

FIREWEED

POETRY OF WESTERN OREGON



VOLUME ONE
NUMBER FOUR

JULY 1990
\$2.50

FIREWEED

POETRY OF WESTERN OREGON



VOLUME ONE
NUMBER FOUR
JULY 1990

FIREWEED: POETRY OF WESTERN OREGON is published quarterly in October, January, April and July. FIREWEED publishes poets living in the western half of Oregon, though poems need not be regional in subject. Manuscripts should include a return envelope and material for a contributor's note. Inquiries about submission of reviews or essays are welcome. Subscriptions are \$10 for four issues. All contents copyrighted 1990 by FIREWEED, 1330 E. 25th Ave., Eugene, OR. 97403.

Editors: Erik Muller, Ann Staley, David Laing

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Virginia Corrie-Cozart	IN THE BARN	/ 5
	DAUGHTERS	/ 6
Lee Crawley Kirk	SAND-WITCHES	/ 7
	SOUR FRUITS	/ 8
Scott Taylor	USING FIRE	/ 10
Steve Babcock	IMMORTALITY AND MORTALITY COMPARED	/ 11
Roger Weaver	"TO THINK A WORLD . . . "	/ 12
Helen Ronan	THE SEVENTH -- OR SOMEDAY	/ 13
Elizabeth Claman	BULL DANCER	/ 14
	DOLPHINS	/ 15
Chip Goodrich	EVENING STAR	/ 16
Quinton Hallett	YARN	/ 17
Gregg Kleiner	WE'RE ALL ON OUR WAY	/ 18
	I WILL WORK FOR FOOD	/ 19
Peter Newton	CITY CENTER	/ 20
Lois Rosen	PHOTOGRAPHS	/ 21
Mervin Mecklenburg	PARADE GROUND AT OREGON AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE	/ 22

Brenda Shaw	O PIONEERS	/ 23
John Campbell	DEER	/ 24
	CRANES	/ 25
Carolyn Reynolds Miller	SNOWING AT 7TH AND COLVILLE, IN HEAVEN	/ 26
	HARMONY	/ 28
Marla A. Wickwire	ANOTHER SEASON	/ 29
David Johnson	ELEGY FOR A GREAT BLUE HERON	/ 30
	STEADY ON THE STEEL	/ 31
Anita T. Sullivan	CONVERGENCE	/ 32
	THAT WAS YEARS AGO	/ 33
Peter Jensen	ONE HUNDRED VIEWS OF HOKUSAI	/ 34
Laura Winter	"I SEE THE SHADOWS"	/ 36
Kathleen Culligan	COUNTING HAWKS	/ 37
D. L.	<u>COMMON GROUND</u> BY JOHN DANIEL: AN APPRECIATION	/ 38
	NOTES FROM THE EDITORS	/ 41
	CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES	/ 42

Virginia Corrie-Cozart

IN THE BARN

everything belongs to the cows.
Dad's black hat is flattened
where he rests his head
against cows' flanks,
strips them by hand
for the last drop,
the hat felted by cow hairs, steam.

Each goes to her own place,
her name printed on the stanchion,
Boss, Pet, Queenie,
Belle, Princess, Doll,
tosses through the fresh hay,
gets two coffee can measures of grain.

Leaning against the barrel of cow feed,
I sit in the shadows,
quiet so as not to shake a hay seed
into the milk bucket,
so as not to disturb the flow,
watch him pour foaming milk
through the strainer,
wait for him to take down
the tin cup from its nail
and dip some out of the can,
wait for him to call me,
"Here, Chick,"
the milk still fragrant as dried clover
and not yet chilled.

Virginia Corrie-Cozart

DAUGHTERS

She, herself, was born
near the end of a long night.
I hold the Timex with the second hand.
She sits in her grandmother's rocker,
clutches the arms, says one is starting,
moans before relaxing
against the wing back.
Her husband turns down the lights,
looks long, his face collapsing,
her eyes closed,
the enormous mound under her skirt.
Her lips stay poised
for the next draw.

While the midwife naps on a futon,
I breathe with my daughter,
knowing her own birth better now,
imagining my mother under ether
delivering me after midnight.
We'd nested like Ukrainian dolls,
one woman holding another
inside another
waiting our turns.

Lee Crawley Kirk

SAND-WITCHES

Come my daughters,
we will take these two baskets
and fill them with sandwiches
and sweet foods.

We will spread a blanket
on the beach, and eat
sandwiches and sweet
sandy foods, and smile.

We will watch the ocean
send in its white herds
and singingly call them
back to sea again.

We will take long drinks
from paper cups, washing sand
from between our teeth
to sing with the oceans
of our blood.

Salt grass will snipe
our bare arms, twine
our ankles in victory. We, sand witches,
will laugh, licking salt
from our sun-chapped lips.

Someday we will remember
how the wind tied knots in our hair.
"We were younger then," we'll say,
and it will be more true then
than now.

Lee Crawley Kirk

SOUR FRUITS

(my father's mother)

Grandmother, I wanted to like you
when I was nine and we first
came to see you at your grocery store.
White-haired and tiny among the dusty shelves
of labeled tins and brightly-colored packages,
you were tough as a clenched fist:
a queen behind the counter
where the cash-register jangled
its metallic snarl of tribute.

*

"Would you like a treat?" you asked.
Did you notice a child's greedy eyes
raking rows of candy bars, Lifesavers,
gum, stacks of Cracker Jacks?
Did you sense the lust in the child
who followed your aproned form
toward bins of nuts, grapes,
cidery-smelling apples, hypnotic yellow pears?

*

"Here you are!" Presented with a flourish,
the red-tinged greenish stalk
a scepter in your hand, you conferred
on me a brand-new form of terror.
"Waste not, want not. Eat it all,
or there'll be no more." Rhubarb, Grandmother?
a stem of rhubarb for a child?

*

I tried. God knows I did.
I huddled on the back door stoop,
lips shrivelled with sour juice, eyes streaming.
At last, defeated, I shoved the slimy stalk
into the garbage can, pushed it down,
taking infinite care that the lid
should make no sound.
"Was it good?" you later asked.
(Did you hide a sneer?)
Avoiding your eyes, "Oh, yes," I lied,
suspecting I had failed a test.

*

Oh, Grandmother, these nearly forty years
have passed. I thanked you
with childish formal notes
for each birthday dollar,
each careful Christmas check.
But thinking of you now,
regarding your bird-like beauty
in that ancient photo on the wall,
I remember dust motes drifting
in window-watered sunlight around your hair,
your face a puckered crab-apple under snow,
and the bitter taste of rhubarb.

Scott Taylor

USING FIRE

Knooling by the lake,
you touch only your face to the water.

You understand disguises.
Their dismissal means nothing to you.
But dive down to the mud of the lake
and even indifference seems painful.

Years ago, your mother uncrossed her arms
and stood at the open window, willing.
Across the field,
a light had just emerged from the pines.
She watched and imagined the face of the man
lit by his torch.
It was then that the rain blown by wind
could begin to shape her.

Stand as she stood,
as if the position allowed you
to hear her thoughts.
Then look up from the lake's moon
into the sky's.

Steve Babcock

IMMORTALITY AND MORTALITY COMPARED

Biograph I

The wanderer,
the poet as peddler
of dark thoughts,
Villon on the lamb, 1450's:

Crutch-step the poet
comes creeping
with a broken soul
and a coop of black crows
creaking.

Biograph II

After five hundred years
of lethargy,
the poet cast in the role
of Jack-ass:

He keeps saying the same thing
over and over,
an old grey mule braying
in a stable,
afraid and unable
to kick the barn door open.

Roger Weaver

"TO THINK A WORLD CAN FLOWER FROM YOUR HAND"

To think a world can flower from your hand,
a world anyone would want to inhabit,
complete with frogs, horses, and lover's eyes.
So I keep opening my hands. See?
Here are tracks and fishing lines.
A world is beginning.

Helen Ronan

THE SEVENTH -- OR SOMEDAY

Sabbath sounds near this small town
hidden from all but a skillful
Sabbath listener who with a surgeon's art
can reach the pulsing, hidden heart;
watches first light cross the yard
in mystery inspired concentration
opens deeper, past respect, deeper --

There pulsing alive, exposed beneath
layers of tractor payments and taxes
For the Sunday listener, deep in his craft,
the sounds of tree roots down, down,
the barn holding itself useful,
the earth shifting to a rest position,
the year turning its face.

Elizabeth Claman

BULL DANCER

Thick braids, her two front teeth
promised for months now, this ten year old
runs to her mother, eyes bright.

"Give me some money!" she shouts.

"Say please."

"PLEASE!"

The mother narrows her eyes. "What for?"

"To bid in the auction!" the girl shrills.

The woman pulls two wrinkled bills
from her bag and stuffs them laughing
into the child's pocket. "There," she says,
stroking the sun hot hair.

The girl rushes to lean
on corral rails with the wranglers,
chewing her Bazooka as they chew their plug,
eyeing the auctioneer's fast mouth.

"Oh yes," she sighs. Scrawny, wall-eyed hereford mix,
back legs splattered with his own scared shit,
bawling as the wranglers hoot --
she knows him instantly. "Two dollars!" she screams,
and the wranglers laugh, "Going once, going twice..."
slapping their hats against chaps. "Sold."

As the girl leads the calf
her mother's lips pinch themselves.
"Isn't he beautiful!" She presses her face
to the warmth of his neck,
the tick of his pulse on her eyelids.
"Isn't he?" she insists, thinking someday
she will leap onto his broad, sleek back,
and twirl until her braids blur
into gold as he bellows furiously,
carving the air with her name.

DOLPHINS

Consider the shape of sailboats,
resting their prows
on the rasp of wave. Consider
their pale timbers
in the bright sun. Then

Imagine that we are among
them. Curled like lithe
parentheses, our bodies
arc through turquoise crests,
our sleek sides flash
between white hulls. How

easy to fly, we think,
rising effortlessly on the sinew
of breath. How easy to dive,
smiling, the taste
of splash against tongue. See?

a child points to us, eyes
tossed between dolphins and mother
under the wide red belly of spinnaker.
See? He points and laughs, his
mother cradling his dark hair
in her palm. Consider

their boats as islands of silent
machinery, poised in the shadow
of wind and wave. But we
are a song so pure and ancient
echoing through the sea, they

can only gaze at us, dazzled
by the breathless instant the pull
of gravity is broken, and we soar
through water, air. Just
for the sudden delirium of flight.

Chip Goodrich

EVENING STAR

Fork down hay
for the white-face steers,
sit on the mow edge
listening to cud sounds,
chewing myself a dry clover sprig.

Long day over.
No evening plans.
Dust motes drift
on the ambering light.
Pigeons flap and coo in the rafters.

First star now
through the mow door.
Sweat cools
and crusts on my face,
muscles lean back on their bones
and all thoughts heal down
to a low whistling.

Quinton Hallett

YARN

When mother died, loops of life
slipped my memory like stitches
from needles into my lap.

Her sisters came, unraveling history,
shredding dresses for rag rugs,
spinning jewels into cruises.

Out of the loop,
my small daughter and I
stood as my mother
dissolved to phantom.

Tell me about grandma
says my daughter one day,
her face pinched
with desire to know.

At first I go blank,
pull wriggling fingers away
from my sweater, tuck yarn tails
back in to the mesh of my sleeve.

Then I remember
wool winding with mother.
She twists the ball deftly
with spidery fingers
while I hold the skein taut
between two raised hands.

Gregg Kleiner

WE'RE ALL ON OUR WAY

I've never really known you, Roger,
good friend of my parents,
but for a wedding present,
you sent us a porcelain picture frame.

As I write your thank you note this morning
I think of the two months they've given you,
and realize I can't close
with the standard see you soon.
But the right words jam up in my throat and skull --
logs on the flooded brown waters of the Umpqua river
trying to pull loose and float
out into the Pacific.

I've never written to someone so close
to death.
This is more than thank you for a gift.

The telephone cuts through the morning:
Mom tells me Bud,
another friend of theirs, is in the hospital in Denver
and not expected to make it.
So sudden, so sad, she says.

I hang up.
The logs all break loose.
I'm right behind you.

I WILL WORK FOR FOOD

He stands big and silent
hunched against November's slanted rain
holding a sign, a soggy cardboard shield.

The large blue letters melt and run
in watery veins that trickle
down through his message
drip from cold knuckles
disappear with floating oil through a grate.

The light changes and I
arc across the intersection
craning to find him
in the narrow butter dish of mirror.

I hear the bag of groceries
fall over in the trunk.

Peter Newton

CITY CENTER

A city
in the trees
through a veneer
of stranded clouds,
other buttes
with names drop back
from my elbows planted here
in the wet grass.

pain is a front page picture
of a man in the Middle East holding on
to his son

The lady in the bank downtown
unnatural blue above her eyes
praises this city
like a homeland,
suggests I have the scene printed
on 200 checks.

Lois Rosen

PHOTOGRAPHS

After my dad died, mother tore up
the one of me on the photographer's pony,
in the organdy dress, at Museum Village
with classmates, graduation,
Alan Lauber's birthday.

Snapshots of relatives in their felt hats
and old style shoes she tore up too,
the whole sorry lot of us to go down
with smelly sacks on the dumbwaiter.

Framed in gold on her bedstand:
a portrait of me and my ex-husband.
I am not making this up.

Mervin Mecklenburg

PARADE GROUND AT OREGON AGRICULTURAL
COLLEGE

All able men must drill once a day.
-1876 OAC Catalog

They are all stiff, framed in
by the bloodless eye
of the camera. Even the boy
with a new callus on his thumb
is reduced with the others to grey
coat and hat, though that very morning,
for the first time, he shaped
a shoe on the anvil, pounding metal
until it was just right.
His face, like all their faces, betrays
a boyish knowledge that this
is an exercise -- only the drillmaster,
not long from the bloody grass
at Gettysburg, shows by the grip
on his saber, and the grim way
he holds in his chin, that this is more
than bayonets aimed
at the sky in pretty rows
like plowshares
turned upside down.

Bronda Shaw

O PIONEERS

On the campus of a western university
stand two statues --
Father Pioneer and Mother Pioneer.
They face each other across a distance
of two hundred yards --
but can no longer see across it.
Someone with other things on his mind
put a building between them.

Father Pioneer stands tall
against a background of cedar and mahonia,
rifle over his shoulder,
whip in hand,
powder horn at the ready.
His eyes are uplifted
as he strides toward the horizon.

Mother Pioneer sits head bowed,
face sad, gazing at a closed book
held in withered hands.

The sun always shines on Father Pioneer:
morning, afternoon, early evening.
But Mother Pioneer is lit
only from behind.
No matter what the time of day,
her face remains in shadow.

Everyone sees Father Pioneer
in his place of honor.
I photographed him the first day I was here.
I discovered Mother Pioneer weeks later.
With camera poised,
I've been trying ever since
to find her face in sunshine.

John Campbell

DEER

I stopped, thought of a deer
I'd seen, how her mule ears
stood out comically against the trees,
how her lack of color saved her,
and compared it all to me, which I'm prone
to do, in my drab
and splendid life. And
in recalling her image, her imprecise
markings, I lost the idea
I was after. It dissolved
in the olive and lichen hills.

CRANES

Something's happening to me
which I can't explain. The red swathes
on their faces throb in my binoculars.
Clouds throw buffalo shadows,
and grass shoots are thin men
dreaming of hauling down the sky.
But the cranes simply feed.
There's nothing in their boat-shaped
bellies but food. Their spirits
thrive outside them,
in the air around their necks.

Carolyn Reynolds Miller

SNOWING AT 7TH AND COLVILLE, IN HEAVEN

1

On St. Mary's Hospital lawn
the pale woman opens her fingers
and people who only moments ago
drew up their knees to die
remember everything
the blizzards of '09 and '27
and look up, smiling at the beautiful echo
the sky shakes down.

There must be gods who envy us
as we envy children climbing the hill
towing saucers, runners, the sleek toboggans, up
and again up, their faces red and happy
below stocking caps.
Even Sisyphus, stripped to his thong,
steps lively beside them, his knees in agony.

This is where I had my protestant
tonsils out at six. And the kind Sisters
nursed me. I thought the nuns wore black
so they would show up in heaven,
and if the statue of Mary ever
completely opened her palms, doves would fly up
and bless the Methodists.

2

Getting here, the plane broke into
clouds, I imagined a stuntwalker
on the wings of an old movie
stepping off into a snowy afterlife,
no wall to lean back on, no fire
to steady his eyes.

Monet spent weeks like that, pacing numb canvas,
twisting shades of white until silence
began to vibrate over the stretched landscape
and the sky fed them flawless petals.

3

At 7th and Colville
the first snow touches the ground
like tattered muslin, then yards and yards
until saints and peasants sink into rapture
and the angel comes down to us
as a rich man turned sentimental
might--between meals--come to eat with the poor
and soar back nodding and chuckling,
aren't they heaven's own salt!

What sticks is hunger.

Did I criticize an angel?
Aren't we fed,
when we are sick with longing,
mortal dusk? Snow fills the tent of the streetlight
and we remember: white beach, a summer night,
stars like bonfires scattered in Valhalla
where friends and lovers, backs to a log,
sit hugging their knees.

4

I think dying will be like
traveling into a snowdrift. No ravens.

Snow has cloaked the statue of Mary
in immaculate feathers. Her hands half open,
white birds frozen in flight.

Carolyn Reynolds Miller

HARMONY

March: Mrs. Biersner plucks us out for an all female sextet,
puts us in uniform (blue skirt/white blouse/red sweater).
Unfurled at assemblies
I'm twelve, chubby, and doomed.

Saturdays our voices stampede
playing run-or-shoot-me. Aagghh!
stagger, bite dirt.

Monday: dejected knees, dejected knuckles.
Mrs. Biersner has the whole class yoked and singing
thumbs in our holsters.

all day I face a barren waste
without a taste of water
Cooooo water

Bev, Janet, Reva,
and down the row somebody's brother in silent ambush
sights me, cocks his finger,
and squeezes.

Bang! I'm dying

(I go out loving Ronald's pomeranian
face, hating Peggy Nestle
who got the part of the princess.)

Through April Mrs. Beirsner keeps us aloft.
Eyes lifted, we watch her hair
sashay up from her forehead
her full lips swallow the pitchpipe
beyond her chin and its partner, don't look
at her breasts between which
the wound never quite closes.

May. Shirley gets a bra.

Maria A. Wickwire

ANOTHER SEASON

Today I am digging the compost in,
pitchfork sodden and working against me.
Newspapers pile on the table beside
the west window. Weathered roses
bend brown heads.
They have taken a vow of silence.

Behind my back, the Golden Delicious
eases its unthinned boughs, thudding
softly. I crush a steaming handful of
fir needles and rose petals,
inhale its warm breath. Quiet
curls like a snail around my heart.

Still digging, I uncover you.
Deception flowers among the hairs
that begin at your thighs and cling like moss
to your belly, matting in black thickets
across your chest, tendrilling at
the white window of your throat.

From behind your neck, I pull a woman's
slender arm. Away in her fingers
come curls of your hair. Petal white
and innocent, this arm has no body.
It comes apart in my hands, pale
fingers falling into your eyes.

Tomorrow you depart, another
exotic defection. I gather the needles
that fell from your cheek and cover my eyes
at the light blaring through yellow leaves.
Late at dark I will rise to listen,
and see the silent snow of another season.

David Johnson

ELEGY FOR A GREAT BLUE HERON

One morning he appeared at road's end
Standing calmly in sodden river wind.
Scrawny, implacable, a metaphor
Of stoic virtue
Braced for the day's abrasions.
Next light, I found him
In the bunchgrass,
Carried him downstream
Below the springbox
Stretched him out like a fallen chieftain
On a lotus bier of skunk cabbage
His long beak at warrior's rest
His legs crossed
In the rune of sacrifice
His wings now feathers tied to bone
A prayer bundle to keep the earth akindle
A meal for the slow fires to sing about
A potlatch ceremony
To give it all away
To get away

STEADY ON THE STEEL
(for Jim Dissette)

At the public campfire
Sundance, Mt. Hood, Summer 1983
We drink cowboy coffee from a gallon pot
Smoke Camel straights,
Tell drinking stories.
A Chippewa,
Red baseball cap, green bowling shirt,
Black chinos, tells his:
"Ten years ago," he says
"I was up on the girders
Ten stories high, steady on the steel
& one day I look down
& I see this old winehead
Suckin' on a jug goddamn I thought
That could be me . . ."
The Chippewa smiles at the fire
Sees a man he once knew
In-There-Dancing

Anita T. Sullivan

CONVERGENCE

Tonight I can listen to the high organdy voices
of the frogs again
and let the fine grey fire which my bones have
held so long
rise out, past my curled ears.
I can hear in the seashell of this long sweet dusk
between the suns
the ghost of a childhood bouquet of violets,
especially their tiny yellow hearts.

Yet my old fear flickers in and out
like the light of the frogs' voices, one after one.

I have dared to remember the austere mansion garden
long ago I came to visit in a white gown,
my feet (in shoes, yes) skimming above the blur
of evening-silvered grass.
I knew my heart was not my usual heart
for I was free to sniff the wild outline
of every fallen blossom.

And all along they followed me on the other side,
the silent, lop-eared rabbits,
making soft humpings on the inside-out.
I did not know, losing myself gladly and often
in the dim burnish of anonymous roses,
how we were converging our way down to the lawn.

Only now, listening back along the stream
of fragrant noises
am I finding where we must be sitting,
comfortable in our brownness,
looking forward to the dawn hole
we know the long spell of frog voices
will finally make in the dark.

THAT WAS YEARS AGO

Holding up the skirts of my red bathrobe
I walk up the carpeted hall stairway of my house
last trip for today.
My back is straight
but my feet do not glide well in flip-flop slippers.
Somebody's mother, is all.
Now I am at the turn in the stair,
the wooden bannister above me, the hall windows.
This house was built in 1912, but now
the year is 1989, December.
My sons are growing.
I remember my mother going up the stairs
to bed every night at 9:30, to read.
She liked peace and quiet.
We had to turn the Nintendo down.
That was years ago.
I stand in the hall, in the cold.
Who am I?
Today I made tofu stir-fry
and drove my car here and there.
Here in my red bathrobe, already I am a historic figure.
Less than that. Back in 1989
they were still heating with gas in this house
and letting it come upstairs
through a vent in the floor.
But that was years ago.

Peter Jensen

ONE HUNDRED VIEWS OF HOKUSAI
(from his One Hundred Poets)

28. Deep in winter

My hunting buddies and I
built a fire by a cabin
in the snow, and we joked
about all the love making
that must have taken place
inside that abandoned cabin.
In fact, those broken windows
looked at our fire with such longing,
and a rusted iron pot filled with snow
looked so lonely, that we put out
our fire as Venus appeared
in the green sky and hurried away.

32. The Mill

By a river where they are milling logs
into boards and beams, I watch
as a young mother drags
her little son along.
He goes so slow because
he has a pet turtle on a ribbon.
I look at the river banks
where rocks have been exposed
because riparian zones
were destroyed, and the soil
washed away. So I ask
no one but the fallen maple leaves:
"Where will little turtles come from
when all the trees are gone?"

33. The boat

I think there is nothing as cheerful
as fishermen on the shore
repairing their boat
at the beginning of Spring.
There they are fixing imaginary leaks,
as the first green buds open
like the faces of fish
that will open to their bait.

Laura Winter

"I SEE THE SHADOWS"

I see the shadows
of moon and cloud

painting
figures

of bronze
across the white
sand-mounds

in a procession

of ancient ones
or
the dark ones

dancing
to silent drums

slow swaying rhythms
of coyotes on all fours

standing

then

erect

as men

dancing.

arrow head chips

scattered

from pouches

tied to narrow hips /

black stars

beneath their feet /

the heavy feet

not marking

sand

but moving

as the moon moves

up

and over

the dunes.

Kathleen Culligan

COUNTING HAWKS

Driving from Eugene one day we started counting hawks
on fence posts.

We hadn't planned on counting them, but after we saw
one, then another, then another, we counted backward
and began to wonder.

We counted forward and found twenty by Junction City,
thirty seven by Albany.

As time went on we got better at finding them, in the tops
of oak trees, partly hidden by mistletoe, and in the
fence rows between the ryegrass fields.

They are singular birds, even when there are two within
thirty feet of each other.

Some slept, others seemed to watch intently things we
couldn't see -- hungry field mice perhaps -- but most
seemed bored with the day as we had been.

At the Santiam we counted forty-nine and quit.

Leave it at that, we said, we want people to believe us
when we tell them, and round numbers will make
them skeptical.

Forty-nine red-tailed hawks on the interstate between
Salem and Eugene.

Were the settlers whose path we followed privy to
such extravagance?

COMMON GROUND BY JOHN DANIEL:
AN APPRECIATION

This writer does not really consider himself to be a reviewer but rather an observer or better yet, a witness, perhaps even in a spiritual sense. Which is to say, what follows is not an attempt to view John Daniel's Common Ground against a set of values or standards for poems necessarily widely held among readers of poems. Rather I would like to present a personal appreciation of the book in the hope that it will pique someone's curiosity.

Now feeling myself freed from constraints I will say right off the bat that this is a wonderful book. To me, it is a very personal book, really inviting a kind of personal appreciation, perhaps from many readers. I know I feel well-met as I move through the book. It is not simply that the reader is directly addressed, on occasion, as in the first poem, "One Place To Begin":

You're close now.
Wander up a dusty ravine until your nose
 smells something different.
Climb to the green grass, the stand of aspens.
Squirm your toes in black mud, with the tracks
 of hooves and paws.
Drink. The face that rises to meet you
 has been waiting for you to come home.

Or that the poet and his friends move familiarly through the poems, as in the poem "The Tidepool" rising to its final statement:

As we lay there watching,
to be alive as we are wasn't all I wanted
but enough: lost in this plenty,
small enough to see.

Actually Common Ground is personal for me in that the poet, or whatever you may wish to call the ego of these poems, seems to inhabit a locality in which I frequently find

myself wandering these days. There is a spiritual quality to the poems, as I hinted at earlier. The poems often occur at the juncture of ordinary personal experience and the infinite or the transcendental or the supernatural or meaning or whatever you choose to call it in your own life.

Though they occur at the familiar meeting place of man and nature, these are not romantic poems: they are not loaded with easy sentiment. In fact the language is often spare, stripped of sentiment, and the subject matter of a poem is presented with what I will call, for the lack of a better word, a "Zen" simplicity. What I am trying to say here about this book has been expressed more lucidly by the poet May Sarton in her remarkable essay "Plant Dreaming Deep": "the romantic style or stance falls away, and one emerges from it more naked, more realistic, though no less vulnerable." Daniel's poem "First Light" contains these verses, for example:

I stand at the woodstack
with owls still calling,
four deer in the frozen pasture,
the tops of the tall pines
incandescent with sun.

This is the way it begins.
We come back to ourselves
always here, now, in the light
divided from dark by no clear line,
that returns us to our own keeping.

In fact the spirituality of the poems sometimes becomes the literal content of the poems, and nothing is lost for me when philosophy takes over. This is from "Of Earth":

. . . given God's power to dream worlds
from the dark, I know
I could only dream Earth --
birds, trees, this field of light
where I and each of us walk once.

It is when the poet encounters nature in its wildness that the most memorable poems occur. The strongest of these is "The Great Horned Owl," in my opinion. Here the language is lean and spare and etches itself on the imagination. A quick sample:

Four days of death are all he can bear.
I find him raking his claws in the heavy dirt
that will not let him go . . .

The influence of William Stafford is in these poems, as in much of the fine work which is submitted to Fireweed. In fact one of the poems, "A Crossing," invites a comparison to one of Stafford's most memorable, the title poem of Traveling Through The Dark. (Daniel quotes the Stafford poem in an acknowledgment at the start.) Both the poems report an encounter with the wildness of nature which is sudden and uninvited, a collision with a deer. Space won't permit a lengthy comparison here, but Daniel's treatment of the incident is more intense and less meditative. There is an anger, a primitiveness of response in his poem which pleases me after thirty years of loving Stafford's poem. It's worth looking at these poems together. Perhaps the difference says something vital about this encounter of poet and wildness in nature, including the elemental in human nature:

I gripped
the wheel, one of the strangers
who kill at any crossing,
without the stomach to pay dead life

the respect of an honest hunger.

All our wildness may be disappearing, but for poems like these.

D.L.

EDITORS' NOTES

We have reviewed John Daniel's COMMON GROUND (Confluence Press, 1988) in this issue and would like to mention that it was an Oregon Literary Awards finalist in 1989.

We apologize to Lawson Fusao Inada for omitting his name from his "Regional Poems" in the April issue.

This issue marks one year, one volume, of FIREWEED. We are encouraged by the quality of poems sent to us, by the steady growth of subscriptions, by many positive comments. It's satisfying to be appreciated for what we are: a steady source of well-made-in-Oregon poems.

Please join readers who have subscribed for a second year. Please show FIREWEED to poets whose work you'd like to see published here and to readers, generally, who enjoy this work -- and who might subscribe.

Two guest editors will shape the issues of April and July 1991. Barbara Drake will select all of the April issue, which, as usual, is open to poems of all types. Clem Starck will edit part or all of the July issue, selecting poems about men and women at work, about workplaces, including home, about what we do for a living, for our days. Please send poems marked for Clem's attention.

FIREWEED Potluck and Open Reading: you are invited to a get-together of poets and readers, rain or shine, Sunday, September 9, 3 - 7pm, at Poyama Day Treatment Center, east of Rickreall (junction of 99W and Hwy 22). Please bring a dish for four and service. FIREWEED will provide tea, coffee and beer. RSVP Ann Staley (Corvallis) 757-0135; David Laing (Salem) 585-4616; Erik Muller (Eugene) 344-1053. Directions to Poyama: take Hwy 22 east from the junction with 99W, go 2.5 miles to Greenwood Rd. and then go south 1 mile to white school house on the left.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

STEVE BABCOCK, Eugene, is interested in performing poetry. This is his first publication. He plants trees for a Springfield co-op.

JOHN CAMPBELL, Eugene, teaches English at OSU, has published in NORTHWEST REVIEW, MISSISSIPPI MUD, POET LORE, and others, and occasionally edits CROWDANCING. His chapbook is EARTHWORKS.

ELIZABETH CLAMAN, new to Eugene, where she is a comparative literature doctoral student, has a chapbook, PERIPHERAL VISIONS, from Five Fingers Press, San Francisco.

VIRGINIA CORRIE-COZART teaches music in the Salem schools. Her poetry won a Ben Hur Lampman Award.

KATHLEEN CULLIGAN, Portland, has "temporarily abandoned the teaching of English for the pleasures and frustrations inherent in free lance writing and editing."

CHIP GOODRICH, Corvallis, describes his Willamette Valley inspiration: "powerful feelings recollected whenever it rains." Rain or shine, he gardens for Benton County Courthouse.

QUINTON HALLETT, Noti, has chosen country and writing after a career in art administration. Her essays appear in THE EUGENE REGISTER-GUARD.

PETER JENSEN has written with the name SNORKEL, and he is considering surfacing as PETER GINSENG or SCRIMSHAW TOEJAM. He has been advising DENALI from Lane Community College. WHEN WAVES SPROUT BIRDS is his retrospective.

DAVID JOHNSON, native Eugenean, has twenty-five years as journalist, editor, book designer, and typesetter. Currently, he is contributing editor to WHAT'S HAPPENING, where, among other things, he has placed emphasis on literary arts and happenings.

LEE CRAWLEY KIRK, Eugene, meets with a weekly workshop called Toad Falls Writers. A free lance writer in many genres, she has poetry in THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, ICE RIVER, CALAPOOYA COLLAGE, DENALI, THE OREGONIAN.

GREGG KLEINER, native of Lookingglass, lives in Corvallis where he read in the May Writers Cabaret. Poems have been published by LACTUCA, BLACK BEAR REVIEW, PARNASSUS.

MERVIN MECKLENBURG, Corvallis, has a manuscript ready for publication. He studied with Haislip, Hugo, Salisbury, Gallagher, and DeFrees.

CAROLYN REYNOLDS MILLER, math teacher at South Salem High, has had poetry in POETRY NORTHWEST, IRONWOOD, HUBBUB.

PETER NEWTON is graduate student at Bread Loaf. He works as a counselor to Eugene's homeless.

HELEN RONAN taught haiku in Florence this June, a form for which she has won recognition. From Eugene, she roams the state. Her Smith Rock poems are collected in PETRIFIED THUNDER.

LOIS ROSEN, Salem, teaches English as a Second Language at Chemeketa Community College. Her poems have been published by HUBBUB, MISSISSIPPI MUD, and COLORADO REVIEW.

BRENDA SHAW's THE COLD WINDS OF SUMMER is from Scotland, where she worked as a biologist. Now in Eugene, she writes poetry and fiction and meets with the Lane Literary Guild and Toad Falls workshops.

ANITA T. SULLIVAN, Corvallis, read at a recent Writers Cabaret and helps in organizing the Willamette Writers Guild. Her philosophic essay about piano tuning--her vocation--won the Western States Award in creative non-fiction.

SCOTT TAYLOR, a recent MFA from University of Oregon, takes his poetry and performance to London and New York. His chapbook is AFTER THE TEAR AND BITE OF THE CITY.

ROGER WEAVER has a new book from Gardyloo Press: TRAVELING ON THE GREAT WHEEL. Through years of teaching poetry at OSU, he has developed a poet's handbook, STANDING ON EARTH, THROWING SEQUINS AT THE STARS.

MARIA A. WICKWIRE teaches in Beaverton. Her mentors include Sandra McPherson, William Stafford, Gary Miranda.

LAURA WINTER, Portland, is fascinated by Great Basin natural history. Her poems have appeared in numerous publications, among them MR. COGITO, POETIC SPACE, PORTLAND REVIEW. Membrane Press of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, published her STONE FOG.