

FIREWEED

Poetry of Western Oregon



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Ken Zimmerman

HARVEST

Today it is the world's abundance
I remember. The squash, swollen and yellow and sweet
among the dried vines. The mound
of firewood growing daily in the shed.
Twists of sage and rosemary hanging over the stove.

It is easy to forget the middle of winter,
the early dark and late light,
short days and long nights soon to come,
easy to feel that the earth provides
all we need.

The old joy: no famine this year,
the pantry stuffed with the fruits of the summer's work,
family gathered close in the growing dark.



Elizabeth McLagan

SKY COMES DOWN

At river's edge
the evergreens lean in
and blacken,
red alders unravel,
pull down
the sky.

This is the hearth
of November:
all the green fires
gone out but one,
a dim blue haze.

Now, under
the cloud-barked alders,
a smolder of sky rests
in the river,

and the earth spins
the next stream south,
out of the Arctic.

Even now
it is drowning the coast,
even now
it veers toward land.

FOR SUSAN

The faces of my family
look out to the windowed tree
wedged between concrete
it lifts and swells
someday cracks will open
and beetles, like Lazarus,
walk out

In cemeteries
old beeches
mended with mortar and stone
thrive in the bone-rich ground

I imagine you
rising in the vault
of branches, leafing out,
your death green
and almost bearable

Like headstones
with their perfect frame
of dates, all emotion
one remove

Or the quiet great parents
on my wall, so distant
they have spared
me their life, and I am
someone they never imagined

I always believed I could
call you, and we would
take up as if
only days had passed

the glass of summer
spilled, and only
trees offering
their leaves like letters

REVIEW: *Windsock Poems II* (Howlet Press, 1995)
Twelve Oregon Poets (1994)

Working Assets: Poetry Circles That Publish

"American poetry now belongs to a subculture. No longer part of the mainstream of artistic and intellectual life, it has become the specialized occupation of a relatively small and isolated group." So begins Dana Gioia's goading essay, "Can Poetry Matter?" Gioia calls for "rapprochement with the educated public... I would wish that poetry could again become a part of American public culture. I don't think this is impossible."

I wish I could dispose of Gioia's thesis as readily as Dr. Johnson rebutted philosophical idealism. Johnson looked away, closed his eyes, and kicked the rock in his path: "Thus I refute Berkeley!" Gioia's essay is in my path; I stub my toe on it every time!

Yet in listing his remedies, Gioia overlooks the non-academic writing group. Indeed, throughout his essay, he overlooks amateurism in many of its forms, the activity of non-professional poets who themselves partly comprise the educated public Gioia wishes to reach. Recently, Nathan Douthit sent me an article about Chinese poetry and one of his poems: "What a shock to think of poetry as so well integrated with the life of educated people... I send along a 'rough-legged' poem for your pleasure." A pleasure, indeed!

No one can say how many times in any week exchanges occur like this one linking Coos Bay and Eugene. The publication of *Fireweed* four times a year might register on a gauge for poetry pulses. So would the monthly or bi-monthly meetings of critiquing groups and certainly their occasional publications, which come to us as bulletins of good news.

How heartening to read two recent chapbooks from Portland! Not only are the poems good; the publications are anthologies—flower bunches—taken from the stout rootstocks of perennial poetry workshops.

Windsock Poems II, handset by Doris Avshalomov at her Howlet Press, "celebrates twenty years of fortnightly meetings ...to share poems, critiques and bouquets." The chapbook is "dedicated to all poets and the four winds that stir them." Doris recalls that the group formed after a Haystack workshop, with a first publication of *Windsock* poems in 1981. Almost always focused on poetry, and with "oddly no men," the group invites friends to join and has provided over the years quite a line-up of titles by workshop members: Elizabeth McLagan, Lois Baker, Verlana Orr (current members) and Marilyn Folkestad and Helen Dickinson.

The writing in *Windsock II* is painterly, representing the sensible world and reaching sensibly across arbitrary borders between person and place, self and others, living and dead. The seven poets—Lois Baker, Verlana Orr, Elizabeth McLagan, Deborah Stone, Pat McMartin Enders, Lucy Sheehey, Doris Avshalomov—each offer two or three poems that link in theme and manner. Registration of nature is sharp:

there's a mile of kelp, yards wide,
smelling of rot and iodine.

Lois Baker, "Kelp"

those naked sinews of bark were
my winter focus...

Lucy Sheehey, "My Tree"

Place description is often preliminary to making connections and finding reasons to inhabit that place:

I miss
the tearing wind, the shock of rude
sharp thunder shaking the mist
out of the bristling firs...

Doris Avshalomov, "Coming Down"

Or from a Boot Hill Museum photo of Dodge City after a
gunfight:

Before the saloon doors open
and the bartender comes to sweep them
away, they have taken the shape of the land:
low hills, the crotch line
of intersecting ridges...

Two women, one child stand watch.
Their posture shows no claim.
The light rises, they must set themselves
against a sky offering no relief,
a burst of clouds and, to the west,
a small rise crowned with trees.

Elizabeth McLagan, "The Morning After"

Or a girl holding out an apple to a horse:

I am here near the barn, the stiff-limbed girl,
right arm reaching out, narrow as a bridge....

And suddenly it is happening,
the sky black as the horse's mane
sweeps my arm....

Deborah Stone, "Zamna Holds the Apple"

Twelve Oregon Poets offers one poem by Jane Glazer, Harold
Johnson, Joan Maiers, Dennis McBride, Robert McFarlane,
John C. Morrison, Sherron Norlen, Verlena Orr, Paulann
Petersen, Shelley Reece, Pat Vivian, and Robert Weiss. This
collection is as eccentric as the Windsock poets were
concentric; a wide variety of tone and subject compared to the
close-knit Howlet Press volume.

This circle, Harold Johnson recounts, was first focused by
Sandra McPherson, the "godmother of the group." Meeting
once a month for fifteen years, the members, according to

Harold, have indeed been various. Some were "starting from
nothing," some were "rusty," as Harold classifies himself then,
and, clearly, others were "somewhere when they arrived."

With no in-group printer, these twelve have engaged Anne
Dosskey as designer. The result is their first annual collection,
a booklet using a literary typeface and an understated yet
crisp layout. Striking among this dozen are the ironic, speech-
derived culture poems and those that push beyond the daily
and accidental with their vision and music.

Sherron Norlen finds a confusion of live and stuffed animals
in "Dead and the Quick at the Confluence of the Selway,
Lochsa, and Clearwater." Taxidermy decorates the restaurant,
but a flying bat haunts the cabin, a troubling mix:

Is the Indian at the window table
stuffed, too?
What if he should speak?
Worse than a corpse sitting up
suddenly in its coffin.

Harold Johnson is not haunted by Brenda Benet's suicide,
but after her death he is fascinated by her appearances on
"Days of Our Lives."

And still, at three, I watch
your leftover life: I see your angry strut,
your drawl of disbelief....

Shelley Reece writes about movie stars and Victory Gardens
and horror comics. "Lucky Number" views a childhood
influenced by chance, questioning the Wordsworthian
dictum, "The Child is father to the Man."

In the time of the zinc penny
Dodge City's water spilled
over the top of my galoshes....

I planted a dollar's worth
of the money my mother
said didn't grow on trees, and
played John Wayne on Iwo.

Paulann Petersen's "Feral," collected in *The Animal Bride*,
explores a dream of bleeding, linking that color to a

rush of

wild poppies. Two, three,
a whole rash field,
strew of wet silk
then a fine dust
floating from one black
throat to another.

John C. Morrison's "Night to Day" also combines instinct and
ritual, but uses blue, not red. His infant son has gotten hold
of an ink pad, so his "strange hands"

...moved through blue
toward black, to a night sky
without moon,
or clouds, or stars: indigo.

The cleansing of his hands, through more play and baths,
Morrison likens to daybreak and to generating a spring bulb
garden. Unwittingly, the child becomes a dealer of death and
life.

Such vivid chapbooks and such loyal meetings of poets may
not move poetry from obscurity to the spotlight that Gioia
wishes for it. Perhaps these signs indicate there never has
been a poetry blackout. Gioia's call to wake us may reach
many in Portland who are awake already, who may smile at
the watchman's habit of being alarmed.

E.M.

Paulann Petersen

BRANCH LIBRARY

Each time I went there I breathed
paper and ink, lemon-oil polish,
the weft and warp of binding cloth.
Like the slow click of a fan swinging
side to side, our time went
passing. The talcum
of bodies held to a hush
drifted out the door.

All I knew

was *story*, pages that led to
one another, the telling of what might be.
I imagined myself hidden while the librarian
gathered errant books, slid them
home on their shelves. She dusted the counter,
pinned on her hat. She left.

I lived bravely, on wheatpaste and water.
Snug in her chair, I watched
as a circle of light from a gooseneck lamp
rose on her desktop blotter
like an ink-shadowed lake. My open book
launched on this surface's ripple,
I followed its pages. I read
and I read. With each turn
a little air stirred.



THE WELLING

At a blood-soaked place on pavement
we could all converge, each bringing
a small vessel of water, some part
of what no single person could carry
alone. Cup, glass—any container
a size to hold in our own hands,
filled from a tap or faucet,
drawn from a common source.

We'd be at a neighborhood corner—
one with signs for a yard sale
tacked on the telephone pole—
some of us bringing our part
in the plastic tubs used for butter,
holding that yellow in our hands
like bunches of dandelions.

We'd stand for a minute or two,
pausing to look at that spot
now darkened, but unmistakable,
then leaning over to slowly pour
what we'd carried onto the stain.
We might stay to talk a little,
thinking of rain, heavy and clear—
water to course along our streets,
to take such a mark away.

We'd see ourselves as those
who'd carried some of our share
to a well of a different kind,
having gone there to replenish,
to pour something back in.
A small balm to leave behind
before we turned to walk home—
hand on a shoulder, a kind word,
the river of what we could give.

EMMA'S BETRAYAL

Three days imprisoned
in her soiled baby crib
she waited in the apartment
her parents had abandoned.
The neighbors unaware
just how desperate
her small cries were.
I'm sure they all assumed
there was someone there.
I'm sure, for God's sake,
they cursed her noise
until it was the silence
that finally alerted them.
Now she has left them,
she has left us all
to our darkened hours,
her little voice still
calling us by name.
Her thirst our thirst.
Her fear our fear.
Her knowledge of betrayal
our own.

Michael Jenkins

HOW WE BUSY OUR HANDS

We say, this is a crane,
shaping its paper wings
to lift us from the screams
of the neighbors next door.
It's probably just
children playing, we say.

But look, look at this!
It is a little boat to float
our dreams out on the sea,
the waves a shade of blue
we choose to call discipline.
Who are we to say?

And this, a star! Not a scar.
Not the body healing
the dark and violent truth.
But a star. A star for wishing.
See how bright it shines,
how its white light blinds.

Deborah Narin-Wells

IRONING

Mother ironed
father's white handkerchiefs
and stiff starched shirts,
even pillow cases.
I watched her there
in the doorway between kitchen
and breakfast room,
the late afternoon light smelling as clean
as new sheets.
It was one of the rare times
I saw her relaxed—
in her private world of water
starch and linen,
that dreaming world where
father's coming home late
didn't matter.

In that brief threshold of time
she could imagine
anything.
The iron moving gently back and forth
with its certainty of warm steam
was a talisman against fear,
a sign that love—
in the touch of a familiar shirt
or face—
was possible.

Deborah Narin-Wells

SHIP IN A BOTTLE

Authentic model it says,
but I never understood how
they get them in under
thin glass;
four tiny pin-striped sails,
ocean like a soft blue eraser.

My father had one
on the desk, next to his pipes
fine brown wood.
I wonder if it reminded him
of those days in the navy
before he was married.

I saw a photo once
an island somewhere,
white shirt open at the chest
sleeves rolled up
hat cocked back
a beer in one hand
cigarette in the other:
perfect model for the girls
back home
mocking smile under
thin glass
authentic
the real thing.

Robert Hunter Jones

ESCAPIST DREAMS OF DISCONTENTED SAINTS

In heaven we are like the crew of a ship
in a bottle. Our model, too frail, too ascetic
to float its mirage, stands on display.
This is real glass we breathe on, held back
from our other hell—the one we prefer
too late. Heaven, when you have it, isn't
worth the polish. It is empty.

Breathing, we cloud the glass
and trace our faces there, looking out.
Even our reflections turn their backs
on us. A blond boy, impish and unlaced,
stares from the other side at the marks
we make on the glass. He turns the stone
he weighs in calculating fingers, and we feel
the touched shape of possibility.

This is the edge we live by, sharp as
any dream of falling glass. We breathe
air too pure to color the blood. Noses
still scabbed by the grindstone
press the shell of our good living.
Impeccable, there is none among us
to cast the first stone. Heaven,
like hell, is mostly in the habit.

Robert Hunter Jones

DADDY LEAVES HOME

for MB

They can no longer separate what he is
from his disease. Two weeks, they said.
We are sorry to inform you.

Three days later in a house of pancakes
she looks down at her plate and hears
a man laugh. What is this? she asks, meaning
the food, the restaurant, this laughter.

It is a fine place for breakfast, she says,
always a wait. She hears the laugh again
and tracks it carefully through all the voices
and gestures, across tables and people

and plates of food, to a man in the corner
and into the cave of his mouth. The laugh
is her father's laugh. What is it doing here,
in another city, in another man's mouth?

She looks with greater care around the room.
What else might have followed her?
She studies faces, listens for inflections
or particular ways of waiting to speak.

She recalls then a dream that recurs: *a child following
her father to a door among windows. Light flows in
with such fluid radiance they must wade against it.
At the door he hesitates; he turns to her. She knows*

*he means to speak, but his voice is only light
and his face a window through which it is shining.
Beyond the clear pane the driveway is empty,
the old Plymouth gone. Daddy, she says. Daddy?*

LISTENING THROUGH SMOKE

Back from Munich at the far end of a weekend,
I sit in the Stiegl Ecke opposite the Salzburg Bahnhof,
waiting in the smoke for beer and local soup,
a bus to wind me back into the mountains.

I live there among mountains with names as lovely
and remote to me as the village women. It's clear suddenly,
listening through smoke to the others, how far removed
understanding is from proper pronunciation.

In German my expectations are tempered
by ignorance, the poor man's humility. I speak
a little but cannot understand. Now, in the smoke,
it occurs to me I have the same trouble with English.

When I think of the problems I've had with
possessive pronouns, not to mention the conditional,
the future perfect! The past is hopeless, the present
too limited to express the range of my desires.

As for German, what little I know is lost
in the Austrian dialect, a subtle rounding, contracting
of the language that varies village to village, expressive
of regional pride and a passive aggression toward Germany.

I close my eyes and listen through the smoke.
I catch the verbs "to need," "to want," "to believe,"
then imagine my own voice, smoothed, rounded,
local, behind which something else is being said.

The waitress brings me beer and soup. She knows
my fatigue by her own. All of us are waiting.
For forty schillings the bus will take us
somewhere, but it rarely takes us home.

GUEST POEM

Philip Larkin

WHEN FIRST WE FACED, AND TOUCHING SHOWED

When first we faced, and touching showed
How well we knew the early moves,
Behind the moonlight and the frost,
The excitement and the gratitude,
There stood how much our meeting owed
To other meetings, other loves.

The decades of a different life
That opened past your inch-close eyes
Belonged to others, lavished, lost;
Nor could I hold you hard enough
To call my years of hunger-strife
Back for your mouth to colonise.

Admitted: and the pain is real.
But when did love not try to change
The world back to itself—no cost,
No past, no people else at all—
Only what meeting made us feel,
So new, and gentle-sharp, and strange?

from *Collected Poems*
(Noonday Press, 1988)

COMMENT

Many of Larkin's poems deal with the questions and the fears of time; of the progression of life rushing heedlessly past the end of his own lifetime. In many of these poems, too, he has no comfort to offset this dilemma. For Larkin, death is a

frightening non-existence; there is often nothing that binds his poems to some eternal sustenance. In this poem, though (written late in his life), he identifies such a comfort. He affirms the inexplicable, undying joy of love.

Time is a many-faceted issue here as well. The first stanza is a delicate testimony to the special nature of two adults meeting and falling in love. Not only is there "moonlight and frost," but also heat and bright light ("The excitement and the gratitude"). An arousing combination! Also, there are the individual pasts of both lovers which appear to be sturdy and supportive.

In the second stanza, though, Larkin admits his turmoil: each of these pasts seems to be a source of frustration for the poet. Time, like love, is a venture; love, in this poem, is filled with contraries. Certainly, as he says, "The pain is real" as he battles with the past which he cannot keep from invading the present, the first facing.

Larkin's biographer suggests that this poem might have been an attempt to put a "brave face" on what was for the poet an episode of intense jealousy revolving around a renewed interest in a woman from his past. Certainly, his "years of hunger-strife" is personal, a struggle which he would like his lover to cover up, to "colonise." However, this poem also contains an affirmation of life which I find to be more than mere face-saving.

In the last stanza, I am persuaded to interpret the love which wants to "change the world back to itself" as not being wholly a self-serving desire. Yes, he wishes that love might gain for him something personal; in so doing, Larkin is affirming, celebrating even, the universal—and he sees that clearly. The poet is able to admit of his pain and still tell us of the other side which we also know so well. That other side is the "gentle-sharp" pull toward love, that most inexplicable life force.

Perhaps in his own life Larkin was unable to reconcile the past with this poem's several moments of tenderness. Perhaps he was never able to resolve the question of time and his own finiteness. Nevertheless, he has taken the intangible existence of love and given it material strength, simplicity, and an honesty for me to savor again and again.

Hank Wilson

Ruth F. Harrison

STRANGE SPACE

The week my brother disappeared, raccoons
moved into the vacant downtown library, and
Glide the german shepherd jumped
through my once husband's upstairs window (which
was closed) onto the porch roof.

It was the season of raccoons, I had seen
eleven, one evening, holding a meeting
on someone's vacation-home porch
noses in air, hymnbooks in hand,
programs tucked under an arm
three latecomers in spectacles, hastening from
the undergrowth, among trees, preoccupied
but diligent.

Just a retired public/private man, a former
city planner, a student of Japanese brushstroke
who disappeared one Thursday in a carport
leaving keys on the car seat, lettuce wilting
in shopping bags in the back—
the larger car, a white '85 Dodge Colt,
gone too.

What sticks in my mind is his aviator-cap, how
when he was five and I still three he
loved aero-planes, ran to watch the mail plane
cross blue sky over the Homestead house. He
was too big to cry, but did cry once, over
a shining purple rock lost to river waters.
And that he always told the truth, especially
about who ate the raisins.

Glide the dog is okay; no one knows why the
jump— Burglar? someone selling cookies?
It was brown imitation-leather with goggles
stitched firmly in place above the forehead line
his grey eyes and freckles next, and
the flaps snapped under his chin.

We wait and watch the telephone and
when we have to be out, we
check the message-machine, look for its blinking light
like Glide the dog checking porch-rail and
shrubby for raccoon scent.

Again I see a biplane, the river waters and stones,
and that old gray eighth-grade speller
he had mastered, still five.

And then today, two raccoons at the edge
of Three Rocks Road and still no word.



John J. McDonald

CHIMES

What spaces
silence?

Voices

or perhaps
windfall?

Chimes

without any
happening

in any
place

low.

Helen Ronan

from fireplace wood
a cricket hops out to find
new recital hall

REVIEW: *I Hear the Crickets Laughing* by Anita Sullivan
(Howlet Press, 1996)

You might hear Anita Sullivan's lilting laughter and prose mornings on NPR's *Performance Today* or sit with her new book of poems from Howlet Press. In either case you would be struck by her imaginative tone, by her playfulness and attention to language, by her idiosyncratic interests, by the various ways she "falls up the mountain." Like all fine poets she mixes memory and desire, reads them through the focused lens of perception, but for Anita, a piano tuner by trade, it is what she hears, what she acquires through listening, which seems her particular gift. Like Virginia Woolf she knows the "hum of language"; like William Carlos Williams, she might say that listening is "my entire occupation."

Besides cricket laughter, things heard in this new collection include: gravel, silent fish and empty-hearted singing; the sea from inside and sifted thoughts, Royal conversation and the third movement of a quartet; train whistles and refrigerator hums and the turmoil of flaming spears, and frogs and bone fire and the dusk; rabbits and fragrant rose noises, terror, zithers, the harmony of irrelevance; the crack of an egg, April silence, and bees, of course; and time and the Agnus Dei, and hay.

Sometimes the power of all this listening is the direct focus of a poem, like "Harmonia" in which "...she hummed the trees/back out of Earth" or "Convergence," where "Tonight I can listen to the high organdy voices of the frogs again." In others, "Summer Solstice" (Helmut Rilling conducting a chorus of wheat) or "The Queen's Guard" (a concert grand and bougainvillea make angels rise and turn inside out), deep listening is the state of grace from which the poem emerges. In these poems, and in many others, it is Anita's particular syntax and narrative which create the silence that transforms hearing to listening, looking to seeing.

In "Just Lately" for example, the speaker is noticing the seasonal change to autumn:

Golden trees have been nodding in
at certain windows of my house
like old potted plants of giants
making a vegetative pause
on their way between dimensions.

which she then connects to a predicament of the heart. The poetic bridge for this understanding includes what she hears in her house in the middle of the night. And as I read on to the final lines I think to myself, "Oh that sound, I know it too." And I take a moment to listen for the periodic Admiral hum, so that the poet's listening makes me listen doubly—to "the short silence" where she has hidden her ambivalence and to my own.

Another poem which brings the reader to a state of keen perception is the sonnet "Passive Resistance," with its tight form and easy rhyme. The seer (the poet first, then the reader) considers a field full of horses, the setting sun, and how Ariadne might be at work in turning "the sun aside each day." In fourteen lines we watch the light slide off horses' backs and,

Amid the turmoil of the flaming spears,
by merely standing still, the horses win;
they lean against the light, and disappear.

In fact, these examples and many others in the collection ask what good poems always ask, and what this poet requests in "Prayer in April": "Listen to this time." Consider the old cistern you've just located in the bamboo thicket or what advice might be given in the *Book of a Hundred Best Ways to Die*; watch ducks in flight and cows waiting for the end of the world; think of stones or of Love "antlered and free, bellowing among the streets"; or "...ask the butterflies about immortality." These poems, like the crickets, are graces which await the reader's keenest listening.

A.S.

John J. McDonald

DOCUMENTARY

beginning
is fact

just the
way

to put it
first

as an
ending

without knowing
what has

happened or has
been said

and how
exactly

It went.

Anita Sullivan

PHOTO OF A WOMAN DANCING

Even if you do not know
(because you have never seen
 a photograph)
this is a woman dancing
you would know the circle
beneath her feet
(even if you do not say
 "circle" or "feet")
you would know round
 and safe
and a small explosion inside
your head might tell you
 "enclosure"
even if the arc she is inscribing
on a black tree
in a white street
with delicate concentration
and fierce beauty
does not lead you to wonder
how she might have left her house,
 her children
for an afternoon
to dress in crisp, ceremonial
 white
to the top of her head
so she could step upon the shadow
 of a tree
you might be inclined
because of the motion
(which you will feel)
to lean out a little
 just to lean out.

Dianne Williams Stepp

THIS LIFE

Lying in bed this morning
being grateful for this life
I've got, bent over the weeds,
the sweet suck of their pulling
out of wet soil. Colander
in hand picking fingers
of beans, and not some other
life, wasting in a hospital
bed, hiding under the hull
of a bombed truck.
Such a leisurely life
is my lot, a thick bowl
filling and emptying with ease
between sunrise and sunset.
Not standing in some scarred
field, searching for a sign,
a familiar plaid, perhaps a boot,
a flash of skirt, to say
who was my own.

Lex Runciman

LETTER TO OURSELVES FROM PLACID

Cracked, useless as an old Timex,
the Nikon rests at home in its parts
in the drawer with lock washers and unmatchable bolts.
Like Marconi, Carrie Nation, and the invention of soup,
all travel assumes the unreality of history.
And the sun fills us with a languorous desire.
Therefore we chill drinks, imagine paper,
a letter to ourselves returned,
strangers amid extraordinary laundry.

Here, out there, mergansers.
Their neon crowns are sexual displays.
Placid Lake fills a bowl a blue mile across
half full, sides bristly with larch
a green entirely their own.
To imagine the cabin, say *cabin*, *screendoor*.
A propane icebox hums its cargo of beer.
Here is here, palpable as lunch.
We're obscure, loose, ratty, uncouth, smug.

We are not opening envelopes.
We are not sorting bills or the bulk mail
samples of liquid detergent and cologne.
And we have no pictures.
Cattle blur on the far shore.
We have used all our fingers to count deer.
Two of them cool up to their withers in lake water.
Today we are going nowhere. We can tell
each other almost anything.

(reprinted from the October 1990 issue)

Michael Spurlin

MEMORY FOR A CITY DWELLER

A range, a river and open range:
under shadowless light from a cloud sun
mountains tower without darkening.
River's flat gray is its own making.
Range grass disappears in the distance
but, close to the river, ripples like
water and makes the river seem still.

Range your eye along the ridge
between sky and mountain;
that's the only spot where clouds,
filling the sky, have motion.
The river too is filled, rising
from that glacier to rinse
the range land's edge.

Recall this day when the world
spoke its center in you,
when a glacier's movement into water
was the rapid motion of earth
and your eye roved around
the world's stillness, bounded
by mountain, river and open range.



ADAM AND EVE AT NEWBERRY CRATER

More women have done this than you can imagine,
or should have, I pant, as we hike the volcano's
ragged rim, peer down into the crater's quivery lakes.
Here, I rant, demand a sex change,
want more power, stronger muscles,
your long leg bones and other coveted gendered perks
of the trail.

But you, already a switchback ahead again,
look down with obsidian glint,
say I might as well trace all sentences back to Eve
or just *try* to unfork the tongue of that damned snake.



SNOW ANGELS

for my sisters

Remember that winter of blizzards, indoors and out,
when we were so sad and each other's only friend,
when we leapt inside each other's snow angels
to move freely within a known and trusted boundary?

Remember when we were sent to our rooms
and you stood inside the doorway
while I coached you to push the backs of your hands
hard against the jamb for the hundred counts it took
to make you an angel?

When I gave the signal for you to step forward,
free of the wood frame, you grinned and I watched
your arms lift from your sides like wings.
That moment, we knew we could fly
and every heavy thing resting on our shoulders
lifted away, like storm clouds from the full moon.

Jean Esteve

THE CRANBERRY BOG

My grandfather took me with him to the cranberry bog
every November before Thanksgiving. He was often cranky,
the fog was cold, and he thought my picking slow,
unserious, but my parents made me go.

I didn't know, and if I had would not have cared
about what turns the souls of those who feel
their death draw near.

Soon after my grandfather died, businessmen bought and
filled
the cranberry bog, built on it a large department store,
nor do I try to hide my smiles of excitement
when I buy dresses there.

John Kaufman

STUMP POND

1

A stage road and a watermill,
a river plugged, a hollow flooded...
There we drank our fill
of pastoral and bass, rented
Sundays of serenity in flat-bottomed
boats, rowing, father and sons
above the trees, between
the turnpike and the highway innocent
of history, afloat, adrift.

2

Once by the pond
a turtle tumbled like
a hubcap down
into the water.

I felt crosscut,
a man stumped
and teetering between
flight and gravity.

3

I heard it first. Rhymed vowels
of dusk across Stump Pond.
Response wicked up to owl.

I followed the clear margin,
homing on the sound
then stopped and cocked

my ears and raised my sight
above the ground. I saw
arched ears and ponded eyes,

ancient Roman face
of the great horned owl—
imperious, incredulous gaze

on what stood below,
hunter or prey
it could not say until

I shifted a foot
to hold my ground
and it lifted its wings to claim

thickening air, all
the nights my island wakes
to comforting sounds.

4

Blunted by bone,
weather or error,
it held its sharpened
shape, the uttering

line, flawed harmony
of art. I hold it
now in Oregon, fondling
an arrowhead like a rosary

bead, like Paumanok
crystallized and lost
as the river of a tribe
called Nisseqogue.

Linda Besant

CANADA GOOSE

In the park
the Canada goose,
dignified and
deliberate among us,

harvests grain
from the children
who shiver before the
probe and sweep

of her beak
and her wild, dark eyes,
while I, from the
balcony of my

taller view,
watch the water
bead on her feathers,
smokey shingles

tipped with light,
and set in a
symmetry perfect
as fir cones or

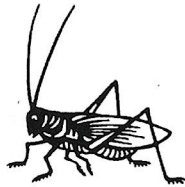
day lapped over night
and I want to ignite
like a sparkler
showering

fireflies of praise.
Or bow down,
a compass needle
before true north.

Perri Dowell

STORY PROBLEM

Since you've become less
of a factor in my life, I've been
thinking I could go and finish
that advanced degree in mathematics,
explore the possibilities, like
Betty and Bob who leave a party
at midnight and travel to separate towns
equidistant from the place of the party,
only Bob travels at twice the speed of Betty,
he also leaves the lid up 75% of the time,
re-hangs the hand towel properly once with
every 3 attempts, while Betty travels a constant pace,
never hears from Bob again, winds up getting
her doctorate in mathematics, gets tenured,
leads a quiet life in a college town, buys a cat,
walks onto her back patio in August, contemplating
light years, black holes, differential equations.



Jim Grabill

IN THE WIND

Think of all the steps, all the runs
through houses and trees, all the walks alone

or with others, each step an unfolding of leaves,
each scent a rocking branch around us.

I know you live in your own world.
But the stone in my body is the stone in yours.

The fire in my blood is the fire in yours.
The water in the rain falls in our cells.

I know we haven't met, but we live in each other.
Our longing reaches into the century out ahead

where we meet or pass or become other people
in other lives meeting, as the wind rocks

the chalice of firs, the clearing opened
and at once congested by everything making it,

the hares and horseflies and all the quartz.
Leaves are the other parts of our lungs,

as water flowing in the river is part
of the way we know our minds and purpose.

I see you centuries out. I see us passing
in the store. I feel you with me now.

EDITORS' NOTES

The literary landscape is a version played fast forward of the natural landscape: landmarks fade and emerge, key features convulse and metamorphose. Always something like Fate or Necessity strikes a shaping blow.

After long service to Oregon letters and beyond, *Mr. Cogito* has ended its 23 year periodical publication. *Calapooya Collage* remains suspended, and Tom Ferté gives his energy to Adrienne Lee Press. *Hubbub* is now publishing annually. Eighth Mountain Press cannot survive only by publishing poetry titles, however fine.

Portlandia is a recent eruption. Dan Raphael manages a steady flow of chapbooks from the series *26 Books*, while Quiet Lion Press is beginning to publish the poets featured in *Off the Beaten Track*. The amazing Oregon Literature Series has formed a range of six tall peaks.

Still there are widely-felt tremors. Small presses are threatened by the renegeing on government and private support and by shifts in the book industry—high return rates, mega stores, and the poetry, as Adrienne Rich writes in *What Is Found There*, marginalized in “those two shelves, down there.” In recent months local presses have made appeals for individual donations. You have heard or will hear from Calyx, Story Line, and Oregon State University. At least directly order books from them. And help build up your favorite place on this landscape by contributing generously.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

*LINDA BESANT, Portland, has worked as an outdoor guide, forest ranger, and ski patroller. She headed a program introducing disabled people to the outdoors. She is now a writer full-time.

*PERRI DOWELL, Portland, is a native Oregonian, born in Sweet Home and raised in Corvallis and Philomath, She is a student in the Oregon Writers' Workshop.

JEAN ESTEVE, Waldport, has had poetry and commentary in recent issues of *Portlandia*. Talent House will be publishing her collection, *Swim*.

JAMES GRABILL, Portland, won the Literary Arts, Inc., Hazel Hall Poetry Award for his 1994 collection from Lynx House, *Poem Rising Out of the Earth and Standing Up in Someone*. And the same year, *Through the Green Fire*, Holy Cow Press, was a finalist for the Literary Arts essay award.

QUINTON HALLETT, Noti, has had anthology publications in *Women's Words* and *Writing Our Way Out of the Dark*. She has read at the Clinton Street Theatre, Mother Kali's Books, and the Maude Kerns Art Center. Her poem “Narrowing” was an OSPA award winner.

*RUTH F. HARRISON, Waldport, is a retired English teacher. She has taught literature and creative writing for Oregon Coast Community College, Linfield College, and Portland State University. Poems of hers have been published by *Denver Quarterly*, *West Wind Review*, *Pen & Ink*. She gardens and writes, a member of Inklings, a writing group.

MICHAEL JENKINS, Grants Pass, is a homemaker living with his wife and two children. His poems have appeared in *Rogues' Gallery* and *West Wind Review*.

ROBERT HUNTER JONES, Vienna and Lakeside, spends summers fighting forest fires and gathering materials for his essays and novel. A graduate of Lewis and Clark and of Brown, he teaches English abroad.

*JOHN KAUFMAN, Eugene, has work in the Adrienne Lee Press heron anthology. *Kentucky Poetry Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, and *Plains Poetry Journal* have published his poetry.

*JOHN J. McDONALD, Portland, teaches at Mt. Hood Community College and University of Portland. His chapbook is *La Mancha*, and his poetry and fiction have appeared in *Yawp Magazine*, *Gutterrag*, *Fact Sheet Five*, and others.

ELIZABETH McLAGAN, Portland, has poems in recent issues of *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Mississippi Mud*, and *Portland Review*. Howlet Press published her chapbook, *The River Sings Like Rock*, 1989.

DEBORAH NARIN-WELLS, Eugene, has a Masters in Comparative Literature from Rutgers. She has taught ESL for Lane Community College and participates in the Lane Literary Guild Poetry Workshop.

PAULANN PETERSEN, Portland, published *The Animal Bride* with Trask House. New poems are in *Poetry* and *The New Republic*.

HELEN RONAN, Eugene, has published haiku in leading journals in America, Japan, England, and New Zealand. Her work is in eleven anthologies and in two chapbooks: *Cloud Shadows* and *Petrified Thunder: Oregon's Smith Rocks*.

LEX RUNCIMAN, Corvallis, teaches at Linfield College. As editor of Arrowood Books, he has published poetry and essay collections by writers within and beyond the region. He has a book-length manuscript ready for publication.

*MICHAEL SPURLIN, Eugene, has worked in various Northwest libraries. He has read in local high schools and been published by *Lynx* and *Tidepools*.

DIANE WILLIAMS STEPP, Portland, has been writing poetry since 1989, studying with Nelson Bently in Seattle and participating in the Castiglia Reading Series. She is a psychotherapist and a recent grandmother.

ANITA SULLIVAN, Corvallis, has published a chapbook of poetry that is reviewed in this issue. She writes for and sometimes edits the travel magazine *Grand Tour*.

*HANK WILSON, Springfield, is a writer and book collector. He works at the University of Oregon's Knight Library.

KEN ZIMMERMAN, Creswell, teaches English at Lane Community College. He and Joseph Bednarik are organizing this season's Windfall Reading Series. Ken has a poetry home page, featuring a poet of the month and a poetry calendar.

* First appearance in *Fireweed*.

