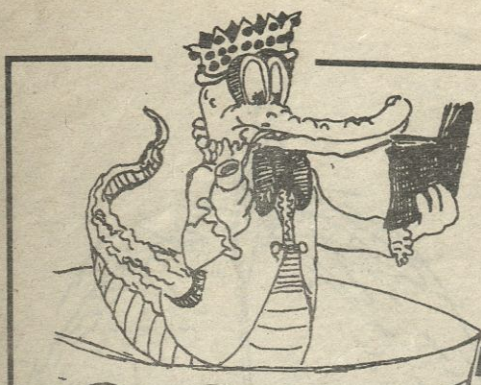


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# River King

## Poetry Supplement

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### Al Says,

With the advent of desktop publishing there has been an increased impulse for writers, and especially poets, to publish their own works. For one thing it is easy. For another, it's cheap. And it's not that poets haven't done it in the past. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was common for poets to sell their wares on self printed broadsides. And there's any number of well known writers who had to publish their own first, and sometimes second, book in order to get into print.

Adding to the need for poets to self-publish, is the cold fact that most publishers have been, and still are, unwilling to dip into the poetry handbag. Even today presses that have traditionally printed poetry are scrubbing their lists. Recently Oxford University Press discontinued publishing contemporary poetry. Then too, when the commercial press (which more and more has come to include university presses) does bring out books of poetry, it is with the understanding that they won't sell, (unless you have the Di-mania II, soap opera, Hughes-Plath, history/pathology), and so there's no reason to advertise. It's a self fulfilling prophesy. Well, okay, the logic goes, then why not publish the book yourself, bring it out on a private imprint, and sell whatever you can.

Well, for one thing there's the "vanity" stigma attached to writers publishing their own work. This is a prejudice created by commercial book companies, fostering the attitude that only publishers who are out to make money can know what is good enough to publish, and therefore what is good enough for the rest of us to read. Then there's the other side of the idea, that self-published books are inferior and simply the past-time or ego trip of someone with more money than talent. This kind of thinking is even reflected in the NEA's fellowship application guidelines for writers, and also in such places as the application for inclusion in *A Directory of American Poets and Fiction Writers*.

This seems to Al a most unusual situation, since the stigma does not stain the entire spectrum of the arts. Painters and sculptors, as a matter of practice, when they have enough pieces available, hire a hall, or open their studios, and have a hanging or an opening. Dancers and singers often produce and manage their own concerts. With a new composition in hand, composers have been known to rent a hall to see if they can draw a crowd. When Redford and/or Beatty write, produce, direct and act in a movie they have financed, why is it not called vanity cinema? And this is to say nothing of writers who have told Al "well, I have this friend who runs a press, and he published my book." Not money it seems as the deciding factor, but, very possibly, not the quality of the work either. And then there are editors of university presses who publish the books of editors of other university presses.

Added to this, is the belief that it's somehow unnatural for writers to sell their own books. That is, unless you're a national celebrity. While it's okay for Hillary Clinton, Colin Powell, Jimmy Carter or Oprah Winfrey to appear at your local bookstore hawking their latest ghosted package of pages, it's somehow out of place for a self-published poet to do the same.

### First Sight

He lost on the instant.  
Gave himself over  
to pillage and plunder  
because of a smile,  
because of eyes lingering  
on his, because of a  
morning sun filtering  
through orange curtains  
of a doctor's waiting  
room suffusing blond hair  
with a golden nimbus.

He tried to back away,  
telling himself he knew  
too much, had seen too many  
sophistications  
to fall for smiles, eyes, and  
hair—for an instant—like  
amber gauze. But no matter.

He surrendered to it all—

to the smile, to the eyes,  
to the hair: and to the  
glass bead melody  
of her voice skipping  
and scattering across  
secretarial trivialities.

—Don Ammons

### Family History

photograph 1969

That day they must have slipped away and brought  
their lunch out to a tract of fertile land.  
In black and white, both of my parents stand  
before I was a shadow of a thought.  
My father looks so awkward and afraid,  
my mother's hair is mussed by Spanish moss.  
They stand quite poised, their bodies both arrayed  
in perfect grace behind a shield of gloss.

The man who took the snap of them that day  
would not recall these lovers or this spot;  
nameless himself, he snapped the perfect shot  
to keep them how I'd always have them stay.  
And stilled they share the future unaware.  
My father holds her unpledged hand with pride,  
two hours hence he'll place a gold ring there  
in hopes this girl will be his constant bride.

The photograph is both a curse and gift,  
recorded chronicle of what has been,  
will always be, and never be again.  
For time, the fine and focused dust we sift  
is cruelest when I look upon this day.  
Their house is filled with obstacles of age,  
bed pans and vials of pills that show decay  
and all of these ignite me to a rage.

They would not know this future waited then,  
on such a splendid moment set in grace;  
their son might share the contours of each face,  
his mother's nose, his father's sagging chin,  
or that their child would write down in some way  
their history he would learn and come to trust,  
to capture every detail of that day  
before their world diminished into dust

—James Enelow

### You Left

You left so quietly  
wrapped  
by those who knew  
you wouldn't need to breathe  
I thought  
Now I will sleep your death  
I will not worry to wake  
to tend you  
But the stars were too bright  
unblinking unrelenting  
I rose and walked the night  
You returned  
a face cradled by branches  
swayed in breezes  
I thought  
those branches will rearrange  
erase you  
But you stayed  
Each morning I woke  
to find you  
still asleep  
until the leaves fell

—Norma Hodges

### Seigfried Sassoon's Memoirs of a Fox Hunting Gentleman

A glass of dry shooting sherry  
by the drawing room fire, after  
the outing, elbow leaning on  
a mantle, the benevolent eyes  
of a whiskered patriarch of the manor  
presiding over the scene, content in  
his knowledge that all is in its  
proper place and right with the unchanging  
world, frozen as it should be in time  
and place. Perhaps the young master  
of the manor, turning from beneath  
the gaze, face flushed with wine  
and the comforting heat, cold, aristocratic  
eye fixed on the fullness of the hunt,  
the kill, a brace of fowl hanging  
head down, shackled by the legs in death,  
waiting to be plucked out of uniform,  
the dead, blank eyes as motionless as  
the war slain soldiers dropping down  
in waves, thrust back into the trenches,  
impaled upon barbed wire or left to die  
on no man's land beneath a yellow haze  
of mustard gas. From the hearth,  
to the kitchen, to the battlefield,  
to the hospital, shell shocked beyond  
all recognition, there is no distinction  
between home and trench warfare when everyone's  
life is at stake and there is no poetry  
in surviving to tell the tale of the sorrow  
and the glory; the real poetry is not  
of the survival or the life after but in  
the awful heroics of death

—Alan Catlin



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**Don't Fence Me In :  
A Note on Poetry and Research**

Poetry and research? Antitheses not likely to be found in bed together. Or so we can be excused for thinking, given the Romantics' identification of poetry with authentic personal feeling—that "spontaneous overflow"—and the subsequent elevation of confessional poetry. But the record doesn't support such thinking. The works of Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Milton all derived from what can only be called research—the extensive reading, even studying, of great numbers of texts and the concomitant accumulation of masses of material the poets worked, transforming it as they went, into their verse. They didn't just "go on their nerve" (with all due respect to the genius of Frank O'Hara, or that of the even nervier belle of Amherst). Of all Whitman's contradictions, none is greater than that of the anti-intellectual's bookishness; section 44 of "Song of Myself," for example, with its sublime Darwinian vision, was based on voracious reading in contemporary scientific literature. And try to tell a Pound or an Olson that poets shouldn't dirty their hands with research! Auden, of course, suggested that all poets subscribe to Scientific American. And why else but to read up on the latest science—i.e., research it—in order to incorporate the wide world intelligently and intelligibly into their work? Then there's our Albert Goldbarth, the poet as encyclopedia. Even Bly has said his favorite room in the world is the Reading Room of the New York City Public Library, adding that his first attraction to poetry, when reading Yeats, sprung from his sudden realization that it could contain the entire world, politics, history, philosophy, and psychology.

This is all apropos of my current project, the writing of a book of poems about Thomas Eakins. I can make no claim for its ultimate value, nor for that of my earlier biography-in-verse of Gerard Manley Hopkins, but I can testify to the thrill of the process in both instances. The metaphor that comes to mind is that of climbing a mountain—*greeting labor and exaltation*. (And maybe those two have a horse-and-carriage affinity anyway.) The metaphor suggests elaborate preparation, an active rational consciousness overseeing the project, doggedness, and the pressure of considerable information and ergs through whatever skills one can muster toward a particular, long-range goal. In general, the goal is what I say in one of my poems. The goal of the realist, even positivist, painter Eakins was: "fact and imagination, the two impossibly one." No guarantees that such a fusion will take place exist. But the trashing of research vis-a-vis poetry guarantees it won't. Categorical thinking is arguably the refuge of the not-so-bright: "Me formalist, you free-verse poet," or, more to the point, "Me poet, you researcher." Charles Bernstein and the other Language poets serve to help open the door for reconceiving the poetic project. Pater spoke of expanding the interval; in poetry nowadays that could mean, at least in part, embracing research. A welcome side effect of such inclusiveness is the banishment of writer's block; after all, there's always something else to research that's worthy of our attention and therefore also worthy of alchemization into poetry. Should the magic not happen, one can take comfort from Randall Jarrell: "Even to have failed as an artist may be a respectable and valuable thing."

—Philip Dacey



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**Case Study (5)**

He made animal noises. Started when he had a job, sweeper up, in a paper mill. On breaks, away from the clatter, rattle and hiss, out in the sun men leant back against the warm tin of the green corrugated walls and smoked their cigarettes. One of the men remembered, from primary school, that the sweeper then used to make animal noises—a moo, a snuffling grunt, a neigh. The sweeper saw the men laughing at the faces he pulled, at the sounds he made, made more.

Sweeping up the wet alleyways between the big iron machines, he stopped close behind men, and made animal noises. Some men smiled, some shrugged busily away. One, startled, turned and, in temper, hit. Got hit back with the broom. Both men were sacked. At home he made mournful animal noises. His mother called the doctor. In hospital he was injected. Was quiet.

Back home he began to go out those days his injection was due. His mother shouted at him.

To tease her he made animal noises. She called the doctor. In hospital he was injected. Was quiet.

—Sam Smith

**Jesenice, 1970**

We chose this crossing instead of Maribor in order to catch the Orient Express north across the Austrian border, arrived as darkness fell.

As a couple of emigrant laborers stand with their sleepy kids, wives in scarves, shabby cardboard suitcases on the ground,

we walk to the end of the platform talking about politics: Trotsky, Milovan Djilas, all the reasons not to speak German in Yugoslavia.

The light at our backs is stark, the darkness makes you want to keep walking into it, to find the place it's made, maybe some underground mill.

Forget it. Though the night is chill, it's the breeze from the Carinthian Alps; though the bayonet shapes of evergreens are stiff pickets, it's watchfulness

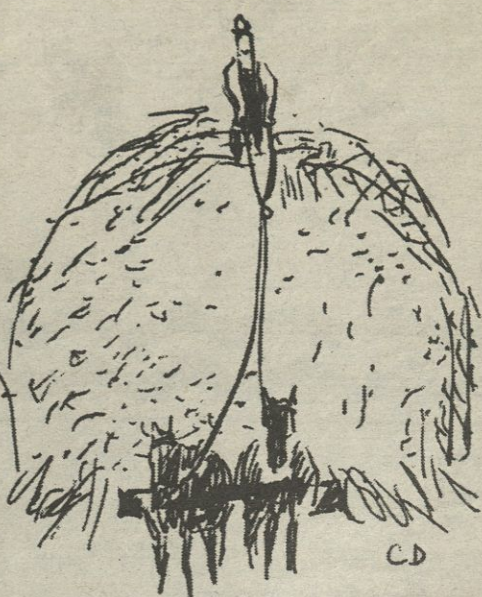
and not an onslaught. It's true that we're surrounded by uniforms, but they're only the station guards and unbuttoned conductors

playing cards in the canteen over slivovitz and cigarettes. Thinking of them only makes me hungry for a hot bowl of goulash there:

the spring air's still chilly from the wake of winter at night. Still we wonder, does the barb wire fence keep something out or something in,

and relax; this land is civilized. The war was over twenty five years ago. A strong hand is at the wheel.

—Douglas Spangle



CD

**The Body Count**

She's the delicate sort with tender breasts And asks you to take your dogtags off— Those pieces of metal you have sworn To keep on along with patriotism Until another piece of metal lodges In your head or chest and someone In authority or presumed as living Uses them to identify your remains. But I guess that is fine because She is in charge of this small hill More than one soldier has charged up, Bayonets fixed and ready to plunge into Unseen flesh in front of them.

And she has brought out a small body bag That she solemnly and ceremoniously unrolls And places with professional tenderness over me. I wonder about the note she might write If or as she sends these remains to my parents: Your son in the brave and loyal performance Of his duty without regard for personal safety Made the ultimate sacrifice of twenty billion Sperm and sixty bucks so we as a country Can survive and buy drugs and clothes and Tanks in the national interest. And she had a small and curious tattoo Of a flag rippling on her inner thigh.

—Edward Michael O' Durr Supranowicz



**River King**

**Poetry Supplement**

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**The Smoke of San Judas**

poems from a journey to Nicaragua  
In the Neighborhood of St. Jude

i  
In Barrio San Judas  
There's always something going on  
down the street.  
Even the trees lean over the walls  
so as not to miss anything.

Morning rush hour is people walking downhill on sloping dirt streets, some dressed smartly like Jenny's daughter in law Diana who works at RentaCar. Some in threadbare slacks and shirts for a day of hard physical labor. Some carrying jars or buckets on their heads, backs straight, not missing a step stopping for a chat with neighbors.

ii  
You can shop at the Pulpería—  
San Judas's 7-11.  
The woman who owns the Pulpería says,  
"You are so happy. Here we are suffering.  
Here we have nothing."  
Behind her are empty boxes.  
She has little left to sell.  
One room in her house is completely empty.  
She has sold everything in it to get money.  
Tortillas are fresh at the Pulpería.  
The price is good, but times are bad.  
"I used to buy four quintales of corn a day.  
Now I need only one."  
In San Judas the poor are getting poorer.

iii  
In San Judas worlds coexist.  
A dude on a sleek new motorcycle inches down the street slowly slowly so the girls can admire his chrome.

Two oxen pull a wooden wheeled wagon full of firewood.  
A pack of long-legged dogs with tall ears and emaciated bellies noses along the wall for food.

Rainbow colored buses praise the Lord.  
Rainbow colored buses demand justice for the poor.  
Rainbow colored buses backfire, lean crazily into ditches, get their tires patched one more time.

A beat-up old car huddles by a wall.  
On the paved street next to the highway new cars gleam.  
But the paving stones have been dug up to build barricades and to throw at the police.

iv  
In the evening the teenagers come out. They stand in doorways in groups. The girls have style. The boys are handsome and dangerous. A boy and a girl walk down the road holding hands. San Judas shimmers with energy. Eros and Agape.

v  
Banana trees sleep, masses of shadow.  
Cats wake up.  
You listen in the sweaty dark to engines revving and backfiring, cattle lowing, radios playing meringue, salsa, rock n roll. Sometimes you hear gun shots.

Towards morning birds sing. Something runs probably a cat across the tin roof.  
Rain on a tin roof—first it patters, then it thrums.  
Wind rushes through the room.  
Water splatters on the window sill. It smells clean.  
A baptism, a visitation of grace.  
Then it's gone.  
A hundred roosters crow the sun up.

—Peggy Sower Knoepfle

**Conditions**

Voices at passed 2 a.m.  
Beyond my bedroom window through lace curtains outside scenes show yet again the same

little things we have to bear now and then: two men talking quietly, in white—doctors or male nurses!—make me quietly, slightly angered, start to swear

at this soft disturbance of my dreams. . .children, lovers, now men, young, In white—and all the others—who keep me from my sleep enhance

a yearning in me for an endless peace, where no noise pollutes, sound seeps, where human kind fade away. More footsteps, clumsy, on the stairs bound me more to this dis-ease. . .

then action, whispers, a stretched shape, strapped, a neighbour, face yellow-white in the residential path-light's glare who passed away as they held him there. . . a kinder sleep took me to a land peacefully mapped.

—R.G. Bishop

**Grasshopper Time**

Slow fire baked the violated colonies. People of importance worried hard. Some days mornings had a greenish haze and odd-looking Odysseus insects hid in brittle grass, smoldering before breezes began. Long days yoked cactus heat.

Slaughtering sun made stones go mad but the grasshoppers worked passionately plying their vicious appetites in the corn. The people grew weary with such rapine and sent word for workers of miracles: anyone who could murder such creatures.

When the bright moon grew fully dry in the long fields, false dreams erupted, sweated in beds against the fitful sleep of those who labored during harvest days. No scent of honeysuckle came that year. Dust settled deep in the empty furrows.

The grasshoppers continued, swollen by their shameful gorging, the only green the sun's indifferent fire could marshal. Not until the end of August was peace gradually allowed in the nascent wind kissing the dry creekbeds thirsty for fall.

—John Garmon

**Clearing an Intersection**

Street lights burned like torches while someone stood Naked, screaming at an intersection About how no one would pass, about some Of the pain in his life and how things could Have been different. A girl, just past childhood Herself, stood nursing an infant with one Breast exposed, wondering about the outcome, If insanity could do any good.

She watched while they cuffed his hands and covered Him, holding him down while they drove away. She noticed how she didn't disapprove Of what he'd done, how his words had smothered The noise of the city, how fate can trade Places with you, till someone makes you move.

—Barry Ballard

**Notes for New Student of Poetry**

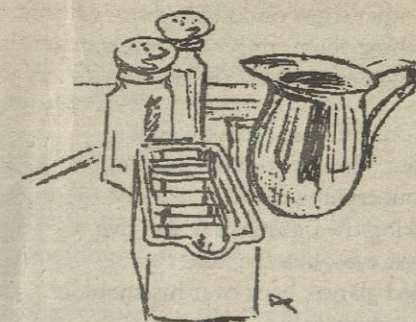
On the contrary, poetry isn't pure prose like a rose is a rose is a rose but isn't, because even gardeners harmonize hibiscus yet wouldn't think of staining wood trellis by intertwining them with natural pink petals. Besides, saguaro grows better in Phoenix soil, which is just to say location of root is best whether one is planter of seed or a hybrid, definitely horticulturally perverted unless green thumb plans on praying for cactus mum, no doubt, not intangible possibility, if botanist knows chemistry or whispers to vine.

No palm denigrates thyme of an owl calling home, but when the decoy flaps wings and answers himself, even motionful fronds bend backwards to avoid programmed hoot generated to soothe swaying spine. If you want to grow 21st century bouquets to please that average woman who isn't average, then these factors are worth modern application: sun, acid rain, clumsy water-meter readers. Choose cloudy November afternoons to transplant hollies in gallon cans but not Pyracantha whose fruit reach ripe perfection during cool autumn. For every formed bloom, there is a time and season.

Personally, I prefer annual perennials enhanced by crimson fortune: last year's poinsettia, surrounded by rainbow zinnias; glistening clean leaves.

Floral aesthetics is matter of taste, except in English garden where pattern and space matter. At the risk of sounding too technically cryptic, let me addend I rather enjoy your humor, even if you're not consciously British butler. That arbitrary point about obscuring theme, however, avoids the whole purpose of beauty, obviously no longer truth in torrid era. Still, a giant's grasp should exceed the midget's reach.

—Rochelle L. Holt



**In An Old People's Home**

From her garden I chose some snowdrops and placed them gently in her hands.

She'd reached that span at 89 where something crops us, sheafs us, makes us free with just a little push to lands

beyond all that matters here. Finally in the pastel sunlight we had our pre-Spring talk. Her whitest hair another sign, with waxen skin,

of ends arrived that end our frail fraternity. Some helping hands still unseen bring solace from another where the moment that we pass and, new, begin

to stride again sans disability down a path we helped to choose. Beyond this path we can hope to see all we thought we had to lose.

—R. G. Bishop

## Eating Breakfast in a Cafe

### I. Through the Cafe Window

They are sitting together,  
Father, Mother, Daughter,  
drinking coffee, waiting for breakfast to arrive.  
They are not talking:  
the daughter tries to read her mother's eyes  
with her eyes, staring hard, blinking,  
cocking her head, asking questions  
without words, raising her eyebrows,  
but the mother's look is blank,  
her eyes will not answer,  
and the father is knitting his brows  
and stirring and stirring his coffee,  
staring beyond or above them  
or looking down at his cup.

When the waitress comes they must  
readjust their postures  
as she serves eggs, sausages, pancakes,  
grinning, trying for light conversation,  
but the mother and father only nod,  
and the daughter smiles weakly,  
and still with no words,  
they start in on their breakfasts,  
losing themselves to the business  
of eating, regaining privacy  
under the clatter and scrape of dishes and silver.

But so quickly each one finishes.  
The father motions for more coffee,  
lights a cigarette, lets his eyes glance  
out the window at the autumn rain  
drizzling slowly outside,  
as if he's just noticed the weather.  
The mother is trying to read  
her daughter's eyes, cocking her head slightly,  
before the daughter turns away,  
breaking eye contact,  
and now each one, Daughter, Mother, Father,  
finds a location just above  
or below or beyond to fix a gaze,  
waiting for the time to go  
when the father would don his cap  
with one quick gesture,  
the mother draw on kid gloves,  
smoothing them, finger by finger,  
the daughter head for the door.

Each one lets the occasion pass  
without a moment of language,  
without coming close  
to asking the questions which live  
in their eyes, like the father's  
puzzled glance, back over his shoulder  
at the empty table,  
at the remnants of their breakfasts,  
at the plates and coffee cups  
and the crumpled napkins,  
the father's eyes squinting  
at the casual disarray of the table  
as if he is searching for some lost,  
left-behind thing, before he turns again  
toward the door and the rain.

### II. Father

We are sitting in a diner  
looking past each other—  
Father, Mother, Daughter—  
staring in three separate  
directions as we butter  
our toast, stir our coffee:  
listening only to the ring  
of silver, the clatter of dishes.

This silence we have found  
refines fear to cool glances,  
in between concentrated  
bites, sharp looks we can  
read, eye to eye, for a second,  
before we blink, turn away  
quickly, back to the  
business of breakfast.

There is my wife and former  
lover, her quick peek  
over her fork

means we should reach  
a rapport: my eyes say  
"I can't" before  
they turn down toward  
the cup I am stirring.

And our daughter,  
grown to the age  
where she prays  
for silence, tries hard  
to concentrate on the  
menu, attempts  
the impossible:  
to think of nothing.

But I am thinking  
how we can reorganize  
our lives, watching  
the waitress nimbly  
picking up dishes  
presenting bills,  
smiling, a dozen more  
orders buzzing in her head.

But I cannot live for the moment  
and although I've written  
a hundred suggestions  
down on scraps of paper,  
the fact is I never share them,  
the fact is I bide my time  
and keep my complaints to myself.  
Soon I will pay the bill

and we'll get up from the table:  
the wife will draw on her  
gloves, carefully, the daughter  
will be already waiting outside  
as I glance back at the table  
still in its familiar disarray,  
the family's usual mess  
before I head for the door.

### III. Mother

Everything is passing—  
in the middle of pancakes, eggs—  
how can they keep their eyes  
so averted, so carefully unfocused  
except on what is passing—  
syrup, butter—like my eyes  
that can't read my daughter's  
blank, reluctant gaze, her eyes  
that blink away so quickly,  
or my husband's cool glance  
I cannot warm to, that makes me  
pass it off, makes me imagine  
standing up and hurling  
my coffee cup like a hard word—  
to shatter the heavy silence:  
I narrow my eyes, turn toward  
the cafe's big, generous window  
to watch fast cars and trucks  
which are also passing, passing.

The waitress stops in passing,  
to refill our coffee, pouring  
defly while she looks us  
in the eye, asks what we need  
with such a practiced smile  
he catches it in the corner  
of his eye, eyes her, takes in  
every detail—he admired the way  
she brought every dish as ordered,  
coffee, sausages, and eggs:  
two fried, and mine, over-easy—  
toast, pancakes, marmalade, more coffee:  
now he watches her quickly calculate  
the bill to the last penny,  
and he nods, would have  
all things run like this,  
as she passes him the bill,  
then like a dancer, departs,  
bowing slightly, as in passing.

We are drinking our last  
cup, the three of us, having  
passed the time in almost perfect  
silence: our daughter is the first

4

to rise, quickly, heading for  
the door as if her long prayer  
to make the time pass quicker  
finally has been answered:  
I draw on my magenta kid gloves  
slowly, carefully, making  
the time pass slower, as if  
I can hold it back by this  
simple ritual before I finally  
rise to go, passing by my husband  
as he hesitates at the door,  
glances back—something I could  
never do—stares one hard moment  
as if he's forgotten something  
with the time still passing, passing.

### IV. Daughter

I can't sit still, yet cannot stir,  
except this bad coffee, my head is lowered:  
The Family Out for Breakfast—why am I  
here? Why can't I say no to Mother?  
Why do I always agree with father.  
Yes or no—When I feel, why can't I say it?

Mother's giving me her  
oh, dear-what-can-the-matter-be  
sad stare—I can feel her eyeballs  
touch mine like distant planets  
trying to make contact, but I must  
remain the alien, pull mine away

and stare out the window, like Father,  
focus on something safe beyond this  
tight space, find a signboard or a  
pigeon to fasten my eyes on until  
I squeeze every thought from my brain  
and think of nothing just like Father,

except he's staring at the waitress  
who has finally brought the one good  
thing the morning offers—food—  
though she's not very pretty, she  
caught his eye when she took our order  
smiling at everything we mumbled out.

He approves of the way she moves,  
sets down every dish we ordered  
carefully—every piece of toast,  
the extra butter, extra syrup,  
cheerfully though we sit barely speaking  
like a bunch of ghosts: The Tombs Family.

She's not much older than I am  
but she's free, free of this slow  
motion game of playing like we're  
in the middle of a rerun of *Father  
Knows Best*—how he likes the way she  
places each plate, softly, sweetly,

would like to see me take on some  
responsibility—what I'd like to have  
is invisibility, watching Mom turn green  
as he watches the waitress dance away  
as if she owns the place and has our number.  
We lower our heads toward our plates

as if we're praying—I am: I pray  
it'll all be over when I look back up,  
having cleaned my plate, slowly, slowly,  
that Mother will be putting on her icky gloves,  
that Father will be paying the grinning waitress,  
that I'll be heading for the door toward fresh air.

### V. Waitress

I know these people, remind me of my own  
father, mother, and of myself, all out  
for breakfast—the way we let the silence  
fall, the way Mother looked at me as if  
I could do something, tried to break  
through when I was working hard to think  
of absolutely nothing, trying to break  
out of the tight little circle.

Now, thank god, I have the gift of gab:  
I could talk their legs off,  
but what they really need isn't on the menu,  
what the father's eyes want,  
hell, he doesn't even know,  
couldn't put into words—

all I can serve is breakfast,  
more coffee and a smile which works

too well because he's caught my eyes  
and narrowed his wife's to slits, made  
the daughter mad as she turns toward  
the window I remember I would have  
given anything to fly out of,  
the way this daughter will fly one  
fine day (as I did) and find somebody  
else to talk to until finally with luck

she'll learn to talk to herself, catch  
the thread of her own thoughts:  
eggs and sausages and toast, extra  
butter, soon they'll be busy with  
their breakfasts, relieved for a moment  
from themselves, from trying hard  
to avoid each other's heavy stares,  
and I will not try to talk to them,

what good will it do?—they will  
only smile politely, painfully,  
and I know the way it will turn out:  
they will finish quickly, they will not  
find the words to have it out, they will  
say no more than "pass the syrup"  
or "more salt please," they will not  
talk about it ever, but simply finish

their breakfasts: Mother will slowly  
put on her forty-dollar leather gloves,  
thinking if she bides her time, something good  
might happen, Daughter will head quickly  
for the door, Father will pause, stare  
at the empty table: he will not remember  
how much he liked my careful service,  
how I figured the bill to the last penny

as he stands there like he's forgotten  
something. He will not call them back  
to drink more coffee, ask them what is wrong:  
there's no chance, that he'll say how much  
he loves them: all he'll do is tip too much  
to pay money for all my care and trouble  
and head for the door in a hurry, without a nod  
or goodbye: I know these people.

—Philip Miller

## Fundamental Things Apply

"As Time Goes By"  
Lyrics/Music: Herman Hupfeld  
Sung by Dooley Wilson

It's still the same old story  
and worth singing about again...

Minding his own nose now  
and that of his business  
our hero of two foreign wars  
retired into this current  
limbo stage as if fight  
for right were out of date.

Too, in cloak of in-between  
during reign of the Swastika,  
Casablanca's French Police Chief  
willfully became a feather floating  
in any breed of breeze.

Enter from right, by contrast,  
old flame and catalyst Elsa,  
a sacrificing do-or-dier  
for future betterment.

By a kind of osmosis  
our two retirees return to the  
active world which welcomes  
lovers of love and glory,  
bringing on the on-set  
of a beautiful friendship.

Back at the Café  
as time goes by,  
Sam can duly play and sing  
any damn tune he wants,  
again and again.

—E. D. Paul

## Scintillation

For M.A.S.

On the road behind us fists of fire bounce  
out of control. You're a fire-loving dragon  
out for a ride shedding scales, and I'm the dunce  
dropping the fag-ends of cancer sticks on  
a black tar road. At ninety miles an hour  
no one gives a damn what our restless  
angst ignites. Joy riding Schopenhauer-  
Nietzsche-Sartre, we consume a feckless  
midnight, another lost weekend, and I  
don't love you and you don't love me, but still  
we drive as if there's everything to die  
for and a storybook empire to kill—  
and if burning up Route 6 we flame out  
of control remember the dead don't pout.  
—Jannet Highfill

## Wherever I Turn

Wherever I turn the air needs water  
—the fires calling out—it will be hours  
shredding silver foil, listening  
for wind and drowning—this yard

as if its air has seasons, seeds  
places to hide and the hose  
smelling from oil and climb—this yard

covered with England, with mist: a net  
—here are my hands! coated  
from mulch and faces

and a shovel that won't leave the ground  
buried as if some plane took root  
and the sky the sun can't see  
spreads into fumes, into fog  
pinned under glass and spray—this yard

has a mask the air chilled, moist  
black—her cheeks won't rot, over and over  
*Lili Marlene*, by the handfult

and blisters—I sprinkle these tin strips  
where sparks are needed now  
close to the engines  
underneath the lamplight  
into the wind, louder, louder.

—Simon Perchik

## Travelogue

There is no room here, only space  
with wind that backs up to the north,  
clouds that look like snow capped  
mountains pressed on winter wheat.

These towns so sparse they're named  
for folks: Ray, Hanks, Russell and Ross.  
Where the young return just to bury  
their dead or auction the family farm.

And nothing much to catch the tourist  
crowd except perhaps the world's largest  
buffalo, or biggest turtle made out of tractor  
tires near Bottineau, hard down the road

from Rugby (whose claim to fame  
is the exact geographical middle  
of the country). But tonight and the next  
and the months that wither like ironweed

in a drought, when the Ryder trucks  
that have hummed and sun-flashed  
on the interstate come to full  
stop in front of their down-chain

motels, the emigrants will lie in the dark  
in Minot, Grand Forks, Seattle, LA, staring  
up at a plaster moon trying to recall just when  
it was in Rugby that their centers slipped away.

—Richard Luftig

## Artist's Daughter after the Pox

The girl struggles to half-sit,  
"Today my father will visit."  
She does not see how her ringlets  
of blond hair fall over the side of her face  
and come out in my comb.  
Her blue eye stares and is too open  
because the fever has taken her lashes away.  
Her cheeks are not those he painted  
the anise of her favorite candy.  
"Dress me," she says.  
I am paid to do as she says  
so I lay out her underthings /  
her slip on the bedsheet shimmers  
like white raisin water.  
The air smells of her shining red dress  
of dried apple peels and of cinnamon.  
Now comes the yellow sash,  
the hooks and eyes that tire my fingers,  
the shoes that match her sash so exactly.  
"Bring me the mirror."  
Some minutes and still she gazes  
drawing her lips between even white teeth,  
she touches her face,  
fitting the tip of her finger in pocks.  
(Yes, they are that big).  
I will make him paint me again in this red.

—Stephanie Dickinson



## Child's Play

I am an ancient cunnilingual tiger burning bright  
enough to spoil this saucy ingenuie  
for anybody else's tried and true. She's  
*paradiddling on my back with dainty feet*

and snatching me where hair and neckline meet  
so that I'm damn near suffocated in the stew  
of sweat and hair and cum as she thrusts up  
to me and blows her cork a second time.

I know to slow, to gently kiss her thigh,  
until she's finished pulsing. Now  
she's motionless, let's loose a grateful sigh  
from tattered lungs as though she's coming up

for air (while I'm the one who's smothered there).  
At last she moves, uncoils, and we can peel  
away each cell from soaking cell,  
one wild ride done for, now we're side by side.

There is no way for her to know I'm fifty-six  
and counting coup, afraid I'll soon face sixty-four  
and few to need or feed me then while as for her,  
she's early twenties with the world to go.

She kisses my still plastered lips and then without  
a pause she slides below to kiss the nether pole  
so she can show her aptitude and skill as though  
it is her aptitude itself that thrills (perhaps it is).

She's not an expert but she is no amateur  
and there I go in much too brief a time, a tad  
too soon as always (always sad to climax, half  
the fun or more is breathless tension getting there).

How will I slake my hungry maw—  
is there some flaw of character imbued me with this  
greed,  
some childish need that's led me to a thousand  
bodies, more,  
and leaves me prostrate always at love's door.

And she, she puts her hands upon my chest and in  
the darkness where we're nose to nose she says  
"They told me you are part of growing up. They  
told me true. I've made good use of you."

—Earl Coleman

## Case Study (3)

Sons grown and left home  
her talk is a gabble of worry:  
"They're fed up with me.  
Do you think I should . . . ?"  
Hers is a subjectivity  
so intense  
she cannot see a thing  
apart from herself,  
"I don't know what I . . ."  
When she smokes she takes  
small  
quick  
theatrical puffs,  
says she doesn't know why  
she is smoking,  
rubs the cigarette out  
with short rapid jabs.  
"Now I don't know what  
to do with myself . . ."  
In a time of elm's green unfurlings  
an overnight storm causes the deaths  
of eleven people.  
Upon this being reported to her  
she says  
"I know.  
Wind kept me awake all night."

-Sam Smith

## Leaving

In spite of the tragedy,  
she leaves today as it is,  
savoring its silence  
of collected thoughts,  
the moon intact.

The schedule of death  
does not apologize  
for her noisy children  
at home in their beds  
pillow fighting,  
soon to be called to her bedside.

No chance for the usual,  
for cookies shaped  
like Mickey Mouse,  
for the hibiscus  
to trail thick in its path,  
for the indifference of neighbors.

Who knows when  
the ghostly virus conspired  
or when madness made  
its gentle turn  
toward endurance:  
the bed sheets smooth,  
the rhythm of her breath  
beginning its change,  
the wind tapping, knocking  
at the window.

-Pat Underwood



## Death In Hell's Kitchen

I lie in the living room on my rollaway for days, my bedroom rented to fashion retailer Brad Boonshaft until the smell of stagnant ditch seeps into the hall, and that me who walked moist cornfields, breathing mosquitoes, who waited for the sky to part like purple H.S. gym drapes, makes my neighbors' eyes water, and wondering, they knock and knock, until Boonshaft answers, at the door on his cordless phone, saying over his shoulder, "Steph, doll are you awake?" and, the me who watched daddylonglegs lift their withering legs and walk the stalks, who pleaded with Jesus not to come, that me who wasn't ready for heaven, is disintegrating, back arched, so arched it must be broken and won't be walking again, that is the me, Alice sees, holding a paper towel to her nose, an understudy to Petula Clark in *Sunset Blvd.* road show, sighing, "Why? My God, Brad!" and then police coming, black boots, axe handles crackling and my cat, hungrier than ever, nuzzling their legs, and "My he's rather a good-looking cat," the big Mexican cop says, and, Boonshaft, knowing nothing has to leave, and me who loved rolling under barbed wire and seeing the dusk moon up, not a buttermilk pail, but my forehead where my brother threw an iron cup and the bloody moon is my brother running, and I am frightened I won't reach grandma's at the end of the furrows, before I am stuffed into a body bag, a duffel bag of rank socks, and the elevator strands me between floors, until the EMS arrive and siren me off to St. Vincents. "No smoking when gasing" my last literature reads, and then Ninth Avenue markets with carved heads of pigs, tallow intestines, slabs of tongue, tripe, and that me who saw Jesus riding a donkey out of the sky alongside flaming angels is passing Peruvian coffee beans, barrels of cumin and sweet paprika, white fish and groupers, bulging eyes and shell mollusks crying, "Pakistani, Azerbaijan, Ukrainian, Yemenite," that me blackens in the morgue drawer, and then Buckley's Funeral Home without pillars but *linoleum*, and Buckley, the loneliest man on the street, presses his fat hands together that man, the last to have me.

-Stephanie Dickinson

## Demolition Work

There was this old building, built  
in Jugendstil before  
the Boer War.  
They started demolishing it  
as the morning sun began to gild  
its undulating rankness, its roofs, eaves,  
spreading honey over the porous walls,  
sinuous stalks, furious ghosts whose calls  
of indignation at these new abasements  
were left unheard. Three-dimensional leaves  
of roses  
in full bloom flew their scattered ways to final pasts.  
Each odour of each thing lasts  
a mere moment; the scent of fresh pine  
from an old rafter's heart grows  
briefly in the air, the intimate ages  
of dismembered bedrooms,  
stale urinal heirlooms  
hoarded under linos,  
in old pipes. With each cloud's bloom a done ago rages.  
A last brick tumbles  
like tired dice; where  
families familed only daylight now, bare  
spaces unenclosed by memories.  
How easily warm permanence crumbles,  
light years, turn to nows undone.  
Galaxies of dust spiral and each spectral  
cloud incarnates briefly; its seconds cull  
new times, bury old hours hourly, unscented years  
held dear and all our rages and dependencies  
unravalled  
fuse again to none.

-R. G. Bishop

## I. C. U.

I no longer recognize you  
frog with the parachute eyes.

Your lids, stitched fast by light,  
are tender as a new wound,  
swollen with fluid  
and lined with a shawl of lace.

A little sequin of blood  
is pasted to the corner of your lip  
like a paper star

The tubes that bloom from your body  
in a starburst of vines,  
glisten like fireflies  
and spread out their roots,  
long and graceful as the necks of swans.

Throughout the cold concerto,  
the symphony of hiss and click,  
you keep your own counsel,  
sing your own song,  
give no quarter,  
as death drops its little seed on you  
and works your stubborn ground.

-Elizabeth Howkins

## Oradour

(France, June 11, 1944)

The brown shirts  
came early  
in the tiny village.

No one heard the first bullets,  
the pulling and shoving  
of sick breaths,  
children with toys  
machine gunned.

Everyone rounded up  
was set afire  
in the church  
as candles dripped  
and the village was no more.

-B. Z. Niditch

## Then and Now

(Budapest 1976)

I did not recognize  
how the town had changed  
dusty streets had gone  
public museums were restored  
churches and palaces intact  
people were busily working  
the flower girl was again  
in the public square  
it was as if no one knew  
of my own childhood.

Perhaps it was a contrivance  
or I was dreaming  
but I noticed the monkey  
crying with the organ grinder,  
at the lover's lane  
a bridegroom took pictures  
a white horse from the country  
had its usual gypsy driver,  
perhaps in the starlit capital  
I will even remember  
the prayers for the dead.

-B. Z. Niditch

## Death Valley

God, I am  
thine own hired hand mired  
in an imperial valley of suffering  
on the Southside of the Delta. A man  
can run up a pretty big bill just standing still,  
calling home collect, gazing at Hollywood and Vine  
on a tattered map of Star City.

The nonperforming arts. . .  
Watch the bouncing ball of hope.  
Stalking the wild mustard green in Louisiana.  
The top of the morning to you too, yet this day  
is worthy of more than excavation of earth.  
With a cast on his head, a man  
can barely see the road.

Yes I am a little East of sanity,  
riding the rails down to an exquisite La Jolla  
dream of wealth: sweeping past Del Mar I saw  
plants and animals dead and dying.  
I saw the Hotel Coronado  
illuminated by flickering candlelight.

Las summer I was just a baby growing up  
in the "Coney Island of my Mind." So what  
happens next? Still further South  
there are other luxurious cities  
with boardwalks and legitimate tenants  
and groups of manicured nuns from Baltimore.  
This present house leans into sunset.  
It all begins and ends in an austere region  
meandering down to seashore, so many mists  
and fogs and shrouded selfsame worlds.  
And I haven't even made it  
to Los Angeles.

-Error Miller

## Two Silences a Piece

"Silence has become the disturbance."  
-Henri J. M. Nouwen

The neighbor called the cops on me today.  
She said my silences disturbed her peace.  
Demanded that I turn on my t.v.  
and make some "civilizing" noises.

My books weren't loud enough, it seems. She could  
hear herself think, and is suing me for  
damage to her worldview, or lack thereof.  
"Shvayg shtil shoynt!" she shouted

so they could hear her in Des Moines.  
But I can sympathize. It's hard to shut  
a silent person up, and harder still  
to stop him from not talking to himself.

Note: genug shoynt - enough already  
shvayg shtil shoynt - shut up already.

-John G. Gregory, Jr.

## Norsemen

(The Confusion of Two Thousand Voices)

Or one voice from two thousand years ago  
That points you this way. Spectators tell you  
It's illusion or myth, the residue  
That accumulates on tombstones this old.  
It's just a boat-shaped grave out of control  
And grown-over with what you're going through.  
You don't notice it isn't moving, due  
To dark water, thicker than green meadows.

And there's noise along the coastline, the sound  
Of dialysis machines filtering  
The blood. Someone saw too much inside you,  
Something they questioned, like the movement bound  
Up inside everything, shape disturbing  
Shape, splitting the opposing molecules.

-Barry Ballard

## elegy

february's morning wind blows from the cemetery  
to the marrow of my bones  
and refuses blood to flow  
it's a stinging hello from my lost brother  
whose bee is spring early  
and the greeting is melancholy  
like the morning he left  
behind a rusty sun to move along slow  
alone  
a bob ross oil painting  
with mixes of yellow ochre  
burnt sienna  
and vandyke brown  
pine needles sun-dried and split on the ground  
burying seasoned wood to crack silent  
where the copperhead sheds its skin

after they're skipped across the lake  
smooth rocks sink flounder and settle in  
resting in aquasounds  
beneath a harvest moon. Lullaby

-Don Moore



## Bathed in Light

Unaffected by gazes from high windows,  
upon the flimsy asbestos of a garage roof,  
you lie, your belly uppermost, white as snow,  
soaking up the fantasy juices of the sun.  
You roll upon your back in ecstasy.  
You have an affectation of periodically  
running your tongue along  
a stretched-out limb.  
But when you have had enough of that,  
I know from past experience of watching you,  
you will stand, your tiger fur ruffled on your back,  
and stare transfixed at the nearby field of grass.  
Perhaps later you'll walk  
my garden's stout dividing fence,  
proudly dangling a metaphorical mouse  
from your smug mouth,  
just as you did the other day.  
Sometimes I wish you were a cat.

-Geoff Stevens

## Droit de Seigneur

Those who always suppose the humble  
Should accept their given lot  
Might care to dwell upon the facts  
Of why Lord Leitrim got shot.

Not a hanging offence, some noble folk  
Might retort, to seduce a maid;  
But what power to resist had all  
Those poor men's sisters he laid?

Resignation in your station may be  
A virtue in several utopias,  
But why practice it blindly, to a fault?  
As did one peasant in Naas:

The local Victorian lord, an MP  
Of Liberal inclinations,  
Riding by, spied a pretty girl,  
Descended to exercise his loins.

As that lusty feudal baron  
Was prevailing upon the lass,  
Her mother, more concerned for the master,  
Said, "Mary, raise up your ass,

Don't suffer a goodly Christian gentleman  
To trail his balls in the dirt."  
No wonder a daughter might ever after  
Harbour bitterness in her heart.

-Niall McGrath

## I. Temp. Vet. Housing (1944-47)

Veteran's Housing  
across from Lincoln

School was jerry-built  
in 44, after Veterans'  
Affairs realized: "We'  
re gonna have lots of them  
coming back, reunited with  
families haven't seen in 3  
years. - Gotta give'em  
some place to live." The  
Army Corps Of Engineers is  
tapped + rushes up colder'n  
hell tarpaper rowhouses. One  
size fits all. Each with 4  
rooms: kitchen-foyer, bath,  
living room, + 1 big bedroom.  
Maybe 6 apartments to a 180' row.  
6 or 8 rows max.

Frazzled returning Vets, from pac.  
Islands, from Italy campaign,  
from shell-shocked France, who  
wake up screaming in the middle  
of the night - gathered families  
"strewn, strayed, frayed, + stranded,"

+ attempt to make a new life of "central  
oil heat" (1 oil heater in middle of apt.)  
+ not + cold running water (as opposed to  
running from shells, diving in freezing  
ditches to avoid strafing, and sweating it  
out in the jungle, 100% humidity, moving  
maybe 1/4 mile an hour, as the (MG man) .. +  
a woman they hadn't touched since 42 + chil-  
dren they'd never seen or whose faces they'd  
forgotten....

II. Temp. Vet. Housing (1944-47)

From the vantage point of the Kindergarten windows  
and the cinder-strewn school yard, the tar-paper  
longhouses looked lively, but very dark. Of course  
the kids went to our school, and, naturally, the  
eternal romantic, I fall in love with Mary Lou  
Offenbach, who lived "over there." Spooning, I  
would sit on the wooden steps after school, while  
her mom made Irish Stew + we would talk about Alaska  
where she was from and where her dad would return to  
sometime soon (Juneau?) or play in their dusty 50 sq.  
ft. front "yard" or on the new concrete sidewalk.

III. Temp. Vet. Housing (1944-47)

The # of row-houses dwindled as the vets found their  
legs and moved away. By 47 there were only two left.  
One moonless night in October, Spinal Meningitis tip-  
toed in on charcoal feet, and struck thru 2 children's  
bedroom windows. Both "taken" in the space of a week.  
Health Dept. Officials descended, The buildings were  
condemned, and by next spring the last block was de-  
molished and burned (total ET of the housing project  
was about 3 years.) That was the spring I won first  
place for the best decorated bike in 2nd grade. We  
still have the picture of this freckled, toothy, na-  
tive son: Above my handle-bars an ornate Sun Emblem  
towers made with brilliant colored crepe paper: blue,  
vibrant chartreuse yellow, bright orange, + finally  
sort of a pulsating red center. My face is about 90%  
freckles and crooked teeth, and 10% eyes...

-R. Kimm





## Barcelona

The moon climbs  
somewhere in Barcelona  
Picasso is still around  
with the carcass  
of the poor

The mass of colors  
by the blocky wind  
are swept by sunshowers  
and flocks of doves  
are released for May Day  
no one speaks about

You cannot wait  
any longer  
to love, paint or write  
but your inward eye  
tells you  
what Solomon said.

—B. Z. Niditch

## Prowl

Clad for bed  
I lug the week's trash  
up the gravel drive  
and drop it on the grass  
by the blacktop

The highway is empty  
With impunity  
I stoop to stroke  
this stabled dragon  
Even now it heats my hand

I lift my face to see the stars  
and think how easy  
and how silly  
it would be to howl

No one would hear  
There is nothing  
but the trash and the road  
the grass and the stars  
and the private call of night

I turn my back on the road  
and see the lights of my home  
glow in the hollow below  
Impulsively  
I mark the trash

—R. A. Burns

## East of Amarillo

We stuffed wet towels in the windows to ward off the fine dust as it tried to filter in, blown by the spring's dry panhandle wind, and the dirt was a record two inches piled in the outside sills,

that year of very little rain to speak of, when the sun was a razor cutting through the ozone layer with a white-hot indifference. Mother kept cooking the big pot of pinto beans in the kitchen.

We could smell the pans of cornbread baking in the oven like gold in our noses, a taste in the air like frying bacon, and the dust outside kept blowing against the brown glass

windows that stared inward at our captivity, our appetites transformed by the light from our mother's beatific kitchen; and the lightless dust and sounds of wind stayed outside.

Finally it was time to eat, and we gathered around the table abandoned to the luminous salvation of steaming brown beans laced with amber juices over the salty yellow bread.

All night the storm ran its hungry grit around our walls past the windows that kept our familial warmth inside as we dreamed of a land somewhere with soaking rain.

—John Garmon

## Bilbo Baggins

I met King in college along with Lenin.  
Lenin had this thing 'bout how the country should  
be run by the workers and everyone should have  
an equal share and let's start a revolution  
and just where the hell did he get all  
that energy anyway?

King was no better.  
Something 'bout blacks and how they didn't have equal  
rights and I have a dream and let's not get  
violent here and just who the hell do the  
two of them think they are  
pushing me?

—Richard Brancato

## Keeper Of The Key

(for my mother who lives)

Time guards this prison gate — dark and rusted.  
Shut inside he hides a flickering flame  
too frail to light the cold damp dark. Night passes  
while with key in hand he stands command to wait  
for whomever he wills to re-light their glowing wicks  
with callused fingers. White coat and cap, he can  
re-twist the raveling wicks, or he can  
let them flicker out. He rides a stripe of rusted  
light from spark to flame. His fingers snap; a wick  
ignites. He speaks and it blinks out. The prayer I flame  
pitches Psalms and creeds up, but ashes pass  
my lips—remorse unchanged, so memory waits  
its turn: Bright-eyed laughter with wide arms waits  
for me chased home from school afraid. I can't  
kick fat Willie's ass or catch my brother's flying pass  
with hands so soft and bruised they're rusted,  
but pride and dreams I catch. One memory flames  
across my mind like videos—your white hair like wick  
untwists. The last spark in tired eyes—the wick  
of promised days burns low to die. I wait  
while memory teeters by on stilts to flame  
and stick in cracks where right meets wrong but can't  
arrange my fears or hopes for long. Death's rusted  
dread still haunts my every thought. Groans slip pass  
my feverish mother's lips. My hope limps pass  
despair; it hobbles to where rage and wicked  
recollection lurk to lynch the soul and rust  
hope out or choke it, but it stumbles on and waits  
for mourning wheels to ride to gone but can't  
rebuke the dizzy dark's uneasy flame  
or light a wick with dying sparks—the flame  
of pain release. My mother yearns to pass  
this gate. White coat and striped cap, time can't  
defer although he keeps the keys. Her wick  
burned low, she seeks now more than flame and waits  
to pass the gate. She begs, "Please no machines." A rusted  
scrape. The gate opens. A spark ignites the wick.  
An inch remains to burn. Time has her wait  
to pass the rusted gate though she would not.

—Marcellus Leonard

## Contributors

**Don Ammons** is an American from Florida living in Denmark. His latest book is *Some-where Else/Andetsteds*, a book of poems in English and Danish, published by Original Plus publications.

**Barry Ballard** has published widely and most recently in *Concho River*, *Limestone*, *Oxford Magazine* and *Whiskey Island Magazine*.

**R. G. Bishop** is a translator and teacher who lives in Munich, Germany. He has published poems in journals around the world. His latest book is *Other Moments*, a collection of poems in English and German, published by Original Plus publications.

**Kate Blasdel** is an artist from Detroit.

**Richard Brancato** lives in Boston. This is his first appearance in *River King*.

**Robert Burns** is past editor of *The Cape Rock*, SEMO, in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. His poems have appeared in *Poetry Now*, *Satire*, *Tennessee English Journal*, *Midwest Poetry Review*.

**Connie Cannon** is an artist and a former school teacher from Chambersburg, PA.

**Alan Catlin** has published over thirty-five chap books. The poems printed here are from a long sequence of poems, *The Poet, Dying*.

**Earl Coleman** has published fiction in *Esquire*, *Fiction*, *Skylark* and poems in *The Cape Rock*, *Potpourri*, *Plainsongs*, *South Carolina Review*, and many other journals and magazines.

**Phil Dacey** is a Pushcart winner. His sixth and seventh collections of poems will appear in 1999, *The Deathbed Playboy* (Eastern Washington U. Press) and *The Paramour of the Moving Air* (Quarterly Review of Literature). He is currently writing a book-length sequence of poems about Thomas Eakins. He'll serve in April as Distinguished Visiting Writer at the U. of Idaho, Moscow.

**Conci Denniston's** visual art has been exhibited in many places, including the Kansas City Artists Coalition, a one woman show at Emporia State University at the Designer's Circle in Kansas City, MO where she presently has a large exhibit of her jazz paintings at the Sheridan on the Country Club Plaza.

**Stephanie Dickinson** grew up in rural Iowa and now lives in Hells' Kitchen, New York. She has published in *The New York Quarterly*, *Mudfish*, *Chelsea*, *The Ledge*, and *Sonora Review*. Her first collection of poems, *Corn Goddess*, was recently published by Linear Arts.

**James Enelow** is a graduate student in the creative writing program at McNeese State University

**John Garmon** continues to wander throughout the United States, writing poems and aiding and abetting those who also write poems. He has recently edited *90 Poets of the Nineties: an anthology of American and Canadian poets*.

**John Gregory** lives in Newton, Maine and has poems in *The Chaminade Literary Review*, *Art Times*, *The Abiko Quarterly*, and the *Black Bear Review*.

**Jannett Highfill** has published in the *Greensboro Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, and *Mississippi Valley Review*. She teaches at Bradley University.

**Norma Hodges** is a poet/artist and a frequent contributor to *River King*. She lives in Oxford, Iowa.

**Rochelle Lynn Holt** is a poet, editor and reviewer who has published nationally. Her most recent publications are *3 Southwest Mysteries*, *Tree of Life*, *Anais Nin: an understanding of her art*, and *Infamous in Our Prime*.

**Elizabeth Howkins** has won numerous poetry contests and has published poems in dozens of magazines and journals, including *River King Poetry Supplement*.

**R. Kimm's** poems have appeared in *Rhino* and *Apocalypse*.

**Peg Sower Knoepfle** is a writer and public access television producer. She lives in Auburn, Illinois with her husband, poet John Knoepfle. This is her first appearance in *River King*. She is the producer and host of *Works In Progress*.

**Marcellus Leonard** teaches at the University of Illinois at Springfield. He has published two chap books, *Nubian Cousins* and *Cardboard Ears*.

**Richard Luftig** has had poems in the *Midwest Poetry Review*, *Windsor Review*, *Xavier Review* and numerous other journals.

**Niall McGrath** is from County Antrim, Northern Ireland. His poems have appeared in *Books Ireland*, *Voices Israel*, *Wascan Review*, *Pearl*, *Cerurus* and *Chiron Review*.

**Errol Miller's** latest books include *Downward Glide*, *Forever Beyond Us*, and *This Side of Chicago*.

**Don Moore** lives and writes in St. Louis, Missouri. This is his second appearance in *River King*.

**B.Z. Niditch** is the Artistic Director of the Original Theatre and publishes widely in the US, Canada and Europe.

**Edward Paul** lives in Germany. He is an artist, composer, writer and his poems have appeared in *The Pegasus Review*, *Poetry Bone*, *Mentor*, *Skylark*, *Iota*, and *The Oak*.

**Simon Perchik** has published poems in *Partisan Review*, *Poetry*, *The Nation*, *North American Review*, *New Letters*, and the *New Yorker*, among many others.

**Darick Robertson** is a cartoonist for *Spiderman* comic books.

**Barbara Ruis** is a writer/artist from Kansas City.

**Doug Spangle** baby sits maritime traffic on the Columbia River in Oregon, and edits *Rain City Review*. His poems, reviews, graphics, articles and translations have appeared in dozens of journals and magazines.

**Geoff Stevens** is a retired industrial chemist from West Bromwich, England, and editor of *Purple Patch* magazine.

**Edward Supranowicz** is a factory worker from Logan, Ohio. His poems have appeared in *New Thought Journal*, *Whole Notes* and other Midwestern and Western journals.

**Pat Underwood** is a frequent contributor to *River King*. Her poems have recently appeared *Voices on the Landscape: Contemporary Iowa Poets*, *Poet and Critic*, *Potpourri*, *The Midwest Review*, and *Stand Alone* anthologies. She lives in Colfax, Iowa.

## Editors

**Wayne Lanter** is the founder and editor of *RKPS* and is the author of four books of poetry, *The Waiting Room*, *Threshing Time*, *Canonical Hours* and an epic narrative, *At Float on the Ohta-gawa*.

**Donna Biffar**, *RKPS* associate editor, is the author of *Water Witching in the Garden* (1995) and *Events Preceding Death* (1999). She edits Belleville Area College's award winning journal, *Head to Hand*. Her work is forthcoming in *Black Dirt*, *Anykey Review*, and *College English*.

**Philip Miller**, *RKPS* art editor, lives in Kansas City and is the editor of the online literary journal *Anykey Review*. He is on the board of directors of the Writers Place and directs the River Front Reading Series. He has published poems in various magazines and journals. He is the author *Cats in the House*, *Hard Freeze*, and *From the Temperate Zone*, and recently edited the anthology *90 Poets of the Nineties*.

**Sam Smith**, *RKPS* British liaison, is the author of *To be Like John Clare*, *Dialogues and Skin & Bones*. He is the editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry* and Original Plus Press in Taunton, Somerset.

**Valeda Evans**, editor emeritus of *RKPS*, began writing poetry twenty-two years ago at age seventy-two and has published in national journals and magazines.