backside of brick

baked daily by sun  
unworried by wind

i envy him  
for his easy tolerance

Terry Shorb

The Great American Novel

I'd been pounding the underworld all night, sulking for the lovely whore of words the nose-flute of words the kettledrum reverberating of them in yr mind yr ears yr groin & belly & finally sulking for their uselessness their inadequacy...& Bobby Frink came by & drove me to the Pizza Hut & bought me beers beers beers and it was 12.30 closing time & while walking home slow just staring at the maniac rose-full moon I saw this tall chick with her Lil Abner Long Sam body & ass length red hair... I introduced myself as the greatest living poet of Normal Illinois & she'd heard about me cause its always in the local paper show I'm in jail for narcotics or assault or for trashing telephone booths that steal yr last dime – it gets around... we end up in her bathtub doing something special & juicy with her strawberry glycerine soap & it was one of the good nights the fine nights, a night that comes along once in a while when you can take off yr mask & just freak all night like that sometimes or its all a drag a mask a role, a Big Rig truckstop with lukewarm showers & bad hamburgers... but then it was Thursday morning & I fell asleep just as her old man came in – I told him how Bad I was but he kicked my ass anyway – well all I really wanted to say was how some of us die screaming some howling with laughter some just rotting away in the arms of that Bitch-Death State... I want to try it all before I go & if you think that strawberry soap wasn't worth a crack on the jaw then yr rotting away already

William Wantling



for Bill Wantling

he liked to write on shit house walls  
his best & finest work  
then shit on bonded paper

Jess Graf

for William Wantling

I am not a graveyard poet in  
search of chilled bones  
the words I speak hold no fear

I have tasted the laughter of life  
walked the sinister circus of reality  
playing out the game like a grand chess master  
knowing there is no power strong enough  
to still the song inside you

the night rolls back its wings  
teeth cold naked bones singing  
poets do not die quietly

you are everywhere  
walking the face of morning  
crystal clear sky humming your songs

you walk with other poets  
who dared to hold the sun  
in their hands

A. D. Winans



Who knows the madman's heart. . .

You've got two days to live  
with cancer worrying your guts  
like an obscene dog.  
They can't do anything for your pain.

Daniel Wm Burns

how to get along with your publisher

he brings copies  
of the novella he's just published.  
it's the first of three books of mine  
he's planning on doing.  
since it has a medical title  
it also has a medical cover photo -  
a pair of bare legs on an examining table.

"i really like the way the book looks," I say,  
"but i sure hope nobody thinks  
those skinny legs are mine."

"they're mine," he says.

Gerald Locklin



some people never go crazy

me, sometimes I lie down behind the couch  
for 3 or 4 days

then, I rise with a roar,  
rant, rage -  
curse the universe

I feel much better,  
sit down to toast and eggs,  
hum a little tune

suddenly become as lovable as a  
pink overfed whale

some people never go crazy

what truly horrible lives  
they must lead

Charles Bukowski



disoriented by  
cheap strong wine and  
hopeless repetition  
I listen  
wanting again  
the clear voice  
from the sky  
telling me  
you're all right  
everyone's  
all right

Judyl Mudfoot



Chores At The Commune

The baby bull sucked the rubber nipple  
right out of the bucket  
and spat it out fast enough  
when he found no milk inside it.

Which proves either how little  
use male has for female  
when she isn't fulfilling  
his animal passions

or that discerning males  
seek the internal essence  
behind the silicon surface.

Merritt Clifton



I am a practical person,  
Pull weeds, make lists, answer letters,  
talk to the donkey.  
Stroke her nose, soft as velvet.  
My sneakered feet are never dry  
this wet summer.  
Do you believe me?  
I am a practical person.  
You can tell that, surely.

It is enough that the poppy  
bursts the hard shell of its bud,  
and opens, though it looked impossible.

I live with reality here.  
Yet for five long years  
the White Goddess  
commanded my being.  
I was borne on great tides,  
waves stormed in my head.  
I was washed up  
on terrible shores alone.

For five years I lived with signs and omens.  
I was sent on adventures.  
The lists became poems.

Do you believe me?  
There are mysteries,  
sources, an underground river  
on the other side of the mountain  
of self-doubt, and of rejection,  
as real as the donkey's nose,  
as real as the huge red poppy.  
Open.

Do you believe me?  
It would help if you did,  
help me not to die the death  
of the rejected who deny their vision.

May Sarton



cover by leann soos



cover by leann soos

PATIENT  
RAINS  
AND  
PETALS



SOOS

cover by a maillot



cover by R. Mumprecht

*two poems for a friend*

**The Waves of the Bay**

create a symphony with your voice  
as your dreams weave through  
the flight of night birds  
which land nearby to gather  
midnight treats left by the quiet roar

the rain of your dreams has washed away  
many of my tears

**Take My Hand**

a thousand times  
each day  
I give myself to you

you will never know

you have soothed the child  
that cried from my heart  
for a tranquil melody

you will never know

poster poems by r soos

SAN DIEGO FREE POETRY #2



SEEKING A  
PATTERN

Don MacQueen

covers: clip art



Don MacQueen is a professor  
at Southwestern College.

art by r soos



realities

5

art by ww everhart



art by tony moffeit

I don't ask for much  
I'm a gal of simple means  
I only want a man  
whose end justifies his jeans

Cindy Muñoz



Whispers

The blood in my ears  
sounds like feet on the stairs  
slow thumps that never reach me.  
When the revolution comes  
I shall be a ghost.  
The dampness used to bother me.

Sue Marra



spanish blues

rolling under  
saxophone stars  
highway  
throwing spears  
that stab the dark  
spanish blues  
back country of new mexico  
dancing  
lights and shadows  
of gypsy nights

tony moffeit

voodoo moon

rolling over  
winding mountain road  
overlooking snake river  
fireflies eat the night  
adobe shacks  
and armadillos  
descending  
in a demon wind  
to slouch in a saloon  
in sante fe

tony moffeit



red dust

blue fire of  
sangre de cristo  
mountains  
blood moon  
gypsy wind  
snake shadow  
on the wall  
the dark highway  
of your body

tony moffeit



the poet

has placed a kingdom in his mind  
climbed the height of a secret tower  
to be an inward prince  
with subjects who will not listen

belinda subraman

Improvisation

You look surprised  
and frightened  
at my accidental fingering  
of your inner strings.

Don't go.  
I probably won't find  
the notes again.  
You will be safe.

Don MacQueen



it's my life

the wind howls  
outside my shack  
wails and moans  
like the blues  
on my phonograph  
the trees bend  
the boards shake  
once i start  
i can't stop &  
the night fills  
all my pores  
it's a fever  
this beat this  
feel baby it's  
my life and i'm  
rockin' alone

tony moffeit

cherokee creek

we weave in green  
rain ramona thru  
nachos & mexican  
beer walk under  
the bridge in a  
tumbleweed wind  
find a place where  
phantoms of fog  
swirl in our  
slung-off jeans  
and a cottonwood  
cries for our  
cherokee dance  
the creek leaking  
tribal secrets

tony moffeit

ॐ

sky full of clouds

running thru ravines to  
the angry tyrant ocean  
i compose - my breath  
a flute my fingers a banjo

the moon full enough  
pauses at an open cloud  
to laugh in wicked contralto  
before sending the thunder

to drown my voice

r soos

reality is a drunken feeling

r soos



Bulletin Populaire

something new to worry about

I received a brochure in the mail today  
stamped *DATED MATERIAL*

and it made me wonder  
how long I have

before they begin to stamp that  
on my poetry

Gerald Locklin



A Ramage For Sleep

Silent in the moonlight, no beginning or end.  
Alone, and not alone. A man and a woman under  
open sky, sleeping, under an antelope robe.  
They sleep under animal skin,  
tender, near each other's hands.  
How many years? The robe thrown over them  
rough, where they sleep. Outside the moon, the plains  
silent in the moonlight, no beginning or end.

Robert Bly



artist

you dream of rebels  
scattered among the curving  
streets of the town  
that you hate with  
all your energy

you make your way home  
among the secret wine

mike hemmingson

Thirst

Walk a long time on the low  
lying desert and thirst  
will bloom between the thorns  
on your tongue like the red  
flowers burning  
on the barrel cactus.  
When your mouth

fills with spines  
your cheeks are a web  
where the black spider hangs  
and the only moisture is the thick

juice in strands  
of tissue, the ground  
on which you walk will be  
a floating deck of stones  
and earth packed

tight to keep  
its water to itself.

You must walk  
in hope of rain

although the sun  
outpaces you, directions  
blur and only  
the south leaning bodies  
of cacti tell  
which way to go. Salt

collects on your skin  
and when you want to drink  
the reflections of bright rock  
you will be the desert

and the next drop  
of water you swallow  
will be a scorpion in your throat

David Chorlton

Desert Language

English is language steeped  
in rain, ground  
from Saxon, roughened  
in the mills of a smoky time  
and spoken

in courts where lace  
was the fashion. And beneath  
the vulture's wing, among creosote  
and prickly pear, it is

the wrong sound. And spanish  
with fire on its lips arrived  
here in a dazzling  
breastplate on the point of a sword  
to name the mesa

palo verde and arroyo  
while native tongues  
go dry

whispering as the desert  
cracks along the frontera  
where speech is a foreign wind.

David Chorlton



Aphrodite's temple :stones  
tourists photograph, repeat  
how pillars will outlast  
whatever they supported :love  
and Adrienne  
down a day, my hands  
fill with battered mountains  
canyons and ravines, oceans  
exhausted by trickling creeks  
and voyagers singing.

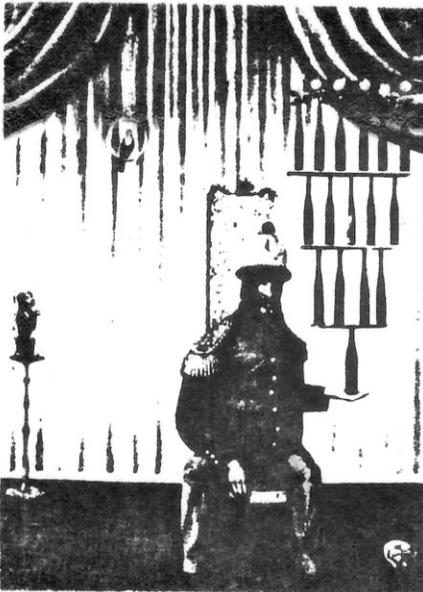
Simon Perchik



*photos by Philip C. Curtis*

### Party

The places people visit  
grow a layer which remembers  
their habits. On a bleak rise  
chairs creak beneath  
their occupants  
who walk away  
leaving their weight behind them.



### The Act

To balance impossible bottles  
for roses to grow inside them  
while a dog begs for applause  
is what I dress up for.

Off duty  
I imitate my bird  
who does not know  
to fly beyond the ring it sits on.

*poetry by David Chorlton*

It just won't go away. What's that? You should ask. Our annual question. Oh. You mean whether to thin the poet herds. No. The question is: should we give tenure to witches. It plagues us. It haunts us. The nays say, Give them life time security and quality will drop. They'll start using bouillon cubes instead of bone stock. They'll try to slip in last year's hexes. The situation will become top heavy. Some witches will even start missing deadlines. Young witches with get up and go will have nowhere to go but sideways. May even leave the area entirely and relocate in places where youth and talent have a future. Others may simply give up and start driving cabs.

Chandler Brossard



### Dreams

I'm in a parking lot. I drop my pool ball and it rolls away. I look for it. The lot is covered with pool balls. The cement has turned to grass. I pick up hundreds of balls. None of them are mine. Right color, wrong number.

Someone tells me that my mother is dead. All these people are crying about it, me too. I get taken to a room. There's a casket on the floor. Someone opens the lid. There's a body bag inside with the zipper halfway down near the head. I don't look in.

I'm in a ditch. I am digging with some other men. My mother comes up to me. She is happy and smiling. She wants me to pick out a coffin for her.

I'm in the stairwell of a house that I used to live in with my mother. I'm lacing my shoe. When I'm done, I'm going to kill myself. Inside the house, there's a girl in a room waiting for me to do it. Music is playing—the same song as when the kids are filing past the coffin in the movie *River's Edge*.

Henry Rollins

Wuchowsen Wind Eagle

Long wing one  
gaze sharp as flint  
you soar my eyes  
above this valley  
lift on those wings  
which made the wind.

You carry me past  
the long water place  
where the heartbeat of rivers  
pulses out of black stone.

And everything  
is alive in your sight  
as you circle, circle  
to the beat of the song  
circle, circle my thought.

Joseph Bruchac



oblivion

i shiver naked  
in the arms of that  
broad, blue oblivion  
and its frost of stars

i disappear in this cold embrace  
with a force i cannot bear

i am torn from this earth  
torn from this time

the empty eyes  
of my children  
a clutching roar  
in my ears  
when i let go

Ruth Mason McElvain

you have not but if you have you speak

you have not known that secret thrust  
those waters hurled beneath the ice  
but if you have it's you i'll trust  
and climb the summit of your face

you have not kissed the open flame  
that sun unfurled from in the bud  
but if you have i'll sing your name  
and scorch your wisdom down that word

you have not sucked the tongue of god  
to wear those truths athwart your jaws  
but if you have i'll shape the mud  
to forge your footprints into laws

you've never climbed the rainbow's bridge  
to raise what suffering to grace  
but if you have i'll heal my grudge  
and weigh your reach in an embrace

if you've looked under, caught fire from  
the bloom, and faced the hardest choice  
of self in pace with truth, then damn  
the rules! you speak with utter voice

Will Inman



I cannot speak from mirrors,  
only the cry of street lights  
open a door of neon miracles  
in the quiet back avenues.

B. Z. Niditch

such a feast

it's colder and colder all the time.  
my goats are angora, but i  
have nothing to spin wool with  
let alone weave

besides  
i wouldn't know how

the two females' teats  
are warm to my fists

that cloud  
encloses everything  
with death  
the final shelter



oracle from between horns

my eyes are wrapped in black silk  
my lips are rolled in dried milk  
my hair is falling around my feet  
my bones are coals inside my meat

i lean between the horns of goats  
what oracle speaks within their throats  
the people cry the people cry  
and one by one the last ones die

the deepest cloud around the sun  
goes chill, this life is almost done  
a young goat cries and leaves this cave  
and i have no more lives to save

Will Inman

god where is your hand

all flesh is as grass yea children grow  
pot bellies in desert land where water  
shrinks back in starved veins how lovely  
to see their eyes widen over a little  
milk in a tin can how ugly to hold so  
shallow a caring great governments are not  
pleased with anger flies are messengers of  
true power teenagers children even younger  
tote death under sparse clothes o dark and  
lovely god where is your hand in revolution  
i cannot speak of peace in the face of one  
hungry child behold all flesh is as god

Will Inman



the poem is a firetruck

the poet at the wheel, the shrill  
siren screaming, the house of life  
ablaze with malachite smoke  
the victims leaping into nets  
that catch their bottomless anguish

the firemen burst into flame  
brighter than the sun's candles  
or oxyacetylene torches  
and shine through strangury cobwebs

Dan Wm. Burns



ship

gray bubbles gleam  
upon a salt-clothed rope  
folding a choir of the dawn

B. Z. Niditch

Mystery

Father watched his wife reading in bed  
she preferred getting drunk on mystery novels  
because they didn't make her urinate.  
He wanted to love her without her knowing  
he didn't want to be interrupted having to prove it.  
He warmed his hands by sitting on them  
before placing them down her neck  
so she wouldn't wonder how they got cold.

Hal Sirowitz



1630

the first one hanged was  
billington  
& so the beginning from Plymouth  
in spray of rock  
in fountain of rock  
in dominion of rock  
greater than the call  
of a god  
  
one flower brushed into another  
on a shore of fast colors  
out of nowhere came  
samoseet of the sagamores  
speaking  
their tongue  
*naked in the march winds*  
*except for a strap of*  
*leather twine*  
he took of their brandy & pudding  
& spoke of a plague that had wiped out  
tribes

guy r. beining

Elizabeth To Robert

And what is he to Hecuba  
and Hecuba to him

tears in slow formation  
fill a singular room  
alone

there is, some-  
times, rest cornered by an ancient bowl.

And that thread  
stretched  
sun-lit, sun-caught  
in autumn afternoons  
beyond the window.

Marianina Olcott



Desert Shore

Who draws  
dancing thistles  
in the desert?

The sun scorches  
the sand look  
of the lovers.

When they breed  
convulsive, their  
hearts smolder.

Roger Theo Nupie

the restless debacle of reason

yearning for death greener than the mad horse  
whose job is to plunge through the veins destroying  
the map of water which is the essence of logic  
the afternoon yawns open from beneath its black pyramid  
the shoals of consciousness are banked in thunder  
children mangled by the purity of their beauty  
suffer birth-pangs and the meaning of resolution of god  
their brows are lighted with the fragrance of their entrails  
liberty and its persistent fiends unwind the sea's linen  
a woman of terrible serenity is revealed profound as a cliff  
the moon charges its waves upon the guilt of the sand  
chaos is defined once and for all as the perfect sentence

ivan argüelles



Behind The Grate

I saw dogs leap and whistle in the  
shopping mall, smearing their  
bloody gums on the shoe store window, a  
baby spitting under the boots: I was  
standing behind a vent grate, laid my  
cheek on the rusty grid and ran my  
hands over the front of my body, feeling for  
hard spots, finding my keys: "How can I  
get to my car?" I thought and stared up at the  
banners clattering above the sawtoothed  
entry facade.

John M. Bennett



The San Francisco Sybil

considered mirrors in the hall  
and cobwebs draped along a threshold.  
This winter the door took on a momentum  
passing from the living room to elsewhere.

There against a wall  
a stone head stares.

Marianina Olcott



An unemployed samurai lion  
sits down between the spanish  
tracks of the guitar. The ocean  
never learned to tell time.

Michael Chandler



I am the old lady in the wheelchair  
who sits by the window. I straddle  
my silver chariot, a dream-like vehicle  
which travels nowhere except where  
they push it every afternoon.

I look blankly at the bare cement  
and count cracks in the empty sidewalk  
never telling them that I still think  
that I still know no one comes.

Ella Salmi





THE  
SKIN  
BENEATH  
  
DAVID  
CHORLTON



Adobe  
Man



KING KONG  
NEVER  
LIVED IN  
CALIFORNIA.



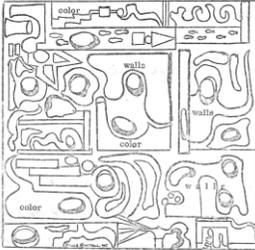
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Robert  
Lima

A Garden of  
East Coast Poets.

photos by Linda Karkhan

edited by  
R Soos



MONTHLY POETRY ANTHOLOGY #3

Abbott Small

SIX POEMS ON WOMEN



artists: row 1 & 2 r soos, typeset, r soos, D Tefft, G Montgomery, L Karlson, typeset  
row 3 & 4 P Randall, r soos, typeset, E Blanche, D T Watson, E Salmi

I know you  
You were too short  
You had bad skin  
You couldn't talk to them very well  
Words didn't seem to work  
They lied when they came out of your mouth  
You tried so hard to understand them  
You wanted to be part of what was happening  
You saw them having fun  
Seemed like such a mystery  
Almost magic  
Made you think that there was something wrong with you  
You learned to be invisible  
To look down  
To avoid conversation  
Just to have a way to get away from them  
A chance to get away from the ones  
Who made you feel so strange and ill at ease inside yourself

You spend a lot of time full of hate  
A hate as pure as sunshine  
A hate that sees for miles  
A hate that keeps you up at night  
A hate that fills your every waking moment  
A hate that carries you for a long time

I know you  
You're sensitive  
You hide it  
You fear getting stepped on one more time  
It seems that when you show a part of yourself  
Someone steps on you  
They mistake kindness for weakness  
You've been the brunt of their weakness for years  
Strength is something you know a bit about  
You had to be strong to keep yourself alive  
You don't trust people  
You know them too well

It infuriates you to watch yourself  
With your apparent skill in finding every way possible  
To screw it up  
Solitude is a hard won ally  
Faithful and patient  
Yes I know you

Henry Rollins



No Music With Words Tonight

Got a pain in my breastbone.  
Play my jazz  
with a mean rap beat  
shake loose my strands  
fused solid with her last goodbye.

Don MacQueen



As A Child He Rejected War

On intimate terms with wind  
he calculates trajectories  
precise points in the sky  
where bursts will occur  
and where stray embers may land

When he dies  
his final words will be  
mygod itisall sobright  
falling star falling star  
falling

Kay Closson

## The Skin Beneath

Passengers drag their chins ashore.  
Their mouths gape for a language  
in this strange home  
which measures their heads  
and shakes its own  
to puzzle the missing parts.  
Their brows are low  
to shade their eyes against  
the old sun. They look  
as if the boot of Italy  
has kicked them into animal shapes.  
The skewed features  
are one face turning  
from a world it knows  
and another from a new one  
as it bears the names  
that describe this cruel profile.

\*

Because we cook old food  
we eat alone.  
The distant war has turned  
our meals against us  
and made the endings of our names  
into knives. The final accent  
always severs us  
from conversation.  
Our cousins lose their only lives  
while in this second land  
we forgive our fathers  
their birthplace so we can live  
with divided blood.

\*

A nation turns pages  
looking for its home.  
Where treaties end  
the nation cannot speak  
for the soil in its mouth.  
A river has been kidnapped.  
Thirsty people dig a hundred years  
into the past for water,  
to promises diverting wildlife  
through a printed forest  
that covers traces of invasion.  
This country became foreign  
when another language  
exiled its inhabitants. Maps  
state their position  
as that of the ancestors  
while they live on the paper  
that was slipped between them  
and their land.

\*

The top skin shows weather  
and the paint in a person's veins.  
In pale countries  
the wrong accent  
can bruise a complexion.  
years of the wrong food  
twist a tongue  
away from honest language  
and colour faces  
as a warning to the clean.  
There is a shade to every skin  
but the spirit of people  
is in the skin beneath.

David Chorlton

Lore

Upon the vernal equinox  
the Sun makes ruins  
cast a shadow  
in the semblance  
of a snake

The Serpent Kukulcan  
descends to Earth each spring  
returning to his Mayan lair  
to take possession  
of his effigies in stone  
and haunt the land  
of which he is  
progenitor

Robert Lima



SH(reds) O(f) PAP(yrus) LOST ( ) IN (time)

I can see your hand O Archilochus  
plucking a string on your lyre  
an octave above your singing voice

You smote the strings  
with a newness  
that made them gasp  
for a thousand years

They spoke of your "raging iambs"  
and how you were an inventor!  
I watch your singing hands  
holding an ivory plectrum  
above the palmwood sounding box

Ed Sanders

Potterwoman

She plays seriously with mountains  
meticulously with what time has worn  
to a slick studded with mica  
flashing sunlight's burst of atoms

her bony body moves history  
echoes creation  
trusting that change  
follows after her like a child

Barbara Moraff



The Insane Messenger

He walks. He works. Walking is good. Why the "Insane Messenger"? Because messengers in general are considered to be either chronic malingerers, or borderline defectives. One older man, when I was a teenager, told people in polite society that he "worked on Wall Street". A white lie; he was a middle-aged messenger. Yes, when the greying is well under way at the temples, and before you need a nursing home, messengering offers a secret niche. One messenger of my acquaintance calls it the Last Hurrah.

My trajectory as messenger often overlaps with other, earlier periods of my life. I get a call on Prince Street and look for my old house, where I lived during an early marriage. I go to lower Manhattan and walk along lower Broadway where I used to get Coast Guard physicals before each of my teen age voyages on Merchant vessels. I see ships out in the harbor and remember again standing on the fantail of the "Beta" with the fat, red-haired guy from South Philadelphia. Present and past intersect. Ah, the Joy of Messengering!

Carl Solomon

the old broad

Sometimes I can't wait to be one of the old broads.  
I'll put that blue stuff in my hair.  
I'll go to all the banquets, all the testimonial dinners,  
the Marine Corps balls, the VFW installation of officers.  
I'll smile.  
I'll dance my little feet off  
in my dressy low heeled pumps.  
And they'll all say  
they hope they'll be like me  
when they get old.  
  
And I'll smile.

Linda Karlson



Last Written Poetry For 20 Miles

Someday i will be a  
Buddha stretched across  
that highway full of tar that way.  
BUT me? i will hold up this or that dust.

There is still another question as Caesar dresses  
for the boardwalk shuffle.

George Montgomery



night always returns  
to echo inside me

looking through my thoughts  
the walls look cold  
with only one shadow

linda haywood

Riding the 'D' Train

Notice the rooftops,  
the wormeaten Brooklyn buildings.  
Houses crawl by,  
each with its own private legend.  
In one a mother  
is punishing her child  
slowly  
with great enjoyment.  
In one a daughter  
is writing a novel  
she can't show to anyone.

Notice your fellow riders:  
the Asian girl chewing a toothpick,  
the boy drawing trees on his hand,  
the man in a business suit  
whose shoes don't match.

Everything is important:  
that thin girl, for instance,  
in flowered dress, golden high heels.  
How did her eyes get scarred?  
Why is that old man crying?  
Why does that woman carry  
a cat in her pocketbook?

Don't underestimate  
any of it.

Anything you don't see  
will come back to haunt you.

Enid Dame



One of my walls  
thought Paris the best scandal.  
But his father  
reasoned Spokane for intrigue.

Steven R. Fava



Living In The City

I had a neighbor  
who drank till the tree limbs sagged  
till the shingles slid from her roof  
I had a neighbor whose  
friends were broken glass  
with port  
cold duck  
I had a neighbor who let  
her lover sleep in the snow  
who borrowed your phone  
and stole your flowers

I had a neighbor whose  
radiant morning face  
looked like my ashtray by noon  
like a blood blister by night  
who began a day with laughter  
and ended it with insults

Paul Bufis



time

an old man's hands  
turning into leaves

a thousand full moons  
sank in his eyes

Rocco Lo Bosco

death is espionage  
moving through flutes of bone  
each breath its footstep

Rocco Lo Bosco



Candle In The Chapel

Blue tip cradled by yellow flower.  
I come clothed in a mantle vowed to silence.  
I hear in it what I cannot say.

The rustle of the wind asks  
*Why have you come among the candles?*

My silence says  
*I have come to listen to the day  
not knowing why we are here.*

Water quenches the pain in spirit and bone  
bathes my heart with blessings of Christ's love.

I bend knees to pray  
near the slim quiver  
inside the blue flame.

Abbott Small



a new way

we were shaking poems  
when the star came to visit  
and left a trail of rising light  
and called us home

Abbott Small

village voices

sprinkling flour on him after kneading him into a ball  
ron's wife rolled over him with her mother's rolling pin  
stretching him out in a crust she filled with blackbirds  
pinching him shut with her long and lovely fingers  
when she told him he would live to eat his words  
and threw her pie into his face

ron rolled up his sleeves  
to shoot her curses up his veins

robert f. whisler



the awkward music

his green glass finger  
strokes the tightwire  
moans over the humming neck

sounds of loss and love  
splinter the glass  
into rigid filaments

he drives his tank to a field  
twenty miles from here  
checks and double checks

rips holes in the lives  
of us all and we  
obligingly die

the awkward music  
of war struggling  
in our throats

Kay Closson

Still Life In A Minor

and the waitress blows a saxophone  
digs Rahsaan - she mothered three  
your tip buys her a cigarette  
and you search for lines of poetry  
but the woman's heard all that jazz  
toads out looking for a piece  
days she works in the factory  
nights the tables  
barely makes ends meet

*sir, have another cup of coffee?*

and she swaggers in a beautiful flower  
of Aphrodite - object of your politics  
a wink and a slap, pinch on the fanny  
grin cutting like a whip

the holy men - a brethren  
masturbate stiff attitudes like a burning ship  
till even their easter lilies make her sick

and she's gentle like the river water  
rolling underneath our skin  
living over and over in the garden of Eden  
waiting for growth, dying for life to begin again

and the waitress paints a canvas  
digs Cezanne - strokes out her rage  
and a shaft of light through her kitchen window  
falls on one red rose in a vase

James Marville



Secret Pancake Scream

When she tries to scream  
the sound of pancakes  
falling on a kitchen floor  
comes plopping out of her mouth.

It's frustrating.

"Jesus Christ," she whispers  
and a couple more pancakes  
fall on the linoleum.

Nobody knows about this.

W. W. Everhart



I spit out tears  
& settle on the pavement  
like a flat tire.  
I framed myself  
in a windshield & nasty fumes  
scrape my brain like fingernails.  
At night I ride awkward bicycles  
backwards through my sleep.

Rocco Lo Bosco



Jack was a bug. He was very compact.  
He had a sense of space that was even  
more generous than a cat's. He lived  
for pleasure, I guess.

Donald Lev

**A  
PORTABLE  
PAST**

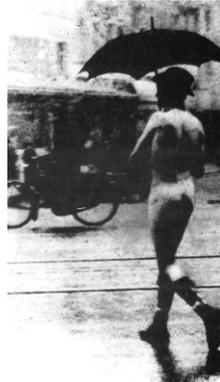
**Poems  
By  
Ruth Daïgon**



G  
A  
R  
D  
E  
N  
S



RICHARD SOOS



*covers by Ruth Daïgon, r soos, steve bailey, ella blanche, T. K. Splake, T. K. Splake, r soos, unknown photographer at an airport, & Chandler Brossard's photo of chimney sweep is entitled The Naked Rationer (1941).*

**A Chimney Sweep  
Comes Clean**

**Chandler Brossard**

**realities library**

## Forgetting

I'm beginning to forget names, faces,  
the day, the date, the year.  
You say I'm irresponsible.  
You appoint yourself my guardian.  
You wear a tweed coat,  
a fedora, a shoulder holster  
like a secret service man.  
You carry a rope to leash me.  
You tell when to wake and when to sleep.  
You grow a beard like a rabbi  
or a judge and stroke it  
while you recite my silly stories.  
Soon, you'll write my poems and read them  
while I'm listening in the back row.  
And you'll lie awake at night  
staring into the dark. My turn to sleep.  
And on my last day, you'll be the one to go.  
Leaving me here - living and forgetting.

Ruth Daigon



in the madness of her rage  
  
she tears up trees and  
stomps through the ocean  
shrieking her complaints.  
there is no premeditation  
before the peak of a heat wave  
when the air is laced  
with the scalloped drape  
of unseen currents.  
all reason is lost  
all control bends  
before her.

ella blanche

balloon

balloon, our child has blown up  
watching eclipses of the sun

was it hot air made you run  
or petroleum?

balloon growing round  
measuring pressure in pounds

your reality escapes us now  
heading for mars

and we are left to be  
here planted in the ground

but i'll be damned if we grow like violets  
and feel like sound attached to feet



James Marvelle  
*art by Steve Bailey*



intoxicated with shadows

is there pride in the final acceptance of death  
or simply a short breath of air between yellowing teeth?

intoxicated with shadows

I coil and spit venom at my dreams.  
I recoil for further attack on my soul.  
I eat my entrails kidneys and lungs.  
I sleep with a belly full of myself.

r soos

misplaced

tonight the candle burns for its own sake  
the wind through the window  
could be blowing through a grave  
flowers drooping in their vases  
weigh down the muscles in your face  
every object in this room has been misplaced

you're looking at the ceiling  
does the cold ceiling give you faith  
i'm looking at that moth  
its wings singed in a flame  
is there anything outside  
is there anyone here you could name  
whose spirit in a corner  
hasn't been misplaced

the wind through the window  
could be blowing through a grave  
the object of this life  
has sometimes been misplaced



James Marvelle  
*art by Steve Bailey*



intoxicated with shadows

the feet of the man twitch in odd spasms  
as blood pulses from the scars deep in his body

intoxicated with shadows

You pick his body from beneath  
the flowering bushes of the city gardens.  
You search months for his identity  
before forgetting his existence.

r soos

bathing becomes  
an augmentation to survival

in a hand mirror I look at my face  
in the morning light and ask  
*who can trust a woman*

we have hidden corners  
unplumbed depths of thought  
that grow things

when we are left in the dark too long

ella blanche



sometimes we even stop  
for a dream

we become intimate with words  
but our power lies in secrets

women are forever unrevealed  
and still feel uncomfortable

about the place between their legs  
it is their fig-leaf of unacceptance

men are forever naked - they may  
hide their minds but not their cocks

men are most vulnerable when undressed  
artists honor the penis with such clean lines

no one can draw the cunt  
without staggering insanity

ella blanche

endurance

the elements finish their terrible task  
rock remains true before surfacing  
layer upon layer of time

one cell leaves my fingertip  
on its way to become rock



I Circle This Rim

seeking ways to end present loss  
I consider my countless deaths and  
these paths impelling me toward them

each death erodes this rim    increases  
possibilities for rocks falling  
with the snow



Reaching In Silence

I plunge into deciduous growth  
small animals scatter before me  
like the dreams handed me at birth

I chant the litany of a child alone  
in the night so blind with darkness  
that my hands are severed from my body

the roots overtake me  
one tendril my spine  
another my voice twisting through my veins

seeking my heart

Kay Closson

heartwall

when the fire begins its music  
I shall dance  
as I have always done

Kay Closson



A Chimney Sweeps Comes Clean

I had taken a leave of absence from my job, among other things. Wise family sayings keep coming back to me. "Persevere and conquer," my Gran would often advise me. "Better to die trying than not to die at all," my Mum frequently observed. I completely agree, I am writing from deep within the fridge. It is only a question of time, you can be sure of that. I have never felt so pure and so personal.

Chandler Brossard



Sappho 142

*2 attempts for olcott*

*4 iambs, 3 trochees & iamb what iamb*

Silver

The stars will hide around the moon  
while her full light cleanses the earth

\*

The stars remain hidden  
around the beautiful moon  
whenever the cleansing of the full light  
from her radiant shape hits the earth  
. . .silver

r soos

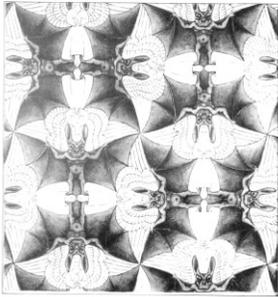
**TWELVE FOR  
CAVAFIS**

**YANNIS RITSOS**

**TRANSLATED BY  
KIMON FRIAR**

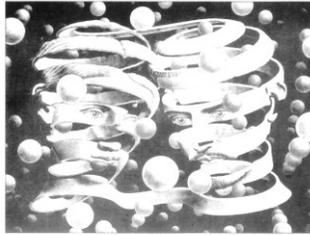


Yannis Ritsos



**THE DEVIL SANG IN TUNE**  
Andónis Fostiéris

translated from Greek by  
Kimon Friar



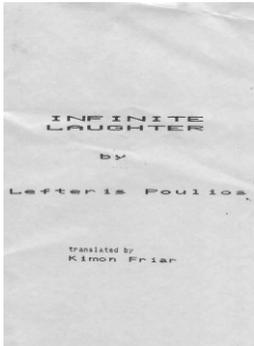
**DARK EROS**  
Andónis Fostiéris

translated from Greek by  
Kimon Friar

THE ANNA  
OF  
ABSENCE

TAKIS  
VARVITSIOTIS

translated by  
KIMON  
FRIAR

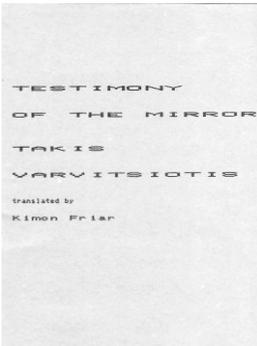


INFINITE  
LAUGHTER

by

Lefteris Poullos

translated by  
Kimon Friar



TESTIMONY  
OF THE MIRROR

TAKIS  
VARVITSIOTIS

translated by  
Kimon Friar



*Top row – cover art by typesetter, photo of Yannis Ritsos  
Center Row – Fostiéris covers by M C Escher – Pamphlet by Typesetter  
Bottom Row – pamphlets by typesetter, photo of Kimon Friar*

## Twelve For Cavafis

### I. The Poet's Space

The black carved desk, the two silver candlesticks, his red pipe. He sits almost invisible in his armchair keeping the window always at his back. Behind his glasses, enormous and circumspect, he scrutinizes whatever young man he's talking with, and whom he's bathed in light while he himself remains hidden behind his words, behind history, behind persons of his own creation, distant and invulnerable, ensnaring the attention of others with the delicate reflections of the sapphire he wears on his finger, and thoroughly prepared savors the expressions of the foolish adolescents the moment they moisten their lips with their tongues. And he, cunning, voracious, carnal, the great innocent, wavers with his whole being between the yes and the no, desire and repentance, like a scale in the hand of God. While the light from the window behind him sets on his head a crown of forgiveness and saintliness. "If poetry cannot absolve us," he whispers to himself, "then let's not expect mercy from anywhere."

### II His Lamp

The lamp is calm and convenient; he prefers it to other forms of illumination. Its light can be adjusted according to the needs of the moment, according to eternal, unconfessed desire. And always the odor of kerosene, a subtle presence very discreet at night when he returns alone with such weariness in his limbs, such futility in the weave of his jacket, the seams of his pockets, that every moment seems superfluous and unbearable - the match, the endangered flame (with its shadows on the bed, the desk, the walls), and above all the glass itself - its fragile translucency which from the beginning, in a simple and human gesture, compels you to protect yourself or to protect others.

### III His Lamp Toward Daybreak

Well, good evening: the two of them again, face to face,  
he and his lamp - he loves it, even though he seems  
indifferent and self-complacent; and not solely  
because it serves him, but even more so, particularly,  
because it deserves his care - the fragile survival  
of ancient Greek lamps, it gathers about it  
memories and sensitive insects of the nights, smoothes over  
the wrinkles of old men, broadens foreheads,  
magnifies the shadows of adolescent bodies, covers  
with a gentle glow the whiteness of blank pages  
and the hidden purple of poems; and when  
toward daybreak its light grows pale and merges  
with the rose of day, with the first noises  
of the shops' iron gratings, the push carts, the fruit peddlers,  
it becomes a tangible image of his own vigil, and even  
a glass bridge that crosses from his eyeglasses to the lamp's glass,  
and from there to the window panes, and then out further  
a glass bridge that holds him above the city, within the city,  
in his Alexandria, uniting, with his own will now, the night and the day.

### IV Putting Out The Lamp

There comes a time of great lassitude. A dazzling morning,  
treacherous - it marks the end of another of his nights, outshines  
the sleek remorse of the mirror, digging vindictively  
the lines around his lips and eyes. Now,  
neither the lamp's affability nor the drawn curtains can help;  
a rigid awareness of the end lies on the bedsheets where the hot  
breath of a summer's night grows chill, and only a few ringlets remain  
fallen from youthful curls - a severed chain -  
that very same chain - who wrought it? No,  
neither remembrance nor poetry help. Nevertheless,  
at the final moment, before falling asleep, bending over the lamp's glass  
to blow out its flame, that it too might be extinguished, he realizes  
he's blowing directly into the glass ear of eternity,  
a deathless word entirely his own, his very breath - the sigh of substance.  
How beautifully the smoke from his lamp perfumes his room at dawn.

V. His Glasses

Always between his eyes and objects stood  
his impenetrable glasses, cautious, abstracted,  
scrutinizing and eclectic - an impersonal stronghold of glass,  
both barrier and lookout tower - a water-filled moat  
around his secret, his denuding gaze, or rather  
two trays of a balance that stands - how strange - not vertically  
but horizontally. And thus, finally, what could a horizontal balance  
hold other than the void, other than  
the knowledge of the void, naked, crystalline, glittering,  
as on its polished surface a procession is reflected  
of his inner and outer visions in a balanced unity  
so material, so incorruptible, that it refutes the entire void.

VI. Places Of Refuge

"Expression," he says, "does not mean to say something,  
but simply to speak, and to speak  
means to reveal yourself - so how should you speak?"  
And then his silence became so transparent  
that he hid himself completely behind the curtain  
pretending to be looking out the window.  
And as he felt our gaze on his back  
he turned and poked his head out of the curtain  
as though he were wearing a long, white chitin,  
somewhat ridiculous, somewhat out of keeping with our times;  
and this is what he wanted (or preferred), believing perhaps  
that in this manner, somehow, he was diverting  
our suspicion, our hostility, or our pity,  
or that he was providing us with some kind of excuse  
for our future (as he had foreseen) admiration.

## VII. On Form

He said: "Form cannot be contrived or imposed; it is contained in its material and is sometimes revealed in its movement outwards." Platitudes, we said, vague words - what revelations now? He said nothing more, but cupped his chin between his two hands like a word between quotation marks. His cigarette remained hesitant between his closed lips - a white, glowing dash in place of the ellipses he always left out on purpose (or perhaps unconsciously?), eluding thus his silence.

In this position, it vaguely seemed to us, he stayed awake all night in a small railway station, under the overhang where on a winter's night lonely travelers meet for a moment, with that taste of coal from the impossibility of the journey, and from the mutual endlessness of their secret, age-old friendship. The train's smoke hung placidly above the two horizontal cones of the headlights, solid and sculptural, between two separations. He stubbed out his cigarette and left.

## VIII. Misunderstandings

These ambiguities of his, intolerable; they try us; and he himself is also tired; his vagueness is obviously betrayed, his hesitations, his ignorance, his timidity, and his lack of firm principles. Surely he's trying to involve us in his own complexities. And he kept gazing somewhere beyond us, as though he had been generous, somehow, and tolerant (like those who need to be tolerated), wearing a pure-white shirt, an impeccable slate-grey suit, with a chrysanthemum in his button-hole. Nevertheless, when he left we detected on the floor in the place where he had stood a small extremely red lake, beautifully shaped, roughly like a map of Greece, like a miniature globe of the world with many omissions and great inaccuracies of frontiers, with frontiers almost blurred in the uniformity of their coloring - a globe in a tightly shut white school in the month of July when all the pupils have left for a dazzling countryside by the sea.

IX. Twilight

You know that moment of twilight in the summer  
inside a closed room; a slight rosy reflection  
slanting on the ceiling boards, and the poem  
half finished on the table - two verses all in all,  
the broken promise of a splendid voyage,  
of a certain freedom, a certain self-sufficiency,  
of a certain (relative, of course) immortality.  
Outside on the street the invocation already of the night  
the weightless shadows of gods, of people, of bicycles,  
when work on the construction sites has stopped  
and the young workers with their tools, their wet, vigorous hair,  
with a few splashes of white-wash on their worn clothing,  
vanish in the apotheosis of the evening mists.  
Eight sharp strokes of the grandfather clock on the top of the stairs  
heard down the whole length of the corridor - the implacable strokes  
of an imperative hammer hidden behind the shaded  
crystal; at the same time the age-old noise  
of those keys about which he could never tell  
whether they were for locking or unlocking.

X. Final Hour

A fragrance lingered in his room, perhaps  
a memory only, perhaps even from the window  
half opened in the spring night. He sorted out  
the things he would take with him. He covered  
the large mirror with a bedsheet. And still  
on his fingers the feel of the beautifully proportioned bodies,  
and the solitary feel of his pen - no contradiction;  
the supreme unity of poetry. He never wanted  
to delude anyone. The end was drawing near. He asked  
one more time: "Gratitude, perhaps, or only the desire  
to be grateful?" From under his bed his old  
slippers stuck out. He had no wish  
to cover them (oh, some other time, of course). Only,  
after he had put the small key in his vest pocket  
did he sit on his suitcase, in the middle of the room,  
all alone, and began to weep, knowing  
for the first time of his innocence with such precision.

## XI. After Death

Many claimed him, squabbled over him,  
perhaps because of his apparel - a strange outfit,  
formal, imposing, yet not without a certain charm,  
with a certain air to it, like those fantastic things the gods wore  
when they consorted with mortals - in disguise -  
but as they talked about common matters in plain language, suddenly  
a fold of their garments would billow out from the breath  
of the infinite or what's beyond - or so they say.

Well then, they squabbled. What could he do? They ripped  
his clothes and his underwear; they even broke his belt. He became  
nothing more than a common, naked mortal standing in shame.  
Everyone forsook him. And there precisely he turned to marble.  
Years later in that same place they discovered a magnificent statue,  
naked, proud, tall, of Pentelic marble,  
the Eternal Youth of Self-Punishment - this is what they called it,  
covered it with a long, linen cloth, and prepared  
an unprecedented ceremony for the public unveiling.

## XII. Evaluation

He who died was, in truth, remarkable,  
unique; he left us an excellent standard by which  
to measure ourselves and, above all, to measure  
our neighbor - no one higher than that,  
very short; another skinny; a third  
as tall as a man on stilts; not one  
of any value, of any value at all.  
Only we can make proper use  
of this standard - but what standard do you mean? -  
of this Nemesis, of this Archangel's sword  
which we've already sharpened, and can now  
set them all up in a row and cut off their heads.

*Yannis Ritsos*

Yannis Ritsos

*translated by Kimon Friar*

Όσο μπορείς

Κι ἂν δὲν μπορεῖς νὰ κάμεις τὴν ζωὴ σου ὅπως τὴν θέλεις  
τοῦτο προσπάθησε τουλάχιστον  
ὅσο μπορεῖς : μὴν τὴν ἐξευτελίζεις  
μὲς στὴν πολλὴ συνάφεια τοῦ κόσμου,  
μὲς στὲς πολλὲς κινήσεις κι ὁμιλίες.

Μὴν τὴν ἐξευτελίζεις παίνοντάς την,  
γυρίζοντας συχνὰ κ' ἐκθέτοντάς την  
στῶν σχέσεων καὶ τῶν συναναστροφῶν  
τὴν καθημερινὴν ἀνοησία,  
ὡς ποὺ νὰ γίνει σὰ μιὰ ξένη φορτικὴ.

*Κ. Π. Καβάφης*  
Κωνσταντῖνος Π. Καβάφης



As Much As You Can

And if you can't create your life the way you desire  
at least try as much as you possibly can  
not to cheapen and debase yourself  
by too much participation in the world  
by too much activity and conversation

When forced to drag your life around  
limit its exposure to as little as possible  
to the daily inept language of intellectuals  
and boring relationships with well-wishers  
maintain your ability to be foreign to them

Constantinos P. Cavafis  
*translated by Kimon Friar*



## The Fraud Of Humility

The devil was taught  
a fraudulent game  
- of humility -  
he says he is nothingness  
- a hole -  
he transforms himself into a fiery Zero  
a castrated sentry in the orifice of women.

At the end he becomes Me.

Rises to a great height,  
applauds with iron fingers.

Howls.



broadcast

you're far off  
and I hear you singing  
the way a wolf cries  
with delicate voice



metamorphosis

sometime I will stop speaking

my hands will become branches  
my eyes will become flutes  
my thoughts will become wings  
my mouth ah my mouth  
shall flood  
shall drench  
the poems

The Devil Sang In Tune

If for awhile you have passed into my song  
it's because you don't exist  
since whatever lives  
speaks alone about the glory of its life  
since whatever has lived has in the light  
deflated the war cry, the balloon of its triumph.  
You sang in tune  
in silence  
you waited for the hymn to wear away  
the lamp of divinity to die out  
for what was once adored becomes hated  
and what has been said will be swept away by time.  
Death replies in the same tongue  
a soundless voice.  
Inside it melts  
with shrieks of light.



the poem

my sweet poem  
brimming with tears  
I love you  
betray you  
and become your enemy

you are unsleeping darkness  
nourishing me

I am the equivalent  
of your most secret  
verse

Andonis Fostieris  
*translated by Kimon Friar*

The Anna Of Absence

she left suddenly  
without leaving  
the traces of her fingers  
on the piano

not even a star  
on the ceiling  
nor even a fragrance  
on the doorlocks

Takis Varvitsiotis

*translated by Kimon Friar*



The Beaks Of Birds

bleed the breasts of spring  
prolong wounds  
sketch storms

perilous aromas  
surround the evening

further up beautiful  
decapitated girls  
sing of waterfalls

Takis Varvitsiotis

*translated by Kimon Friar*



When It Snows

When it snows said the bird  
each of my feathers shall rise  
lightly into the heavens

When it snows said my sister  
we shall open the door  
to the pallid season

When it snows said the wind  
I shall bring a branch of stars  
for my sorrowing betrothed

When it snows said the rain  
each of my memories shall become  
a mirror for the first clear dawn

When it snows said the flower  
we shall close our eyes that deeper  
in the earth new eyes may open

When it snows silence replied  
we shall chant in the remote chapel  
a secret liturgy

When it snows the crosses replied  
from our tears shall blossom  
a white and wild rose vine

Takis Varvitsiotis  
*translated by Kimon Friar*



For Federico Garcia Lorca

My voice, my own  
my everlasting friend  
who emerges from rock  
wearing three carnations  
and three wounds  
dressed in the smoke  
of my nostalgia  
buried in the south wind  
with benumbed reflections  
of nightingales

burning flute  
on the lips of sleep  
of snow  
of fresh innocence  
of grass under  
the new cornstalks  
on the lips of time  
with its crimson colors.

Takis Varvitsiotis  
*translated by Kimon Friar*



in this land belonging to everyone  
where everyone is a stranger  
Greece is the alibi of the Greeks

Aristotelis Nikolaidhis  
*translated by Kimon Friar*



Testimony Of The Mirror

On its face it puts to sleep  
the gleaming of a candle  
and within itself much deeper  
it discovers many things  
that sing

(and all things sing  
when within ourselves we lock up  
something of their spirit)

and these things are  
the crystals of dreams  
relics of wings  
and snow  
much snow

and these hands are  
the plaster hands of girls  
hair that grows pale  
multiple reflections  
and eyes fluttering

Takis Varvitsiotis  
*translated by Kimon Friar*



plant your eyes  
into my fertile loneliness  
seed your glance  
in my rich manure

when you thresh me  
you'll stand amazed  
at the harvest

Dinos Christianopoulos  
*translated by Kimon Friar*

## The Box

I feel like a box filled with cables and batteries.  
I move, I act, dressed in the moldy surface of the earth  
and a cap of blue rusty sky. The others are music.  
They let out a great cry. Violence breeds violence,  
Men are not clouds, they are stones. Men are headless;  
they open a box and share cheap candles every Easter Sunday.  
They have complexes, they have sex manias.  
My thought finds itself in harmony with myself.  
Reclining on a fat-assed roar of the road,  
I think as I smoke a cigarette lit from the hot coal of the moon.  
I find myself in a blind alley.  
My country is surrounded by a chain  
of vipers that are always biting me, chaining me,  
leaving me crucified in the center of the earth.



## The Grateful Dead

I wash my clothes  
with the waters of schizophrenia  
this mass of daily stupidity chokes me  
and you, poetry,  
you are the most meaningful, the most perfect.  
Even though I walk down every street  
lean on every wall  
wedge myself under every stone  
into every lump of mud  
into every fog, I carry you  
upon me impudently  
like a grave its gravestone.

Dear God

I've been stripped naked  
of the clothing of your compassion  
O superior being  
    nourisher of these verses  
    murderer and butterfly  
    you exist as exists  
the music of terrestrial sorrow  
two gods that gush out of the springs  
of their nonexistence.  
Gardener, starbinder, udder of storms,  
human butchery. Poetry is your gift,  
accumulated pollen of all things.  
Make me a child.  
Make me I beg of you a heedless creature.  
Make me at least the cleaning cloth of your sun.  
Give me prophetic words. Golden haired demon,  
man and horn of divine prostitutes  
unbearable lie that causes my lips to tremble  
in the vagina of your kindness.  
Speak then,  
pour orgasms of human sensitivity into the womb  
of poetry. Traveling statue, my likeness  
that voyages through your plastic universe,  
I raise my hand in supplication  
then frenetically and brutishly howl at you.  
I talk to you on the telephone, open my heart  
to you and burn, leap out of my flesh  
holding flowers and lava, and live  
the experience of sorrow  
to pay off the fact of my bondage  
to this world and in all probability to the other.

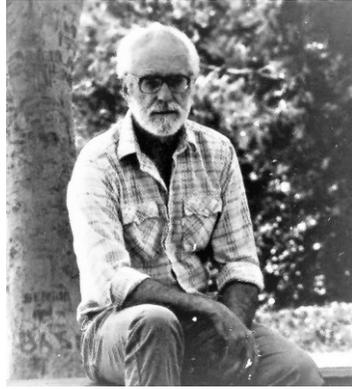
I am maimed, my hands cannot grasp truth.  
I turn and twist like an embryo in an old womb,  
and collide and explode in the magical darkness.

Lefteris Poullos  
*translated by Kimon Friar*

# FAR FROM THE GARDEN



Don MacQueen



# Condensed Versions



Don MacQueen

# Whispering To God



Ella Blanche



OFF THE WALL



Special Eyes

Hans Ebner

Spines displayed to show numbers

Top row: cover by Don MacQueen, photo of Don MacQueen

Middle row: cover by Don MacQueen, cover by Ella Blanche

Bottom row: cover artist unknown, cover by r soos

REACHING IN SILENCE \* KAY CLOSSON  
 A FOREIGN LANDSCAPE \* SOOS  
 A CHIMNEY SWEEP COMES CLEAN \* CHANDLER BROSSARD  
 REACHING THE SHADOWS \* ELLA BLANCHE  
 REALITIES LIBRARY 226  
 REALITIES LIBRARY 227  
 REALITIES LIBRARY 231  
 REALITIES LIBRARY 232

Only This I Ask

that I might make a poem  
like a palm-fitting stone  
much matter in a small space  
only at a glance opaque  
whose surface lines reveal  
its core to the steady eye  
turned in the light  
strange glints appear  
dropped into still minds  
a ruffling of smug dreams  
thrown hard perhaps  
some monster stumbles  
sprawls



My Forest Has Too Many Panthers

They have over-bred themselves  
in this excellent environment.  
I shall try thinning them again.  
There are so many they might seem  
impossible to miss at this range, but  
although I've become familiar  
with the forest over time,  
so much of it is dark.  
I shall have to fire at partial sightings:  
    a moonlit fang  
    an eye luminous with rage  
    the sheen of a crouching shoulder.  
And my aim is not as sure  
not as simple  
as it once was.  
And the panthers  
have come to  
know me.

On Being Told I Am  
Not Spiritual Enough

You say  
if I would just  
roll off your line  
you'd soar  
                  expand.

I think you're right.  
Then  
nestled once again  
in the moist warm flesh of earth  
my upturned face could also  
in its stolid way  
absorb the flesh of stars.



You Tell Me All Your Troubles  
You Tell Me All Your Dreams

From time to pressing time  
I've struggled to wrench free  
and reach out from behind  
your many images of me.

The clamps are fairly tight  
cold-forged from your need's steel.  
When, once, my real hand reflected light  
your face unfolded an appeal

of such desolation and dismay  
that I, abashed, withdrew  
the rash and rude display  
back to its proper place. And you

rewarded me - a little - with  
a smile so quickly recomposed, so sweet -  
I knew then, sadly, why thin myth  
finds thick truth easy to defeat.

If I Opened Myself To You

If I opened myself to you  
as you ask,  
the raw place would be larger  
than your eyes, larger  
than your lips, larger  
than both your hands.  
It would take all of you,  
lying close,  
to protect that tenderness  
from the rustling of ledgers,  
the rasp of cages being locked,  
the salt of misread smiles,  
the beat of clocks.  
And if you should fold yourself  
into a gentle poultice  
to fit that weeping sore,  
it would absorb you wholly  
and, absorbing, weep for more.  
Can you love me  
closed?



Lights Are On In The Citadel

Lights are on in the citadel.  
They are making plans to defend us  
from what has been reported  
to be out there approaching.  
It is difficult for us to see  
very far beyond the walls.  
Bread rises each day.  
Men and women stretch and yawn.  
Children appear, from time to time,  
presenting a flower or a bit of glass.  
And there are entertainments  
which we all enjoy so much.  
I suppose they will tell us  
when to begin the hating.

Suppose He's Really Got It  
This Time

The past master of kinky sex  
and how to roll barbiturate cigarettes  
has come to the city  
after long absence trotting  
into our presence iridescent  
robe clogged hair beard  
sewn with diamond drops  
and all flapping along  
the bleak and shrugging streets  
to share His bounty of new facts

He's a bounty hunter  
chopping the rural bushes  
for sweet leaves to wrap  
His thorns of purity and  
His nettles of wisdom in

His left arm runs  
with honey and His right  
arm with Barcardi rum  
aged neat like a neat's foot

Let us greet His return  
jab our thumbs with  
match-flamed needles  
sign the welcoming petition  
in our wayward blood



Write about what you know, they told me.  
But I went on making poems about  
women and wild animals.

I See You But You're Nowhere In Sight

I

Your mama told you Adam was nothing but a puppet.  
The real man was that snake. She warned you,  
Child you keep practicing those mongoose eyes  
and stay out of the tall grass.

II

Sin slides in easily releasing its funky smell;  
a velvet quivering harpoon.  
You pull it out by your rosary chain  
and flicker away leaving not one drop of blood.

III

It was a briefly exciting game. You led him to believe  
the numbers you had tattooed on the inside of your thigh  
would open your secret strongbox. You let him think  
he'd won your trust and then, amused, you watched him

turn and turn and turn the dial.  
And then you cried yourself to sleep.



If we create  
our own reality  
why doesn't the phone ring?



What if this was the last day  
you could fool yourself?

Don MacQueen

Creator

The poet very carefully  
positions all the Players,  
strikes the Gong, then,  
wide-eyed, has to leap aside  
or risk being trampled on.

Don MacQueen



Religion

I have pierced my own side to drink your blood.  
I have tattooed my breasts with your evil thoughts.  
I cannot pray.  
I can only howl in the streets through the last days.  
All that I dreamed lies splattered with blood.  
I have no identity

We will become strangers for the last time.  
There will be no need to dance before the moon.

Memory is the universe whispering to god.

Ella Blanche



Holding Communion

She is tired of long, dry weeds and rusted horizons  
but not tired enough to confront herself  
on the desolate beach where a woman could die  
with salty cold sand shimmering through  
her pale white legs.

Ella Blanche

covenant : a rain chant

1

under the eaves water buckets  
are full of spider webs

*sun  
stands spread-legged ready to dive  
laughing  
what red eyes burn  
hot under our skin*

this rock i hold scorches my hands  
i kneel, askew skyward, on a high hill  
god has rank purchase in my will  
until a reluctant rainbow bends

my tribal comrades put their feet  
twisting in dust, healing earth under  
restoring what we lost, who shunned her  
even in dust her balm is sweet

and children cannot live sucking dust  
white rainbows, dark mothers' scant ribs  
hold starving god in bare rocking cribs  
and grass does not green that must

all over Africa swarms that dry wave  
like a bitter thorn in the tongue, what thirst  
draws millions where death rehearsed  
its rain free picnic. flies thrive.

under the thorn tree a cowskull  
holds sun's face between horns  
how fierce the ants how gentle  
the white bone

2

for some it is freedom  
for some it is to be rid of flies and lice  
for some it is to be well of fever  
for some it is to have food  
for some it is a need for rain  
    under the thatched roof a cold snake  
    stretches close to a starving dog

3

most of us who have waste  
waste earth's resources and each other  
waste ourselves  
    under the rear bumper of the Ford  
    a roadrunner pursues a lizard

4

god stands in dung we make of ourselves  
and looks for some self to put on  
there is no one but Lazarus  
god weeps  
stretching that postulant skin  
    under the tongue of god medicine  
    stirs a black hole a new song

5

no longer the fringes of Sahara only  
no longer only parched Ethiopian villages  
this modern desert creeps into great cities  
what dust down the eyes of children  
what curses in the lips of frightened young  
even bishops join the dance for healing  
    under the roof of the cathedral birds  
    and children sing dioxin canticles

6

why do great nations  
contend over swamps and sand?  
they want the blood of the poor  
their labor and their warfare  
the margins of profit  
the edges of power  
depend on mud, depend on dust  
what, just what, do your eyes see  
when they open  
    under the heavy lids of this instant  
    everything is known we need to know

7

we will not support you, not any of you  
who conspire to keep power at human expense

we will make a new covenant with sun  
we will restore earth to life

still and yet  
    under the eaves  
    water buckets are full of spiderwebs  
  
    under closed eyelids darkness  
    under closed lips a new song  
    under the farthest clouds rain  
    under the darkest cloud rainbows, no

that child's belly is not swollen with god

Will Inman



## Confessions

I sing 200 year old broadsides to my sons with my eyes closed. They are silent with heads on pillows. They are pleased that their daddy sings to them. It's almost as good as a story. The bathroom needs painting, the walls are peeling and the front porch is sagging. Nights I sing to them. These nights warm me and free me.

I've turned into a Father who takes care of his Father. It is not natural for me. Time presents itself now at times when I should be facing the mirror or finishing the novel. I don't want this night to end. It's like a ship anchored in the harbor.

I am too young to worry about endings. The poem spreads across the page like oil on water. It doesn't go very far, just around the world forever.

I feel the flicker of love for my sons. I want so much to live long enough to see them grown and strong. I have dealt the cards of image and spread them on the table. I have been a day dreamer since the dawn of time. I feel like a farmer with dirt under my nails, with oil soaking into my veins. I know I never wanted to be anything but a poet, but I will never forget this night and singing to my sons like a Father.



morning is always my best time  
when you are asleep  
I get a chance to think  
and dream the hours away  
while washing dishes  
clothes  
feeding the cats  
the coffee is made when you get up  
I make everything right  
while I write a poem or two  
that you'll never read

it's my way  
of loving you

Hans Ebner

last rains, last songs

now is the darkness before dawn  
at the door of my cave, i stand, wait

only my own death i have on

dawn or dusk  
it's too late  
to live

my people were the kind to hope  
inside our ribs we never surrendered  
though we signed our names in spanish

the river  
through the desert of our lives  
ran under the sand  
behind our faces

ocotillo honey grew in the hives  
of our love for each other  
like washes we bloomed after the rain

now, save in me, all pain is gone  
joy too  
that cloud  
that cloud that merciless cloud  
hangs over everything like a frown  
on the face of a dead god

i pray  
all i have known  
stands in the mouth of this cave  
mad in the door of my eyes  
nothing remains of god but my voice  
and these last rains

i sing last songs

Will Inman

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### Part 3 words from the editor 1973-1998

it began in the way of all good poetry - nothing original, stealing from the best, a change in experience. one moment the poet is safe, deep in the warmth of love with thoughts of all swarming through brain cells as one. then something from outside the safe zone grabs you, pulls you, hangs you in a position within gravity you never felt before, slaps you across the bottom, and giggles the maniacal giggle of a masochist as you scream into a void you want to escape. as a poet you scream the same scream of all your fellow poets. let me alone, leave me be, put me back where i was. all those around you passing you from hand to hand with laughing eyes were once poets, and made another choice - to grow up. yes, we are born in the presence of our mothers.

fifteen years later a small group of interns on a wonderful local magazine *poetry shell* were asking lois wilson why can't we do this every month. it was joyous every three months as young writers to work with this wonderful seventy year old woman putting together a magazine of poetry by the beautiful people in our local area, who like us never wanted to grow up. this poetry magazine experience felt so much more like warm truth than the cold high school we were sentenced to remain in except those few days each quarter when we were given a reprieve and allowed to read, get ink stained, collate, staple, and distribute love to our entire world. we asked her, pleaded with her, to do this every month, to do this not only for our local community, but for the whole world. mostly so we could skip school, but also because it was fun and fulfilling work.

as important as the experience was for lois, the model we accepted of a person who never grew up, she tried her best to teach us about some cold realities we did not want to accept. "i have to earn a living to help pay for this". we did not understand that poetry was not paying for itself. "poetry shell" was the perfect title for her magazine, because we pulled that shell around us and talked and prayed and whined and dreamed - we can do this. for several years we said, if we do this all the time it will pay for itself, we will live what we love. lois would not waver

from the quarterly, so we asked if we could try it on our own. after all, sam, one of our leaders, had started a small magazine about comic books, and he was sharing it all over. he was a printer, a lover of words, a lover of other people's words. if he could do that with comic books, we could do it with poetry.

lois gave us her blessing and gave us a poem for our first issue (p 4). later she even shared a delightful poem before she died, complete with pun. you'll enjoy her joy of the word on page 88.

at the college there was only one poetry magazine aside from our beloved poetry shell. it was "poetry" magazine from chicago. we tried reading it, tried understanding it, and talked in secret about the strangeness of what was going on between those pages. we kept looking at each other speaking with our eyes – "if this weird nonsense gets passed off as poetry every month, what would happen if we published a magazine of poetry every month that people can read and understand?" questions turned into dreams, and the dreams became realities library, a non-profit corporation dedicated to making poetry a joy for all americans to read.

then the government stepped in and postponed our plans for awhile as a war raged . after the government split us onto different parts of the globe to seek and destroy there was one left standing with the same dream intact. i placed a classified ad in several magazines, including psychology today & rolling stone & popular mechanics. the poems started rolling in.

*i must try a dream of the seven lost stars* - kenneth patchen

still blind to the fact there were literally hundreds of poetry magazines in the world, seven stars was born. the *tree* on the cover was a symbol of the desire to spread the leaves of *poetree* around the world. the very first poem was by michael c. berch, and is included as the first poem here because it was a declaration - seven stars was going to walk past *the old man* of poetry.

years flurried by. learning occurred. new friends occurred. looking back i find it nearly unbelievable that one poet, james marvelle, who appeared in our first issue, remained consistent with seven stars and realities library for every one of the variations of life we explored - words - music - dance - words - tapes - balloons - posters - and mostly words. other poets jumped on board rather quickly and became the financial backbone of our experiments. the shout-out that needs to be made here is hans ebner who sent in checks regularly so we could buy paper and ink. as a press we quickly discovered len fulton and merritt clifton, and though them discovered wormwood magazine, and found poets who were speaking with the voices we couldn't find in libraries. we discovered quickly we were simply one among many. far from unique, and the entire small press scene formed a family of mutual respect.

relationships established in the 70's with realities library have continued providing exciting material for the magazine i produce today called cholla needles: james marvelle, george freek, simon perchik, david chorlton, tony moffeit, alan catlin. it's a large poetry world that remains small because of the power of family and kinship. the poem by kathleen on page 70 says it all for me.

poets would write poems to the editor because we appeared so often, and they were included in each issue instead of letters to the editor. you'll see some of those on pages 95, 100, & 169. a poem on page 339 is good nostalgia - reminds us of the days when poets would sit outside the post office waiting for it to open to see if any acceptances came in.

i tried to keep intact, as much as possible, the sense of family within the anthology. poets would answer each other's poems, and there were even love notes and marriage proposals within the pages. there was always a lag time because of the poem, the printing, the mailing, and the return poem, the typesetting, the layout. a poem on page 32 was responded to by a poem on page 53. the lag time for appearances was 4 issues - or 4 months. we were family, so time was irrelevant. we loved hearing from each other and sharing with each other. you'll see the same pattern between spacelady & james on pages 56 & 71, nancy & james on pages 141 & 166, bz & ron on page 191.

a side note here is a shout-out to jacqueline bowles, a volunteer for well over ten years who typed each and every poem. poems would come in - i'd select a batch and mail them from west coast to east coast for her to type, and she'd return them as soon as they were typed and layout would begin.

we kept up the monthly routine, and it was joy, tremendous joy. the political atmosphere of the country was toxic, and some of it spilled into our pages. i kept some in the anthology to reflect the times - in retrospect most of the work i decided to keep out of the anthology was 'protest poetry'. all fine and good for the times. not for the ages.

you'll note one such on page 113, where greg wyss predicted in the mid 70's that reporters would become "embedded" with the military in a war and spread government propaganda directly from the front lines. poet as prophet.

poets and writers started to make noise as an organization, and helped us find fresh voices every month. the magazine had a core group of writers, but always we were seeking to allow fresh voices to encourage our own growth. other organizations started up which kept us humble - small press distribution was one such. we would take each issue up to their store each month, and be astounded at the stacks of magazines growing and overflowing.

mags we became kin to had names like dog river review, third eye, ptolemy, tandava, poets on, crawl out yr window, kudzu, wild turkey, antenna, arulo, vega, free poets, absinthe, poetry dada way, wind, proof rock, and that's enough to give you an idea - there were many. some lasted a few months, some a few years, and we kept trucking, watching as mags were born and mags died.

moves happened, experiments happened. california poet lasted two issues. san diego free poetry was a weekly that lasted a few months. beach poetry coincided with this effort and was a great celebration for everyone on shore each time we appeared - don macqueen and i would

hang out with whoever wanted to come and we invited everyone on the beach to write poems in the sand. We then watched the poems disappear with the waves as we handed out free poetry zines and sang memorials to the seagulls. we moved again and started power pole poems, christian poet, monthly poetry anthology, poetpoetry, a poet, poemcards, coffeeshouse poetry live, poetry in the museum, occasional review, poetry in the library, kkup poetry on the radio - 3 hours per week. good times. we lived our motto: "your imagination is our only boundary."

at the end of our tenth year of publishing, in issue 120, these words wrapped up the early years: "realities library was founded in 1973 to provide an alternative outlet for current poetry. realities library has been involved in publishing magazines, books, producing weekly radio programs, live readings, and many other events."

we learned to use technology - tapes of poets reading & singing. james marvelle, tony moffeit, and many other performing poets. poets collaborated with each other - music & poetry, poetry & music. the cassettes were released as 'tapes of the century'. then later video poetry. and even later we moved into powwow - which was poets on the web, writers on the web. always using whatever we had on hand to make poetry alive for as many people as humanly possible from one spare corner wherever i was living. in 1983 i wrote "poetry is a fantastic escape into reality".

guidelines for writing for seven stars were: "we have no guidelines for you to follow, your freedom is our concern." after publishing a few books we had to make it a bit harsher for book writers: "guidelines for having your book published are reasonably simple: send poetry. the poet is the main publicity tool a publisher has, and i expect as much energy from the poet as i give their book."

as editor i always had fun combining poems to match on pages, on facing pages, and between the covers of the magazine. i am still having fun in this regard - you'll see on page 192 where i matched a well known

proud sexist pig with a firm and adamant feminist. of course, in my mind these labels do not work, and should not be attached to anyone. i know - poets love to self identify in some way. for me as a reader, editor, and lover of poetry, it's the words that reach my heart that matter. is there a contradiction? of course! every day is a contradiction & I glory in that. i can be a sexist pig and a radical feminist. I can be a socialist democrat, a capitalist republican, as well as a socialist republican and a libertarian democrat. there's room within me for all. the two mentors who taught me how rich life is when i accept every person as pure and real and necessary are jesus christ and walt whitman.

it'd be easy to push on about accomplishments, relationships, good people i pushed away, hurt. great people who did the same to me. stories to tell. relationships to share. fun little stories. big bad blow up stories. divorce stories. children coming into the mix - talk about contradictions! the little buggers wanted food. and clothes. and haircuts. poor kids had to put up with me cutting their hair a lot of the time. yeah. i was not a good dad, not a good husband, not good for anything except trying to keep poetry vital. so, i could talk about accomplishments and awards, or i could talk about too many drunken nights. in the end those stories will not add to the words you'll find within this anthology. i've lived with these poems for a long time and feel confident they will long outlive my ups and downs as a human being.

there is one story i'll indulge in though. because i can. hans ebner sent in poems like everyone else. they knocked me over. he had never seen the magazine, was simply responding to an ad in rolling stone like so many others. "teachers teach poetry, poets eat it" (p 50). turned out he was knocked out in turn by seven stars. there was an instant recognition in each of us - a powerful spark traveling through the mails. we never met in person. slowly i learned to know him, he learned to know me, i heard of his wife, his kids being born, and vice versa. there were poems he wrote that i loved even without understanding the whole truth behind the words for twenty-five years.

in 1975, after appearing in several issues in a row, hans sent me a manuscript he called "10 years of sad rain." they were poems about his experiences in vietnam in 1965 and the aftermath of that experience. the highlight poem *an open letter to anyone who will read it* (p 60) defined the powerful emotions of a generation of young people who had experienced war. he defined word by word what people were feeling and could not express, could not understand, did not want to say for fear of being locked up. for good. he had the strength to put the words to paper. it wasn't for almost another 20 years, when the men who had experienced the atrocities we committed in desert storm and lived with the memories, that the public was given a new word to explain the emotional impact of tearing up your moral beliefs about who you were and what your country stood for: ptsd. once the phrase was out many vietnam vets were vindicated - yet the damage was done. lives had been shattered, suicides were rampant, drugs were the escape.

throughout the years hans always had words about age in his work. his words always haunted me, but it wasn't until 1998 until the words came together to a full understanding. "i demand my age be given to me" (p 53). something resonated. some sort of neuron exchange took place between us. "my eyes swell up with the sad old rain/for an old man's eyes i'll never see" (p 141). in 1998, i published our very last book , #260, written by hans ebner. he called his manuscript *special eyes*. "i am too young to worry about endings. . . i feel the flicker of love for my sons. I want so much to live long enough to see them grown and strong (p 268)." email was a quick form of communication by this time, and we had almost daily conversations while work on the book ensued. although i knew a lot about the poet, the young man with a family, the soldier who had lived through hell, i was totally unaware of the bombshell he laid on me those last weeks. he had long known, and only now felt free enough to talk about it, that he was dying from a chemical sprayed on him by his own country while fighting in vietnam. he was one of the many many victims of agent orange. he died while the book was being printed, before it was bound.

i was devastated. all his words from the past came back, and i knew that i was holding history in my hands and that at the most 1800 people would ever have the opportunity to read the words of someone holding in a secret. "i demand that my age be given to me." he was speaking for an entire generation - every generation pulled out of the loving arms of their parents to travel across the seas to experience the maniacal giggles of masochistic drill sergeants and politicians whose joy is in watching young people suffer and learn that they suffer for the express purpose of causing pain and suffering on fellow humans on the other side of the globe. they grow up and accept it, or like hans, they grow up and scream onto the page "i am too young to worry about endings". i will always feel blessed to have been the conduit by which hans was able to scream his pain. even if he could not fully release it from his own mind, he was able to give words to the trauma that so many, too many, feel each and every day.



i'd be lying if i said that was the only reason i quit. life was complicated. i was feeling a lot of pain. i had children who would soon need to be able to go to college. i felt the poems i was publishing in the regular issues no longer mattered in the same way that ebner's poems mattered to me. you can see on page 121 a copy of issue #116 - no art, just a simple statement. not even the name of the magazine on the cover. that happened a lot. hubris. maybe. probably. we were the prince and madonna of poetry. we no longer needed a title, a name.

twenty five years. imagine. 260 issues. more than 15,000 poems. more than 3000 different poets and artists. 2,134 monthly subscribers at one point. average over the years was 1800 monthly subscribers. we had a boost for several years when writer's digest reprinted freckled tickle in writers market (p 175). the power of a poem. we need a word.

which brings us to the past few years. i mentioned to ruth nolan at the first reading held at space cowboy here in joshua tree that i was editor of a poetry magazine back in the seventies. she said excitedly "oh, i loved those little magazines". i did too. i knew i did. i had twenty years away from that experience, and was now retired from life. when i contemplated retirement i looked in the mirror and said - you have 25 more years to go, my friend. you can sit in your rocking chair and go through your glory days every day, or you can start something new. new? what's new at my age? getting stabbed in the hand by a cactus! cholla needles was born. i decided to ride out my old age like i had my very young age - with a monthly poetry magazine.

ruth lit a spark. the old magazines - i had many copies laying around in boxes. i loved and admired the energy of the writers, and wondered where they all were. the more i explored the more i realized many had simply died. i knew, of course, that hans ebner had died. i didn't keep my head completely in the sand, and knew bukowski had died. many i'll never find. some i'll always wonder about. daniel tobias walson. we never fully understood his story, his mind. so many. spacelady moonwalk. kathleen keller. my search did dig up the braless express herself - nancy brizendene. she is the artist who gave me this cover

months before i knew how i was to approach 15,000 poems & edit them down to 300 pages.

don macqueen gave me the answer - "my forest has too many panthers" (p 259). "i shall try thinning them again." it took many months to accomplish. "there are so many they might seem impossible to miss at this range, but. . ." it had to be done. "i've become familiar with the forest over time, so much of it is dark." and the classic last line: "the panthers have come to know me." so, we end up. completely, totally, and honestly subjective. i tried my best to give the reader a taste of what was being published by one single press during those years. when you read these pages, smile knowing there are 14,750 poems missing, and there were well over 1000 other presses doing the same thing during these years, and each has its own story to tell.

i've already been approached about doing a volume 2. and 3. ain't gonna happen. i'm moving ahead into the future with cholla needles, and invite you to follow me there. i would not call this volume *the best* of seven stars and realities library by any means. not by a long shot. i am confident that it is truly representative of what we did for those 25 years. what you hold in your hands would encompass six months of the magazine. It would take 50 of these volumes to reprint everything. naw, ain't gonna happen. the world has changed. once upon a time we knew without a doubt we could sell at least 1500 copies of anything resembling poetry, now we're struggling to find 25 readers of any new release. it's best to leave the past with this small representation of how we lived.

i am all for keeping you 25 loyal readers happy - and i plan to do that by releasing works of poets who are writing new material today. it's fun to have this relic you now hold in your hands; and i'm proud of it. i'm also proud that the turmoil in our nation remains vibrant and is as dysfunctional as ever. our country needs strong writers today writing for today, about today. as long as i am able i plan to keep on walking past *the old man* of poetry. it's time. we are born in the presence of you.

*i am too young to worry about endings. . .* - r soos

## Part 4 words from three contributors to Seven Stars

### *Small Presses, Big Visions*

*The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, from *Dustbooks*, is available as a CD ROM today, or online. Back in 1980 it was a weighty paperback which served as my first passport to enter the territory of poetry publishing in the United States. In this digital age, I often find myself comparing then and now. It used to be the order of the day to send four or five poems, freshly typed, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and no simultaneous submissions tolerated. Response times were what they were, anything from a couple of weeks to six months or more, although this more often came from publications with more regal credentials. Sending by email now, we might hear back within twenty-four hours! Not always, naturally, but the physical side of the small press has been changed a lot by computer technology, as have submission guidelines.

Back then, as now, any specific poetry magazine wasn't read by too many people, but picking copies out and glancing through them brings me to realize what a fine record of who we were as we wrote and sent our work out to be seen and to give it a grain of permanence. Often enough, the physical products were efficiently put together, invariably typed out, passed along to a small offset printer before being collated and stapled inside a cover stock. There were, of course, plenty of more established publications, and I'd highlight Joel Weinstein's *Mississippi Mud*, *Abraxas* (thanks to Ingrid Swanberg and Warren Woessner), *POEM* from Alabama, and the oldest U.S. poetry magazine of all : *Poet Lore*, among them as having been especially interesting to me for their range and quality.

Nice typesetting and layout notwithstanding, I turn back to a more basic product that didn't need visual sophistication to make its mark, and Bruce Combs' *TAURUS*. It began in 1981 and contains poems by writers whose names I would encounter over and again, usually without knowing much more about the poet than his/her name, but the point is not to single out individuals, rather to applaud these small scale

enterprises that gave many of us a place to be read. For those who had continuity, the overall exposure afforded by all the magazines has added up to much more than the small readerships might suggest.

Then came *The Yellow Butterfly*, edited by Joan Sherer (also from Oregon) and continuing the good work by featuring, among others, the delightful Iris Richardson, Sigmund Weiss, Kyle Laws, Tony Moffeit, Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel (didn't Robert Peters think of her as a national treasure?) and Sheila E. Murphy. Was it coincidence that I encountered a lot of publications from Oregon? Laurence F. Hawkins' *Dog River Review* was another from that state, with character and fine presentation. Many poets had more longevity than the magazines they first published in, and later we find their names on the contents pages, often in online magazines: Catlin, Niditch, and the late Gayle Elen Harvey. One new creation from 1981 about to put out its 38<sup>th</sup> annual issue is *Slipstream*, which I'd point to as one of the very best for regularly introducing new names among the familiar and consistently finding fine writing with the edge to make it count for more than literature.

With its idealistic title, Ruth Wildes Schuler's *Prophetic Voices* looks to me from 2018 to have been a labor intensive work with a universal drive. It contained a generous selection of work and somebody had spent a lot of time at the typewriter to bring poems by, among many others, Katharyn Machan Aal, Joseph Bruchac, Harry Calhoun, Merritt Clifton, Karla Hammond, Norman H. Russell, Laurel Speer, and Ken Stone. Little by little, I came to know the work of those who published widely and often, and some of the poets were editors and publishers themselves, such as Gary Metras, whose wonderful *Adastra Press* continues to produce high quality work using hand set type.

Another venture with vision was the late Jennifer Bosveld's (back then she was Jennifer Groce Welch) *Pudding Magazine*. It continues today under Connie Everett, still matching poetry and purpose. We also had the kind of magazine Will Inman published as *New Kauri*, in which he'd photocopy the poems he chose and they appeared just as we sent them to him, often side by side with a translation into Spanish. And speaking of translations, I was impressed to receive some from modern

Greek poets by the esteemed Kimon Friar arrived from Rich Soos' *realities library* between copies of *the occasional review*. What made any of these magazines important was primarily the editor's vision, and that often gave us more of an interesting read than many of the products of editorial boards. But I'm still wary of getting drawn in to academic versus non-academic debates. I take the work for what it is, rather than for what the resume of the poet might suggest it to be.

The mailman's arrival was a highlight to the day, with the possibility of a response to a submission or a larger envelope containing more from the democracy of poets. The improvised feel to much of what we were involved in does nothing to take away from its significance, as the subsequent careers of many of the poets prove. Although I enjoy many of the online publications today, and appreciate those urgent and newsy ones that bring out poetry responding to current affairs, I like even more the feel of a book in my hands, typewritten or typeset. America's collective small press productions comprise an archive of sorts that demonstrates initiative in the best spirit of the country and its art.

– David Chorlton, poet



***From the cover artist of this book you hold***

Since you re-contacted me, I have gone back and reread the magazines and books that I have from that era and have been having a great time. It's a unique experience to have a dialog from a younger self to me now. I still meet life with a sense of humor and enjoy putting a surreal twist on reality. I just do it more with my camera now and less with words.

– Nancy Brizendene, poet & photographer

***From Issue 1 of Seven Stars 1973 to Cholla Needles 2018 & beyond. . .***

I have been a part of Seven Stars since its inspired inception. So when Richard asked me to say something about this marvelous creation, I of course, prayed that I may be worthy.

Seven Stars was all about the poetry.

It was conceived by one man's love of this art form and his undying devotion to presenting the poetry of people who needed to be heard.

It became a voice and vehicle for poets that had endured the rejection of their work by those with less understanding. Seven Stars was, like poetry, an explosion of the culture we live in. It was also a community of poets, who while quite diverse, felt and found themselves, outspoken!

And I always got the sense that the poets were listening to each other and becoming more and more inspired in all of their diversity.

Seven Stars was a celestial and true path forward, and quite unique for its time.

I still enjoy reading these poems today, and the growth I've harvested from them.

In all its forms, Seven Stars, still twinkling, is sailing!

– James Marvelle, poet



## Part 5 - Len Fulton and Dustbooks

Reviewing the book you have in your hand for final publication provided a new revelation. David Chorlton mentioned *The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses* in his first line, and implied that this is where he first heard of Seven Stars and Realities Library. In my article I had mentioned the importance of Len Fulton to the growth of Seven Stars. Len Fulton was the founder of Dustbooks, and the publisher of the yearly Directory. More important to me was that he was also the editor of the monthly "*Small Press Review*". Don't get me wrong, the directory is excellent and important; but there was this truth about it - many of the magazines listed within died before their directory listing appeared. "*Small Press Review*" was immediate, and gave timely news for writers - it was, in fact, the writers World Wide Web of the 1970's & 80's. It was truly our only reference point for what we were attempting to accomplish.

Len Fulton was a visionary who could see the true history of this small press event passing by without anyone else noticing. He was totally open and honest when he said "*Small Press Review*", because he would mention and exalt the smallest of smallest presses. His magazine and guides were how we found each other and found out about new zines and presses starting up and seeking their place in the huge world which excelled in ignoring anything "small".

Len Fulton also influenced me - a little - in 1975 with the publication of his book, a travelogue with Ellen Ferber called "American Odyssey." It was the story of their traveling around the nation attempting to get his books placed in bookstores everywhere. What I took out of the book for myself was the importance of bookstores which had started disappearing, and I realized that for me the best shot for being able to stay viable as a press was to have a relationship with them – and for me and my life style that meant to stay local.

Putting all this together I decided to look up Len and see if he'd agree to talk about 60 years ago. David's article mentioned the directory was available on CD ROM, so I looked for dustbooks on the web. Yep, dustbook.com. I was clicking through all the links, looking for contact information, and discovered in one link that Len had died in 2011 of lung cancer at the age of 77.

He had carried *The Small Press Review* through 500 issues, which will be a valuable resource for anyone who decides to undertake a history of the small press scene. Fulton conveyed an understanding to everyone through magazine that this entire journey was not because of him, not because of money (there was none), not for seeking recognition, but simply to fulfill a dream. His small press review gave all of us a method of keeping track of each other and celebrating when we saw poets we had published start their own magazines. Len turned no announcement away, and was totally genuine in sharing "news and views" without any censorship. All zines were important, and no one was "too small" to be considered "small".

Susan Fulton Raymond and Kathleen Glanville still run Dustbooks. I asked them for permission to reprint what I feel is a beautiful and loving tribute to the man we loved addressing envelopes full of our magazines to in Paradise, California. They did give me permission, and Kathy added, "*Of course you may use our tribute -- there is/was no one like Len and I miss him every day.*" Susan and Kathy continued *The Small Press Review* for four years after Len died, and then had to write this bit of reality to the loyal readers of *The Small Press Review*:



"June 1, 2015

The Small Press Review ceased publication with Vol. 47, nos 5-6, May-June 2015.

While this has been a labor of love, there does come a time when one must take a hard look at things, and do the math. It may come as a shock, but a publication dedicated to reviewing books and magazines published by small presses is not a huge moneymaker. We were not, of course, doing it for money. But it has become increasingly difficult to justify continuing in light of the dwindling (or negative) return.

The founding publisher and editor, Len Fulton, would have turned 81 last week. We think it's safe to say he would have to do this very thing himself. Even if he could mentally handle it, the sheer physical labor of hauling bins of books back & forth to the post office would not be possible without (presumably paid) help. For him, the SPR/SMR was the focus of his daily life to a large degree. We could in no way match his

love for it, his vast knowledge of its subject matter, and his relationship with the contributors, publishers, readers, and subscribers. We continued to publish SPR after Len's death to honor his vast legacy. We could not have done so without the incredible momentum and loyalty demonstrated by his supporters (and we harbor no illusion that we could in any way replace him). It has been a fascinating, frustrating, illuminating, and ultimately joyous ride."



There is a certain mystery in publishing a monthly magazine. Even before it comes back from the printer you need to be hard at work preparing the next issue so it can get to the printer and be published on time and to keep the momentum going you need to prepare the next issue. A thankless job, which Len was very proficient at. As far as I know, no one has taken up his mantle after Susan and Kathleen. Times have simply changed. I never met Len in person, never made the trek to Paradise, CA. I sense when I do finally meet him in Paradise he will laugh at me and with me at how seriously I took myself during this short time on earth.



I'm grateful for editing support from  
Cynthia Anderson, Tobi Alfier, &  
James Marvelle.

with love, r soos, 2018

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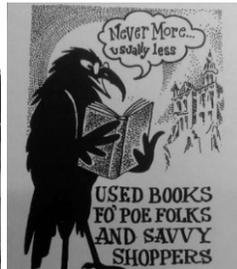
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