Shawangunk Review

State University of
New York at New Paltz
New Paltz, New York

20th Anniversary Issue
Fall 2009

GUEST EDITORS for 20th Anniversary Issue
H. R. Stoneback
Joann K. Deiudicibus
Dennis Doherty

REVIEW EDITORS
Daniel Kempton
H. R. Stoneback

Cover art: Jason Cring

The *Shawangunk Review* is the journal of the English Graduate Program at the State University of New York, New Paltz. The *Review* publishes the proceedings of the annual English Graduate Symposium and literary articles by graduate students as well as poetry and book reviews by students and faculty. The views expressed in the *Shawangunk Review* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. Please address correspondence to *Shawangunk Review,* Department of English, SUNY New Paltz, New Paltz, NY 12561.

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From the Editors

The editors are pleased to present this anniversary issue of the *Shawangunk Review* celebrating the first twenty years of the journal's publication.

Collected in these pages is the best of the poetry and fiction that has appeared in the *Review*. You will find a generous sampling of work by poets of national reputation and international renown, side by side with poems by SUNY New Paltz faculty and the work of our graduate students—some of them now rising younger poets whose careers began at New Paltz. Interspersed with poems selected from the general poetry section of the Review are excerpts from the special event poetry sections that have occasionally been featured. The capstone of this volume is the work of Robert Penn Warren published for the first time ever in our 2006 *Warren Centennial Issue.*

The editors particularly wish to acknowledge Joann K. Deiudicibus and Dennis Doherty, who served admirably on the editorial committee for this volume.

Thanks also to Jason Taylor for layout, typesetting, and production supervision, and to Jason Cring for the cover art.

Collected Poems

No Lady of Shallot

William Bedford Clark

Back in the 60s (not yet THE SIXTIES)
Near lightning and stumbling thunder
Had emptied the links and pool at Twin Hills.

And a girl, hair wet, in new jeans, weejuns,
At the window of a stone house
Edged tight on the very far east of town

Watched as the long drought came roaring apart
With wind and horizontal rain
That humbled oaks, set old shingles clapping,

Turned the dry spruce free of its fibrous roots,
Quite unmindful of the low wall
Designed to keep ditch and world at yard's length.

Her pupils rounded wide to take it in.
An awful glee razzed up her spine
As mind danced in the throbbing disorder.

No Lady of Shallot, she looked, foresaw
The greater shakiness to come:
Ruined Camelot—long war—shamed Presidents.

(Not quite literally, of course. But still
The next decade failed to surprise:
The slow replay of a quick fast-forward.)

There is a certain virgin turn of soul
That defines the girl from woman.
She watched at the recessed Tudor window

Back in the 60s (not yet THE SIXTIES),
The day lightning and bum-thunder
Sent her home from the high pool at Twin Hills.

Preventive Grace

William Bedford Clark

They never wed, so never quite divorced,
But just now met by canny happenstance
On the declining square (brickwork noon-scorched—
And scarcely June), contrived a gimpy dance,
Parleyed an inane word or two, and smiled
Toward the middle-distance. Once stung, twice wise,
Long-immunized against what will beguile
Teens' buzzing surge, each copped a neutered guise
That would (but didn't) hide the plot devised
Full forty years ago against a child
Who wasn't there—or let go on its own:
Some spotty blood, no discernible bone.

Yellow House

Pauline Uchmanowicz

Strobe light, fire light
ember of frankincense
stoked by the lid
of a wood-burning stove

Out dog-chewed windows
snow piles wind
a hydrant with a moat,
marking a frozen castle
flying orange flags
as cozily as thimble-tinted
stars displaying precession
on equinox horizons
ring wobbling earth
in a zodiac sampler

And on the pine wall
adjacent to the icebox
the crucified icon whispers
God bless this home

Reader to the Page

for Louise Glück

Pauline Uchmanowicz

I am the perfect ear,
revering your dark,

autumnal stars,
assembling silent precision

among atlases of lost acoustics,
provenance of oversouls

and sleeping prophets,
lyres wound, listening

for severed heads of gods
drifting on unstoppable currents,

a praying mantis pried from purchase
off the rim of an empty teacup,

a peach pit's sound,
time's aubade, the wordless

increase of desire, indifferent
earth having sucked dry

a profit of hard rain, air,
precise, orderly, everywhere.

It Is Marvelous To Sleep Together

after Elizabeth Bishop's "It Is Marvellous To Wake Up Together"

Joann K. Deiudicibus

It is marvelous to fall asleep together
at the same minute; marvelous to hear
the rain knock steadily on the roof,
to feel the air cold
as if electric heat were visible
from the black clang of radiators by our side.
All over the roof the rain sizzles
on the car's hood to the light tapping of acorn kisses.

A storm is going or staying our way
and pricking up ears on dogs and deer.
If lightning fell on our dreams now,
it would skip past nightmares and
seep deeply into our veins in quick
pricks, dance through our bodies laid out
like a god's feast, heating our blankets
and the coffee grown cold in the pot.

Safe there in the night, lying on our backs,
all things transform into desire,
since always to want us there must be the
dark reminders of silence, the bedside pile
of reading undone, the clothes tossed aside
in holocaust fervor, the frenzied tattoo
of absence, where our fingers could touch

as the weather might transform into something
quite different, as the air changes pressure
or lightning winks wickedly one-eyed
and we blink without our thinking mid-kiss
despite our fear that glimpsing love be missed.

Like the moon and the night,
though marvelous, we do not sleep together.

I Have an Obligation to Chaos

Joann K. Deiudicibus

I have an obligation to Chaos.
I have no say in this conjugal affair.
Every time I think I am finally alone,
she reveals herself to me:
flaxen hair disheveled, eyes agleam,
perfectly punctual,
predictable.

She is a shrewd woman, this siren,
and I am her naïve husband-child,
afraid to disobey the sedimentary
stagnance of our togetherness.

I've danced with other bacchantes before,
but none ever enmeshed me in
honey serpentine hair
the way my wife-daughter
Chaos does.

Her fleecy steps rise,
like tiny Christs to an impish roar,
as I erupt ice. I couldn't abandon
her if I tried, my Chaos,
my keeper, my gilt cage,
in which I can only sit
and look pretty,
sing out her name.

Prodigal

James Sherwood

Half a life wrestling with angels
and the smoky devils of misdirection:
The Son stares into his smiling face
at threefivesevennineeleven
doesn't recognize a thing doesn't
remember a thing before fifteen.
Muted impression of a boy on a hill,
children playing like ants a lightyear away.

A hell decade and a purgatory half spent
searching for the ghosts of Laius and Jocasta
in blackened teaspoons and amber nectar
in chemical ecstasies clawing from an abyss of self.
Biting the hand that feeds twice too many times
forces redefinition, reassessment—
Bagels from dumpsters: Manna from Heaven.
Solace: A place out of the rain.

Run and break and burn;
the slow self-immolation accelerates,
flames lick away at the past, the future falls.

February hospital room a
quiet cocoon—
a quickening.
Hushed voices encourage
a lamb to stand, where, caul peeled, staring
wide-eyed at the snow outside, he
receives a new way to see, crystalline.
How many of us are allowed two lives?

He eases through shadows
on unsteady legs, crawling from the ruin,
understanding that the currency of old myth
can be traded for new.
Carrying nothing more than contrition,

something less than hope—
the Son rises and walks through the door
and heads home.

Now: Light Rain and Freezing Rain and 32°F

James Sherwood

says my blinking forecast. Sounds about right.
These past weeks are icestormy, pogonip nights
dropping tinkling crystalline dust on every surface,
sugared walks, latticelike doilies and then frozen water,
leaving crackling shellacked branches
raining icemelt in the morning warmth, quiet cracking clock-
faces in still pools, lucent medallions, ice-cakes floating into
gray days and white nights and diffuse moons, road salt and
sand walks and the plow-scrape scarring parking lots.
Hot coffee and doughnuts in the mornings before class,
I pass the rising cloud breath of crowds, looking for safe footing.
Under all this, it's still green, anticipating the shortening shadows
marking the inching arc of the sun by day, the clasped buds
tight and pensive, motionless, waiting.

Pedagogical Dilemma #1

(channeling Richard Brautigan)

Christopher Tanis

In my perfect world
—and don't ask why it isn't so—
I would measure my students
By height…
…and that's it.
You'd need at least
Five foot six
To get anything over
A "C"
Out of me, fella.
As for the ladies,
Well,
I'm afraid that it's platform time
From here on in.
And if you have the misfortune
To possess less than
Sixty inches,
Then I'm sorry.
Better luck next time,
Bub.
But if you're over six foot six,
Here's your diploma!
Cum Laude,
—and thanks a lot!

Special Section

On "Rereading Whitman" (and Pound)

All students of twentieth-century literature remember the resonant opening lines of Ezra Pound's famous early poem "A Pact" (1914): "I make a pact with you Walt Whitman— / I have detested you long enough." In my correspondence with the Countess Mary de Rachewiltz, distinguished poet, scholar, and translator (and Ezra Pound's daughter), we sometimes send each other new poems we are working on. Recently, she sent me a draft of a new poem, "Rereading Whitman," and she has granted permission for its first publication in these pages.

As always, literary history has an engaging background story. In July 2007, I directed an Imagism Conference at Brunnenburg Castle in Italy. The idea for this conference grew out of conversations with my longtime friend and colleague Catherine Aldington, poet and translator (whose poetry and translations have been published in preceding issues of the *Shawangunk Review*), and daughter of Richard Aldington, who with H. D. and Pound was one of the original Imagists. Then Mary de Rachewiltz and I discussed the idea of holding a kind of Imagist Reunion at Brunnenburg Castle, involving second-generation "Imagists," descendants of the original Imagists. This led to contacts with Marie-Brunette Spire, writer and professor at the University of Paris (and daughter of André Spire, often described as France's leading twentieth-century Jewish *homme des lettres*).

We all gathered, then, at Mary's home, Brunnenburg, that extraordinary castle and Pound Museum in the Tyrolean mountains, and the assembled writers and poets, scholars and conferees, included the world's leading Imagism scholars—William Pratt (Miami University of Ohio—author of *Ezra Pound and the Making of Modernism* and other works), John Gery (University of New Orleans—Director of the Ezra Pound Center for Literature), Emily Mitchell Wallace (Bryn Mawr—author of numerous works on Imagist poets such as H. D., Pound, and Williams) and others. New Paltz was well represented at this event since the editors of this journal, Professors Kempton and Stoneback, together with New Paltz MAs and former TAs William Boyle, Brad McDuffie, and Matt Nickel presented papers and participated in conference sessions devoted to an assessment of the legacy of Pound, Aldington, Spire, and Imagism. This "Imagism Summit" (as it was characterized in media announcements) concluded with the presentation of a volume of poems—*What Thou Lovest Well Remains: Poems c/o Brunnenburg Castle* (Des Hymnagistes Press, 2007)—to Mary de Rachewiltz, from which several poems and translations (by Boyle, Kempton, McDuffie, Nickel, Stone-

back—and recent New Paltz BA Alex Shakespeare) are here reprinted. As Pound made a "pact," a treaty in the difficult case of Whitman, so these poems represent a negotiation with the literary history of the twentieth century, with the epoch that Hugh Kenner and Marjorie Perloff have designated "The Pound Era."

We are particularly pleased to publish here for the first time Mary de Rachewiltz's poem "Rereading Whitman." In her notes accompanying the poem she tells me that it grew out of her "rereading Whitman—combined with my parents—this is the result." The poem leaves us with a striking, haunting image of her father, Ezra Pound (many decades after his "Pact"), still rereading Whitman in his last years, still annotating—albeit with faint hand—still conducting his long and passionate encounter with the great writers of the past. And as *her rereading* of Whitman and of *her father rereading* Whitman reminds us: The past is never past, all great literature is *now*, everything done well with passion and love is *simultaneous*.

—HRS

Rereading Whitman

Mary de Rachewiltz

"Garrulous to the very last" you were
not. "Like a field-mouse" you slipped away,
your hand grew cold in hers, so hard
to release, she unaware you were
no longer there.
Left alone in old age there's time
time to retrace their steps and find
the stain of a tear, an eyelash lost
the sign of the pencil ever so faint
marking a page in Whitman's prose
to affirm unending continuity
of moods and speech, eavesdropping
in Concord or Boston Commons
revisited so late, yet always there
"disembodied, triumphant, dead" you
return to remind America
you're determined to let the world know
in small print you are her great singer
with little specimens on record,
in periplum sailing the Divine Ship.

Song and Letter to be Delivered to Brunnenburg Castle

H. R. Stoneback

I. "Song for Maria Down from the Mountains"

Down from the mountains all down to the sea,
ride rivers of ribbons and rosaries
into the shadows of the hidden nest.
Comes the pig-tailed golden-haired shepherdess:
gondola-leaning, canal-splashing tunes
sung to unholy waters of the lagoon.
Homesick for spring-water fonts of Tirol,
earth-daughter weaned slow from the soil.

Rocks and fields—the sheep, the cows, the horses,
the chanting of ancient songs and stories
when the peasants sit by the vaulted stoves
through winters longer than strong missals, old loves.
Homesickness, yes, but there was the Bible,
read in English, on his lap, and magic fables;
city walks, clacking of cooped-hen printing press
at Santo Stefano, where the ice cream was the best.
    Cantos in the evening.
    And always the leaving.
Oh let the villagers bring flowers and song, with torches and drums—
For all things in every place, all things human have their homecoming.
And we only know where we are when we are home
in the country of the heart and spring-glimmering stone.

II. "A Letter for Mary from Provence"

Who needs old fairy tales fat with magic
transformations, peasants and princesses?
I come to the castle with letter and song
for the countess who might have been the girl next door
in Jenkintown or Hailey, Idaho,
or at my farm in Kentucky on Boone's Trace
where, in another life, I was a peasant
clearing and working the land, fighting off redskins,
dreaming myself West. Then East into poetry.

In Provence, the Camargue, home of the other cowboys,
the idea started: an Imagist Reunion
at Brunnenburg, the daughters of Aldington and Pound
(who else could be found?) together in another century.
Catha and I sat in her tall hollyhock garden
in Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, talking castles.
Mary sent a poem for Catha. I made a book.
We wrote many letters, making plans.
Mary warned me about difficult access,
spiral staircase, stone courtyards and steps.
(These days I love nothing more than a wheelchair test.)
We wrote of gardens, flowers, weather, places.

Now Catha says her life has dropped down a black well.
She is unable to travel.
Each converging day, we understand better
how we are living and dying into each other
as we shape a paradise garden beyond weather.

An old country song goes: "Take a Message to Mary."
So I bring this message to your door, with a song,
a song of place and time with torches and drums:
    We who have been blessed to dwell in beautiful places
    know that "out of all this beauty" comes song for the ages

The Shifty Night

for Ezra Pound

William Boyle

With my lowest breath, I have lived in the
Full flare of brightness. Caught up in your
Letters, those strangest of poems. I stepped
out carefully. Saw this: the rough king
Wrapped in chains. I too once sent a letter one
Thousand miles. It was flawed to the bare
Bone. A man held my skull and hummed.
He said, Do the Claudel thing: remember
The blessings of God and raise your voice to
Him in a hymn of thanksgiving.

So I have raised my voice loud to the long
Holy night. It's like Péguy said: the night
And my dreams bring me back to those three
Nights, the nights that Christ was a dead man
In the world of men. So the ghost was pushed out
To pulp. I lit out–half-weaving, undernourished—
for the place where difficult beauty flourished.

Micel biþ se Meotudes egsa

And though he strew the grave with gold,
His born brothers, their buried bodies
Be an unlikely treasure hoard.

—Ezra Pound, "The Seafarer"

Daniel Kempton

Scant help is gold before the power of fate,
Great is the Measure's might, which makes the earth turn,
The firm ground, salt wave, and sky above.
Foolish he who dreads not fate, comes to death unprepared.
Each man should control his strong spirit, remain steadfast in pledges.
Each man should meet his friend with love,
His foe with death, with hot flames on the funeral pyre.
Fate is more mighty than any man's thought.
Let us consider where we would have our home,
How to fare thither, hasten to find happiness,
Eternal fame in the meadhall, exalted among wonder-princes,
For all time.

The Enormous Tragedy of the Dream ("On Christ's Bent Shoulders")

I would like to bring back momentum and movement in poetry on a grand scale, to master your tremendous machinery and to carry your standard further into the century.…

—Robert Lowell, letter to Ezra Pound

There was little distinction between etiquette and religious practices.

—Mary de Rachewiltz, Discretions

Brad McDuffie

I.
The Centuries turn on androgynous Cantos—
(America is Vomiting)—
"On a wet, black bough."
'Hang it all, Ezra Pound.'
I will show you fear in the Poet's
Usury of Time.

II.
We pay our debts, tithe offerings, to your generosity,
(Forgive us our amnesia). New, all is new
In the anima century. Remember us Colossus
In words carved into stone. The State—
Your *Notre Dame* taxed utopia—
Coughs up blood. Everyone rhymes
But no song of prophecy sings in meter.

Come home!
Come home!

We who were weary came home, but Europe
Was sowing salt in its fields. I write to you in grain
Psalms and omit adjectives for God.
Mary's face sails ships to the New, New World–
The Achilles heel of the Machine's
Exchange rate. The wheat of her heart
Was your true Genesis. You, *Laufer*,
Frobenius of poetry's *melopoeia* revival.

III.
See the Childe rising with the dawn,

In the land up from where the canals
Jettison the century's restless push upward.
She numbers a Rosary for the soul
Born still into the turning world.
Translating Cassandra upon the Western
Wind, her mind tends to black sheep
In their fields, plays "He Loves Me"
With *The Life Of Christ* upon daisies
(plucking at God, Lucifer and Purgatory),
And cries "*Grüss Gott*" to Cities on Hills.
She speaks to us in counterpoints
From "the Hercules Columns" of her child-
hood, upon which her Father's voice
Is the foundation—water, that flows
Faithfully, in Venetian mazes, through her lines.

The Poet Did Not Answer

for Ezra Pound

The priest did not answer

—Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls

Matthew Nickel

In paradise they do not write but sing *pour*
Le nuit, doucement, *purifiez nos coeurs*
Is it enough to say, you have given me paradise
In the unforgivable silence of a poem's broken heart
In the bird's mouth, the singing troubadour's eyes;

Is it enough to sing a hymn of thanks, to start
In humility like worn-out pallbearer at grave's heart
After poetry, the bitch, sighs its last breath,
To pull down despair in the care of your poem
Is it enough to say thanks in the Word's last death—

After the frosty silence and apostle's aimless roam,
Is it safe to praise thee, beyond betrayal's home
To hymn to thee for lightning phrase and turn
For the heart's twist and agony of love,
A love not breathed but for the poet taciturn,

Is it safe now to sing thy praises loud and mightily
To pull down this year's vanity for next year's charity
To pray at the altar of memory, without pause to lean
Like the butterfly perching on petal, above rain-tears
Moving in droplets, pooled in places never seen;

Somewhere in sands of memory and eye-clogged fear
I see a poet kneeling under blood-threat, gun-stare,
And dust stirred, settling in silence, while outside in air
Larks float gently like poetry, musing upon sunlight—
Wings of praise, and the kneeling poet in poem-prayer

Did not answer to the gun-threat and blood-fright,
Kneeling contritely, hands outward in sun bent sight,
He chants in some forgotten language a *cantico del sole*,
What thou lovest well shall not be reft from thee

And the fine old eye sees beauty rising from the sea

Then the wind spoke the interminable night litany
Is it enough to walk slowly in the paradise of your poetry—

Buying Pound's *Cantos*

Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

Escaping the heat of a sixth floor apartment,
I am not alone under St. Mark's dull vertical.
An old man picks through the garbage. Pigeons settle.

Things vanish. In this neighborhood, they're raising rents
and it's too hot. I turn right into my local
leftist bookshop; my pockets jingle with coinage.

Poetry. Poe. Pound's *Cantos*. I have the sinking
feeling that I am going to buy the thing.
I know they are like a Marx Brothers routine, a
book that demands books, regenerates the age

and radiates libraries. But to concentrate, to
hold
one line and begin

to unknot the gossamer
        and tangle with
        text and man,

(I remember all righteous anger subsiding
the moment I saw the dusty film
of him, old, Tyrolean-hatted,
in a long coat,
wandering Venice in black and white,
exiled from exile,
like a strange bird
wrecked off the Adriatic.)

that is enough.
Off the white page
vatic ink

and one hears the aged
voice and sees through
the fine old eye.

St. Mark's lifts up,

I walk; I walk,
and one bird flies.

Mothers and Sons

for Sparrow

> *. . . Tonight we are going*
> *Good better and better we are going*
> *To win, and not only win but win*
> *Big, win big.*
>
> *—James Dickey, "The Cancer Match"*

William Boyle

While downriver the streets dry up,
Upriver the snow is still piled high
Against the mouths of mailboxes. He is
Taken there in a swift turn down dream
Country roads. There are things that he

Still does not understand. How. Mostly.
This. A song would be better, he knows,
Because songs carry cures and poems
Carry sicknesses. But he cannot sing for
You as you have sung for him. He cannot

Soothe you the way you have soothed so
Many. So. Many. Heavy winter. No mercy.
His mothers cry. His grandmother prays,
Keeps a wide smile, keeps her sweater
Buttoned high. Tells him about God and

How it is in His hands. How big God's
Hands are. And His heart. There were heavy
Lonesome summers where he doubted that.
But that doubt is long gone. Because mothers

Teach sons how to live. Teach them how to

Sing. Beating things is easy when you know
The secret of sitting in love. Beyond dawn,
Beyond distance, blessedness can carry. Even
In heavy winter. Even in bright blare. God
Blesses mothers who have taught sons how

To love and sing. All carrying, all weeping,
Folds in. All praying sweeps out, folds over
You. He has never been lost in your presence,
Never felt uncertainty. Only lit up with grace.
Only lifted. Only cared for. Only loved. Only sung to.

Father Kafka His Long Lost Helmet

Lynn Behrendt

I dream a turtle bites my ear
tree falls between two houses
cat in a sunlit painting
becomes a crow that lands
dead on my shoulder
and last night tire tracks
white cat the baby didn't grow
food on black plates bricks
and glass in a field
a man deciphering bus routes
kitten sliced by box cutter bank robbery
flowers turn into coats of arms teeth
open a red birthday box
with yellow bow my son's face
full of blood machinery deer dust and ink
diary thrown into the fireplace
two guys with sunken eyes
carry wet suitcases and a swaddling cloth
snow dwarf lawn ornament
an ordinary llasa apso dog that lives in the hospital
rods and cones falling uncontrollably out of vagina
a library with nothing but a miniature shadow box
in which toy silver-plated people wash tiny clothes
and I cannot find where that smell is coming from
Hopper figures sit on a porch all facing the same direction
strangely large rooms sparsely furnished
spiders that burrow under the skin then
I am running with him running then he's gone
turned into cement I cut open a snake
inside: 2 men 1 cook and a golden retriever
old man with yellow eyes climbs a rickety staircase
screwdriver drags deep across a red sports car
I find father Kafka his long lost helmet
while Keebler elves grow corn inside your body

If This is New Jersey

Lynn Behrendt

If this is New Jersey I must be delusional
if these are catacombs you must be horns on highway's edge
fringe of owl semblance wizened and persimmon like
if this is Fra Angelico that must be the Tiber down there
if this is your rib then where is your hand hard held
if this isn't a device then I'm not either if it wasn't we weren't you dig
if this is dirt I'm covered having rolled in it thoroughly
if this is dawn I'm shards

I'm sure this can't be California

if this is Tallahassee I missed my exit
if this is Des Moines, oy, I didn't mean it
if this is murder then why are you so good at it
I mean if this is mortar can you conjoin
if this is a wall I am a climber
if this is a well I'm a tosser-into
if this hurt you the scattering sky I

if this is an end I am no one's lucky clover
if this is Saskatchewan I wear this watch upon
if this is not my arm then whose is it
If this is New York then why isn't this war movie over yet
if this is Werner Herzog then I am wishful thinking
and that doesn't mean anything though a tall ship perhaps
if this is there I am so harbor damned and bound
if I do and if I don't understand that this meat this morsel
if this is a tower where is the tippety-top
if this is a torrent where is the choppy turret
if this building falls will I get out in time or turn
if this fallow budding fills will I stitch it back
if I sent this if I sorted it all out if I said so if I
if this is Germany *achtung* why me, this frost on a sill
in this particular fruit basket I played the plum
if this is saying I am sternum lighter fluid bone bearer
if this hellhole they call Here is truly here I

if this is wary I am null
if this is Wachovia I am Washington
if this is mutual we have all unfurled flag-like at last
if this is holy hair rollers muchacho or brittle matchstick
if this is Munsey you could've fooled me
if this is or sounds like a stiff sermon regurgitated
if this you see repeat after me if this you see repeat

if this wax museum sells discount tickets will you buy one
if this is warranted for one year can I return it on day # 365

if this is Detroit I must be detritus
if I am shit then you are shinola, a shindig, a sure thing
if this is innocent I am New Jersey New Brunswick Newcastle
Newtonian facts about light particles in fact the whole east coast
but this sure does not look like Africa
not like a caucus not kernel or tern or mine

July 15, 2002: A Meditation on My Last Tour de France

H .R. Stoneback

Lance Armstrong finished second today
in the long individual time trial.
Talking to reporters in the finish area,
he said: "Sometimes I think 'Man, I'm really
going fast.' Today I didn't have that feeling.
In light of that, it's not bad to be where I am."
In the flat windy terrain of Brittany
he averaged close to 50K per hour.
Let the Colombian wear the yellow jersey
for now. What we lose in the flat country
we'll get back in the mountains. Here, in the Camargue,

I do not have that feeling I'm going very fast,
in this wheelchair, in the finish area
of a long journey: not having walked for a year,
I try to remember the last time I cycled—
There was Hawaii in the 60s, the long haul
out to Pearl Harbor, the great runs down from Manoa
to Waikiki, the wipeouts; and, in the 70s,
in Brittany, cycling to the village spring
for water—was that the last time I really went fast?
(And when was the first time? When I was a kid,
we were too poor to afford bikes. We made our own

death-fast scooters, out of castoff boards and skates, crashed
them on the steepest hound-dog-hills we could find.) My last
bike-ride was in Beijing, on a borrowed cycle,
through bike-traffic jams, from Beida to the Friendship
Hotel, then down to the Embassy District. 1984.
No, I'm not going very fast in this last time trial,
but in light of all the rides I've had (as Lance says)
it's not bad to be where I am, even if wheelchairs
don't move very fast in the Camargue sand.
My team has carried me in this Tour de France.
But High Country's coming—I'll get it all back there.

Something About Your Voices (For The Staircase Poets)

H. R. Stoneback

Something about your voices
echoing in my hall
as you sit on the steps
of the grand staircase
and read the great poets
(and some not so great)
and say what poems you have in memory

Something about your voices
rising above the squeak and rattle
of my walker as I rise from the wheelchair
to try for a new record—
1000 feet today!—
as your voices tell shattered shuffling knees
hips feet how it once felt to walk, glory-memory

Something about your faces
passing them smiling on my walker
seeing you between elegant (prisonbar) spindles
of the 1890 banister and staircase
keeps me moving morphinelessly through
the stations of ancient agony
gives new sense to l'esprit de l'escalier

Something about your presence there
scattered on the ascending stairs
and our secret knowledge of the walking rhythms
of Hemingway's prose, our wonder and pride
at your recitation of *The Wasteland* by heart
that day I walked 1,000 feet and felt,
more than memory, the dream of the future

Something about what we have always known
about poetry as spiritual therapy
and what we have learned
about poetry as *physical* therapy—

Imagine the possibilities:
New careers, Vocations, PTs (poetry therapists)
the whole world rising to walk rhythmically
Something about saying No
to the Hemingway-Solution
and how you give me reasons to endure
to resist that conclusion
something about steps and damn Perhaps
something about saying Yes
and voices that bless

Something about your voices
beloved familial resonance in the high halls
of history, and your presence
in the hereness of mystery
on the stairs I hope to climb again
lifted by your voices
and something about love

Durendale (April 2003)

This Wednesday's Ash Rain
(Ash Wednesday, 2003)

Matthew Nickel

To make a beginning on a clean page
Is only a deception
But not in the way of deceiving
Like the rain that falls today, deceiving,
Not in this way
Not today.
But this day is another day;
There was the end and this
Beginning
So the rain is appropriate today.
And tomorrow we will know
The bird call and children in the churchyard
Alive in the sun
And we will not lose hope
Even though the sunlight is stained with a few clouds,
Even though our hands looked clean in the rain.
Today we will remember;
Tomorrow we will look to the dust
Rising behind the steeds of Dawn.

A Modern Song of Songs, Romance of Romances, Paraklausithyron (Ash Wednesday, 2004)

For My Love

Matthew Nickel

In my beginning is my end,
Says Eliot;
To what end we go,
I do not know;
The sun goes down over the field,
Bright yellow turns to green and gold;
The flock of birds call in the Spring,
The Resurrection of our King.

I write this poem to a doorway
Upon which I sit until you come,
I write this poem for you;
I look upon the meadows
Out from this cedar threshold
Past the vineyards and beds of spices
Past the agony and the passion;
I wait and am afraid
I wait afraid to turn
And fear this door without you,
Here, in this sunshine—
    Last year was another day, deceiving,
    Like the rain that fell that day
    A day that rained not like today
    Where I wrote upon the wrong doorstep;
Here, in this sunshine
I can smell the dust in my eyes,
Moist finger tips drying
And you playing with the sun
    Stricken by love, I lost myself and was found
    Your dove eyes, fair
    Which opened my eyes
    Revealed the way through this door—
Now I rise up to open this door for you
I rise up sick with love:

And open the door to a garden
Each flower a new life
Each life a new love
All in the same garden

Around the same fountain
With you in the center of it all
Petals turned and watching your delicate steps
The brush of your sweet hair sway
Across your eyes like two fruits of spring
And your lips like lilies taste of honey-comb;
I opened the door and found you, love
I opened the door and found Love,
And you opened my eyes
And Love opened my heart.

Fidelity

for Robert H. McDuffie Sr.

Brad McDuffie

"I let the lawn get away from me . . ." Papa's
voice trails off into the blue dusk of Jacksonville.
"Once your grandmother got sick I had to
let go of something."

I nod, Niska Trail is hushed like a churchyard.
At dawn we watched the blue jays at the feeder
making clothesline dives from the Holt's white Crape-Myrtle
tree, winged ribbons

they hide in the silver stars of the Live Oak.
"I used to open the window for Cherry
to watch them. Sometimes she'd sit out on the porch
with me all morning."

Behind us the old wood swing's broken in two,
hanging like masts from an old cross-beam after
a storm passes. When it breaks, Rachel laughs, her
eyes bright behind the numb pain. "I'll tell you," Papa
is saying, "the wren,

boy, he don't back down from them bigger birds. No,
he stands his ground all right." He talks about how
the hawk circles, how jay-birds call it off from
the high branches of

the Short-Needle Pine. "We done lost her, Brad, been
almost a year now." The pain of sixty-years
stings at his eyes. I look back over the lawn's
yellow skeleton

where we once played Red Rover. Rachel's eyes are
Rose-of-Sharon red. "That's a Red Maple there—
it's slow growin, and that Magnolia that came
up from a seed." Micah,

our youngest child, fights off sleep, over-tired.
"That swing's done gone old. 'Bout time for a new one

anyhow." I hold Micah tight, rocking him, letting the wind lull him

to sleep. Fidelity is letting go of
what you love most year after year. "I'll get the
lawn back," he says. Later that night we take all
the pictures down from

the wall and paint the big living room wall gold.
"It's gonna rain," he says as we are cleaning
up. I watch the yellow halo burn around
the red moon. I can

almost hear the clouds etch against it as they
pass. That night making love feels like wrestling
an angel for a blessing—our children dreaming below our bed.

The Gulls Leave Gentle Traces

for JAS—Sparrow

Brad McDuffie

in the sky off Emerald Isle,
as Anna bobs upon the anapestic
break of the Atlantic at low-tide—slick
white-caps betray rip-tides. Miles
away the sun drowns in western waters. Its razor files
time out of the day like a pyrric
dance, before night unfolds a mystic
three-quarter moon and the smile
of Orion's sweeping sword reflects
light from years we'll never know.
The gulls bank on the unseen, white hearts
with wings half-cocked, they bullseye minnows—
white stones plumbing ocean depths. Beyond the sets,
Spanish Mackerel flash in ecclesiastical arcs—

boutants; they model the soul's loophole along the quais.
Anna wishes to make of it all a record
upon the North Star. I watch how the water lies
unbroken beyond the break and pretend
not to hear, for luck. A gull cries
over the white-wash, breaking her rubie-
slipper spells. At bed-time prayers,
she disarms me; "Daddy, why do people die?"
Once Sparrow gave her a dream-catcher,
". . . to sleep . . . to keep," the words skip in my mind. Daughter,
I wish I had an answer. The night's long declension falls
and, leaning into the wind, the fisher-
men cast out to the Old World—their final call
into blackening waters.

We're listening to the Vesper singing,
from her blue-grass state, of Hudson homes and a-liven'.

Meatball Saturday

D. A. Carpenter

Three pounds of ground beef,
bread crumbs,
mysterious spices and seasons,
bowl of extra virgin olive oil,
bowl of red wine vinegar,
and his two hands conducting
the early Saturday symphony,
as I forget about my Cartoon Express
to get a table-level view
of the chunky, meaty masterpieces
in mid-creation.

It was the same thing every Saturday.
It was the same ingredients
and the same darting hands
with rolled-up-sleeve forearms.
It was always the same perfect
collage of hands, meat, oils, and seasons,
but every year the table-level view
faded further toward the ground
with a downward tilt of the chin.

Then came the Saturdays that I would
sit with him and try to imitate the fluid
darting movement of his hands
grabbing a hunk of meat and cupping
my hands with a back and forth
muted slap of wormy strands
that always seemed to crumble into a heap
in front of me.

"No, look, you have to dip your fingers
in the oil and then the vinegar."
Then he'd bellow some Italian tune
that I didn't understand, but felt,
and then try harder.

I remember watching his fingers dip
into the liquids and thinking
about those fingers dipping into the dirt
barehanding a ground ball
that would roll up into his palm
and then sent on its way to first
when he played semi-pro.
When he kneaded the beef
I thought about all those rainy days
his fingers sunk in the mud
on the line of scrimmage
while the leather-headed quarter-back
barked audibles.

And I continued to think about these things
even when he was wheelchair-, and then, bed-ridden.
I could still see it in his eyes when he had enough strength
to ask me how my team was doing this year.
Even in his coffin I could see the five foot five man
who stood taller than anyone I ever knew
with his dust-in-the-nose hazy days,
with glove and cap,
and nitty-gritty autumn afternoons in the trenches,
with crooked nose and grin,
and always,
those meatball Saturdays
I spent with him.

Rolling Thunder and Consonant Shift (In Four Parts)

A portrait of Dylan, 1975.

D. A. Carpenter

I
Bare that damned cross
across your chest.
Pick up that body,
drag it inside.
Your painted guise
and apocalyptic talk
call to God, drugs,
and Egyptian kings.

II
A false face hides under a flowered hat.
From the vested and scarfed filth-stained shirt flows
squeezed fists and harmonic screams of pharaohs.
Isis thrives in the surrounding fumes of
heroin and vivid hues of thunder.
Howl for the hard rain that's a-gonna fall

III
Mad, nymph fluttering wings
move the singing arms to
morning from moonlit night.
The masked neurotic moves
across the carpet stage.

IV
Renaldo retells and relives his loves.
You singing gypsy woman in white;
you luscious lowland woman in red;
are relics like Isis wanting to be
rediscovered by reckless Renaldo,
a roving woman loving legend.

Special Section

"This Be the Verse": Poetry from the Fifteenth Annual Graduate Symposium

Explication de Texte

for all who must take or teach English Proseminar

Pauline Uchmanowicz

Natives rubbing sticks spark the first line
only to canoe straight out of the stanza,
usurped by leaves cackling under a magnifying glass

followed in the next tercet by a distilled lesson
on the invention of matches: phosphorous discovered
1680; strike books manufactured 1889;

and just when you count yourself a third-through
captive, blindfolded in the pitch of typeset,
a firing squad shouldering muskets forms

a column of dropped knees, shots got off
at the heart of discourse answered by caesura,
tripping an enjambment chain

reaction further up the poem when, presaged by altar
candles casting apse shadows, campers flicker flash-
lights skyward towards the dangling Milky Way's

dying luminosity, making way for the turn, where
some disgruntled peasant tosses a matchstick into
a powder keg, the verse's fuse fizzles down and

time bomb detonates, its epiphany dynamited
to smithereens by penultimate fireworks as
a scout deciphers grand finale smoke signals.

Ventriloquist

Jacqueline Renee Ahl

It's getting a little uncomfortable.
God's adjusting again—
wearing a watch that scrapes my innards,
forgetting to file his nails.
He moves his thin fingers,
duckbill style
against the red walls of my open throat.
He flexes and squirms
cracks his knuckles
raps on my voice box until I grow hoarse and talk in sleep,
keeps bits of apple and bread from going down.
When my throat closes in pain
I know he is saving up words in a fist.

Sometimes he signs the words for baby
snow
night
and my whole body rocks with the motion.
Sometimes he leaves off in mid-sentence to scratch an ear,
forgetting to finish,
already half in love with the sound of his own voice
from the laughing mouth of another.

Sometimes I am not sure who is propped up,
whose knee and hand are whose,
or if I am made of flesh or wood
or gold.
I am not sure whose voice it is,
straining to hear the answering machine,
the voice crackling through the millennia,
so unlike myself.

Here we are,
shifting papers
small coughs over tepid tea
all ablaze with visions of ourselves—

divine megaphones sweating light and heat,
lightning rods ashed black through volumes,
scorching ears with sight.

But I see.
It is we who reach up through divine guts
cupping the warmth of organs
our hands working furiously
clapping
writing
waving
urging open the mouth of the sky
coaxing whispers from head-heavy clouds,
worshipping the rain we make.

We are talking to ourselves—
lullabies of the most lonely tongue.
Hands over ears,
sung to sleep by the mystery
of our own hearts.
Nowhere more clear than the Sistine's torch-lit arcs,
bent by the labor of one man.
On scaffolds high enough to touch encaustic stars,
Michelangelo's hand reached to paint itself—
creating a god
that could love him.

Election Day

William Boyle

"Listening to my grandfather talk about drinking beer on
Election Day, how all the men came in and scrapped
together the change and got it straight from the tap,
how they never spoke of wives or elections, only sat there
and raced cockroaches on the bar top. Creativity was key:
naming the cockroaches was as important as how they did
in the races. My grandfather named his West the Tinker.
His roach had speed, character. It took four straight races.
He put it in a jar, set it on a cocktail napkin, and tapped
adoringly on the glass. "Little West," he said. "The real
deal." The losers, on the other hand, were gathered together
by Eddie Grease, Joe Smalls, Billy Bald, and Joe
Timber. They were squashed beneath foot and tossed in an
empty peanut bowl. As the sun set, Joe Timber poured
beer froth over the roaches and called it roach cereal and made
a bet that no one would put it down. The looks went around.
My grandfather said his eyes were on Billy Bald. Billy Bald
would eat anything, drink anything. "What're the stakes?"
Bald asked. Nick the bartender, towel over shoulder, said,
"All right. Free beers all night for whoever puts that stew
down." Ha! The looks went around again. There was no
doubt. Nobody needed the free beers like Billy Bald
needed the free beers. He went at the bowl and started
in on it. A mouthful of crunchy cockroaches and his face
turned green. First swallow seemed okay, but the second
wouldn't stay down. Billy puked on himself. The boys
roared. Nick went out back and got a mop and a bucket of
water. "Get to cleaning, you louse," he told Bald. The
beers went up, there were toasts. Bald got to mopping.
My grandfather tapped on West the Tinker's jar. "Good
roach," he said. Eddie Grease bought him a whiskey. Things
were looking up. And imagine, my grandfather said,
somewhere men were busy voting.

Amnesia

Joann K. Deiudicibus

I have never been so cold.

This frozen lake of words
Engulfs my retina
Like fire.

And I have never been
Burned before.

I do not prefer
January like you,
Darling. Its white
Blankets of blank
Scenery, images
Without memory.

Sitting with you
At the mauve counter
Of the chrome diner,
I am cold.

My hands are stiff
Like the gin and
Tonics you mix
Yourself each lime night.

My nose runs
But memories stay.
They infect like an
Earache:
Drunk driving blonde insomniac
In a blue rust Chevy,
Cigarette glowing like
The Tang sunrise on Sandy Hook or
The pink spandex sunset over Knoxville.

The picture reels
Click and swish with

Each buttercup gulp and vanilla swallow
Of light coffee and sweet phlegm.
They percolate unplugged.

Nothing is blank.
Frost thaws.

Perhaps that is why
We were perfect
For 365 days at 98.6 degrees.

Between excess and
Frigidity there is Utopia.

Between you and me,
The pelting patter of
Sleet embers supercooled
On a window pane, through
Which darkness peered
In August.

Le Sacre du Printemps

Joshua Gran

The burning in the Spring
From the fire *is* Spring.

Firebirds on bark of the mighty
Oak adjacent, too dark to see
Except for the connection to
The fire burning in the Spring
With your hands in it.

Detached arms
As climbing tools—with fingernails
Ascend, with fleshy crampons grip
The oak, arms strong and warm
From

The burning in the Spring.
Beauty booming, blooming arbor sweet
With pop and crackle lighting boughs
In the Spring.

Up top
The view incredible and vague;
No borders, lacking lines defined.
There are noises in the distance.
Sirens you think; and then you don't.
Look down—

The fire,
Reminiscing about it all—
The ground sprinkled with leaves and dirt
And leaves. You don't remember what
You think because you lost your arms.
But there *are* the sirens getting
Louder all, forgetting you where you are
And intimations of the new,
A moment of what you can't say
For you forget from where you came.

And wither is fled the broken
Signs of love and eternity?
Gone. They *are* your arms, and they burn,
Lost, absent, dark, adjacent and
What hurts is augmented by air
Of hopes fallen in pits of fire,
The outline getting all more clear
From the sirens forgetting you of
Spring.

Burning arms and burn they do
Just like your mother who's a branch
Consumed, encroached by

Spring.
The parent garden monument
Swallowed by darkened wood in light
Quite new—the colored death of
Resolve and freedom burning in
The moment—life. A branch splits quick,
The sirens getting closer and
Glacial domes of funneled points
Of pleasures burning all around—
Genesis and insanity
Uncontrollable; and your arms
They're burning with the pain in the
Moment from

The fire forgotten
Into your body attaching
Rejoined attraction and the new
With the sirens alarms on high
Rebuking the all of you with
Ground come closer the leaves and
The dirt and the leaves and the sirens
And the buzzing saw cutting you

Back together and the others
Them chopping you with pain and leaves
And sirens your hands

In the fire.
Encroaching ice frozen strong makes
Blown air invasive, frigid, raw.
It's so; and you don't, but *they* do.
The oak tree—what of the fallen?
It is destructible. You don't,
But the do is inner and it's
Destructible and it is, and
You be and he nothing and she
Is the tree destructible and
You the sirens breaking with the
Cataract of thousands, all kinds—
Ice blocks of being, sirens hands
And sirens screaming in your ears
Adze and axe uncontrollable
And you could have sworn there were more
But the sirens

Fire the Spring
With your hands in it the plight
Of charring sirens conscious hands
Feeling fully

The Spring
With hands up it all falls like a
Bird hopping down a flight of stairs.

There is a poem she wants to write

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt

They walked down the boulevards of East Berlin
The Unter den Linden

She tries to remember

The color of the limes
The ones they couldn't eat
Were they neon green
Or a phosphorescent chlorite green
Or a suffocating gaseous green

She tries to remember

But all she sees is a blur
Of walking feet
Toes and ankles swollen
In the August heat

She begins again

With names
The Brandenburg Gate
The Reichstag
Frederichstrasse
Banhoffstrasse
Hakesher Mart

The gnarled consonants
Barbs caught on her tongue

A holiday in East Berlin

She starts again

They stalked the crooked streets
Of the Jewish quarter
Searching for clues

Where were the Jews?
They were gone from the cemetery
No gravestones
Gone from the Old Age Home

The place where they took them
Gone from the boy's school
Only a marker left

Rhythms and images elude her

No chanting voices
No Yiddish
No white prayer shawls

Only the gleaming
Light and metal of
This reconstructed city

Begin again she thinks
They were walking down
The Unter den Linden
The limes hung precariously from limbs
They strolled by the
Canals of the Spree
Grey green and stagnant
In the August heat

They ate curry wurst
And drowned their thirst
With lager
The burnt skin
Salty on their tongues

And at night
They were silent
And swam in easy patterns
In the apple green haze
Of the hotel pool

Now this is what she sees

The green of the limes
The green of the canals of the Spree
The electric green haze of the hotel pool

And the algae luster
Of the pond at Birkenau
Eyelashes, ashes, and splinters of bone
Suspended in the resinous muck

When he fell through the sky
like a struck flare
his fingers almost touched the sea the earth.
Then his body thinned to
fish scales
watching the world.

She imagined this
his falling body
his back bursting in flame
she unable to follow his course
to hear his cries seared
like burnt parchment.

Then she learned to fear nothing.

In another time
she saw the father
in his cell
watched him trace wings
of wax and feather
glaze them yellow gold.

She saw the wings
magically take flight
the boy eager to touch the
bright blue edge of the world.

Then the fall
against a vanishing sun.

And now she bends
into herself
caught in her own
labyrinth
grief and rage.

And what

she remembers
is a body alight
and glowing.

Parked between the Valley Fields in the Warm Wind and Rain

Donald Junkins

Down from the red dahlia and the morning glories on Hawks
Road where our out of season lily leans,
my windshield blurs in the sweeping autumn rain,
and it fogs. Pellets rap, and the wind rocks
the car, then stills. This is Child's Cross Road
where the guest workers groom the rainbow fields
in the sun, where the quiet mocks the battlefield
photos from far away lands, those loads
of body bags. I remember a childhood day
in the fall when it was warm like this in the rain
and I watched horse chestnuts fall from Mrs. Hamerstrom's
tree next door. I went out in the rain and pried
the brown shiny nuts from their spiked autumn jackets
as white and soft inside as ermine-lined lockets.

October in Our Town

Donald Junkins

Now when the autumn ague draws old hips
again, and the marathon-worn joints are dry
to the bone, I sit beneath the green maple sky
in the sun, watching the green hummingbird hover. He sips
the last rose in mid-flight, backs up, and is off in a blur,
a dwarf woodcock in silks. These maples, too, hover
in the early autumn silence under the cover
of the blue autumn sky. Soon they will be the honor
guard of the season, but not today, and in
good time they too will receive the wind
in less supple grace. Genesis again.
Old Jacob wrestles all night, in the newer version,
with his hip out of joint, not an angel but a man.
Something about autumn, about a sojourn.

Joy Unremembered Most Real

Dennis Doherty

I used to look for it at Manor Park
Where all I ever found was the
Mundane wash of seaweed tendrils
On the old dog-shouldered stones,
The moan of fog horns, the bored
Chop of bay slosh on the boats I'd never own,
And the far loom of Long Island
A call to sleep in manic dreams.

I looked in the circuit of houses near home,
Up, down the road, round and back. Then off
The track in the secret of spots,
Particularity of hummocks and hills,
Places disturbed by history of hands—
Structures in woods, fallen walls, litter,
Symbolic binding of bark twists and sticks,
Under erupting forsythia, honeysuckle
Immolated in frozen mushroomed bloom.

Looked in scattershot schools where
I learned to use tools like those
Beneath the broken bikes in the Winks'
Backyard dump. Grew to discuss
It in obsolete tongues; talked around
It in ricochet weave that wound
An armor plating's chime, deflecting gleam.

Beckoned! Pleaded! Languaged whisper-plasma,
Squeezed from the milk of intuition: burnt
In the groin by a light in the mind,
Grazed but not held by a hand from without,
Tickled by the inarticulate, informed
Of a joy unremembered most real,
I constructed stanzas to snare a pulse.

Lately I've been catching glimpses
With the sweep of my net, little glimpses

(With silver bellies, cilia feet, and
The wispy down of agelessness) that sift
Away as incense coils from cleric
Prayers: sideways roll of lambent brown eyes
Toward mine from a placid mien;
Defiant public lick of fingertips
From a sticky bun; a voice gentling
From a face swimming in the pleasure
Of its own beauty ("to simplify,
To simplify") like pursed lips' breath
Kissing music from a bottleneck.

When at last I piece it all together—
Thread the ocean through the street;
The child through the man;
The glimpses through the grail—
We will meet in that ultimate beat,
My poem stretched across the finish line:

And here she speeds to crash my open arms,
Obliterates my banner, scatters my tatters.
And when she plucks my bent and shadowed
Remnants held aloft and askew, she'll squint,
"Is it you? Is it finally really you?"

The Beautiful Thing That Awaits Us All

Dennis Doherty

Of course it's swathed in a mystic blue light:
for you tv in a dark room and a sex- soaked couch-
for you tinted glass and globe of antique shops-
for you the fairy burnished glow of Wordsworth's glory.

The many roads, the many starts, the lives we take:
new skins all and unshed old, accretion of coats,
increase, new skin calling for newer skin still
in the layering of so many lives, compressed
corn promised to pop a someday perfect core
of the beautiful thing that awaits us all.

Success to the boy at the bedstead, his hands
clasped in order moral as two shoes by his side,
eyes to the waxing infinite dome outside the pane,
mind reverently fixed on the stern, rewarding sire.

Success to the lover of lips, adorer of girls,
dreamer in the summer dirt and winter motes of home,
choreograper of hopes in sway to mezmer sun and moon,
the heat of rooms, the odor of vicinity.

Boon to the man-boy in all his acts, who knew
to learn what he didn't know why, and so
he soldiered and soldered, come dead or erect
the edifice of adult aping, the practice
for imagined milestones to the storied city,

when the too quick new old skin upon the too slow
new old bones climbs a limb and looks around:
ahead, perspective verging in mirage of lines;
behind, the beautiful blue thing that awaits us all.

Unknown, Twenty Cents

Robert Singleton

> *"Solemnity is an attribute of the sublime. The sublime in scenery may be defined as continuity of extent, the repetition of objects in themselves simple and commonplace."*
> —Remarks on the Design of the Soldier's National Cemetery, Gettysburg, 1864

The night presses for eternal serenity,
why balance it with dawn?

Why not open the box in its depths,
find the tiny calyx of death in the coins,
the tintype of the world set ablaze
and made permanent as the bread of the future?

Why not wrap survival in its shroud
like a child with a recalcitrant doll?
Why not sing soundlessly where wreaths of smoke
take precedence over fire and logic?

In this quilt of mismatched patches,
why be the one inspired to the foolishness of totality?
Why take that empty orange blossom as the enemy?

Why not lift the confession
from its chastising, predictable service
and stow it away in the deadly heart of the museum case
with the stereopticon and the trenches of Flanders.

This field of bone is a triangle
where animals once grazed
in the noble consequence of their consuming innocence.

They charge through your eyes like the failures of love,
but then crawl out again in the exercise of automatic writing.

They see the sun rise once more
over the exhibitions of the old men
and bless us with their absence.

Ashokan, Looking Westward

Robert Singleton

To convince myself there is no moment like this one I sit motionless in a cold wind off the mountains trying to feel anything of the spirit of the wind or the spirit of the water. To dwell in this minute as much as I can seems like the proper thing to do. The evergreens behind me click together like sewing needles, the boats at anchor creak like bees in the ash trees. They dwell in nests of paint that seep into what is left of the snow, layered white, yellow, and brown. I have come here as if there was something hidden in this immeasurable loneliness that was suddenly important for me to find. Last night I dreamed about you walking in these same mountains. I took it as a message, an outline I would find in these waves, stirred by no tide on this inland lake. Perhaps this is what I came for—to drive into nearness the hidden force that would suddenly wrap itself around my body and draw me near you, as if all this time had not been wasted, as if the rusted spike lying at my feet still anchored a living house.

Special Section

Robert Penn Warren: Unpublished Fiction, Letters and Poetry Manuscripts, with Poems of Homage from Robert Kelly, Dave Smith and others

Robert Penn Warren's early short story, "Goodbye, Jake," was published for the first time in *Shawangunk Review* XVII in 2006. Two typescript versions of the story are housed in the Robert Penn Warren Papers, in the Yale Collection of American Literature, at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. The text published here is the later revised draft, a clean typescript with a few holograph corrections (Beinecke: Box 221, Folder 3854). The editors of this journal wish to express their gratitude to John Burt, Warren's Literary Executor, for granting permission and making possible this rare opportunity to publish what we believe to be Warren's finest unpublished fiction, which serves, at the very least, as important documentary evidence concerning Warren's literary apprenticeship. We also extend our thanks to the Beinecke curatorial staff, and to our research assistants, Matthew Nickel and James Stamant, for journeying to New Haven to acquire copies of the manuscripts.

Although both the Beinecke archival notes and Warren's bibliographer, James A. Grimshaw, Jr., accurately list the two "Goodbye, Jake" manuscripts as undated material, it is possible to date the story with apparent exactitude. On January 26, 1931, Warren wrote to his friend and Vanderbilt-Agrarian colleague, Andrew Lytle: "I have just completed a short story. It may be good or it may be bad, but it's very one or the other. I want your opinion of it. I'll direct Carolyn [Caroline Gordon] to send it on to you when she gets the copy" (William Bedford Clark, *Selected Letters of Robert Penn Warren* 1: 195). Apparently Gordon liked the story, for sometime in the early spring of 1931, Warren wrote to Maxwell Perkins: "At the suggestion of Carolyn Gordon I am sending a story which you may be able to use in *Scribner's*." He identified himself to Perkins as "the author of *John Brown*" (his first book, a biographical study published in 1929), and a contributor to *Fugitives* and *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), thus perhaps contextualizing both his writerly credentials and this particular story, and concluded: "I hope that you will find a place for *Goodbye*, *Jake*, but in any case I shall appreciate any comment you may make concerning it" (Clark 198). By April 24, when he wrote to Allen Tate and Caroline Gordon, he was reporting Perkins's rejection of the story: "I sent *Goodbye*, *Jake* to *Scribner's* and got a gentle but firm rejection. I see a lot wrong with the thing, but I don't know how to remedy it" (199). There, it would seem, the

published record of commentary on the story ceases.

When Warren wrote "Goodbye, Jake," he was a 25-year-old Assistant Professor of English at Southwestern College in Memphis; the story typescript bears his home address—2095 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee—where he lived from September 1930 to May 1931. He was not entirely happy with his academic situation, and, given the controversy surrounding the Agrarian manifesto, *I'll Take My Stand* (with contributions by Lytle, Ransom, Tate, Warren et al), as well as the academic pressure to write critical and scholarly articles, he seemed anxious to write fiction (Joseph Blotner, *Robert Penn Warren: A Biography* 111-15). His novelette *Prime Leaf* (1931, his first published fiction) and "Goodbye, Jake" mark the beginning of his career as a writer of fiction.

Early influences on Warren's writing—for example, Faulkner and Hemingway—may be detected in "Goodbye, Jake" by the literary sleuth alert to certain details of dialogue and characterization. But we leave that to the perspicacity of our readers. A more important and perhaps more obvious influence is discernible in what we might call the story's Agrarian theme, or thesis. The narrative situation pivots on Jake Hawkins's announcement of his imminent departure, his determination to leave behind the family farm in its "obscure valley" in Middle Tennessee, move to Florida where it's "all sandy and flat," and make lots of money. Emily tries to convince him that he should stay home, that he "won't be any better off in Florida" than he is in Tennessee. When Jake uses his departure as a seduction-maneuver, Emily flees into the "tangled bushes" and down the limestone bluff, trips and falls and rolls against the "upturned roots" of the fallen cedar tree. This looks like a straightforward Agrarian symbol of deracination—nothing good can come from leaving behind the family farm. Yet taking a stand is one thing, taking a fall is another, and Warren, the youngest of the Vanderbilt Fugitive-Agrarians negotiates his Nashville Agrarianism(s) with greater subtlety than might be expected from a 25-year-old writer. Sense of place, family, and rootedness are not unmixed blessings, for they may also involve blood-vengeance, precipitate violence in the name of family honor. And Emily, left "hanging" on that gate, is equally the *deus loci* (or spirit of place), and the victim of both place and deracination from place.

An even more important influence on "Goodbye, Jake" is the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Since Roberts's work has been largely neglected for more than half a century, this influence may be invisible to most readers today. Even Roberts *and* Warren scholars have completely overlooked the connections, but Warren knew and admired Roberts's work from his student days, through his early teaching days (when he taught *The Time of Man*—her 1926 masterpiece—every chance he got), and throughout his writing career as evident in his critical writing on Roberts (first in 1931, again in 1963) and the echoes of her work throughout his fiction. Roberts's fiction is replete with Agrarian motifs and concerns that rever-

berate in Warren's work. Yet perhaps the most telling influence may be discerned in matters of style, and in Roberts's remarkable skill at rendering landscape that Warren echoes in "Goodbye, Jake." For example, when Warren composes his extended landscape passages here—"the harsh knuckles of the roots" (of the *upturned* tree) that cut Emily, and on her urgent flight to Jake's farm, the trees in their "regular places," the air that "fingered the high leaves of the hickories," and the "careful willow leaves [that] feathered the water"—he writes like the fully engaged apprentice to Roberts's art of landscape. His manuscript revisions and insertions focus on the landscape—the addition of those very Robertsonian "cattle, fatalistic and heavy and sculptural" in the pasture, the revision of the early draft's opening paragraph, with its cliché view "over the deep vista of the valley" changed to the final "over the twisted cut of the valley"—read like lessons in the art of landscape learned from Roberts.

Moreover, Roberts's landscape is always symbolic landscape, *paysage moralisé*, and the most extraordinary thing about her landscapes is the way they serve as objective correlatives to the inner states of being and feeling of her characters, usually young women with an intense sacramental sense of connection with the land. Roberts composes landscapes that become inscapes. It seems to me that the greatest risk Warren takes in "Goodbye, Jake," the challenge that he sets for himself, is to center the story in Emily's sensibility—he doesn't seem at all interested in Jake—and to render her state of being in terms of the landscape. At this, he succeeds admirably, thanks to the example of Roberts. More than three decades after he wrote "Goodbye, Jake," Warren would write in his 1963 essay on Roberts: "By 1930, with the appearance of *The Great Meadow*, the fourth novel, it was impossible to discuss American fiction without reference to Elizabeth Madox Roberts" (*Saturday Review* 2 March 1963: 20). And it seems that in 1931 it was impossible, for Warren, to write fiction without reference to Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Maybe the clearest sign of that in "Goodbye, Jake" is the cryptic reference to the Jarvis place, next to Jake's place—Jarvis, of course, is the name of the man who goes away in *The Great Meadow*. And students of names should note, too, that Warren's protagonist is named Emily *Roberts*.

Finally a word about the story's setting: it takes place in the country of limestone glades, small stream valleys, and cedar forests south of Nashville, near Murfreesboro, Tennessee. The stream in the "obscure valley" setting flows north into Stones River. In 1931 no one in Tennessee, where Warren had spent much of the past decade, perhaps no one in the South would hear the words "Stones River" without thinking of the "Battle of Stones River," one of the fiercest battles of the Civil War, albeit tactically indecisive, with what is often said to be the highest percentage of casualties of any major Civil War battle. The furious battle took place in the terrain of Warren's story, a country of limestone outcroppings and dense cedar thickets. The Confederate army under the command of General Bragg, after

a defeat in Kentucky at the Battle of Perryville (where, incidentally, Elizabeth Madox Roberts was born—her father having served under Bragg's command), made its way to Murfreesboro where the great confrontation with General Rosecrans's Union army took place: c. 80,000 troops, more than 20,000 casualties. Warren ends his Stones River valley story with the striking image of Emily Roberts clinging "against the gate, hanging against the sharp palings, looking somehow like the boys of that section who, far away across the ocean, had died on the enemy wire." Thus, in that one compelling symbolic landscape image, Warren evokes the burden of the past and the burden of place, the old war and the recent war, and inscribes Emily Roberts as "somehow" another war victim, another casualty. That gate is the portal that opens out into much—fiction, poetry, and history—that Warren would later write.

—HRS

Goodbye, Jake

Robert Penn Warren

The Buick pounded up the grade. At the corner where the steepest part of the road began Jake put it into second with a clatter and grind of the old gears. The wheels slipped a little in the loose gravel, the dust spun out in thicker clouds than before to settle on the leaves of the bushes by the roadside, brown upon the new lustrous green. It settled on the tight little blackberries which clustered, green and nodular, where a few weeks before had hung the white blossoms. When they reached the broader shelf of the hill near the summit, he slowed down and drove the car just off the road to face over the twisted cut of the valley. For a moment he sat without even looking at her, one hand still on the wheel and the other on the brake. "Are you gonna miss me, Honey?" he said.

"Of course I'll miss you, Jake." Then, when she spoke, he turned to her.

Down the valley it was already getting dark. The stream that followed the long northward drift of the valley toward Stones river gleamed like cold nickel where it debouched from the cedar grove at the base of the bluff below them, disappeared among willows, gleamed again more remotely, and was lost in the tall shadow of the hills whose base it hugged. Above the hills to the west side the light flung out level and straight like painted streamers, and in that brighter reach, the crows, going to roost, passed over the valley.

"Jake," she said. "Jake, I wish you wouldn't go."

He didn't answer her for a minute and then he spoke in the stubborn voice a person uses in saying something already said and settled many times before. "You know I'm going," he said.

"I reckon so."

"You know so. There ain't any reckon about it."

"All right, Jake. But I bet there won't be any place in Florida as nice as here. They say Florida is all sandy and flat."

"It can be sandy as all hell for all I care. I'm going down there and make some money."

"You won't be any better off in Florida than you are right here in Tennessee. Anyway, I don't believe that everybody that goes to Florida makes money like you say."

"Maybe not. But I'm gonna make some. Don't you want some money Em'ly?"

"Yes, I want some money, but I don't want you to go off down there. You're

making money right here."

"Sure, I've made a hell of a lot. I've worked like a dog for three years now and I ain't made but about twelve hundred dollars for my part."

"I think you've done real well, Jake."

"That ain't any money. And I won't make that much from now on when Tom gets back from Knoxville for good and starts working his part of the place all year round. Then I won't get anything for putting in his crop. Mama don't need me any more now, and I'm going."

"I just don't see why you've got to go, Honey. You all've got a nice place, and I don't see why you want to go."

"I hate the damn place. I've told you a hundred times I hate it worse'n poison. If Papa had just divided it up in his will I'd sell my part right off so quick it'd make your head swim. And I'd take all the money to Florida with me. I could make some real money quick down there. That's what I told Mama."

"Why, Jake!" She sat up straight, pushing his hands away from her shoulders. "Jake, you ought never told her that."

"Maybe not but I did, I was so mad. Mama, she wouldn't loan me a cent to take down there, and she could too. She loaned Tom money to go off to Knoxville on to study agriculture. Hell, I bet I know more'n Tom right now about farming."

"I know you do. Everybody says you know a lot for a boy and you've done mighty well since your father died. Everybody says so."

"I don't give a damn what everybody says. And I'm not a boy. I'm going on twenty-two."

"Anyway, you're not grown up yet or you wouldn't act so crazy," she said. But it was not true: the hand that cupped the small of her neck was a man's hand with deep palm and fingers brusque and alive. "You act crazy as a kid," she said.

"Well, I'm four years older'n you, and you think you're mighty big."

"Girls get grown quicker'n boys. Everybody knows they get grown quicker. I'm just as grown as you are right now."

He tried to look at her face, but even close beside her he could not make it out clearly in the darkness. He could only make out its whiteness under her dark hair, the shadowed cavity of the eyes, and the dip of her bare arms, held close to her sides, against the dark dress. He reached over in her lap to cover her hands with his larger one. She acted as if he hadn't touched her. She only kept looking out over the obscure valley.

"Jake, I wish you wouldn't go," she finally said.

"I don't see why I oughtn't go. You just keep saying that, and you haven't got a single reason in the world."

"It's just because I love you so much, Jake. I'll miss you so much if you go."

"I'm going." Then when he leaned over and kissed her, he found that her cheeks were wet. "Honey," he said. "You know I'm just crazy about you. It ain't

gonna be long before I come back. You ain't but seventeen now and I'll be back soon. You know I love you, don't you?"

She did not answer.

"You know I love you?"

"I don't know. If you loved me you wouldn't want to go off and leave me. And I'll miss you so."

"You know I love you?"

"I don't know." And then both her arms were around his neck and she was kissing him hard while she sobbed. "I love you so much, Jake. I don't want you to go."

His hand was behind her head while he kissed her, and with the other he held her waist, drawing her to him so that their knees touched. "I love you so much, Jake," she kept saying, but he did not speak a word. After a while she stopped crying. Her head was supported by his hand, and between kisses their lips almost touched. "Are you glad I love you so much I cried?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

Once after a long silence she took one arm from around his neck and pointed off down the valley. "That light's at the Jarvis place, ain't it?" she said. "And that other one, it's your all's place, ain't it Jake?"

"I'm not gonna talk about that anymore." Then he added more harshly, "you know damn well it's our light."

Before she could answer, he began kissing her again, and after a moment she responded, her small nervous arms holding his neck closely while she kissed him back.

"Em'ly, you know I love you," he said, with his voice almost as harsh as when he had said, "you know damn well it's our light." Then differently, "and I'll miss you a hell of a lot, Em'ly."

"I'll miss you, Jake. I'm missing you already."

"You won't miss me like I'll miss you. You can't. You don't know."

"I will miss you," she said.

"I'll bet you forget me. I'll bet you get to going around with somebody like Tom Sanders or somebody like that."

"I'll miss you every minute till you get back," she said. She pulled his head to her and kissed him over and over again, on the mouth and face, with quick little violent kisses like those of an excited child.

"You'll forget me," he said, "and everything."

"I couldn't, Jake."

"Yes you will. You'll forget because you're just a kid. I wish I could know you'd belong to me while I'm off in Florida."

"You know I belong to you. We belong to each other, Jake. Don't we, Jake?"

"No," he said. "You'll forget. You're nothing but a kid."

"No."

"If I could just have you before I go. Really have you. Then it would be all right."

"Jake."

"Then I'd know you belong to me. Em'ly, I've got to. I've just got to!" He pushed her head back, half choking the words which were no answer, but only his name. "Jake," she cried, "Jake, Jake." She struggled, then her right hand found the catch of the door. She jerked loose and half slipped, half fell, from the car. He tried to follow, caught against the gear lever, wrenched it back, and was out after her, but she had disappeared through the tangled bushes of the roadside some ten yards away.

She heard the startled beat of his feet on the gravel, then the cracking of the bushes when he tore through, the cracking of dead cedar branches closer behind her, and then his voice calling. "Em'ly, Em'ly," he called, but she went on. She clambered over the rounded limestone that shouldered from the bluff, found the trail for an instant, and stumbled and fell. She rolled a few yards downward and piled against the upturned roots of the tree whose broken upper branches had tripped her. From above a rock came bounding, cracked solidly on the smooth surface of the limestone—one, two, three—and thudded in the soft earth of the trail. Jake plunged down the trail, not calling now, and she heard the murderous swish of the cedar boughs as they struck him. "God damn," he said out loud. "God damn her, God damn her."

After he had passed and the noise of his descent was lost, she still lay there. She did not even move, although the harsh knuckles of the roots cut against her back and side. It was a long time before he came back up the trail. He was walking slowly now, and she caught the sound of his heavy breathing as he went past her hiding place. He did not turn and climb up over the boulders directly to the car, but followed the easier way of the trail itself to the road. The lights of the car leaped out, two clear and steady beams high over the cedars. The motor started, and the swift radii of the lights swept away from her view.

She got up, shaking as with a chill, and supported herself against a sapling. After a little she climbed back to the trail, bending forward almost on all fours to help herself in the slippery residue of leaves and dry cedar needles. It was three miles to her house—down the bluff, across the fields of young corn where the plowed earth crumbled like ashes over her shoes, across the pasture by the creek, and along the road for a hundred yards to her gate. Near the pasture ford stood the cattle, fatalistic and heavy and sculptural in the darkness, while she went by. It was eleven o'clock when she saw the house like a black wooden box from whose front apertures a little light shone out to grey the grass where it fell. Almost two hours had passed since she rose from beside the tree on the face of the bluff.

She skirted the house, and climbed the sagging wooden steps by the cistern to the back porch. She stood there, holding the edge of the screen door as she had stood beside the sapling. Just as she entered, the tall figure of her brother stepped into the alley of light that reached from the front room across the hall.

"That you?" her brother asked.

She crossed the porch quickly, saying nothing.

"Come here, Mammy wants to see you."

She reached the back end of the hall and stopped. "I'm not coming. I'm going right to bed." And she turned to the door beside her.

"You come here," he ordered, and took a couple of steps toward her, looming bigger as he came into the shadow.

"I'm not," she said. Then she burst out crying, leaning her head against the door, quivering with sobs.

"Her brother seized her arm. "You come here," he said, and pulled her forward.

An instant she clung desperately with one hand to the door knob, still sobbing, and then went with him to the alley of light.

"Look at her!" he almost shouted into the room. "Look at her, just look at her." He jerked her arm a little, as a constable jerks a thief or a boy jerks a sullen dog. "Look at her," he said, jerking.

The little bald-headed man by the lamp, her father, looked up from his newspaper with a certain mean toothless surprise. Behind steel-rimmed spectacles the eyes of the woman, her mother, were wide, hurt, unloving. The twelve year old boy who had been sleeping on the couch by the window sat up and blinked like a toad. He got to his feet, snatching the twist of sheet up about his naked middle. "What's the matter with you?" he demanded, and his voice, though a child's, was much like that of his brother.

"You all know what's the matter with her," the big one said. "She's been out with that Jake Hawkins. She's been out with him just once too many times."

She stopped sobbing.

"Em'ly," her mother asked, "what's the matter, Em'ly?"

"I done told you. Ain't you got eyes!" said the big brother.

Her father did not speak. He still held his paper up, stiffly and inert as if he had been struck to that posture. His cheeks were sucked in now so that the lamplight cast a little sepulchral shadow in the cavity of the cheekbone.

"Em'ly," said the mother. "You answer me."

The girl turned, slow and dull, to the brother standing beside her, and stared at the hand that held her arm.

"Don't you hear her talking to you?" he asked, and again jerked the arm.

"You turn me loose," she said with sudden passion. "I hate you Alec Roberts, you don't know how much I hate you. I wish you was dead!" She flung loose

from him, ran down the hall, and slammed the door to her room with a violence that shook the frail structure of the walls.

"You see there," said Alec, whose hand still clutched the air with stupid fingers. "She said she wished I was dead!" There was a note of vindication in his voice. He went across and stood a little in front of his father. "What you gonna do about it?"

"Nuthin. They ain't nuthin to do."

"Nuthin, hell! She ain't my kid, but she is my sister, and I'm gonna shoot that son-of-a-bitch."

"Alec, you ain't." It was the querulous voice of the woman.

"Ain't I?" he demanded, not even bothering to face her. "If'n Paw had any guts he'd shoot him hisself."

Again the man looked up, vague and toothless as when his son and daughter had appeared at the door. "Mammy," he suggested with a trivial mockery of hope in his voice, "you go and talk to her. Maybe it—"

"Maybe, hell! She's my sister and it don't matter what happened. I'm shooting the son-of-a-bitch."

The mother did not rise from her chair, did not even look at her husband. Their son stepped across to the mantleshelf and picked up a pearl-handled revolver. From a vase covered with a mosaic of red and gold cigar bands shellacked down he poured out the cartridges into his palm. "I'll teach him to monkey around. I'll fill him full of .38's. He thinks he's better'n anybody. All them Hawkins thinks they're so damn high-falutin." The man and the woman stared at him, disturbed and fascinated like simple people at the theatre. Deftly he slipped the cartridges into their chambers, and flicked the gun shut. "I'll teach him all right."

"Yeah," said the young one, "them Hawkins thinks they're better'n anybody!"

"Alec, you ain't!" Again the voice of the woman. It was not a command, not a protest; it was more like a wail at the sudden recollection of a deed already done.

"You hush up, Mammy. I know what I'm doing." Then he turned fully to his father. "Are you coming or ain't you?"

The man's lips parted dryly, tentatively, like the beak of a chicken that gapes with the heat. "Maybe," he began.

"Hell! Are you coming?"

"I'm coming." He stood in the middle of the floor, his feet on the lighted patch of the carpet. The heavy work shoes he wore, with their metal hooks and thongs, gave the look of a childish, pathetic masquerade.

"Get you a gun," ordered the son, "and come on."

The man went to the corner behind the door and got a shotgun. He dropped the oil-spotted white envelope from its muzzle, and loaded it with shells from a

box on the mantle. He was vacant, mechanical.

"I'm coming too," declared the younger son. "Alec, you wait for me, it won't take me no time." Already he had pulled a shirt over his head, and was separating his pants from the tangled sheet on the floor.

"Naw, you can't come. Get in bed."

"Alec," he pleaded.

"Shut up," Alec ordered savagely. "Come on, Paw."

They went out into the hall, and out to the narrow front porch, slamming the screen door after them. The woman sat in the chair from which she had never moved, heavy and fatalistic like the cattle by the ford. Her hands were crossed on her breast, and the grey folds of calico sagged and looped between her parted knees. Across the room stood her son. His lanky thighs extended from beneath the shirt tails, the lanky thighs of adolescence; his brown feet were lost in the ruck and tangle of the sheet he had dropped. From the yard came the sound of a Ford motor backfiring, sharp and quick, and then a clatter as the car drove off over the make-shift wooden bridge at the big gate. "Me'dith," said the woman to her son, "you get to bed."

After a time the woman rose from her chair and picked up the lamp. The boy on the couch watched her movements with a dark animal-like glance. When she had gone out and the room was in shadow, he lay on his back, with the sheet pulled taut up to his armpits to outline his body, and stared at the ceiling.

The woman went to the back end of the hall and stood listening beside the door of her daughter's room. Stealthily like a thief, she turned the knob, entered, and closed the door behind her. The rays from the lamp she held reached across the room to show the girl's figure face down on the bed. Her hair was loose, and her arms were flung out as if a long time before she had clutched the coverlet with an abandonment of grief, and then, long before in weariness, had relaxed her hold. Her feet hung over the edge of the bed, and her light stockings, like the skirt of her red silk dress, were spotted with the mud of dust and dew. The woman put the lamp on the marble-topped dresser, where it illumined the glass powder box, the painted celluloid brushes, the lace pin cushion, and illumined the large bank calendar in which an Indian girl looked faithfully across blue water. The girl on the bed did not stir.

"Em'ly," asked the woman, "Em'ly, you ain't asleep?"

There was no answer from the bed. The woman sat patiently, hands folded on the breast, like one who still keeps a disastrous vigil already endured for a long time.

"Em'ly. Em'ly, listen to me."

Again there was no answer.

"Em'ly. You better listen to me. They done gone."

The girl turned painfully and lay on her side, staring like a sick, dry-eyed

child at the lamp on the dresser.

"They done gone," repeated the woman.

Something in her voice, some peculiar inflection of the repeated words, caught the girl. "Gone," she answered, "gone?" Heavily she sat up. "Where?"

"I couldn't stop them, Em'ly."

"Where?"

"They done gone after Jake Hawkins. I couldn't stop them."

The girl did not seem to understand.

"I couldn't stop them," said the woman. "You know how Alec is."

Then the girl was standing, gripping her mother's arm, shaking her, and saying over and over again, "why didn't you, Mammy, why didn't you?"

"You know how Alec is," said the woman. "He just got his gun and went. He said yore Paw didn't have no guts, and he went too."

The girl stood in the middle of the room. "Paw too," she said. She gave the woman a sudden direct glance, not of hatred or contempt or fury, but the appraising, inimical glance of a stranger, and then, as suddenly, she fled from the room. She fled down the hall, across the front porch, and across the grass. Once there came from the house the thin voice of the woman, calling.

Between the stone walls lay the pike. On one side beyond the tumbled stone the young, erect appletrees stood at their regular places, then the pasture; on the other side the cornfield stretched. The path that turned off the pike went along the border of a cornfield, next to the wall dividing that field from another. Honeysuckle looped the stone. Beside the stone grew the fennel. In June before rain the wind is down the valley. It was not wind, the downward drift of air between the hills, over the corn. It fingered the high leaves of the hickories that stood between the field and the creek. Under the darkness of the shagbarks went the path. The slats of the grapevine bridge rattled with footsteps, and beneath the bridge the water, glossy and black, spread downward flatly over the fanwise laminae of shale. The careful willow leaves feathered the water. The guywires of the bridge hummed like gnats. Then the path went beside the willows, then the long wagon road went across the hayfield beside the barbed wire. There stood the barn and the silo, and there the house like a great black box among the trees. From its apertures no light shone.

When she opened the side gate, a dog barked, rushed at her from the shadow of the trees. "Bob," she said, "Bob, Bob." The dog came up with wagging tail. Though she paid it no further attention, it cavorted beside her as she hurried toward the house. She beat with the flat of her hands on the door. She listened. With clenched fists she beat the solid wood. Finally there was the faintest click from within, and on each side of the door the colors of the stained glass panels came to life. The door swung inward, stubborn, grudging. In the space stood a tall woman who wore a blue flannel wrapper. Against the dim light from the single electric

bulb of the hall the grey hair seemed a thin, incongruous aureole of gold about her shadowed face. She stood very straight with one lean hand on the doorfacing as if to bar entrance.

"Where's Jake?" the girl demanded.

The woman regarded her with a slow, sober malignity. "It can't be much to you," she said.

"Where's Jake?" Her voice was peremptory, breathless. "Tell me, Mrs. Hawkins."

"He's gone," the woman said, and watched the girl's drawn face relax. "He's gone," she added, "but it's no fault of yours he got away."

"Mrs. Hawkins!" It was a child's voice in puzzled protest.

"I sent him off before they came, then I told them he'd gone to Fayetteville. But he's gone to the woods and he'll catch the freight at the crossing tonight. I sent him off." There was something stored and awaited, a cold unction of hatred, in the slow words. "I knew what those low-down pore white trash Roberts would do."

"Mrs. Hawkins!"

"I knew what you would do," she said. "You sent them here, you sent them here with guns!" The voice broke, suddenly tearful. "But they didn't get him, you—you bitch."

The door slammed. Beyond it was the sound of harsh, muffled sobs. The girl turned from the door and took the brick pathway to the front gate. Beside her under the maples paced the dog in an awed animal sympathy. Behind, the stained glass of the panels went dark. She clung against the gate, hanging against the sharp palings, looking somehow like the boys of that section who, far away across the ocean, had died on the enemy wire. But she had been gone for a long time when the night freight whistled for the crossing beyond the hayfield, Johnson's creek, and the woods.

Notes on the Typescript

p. 100 Three typed sentences at the beginning crossed out:

~~"Are you gonna miss me, Honey?"~~

~~The Buick pounded up the grade, drowning out the sound of her reply.~~

~~"You know I'll miss you," she said.~~

Handwritten sentence inserted:

The Buick pounded up the grade.

p. 100 Typed sentence crossed out:

~~"That don't matter to me.~~ "It can be sandy as all hell for all I care. I'm going down there and make some money."

p. 101 Typed word crossed out:

~~Then~~ I could make some real money quick down there.

p. 101 Typed word crossed out; handwritten word inserted:

But it was not true: the hand that cupped the small of her neck was a man's hand with deep palm and fingers ~~firm~~ *brusque* and alive.

p. 101 Typed sentence duplicating preceding sentence crossed out:

~~"It's just because I love you so much, Jake. I'll miss you so much if you go."~~

p. 103 Typed word crossed out:

~~Suddenly~~ The motor started, and the swift radii of the lights swept from her view.

p. 104 Typed words crossed out:

She's been out with him just one too many times. ~~with him~~"

p. 104 Typed word crossed out:

She ~~suddenly~~ stopped sobbing.

p. 104 Handwritten words inserted:

He still held his paper up, stiffly *and inert* as if he had been struck to that posture.

p. 105 Typed word crossed out; handwritten word inserted:

… it was more ~~as~~ *like* a wail at the sudden recollection of a deed already done.

p. 105 Typed word crossed out; handwritten word inserted:

He stood in the middle of the floor, his feet on the lighted patch of the ~~floor~~ *carpet*.

p. 106 Typed words crossed out:

The woman went to the back end of the hall and stood listening beside the door of her daughter's room~~, but not the faintest sound came from within~~.

p. 106 Arrow indicating relocation of phrase:

She turned the knob, <u>stealthily like a thief</u>, entered, and closed the door behind her.

p. 107 Typed word crossed out; handwritten word inserted:

Heavily she ~~suddenly~~ sat up.

p. 107 Typed words crossed out:

~~For an instant~~ The girl did not seem to understand.

p. 107 Typed and handwritten words, duplicating the following passage, crossed out:

She gave the woman a sudden direct glance, not of hatred or contempt or fury, but the appraising, inimical glance of a stranger, ~~and then, as suddenly, she fled from the room. She fled down the hall, across the front porch, and across the grass. Once there came from the house the thin voice of the woman, calling. Between the tumbled stone walls lay the pike. *On one side beyond the inert and tumbled stone* Beyond one wall the~~

p. 107 Typed words crossed out:

"Bob," she said, "Bob, Bob," ~~and whistled softly~~.

p. 107 Typed words crossed out:

Though she paid it no further attention, it cavorted beside her~~, trying to lick her hand,~~ as she hurried toward the house.

p. 108 Typed words crossed out; arrow indicating relocation of phrase; handwritten words inserted:

I sent him off ~~because~~ <u>I knew what those low-down pore white trash Roberts would do."</u> ~~She spoke each word with a certain unction of hatred.~~ There was something stored and awaited, *a cold unction of hatred,* in the slow words ~~of the insult~~.

p. 108 Typed words crossed out:

"~~You don't understand,~~ Mrs. Hawkins! ~~You don't know~~."

p. 108 Typed word deleted:

"~~But~~ I knew what you would do," she said.

p. 108 Typed words crossed; handwritten word inserted:

~~Then her~~ *The* voice broke, suddenly tearful.

p. 108 Typed words crossed; handwritten word inserted:

"But they didn't get him, ~~—you bitch~~" *you—you bitch.*"

p. 108 Typed word crossed out:

The door slammed ~~shut~~.

—DK

The Craft of Warren's Poetry: The Evolution of "Amazing Grace in the Back Country"

Since a number of the New Paltz Symposium speakers, as well as the poets who read at the "Homage to RPW" Centennial Reading, paid tribute to Warren's poetic craft, it seemed appropriate to include here one of Warren's well-known poems. With a view toward encouraging close attention to Warren's art of revision in the case of one poem, we sought permission to publish here the final text, together with facsimile pages of the holograph manuscript, and the later typescript with holograph corrections by Warren (and editorial suggestions by William Meredith). "Amazing Grace in the Back Country" was first published in the *Ohio Review* in 1977; its first appearance in book form was in *Now and Then: Poems 1976-1978*; the text printed here is from John Burt's edition of *The Collected Poems of Robert Penn Warren* (Louisiana State University Press, 1998). The editors are grateful to John Burt, Warren's Literary Executor, for permission to reprint the published text and include here the manuscript facsimile pages.

We might note briefly a few of the more striking aspects of Warren's revisions. He begins with the old hymn title "Amazing Grace," adds "In Back Country" in the typescript, and in the final editorial process "the" is inserted in the title—although to some editorial ears the title without "the" might sound both more Warrenesque and more true to place-idiom. The poem's opening line evolves from the first version's "Under the star-stung sky of late August" (which remains in the typescript) to the final "In the season of late August star-fall"; such a change might evoke a feeling familiar to students of manuscripts, an inkling of preference for the original version. In any case, it seems hard to give up that "star-stung sky," and one wonders why Warren felt compelled to do so. Here, too, some readers may ponder some unthinkable future when *all* poets compose on the computer, all manuscript variations cease to exist, all revisions are lost, and only final versions exist. Finally, we note the precision with which Warren navigates and negotiates the syntax and categories of grace: "Amazing grace so freely found" (holograph) becomes, quite correctly, "amazing grace so freely given" in the final version; and the typescript version of "moving on into darkness, / Of amazing grace" is transformed, with a clarifying effect that removes any syntactical ambiguity with regard to the darkness of grace, into the final felicity of "moving on into darkness, / Voices sang of amazing grace."

Warren's revision process is also illuminated by the recognition that the typescript contains notes made by his friend and fellow poet William Meredith. It is instructive to note that Warren, in his 70s, still follows a practice he had

begun as a teenaged member of the *Fugitive* group of poets at Vanderbilt in the early 1920s—sending out poetry manuscripts for commentary from other poets. Graduate seminar students of explication, as well as poets, might learn a good deal about the craft of poetry from contemplating William Meredith's commentary (at the bottom of the second typescript page): "If this is still malleable, I'd suggest that it could be revised in the light of its 4-beat or 5-beat line. I think only the exceptionally long or short line should be allowed to resist what I hear as a tetrameter matrix. Wm Meredith." We note also Meredith's editorial note in the margin next to line 27 (in typescript and final text): "stet: this line needs its length"; and, next to Warren's original long line 40, "Like an incantation … fresh-minted," Meredith wrote "Not this one, though." Warren heeded Meredith's advice and let line 27 stand as the poem's longest line, and he achieved a significantly sharpened effect by changing the typescript line 40 into the two short lines of the final version: "Like an invocation, out loud—and the word / So lovely, fresh-minted." Thus Warren, at the pinnacle of his poetic form, with ten volumes of poetry behind him, spanning a career approaching six decades in duration, pays heed to the advice of a poet fourteen years his junior. Some of the advice, that is, for Meredith's "tetrameter matrix" is a far more complicated matter, too intricate to deal with here.

—HRS

Amazing Grace in the Back Country

Robert Penn Warren

In the season of late August star-fall,
When the first crickets crinkled the dark,
There by woods, where oaks of the old forest-time
Yet swaggered and hulked over upstarts, the tent
Had been pitched, no bigger than one of
Some half-bankrupt carnival come
To town with fat lady, human skeleton, geek,
Man-woman and moth-eaten lion, and one
Boa constrictor for two bits seen
Fed a young calf; plus a brace
Of whores to whom menopause now
Was barely a memory, one with gold teeth and one
With game gam, but both
With aperture ready to serve
Any late-lingerers, and leave
A new and guaranteed brand of syphilis handy—yes,

The tent old and yellowed and patched,
Lit inside by three wire-hung gasoline lamps
That outside, through threadbare canvas, were muted to gold.
Here no carnival now—the tabernacle
To the glory of God the Most High, for now corn
Was laid by, business slack, such business as was, and
The late-season pain gnawing deep at the human bone
As the season burned on to its end.

God's Word and His glory—and I, aged twelve,
Sat there while an ex-railroad engineer
Turned revivalist shouted the Threat and the Promise, with sweat
On his brow, and shirt plastered to belly, and
Eyes a-glaze with the mania of joy.

And now by my knees crouched some old-fool dame
In worn-out black silk, there crouching with tears
In her eyes as she tugged me to kneel
And save my pore twelve-year-old soul

Before too late. She wept.
She wept and she prayed, and I knew I was damned,
Who was guilty of all short of murder,
At least in my heart and no alibi there, and once
I had walked down a dark street, lights out in houses,
Uttering, "Lust—lust—lust,"
Like an invocation, out loud—and the word
So lovely, fresh-minted.

I saw others fall as though stricken. I heard
The shout of salvation. I stared
In the red-rimmed, wet eyes of the crazy old dame,
Whose name I never remembered, but knew
That she loved me—the Pore Little Lamb—and I thought
How old bones now creaked in God's name.

But the Pore Little Lamb, he hardened his heart,
Like a flint nigger-head rounded slick in a creek-bed
By generations of flood, and suddenly
I found myself standing, then
Ran down an aisle, and outside,
Where cool air and dark filled my lungs, and fifty
Yards off, with my brow pressed hard
On the scaly bark of a hickory tree,
Vomited. Fumbling
In darkness, I found the spring
And washed my mouth. Humped there,

And knowing damnation, I stared
Through interstices of black brush to the muted gold glow
Of God's canvas, till in
The last hymn of triumph rose voices, and hearts
Burst with joy at amazing grace so freely given,
And moving on into darkness,

Voices sang of amazing grace, singing as they
Straggled back to the village, where voice after voice died away,

As singer by singer, in some dark house,
Found bed and lay down,
And tomorrow would rise and do all the old things to do,
Until that morning they would not rise, not ever.

And now, when all voices were stilled and the lamps
Long out in the tent, and stars
Had changed place in the sky, I yet lay
By the spring with one hand in the cold black water
That showed one star in reflection, alone—and lay
Wondering and wondering how many
A morning would I rise up to greet,
And what grace find.

But that was long years ago. I was twelve years old then.

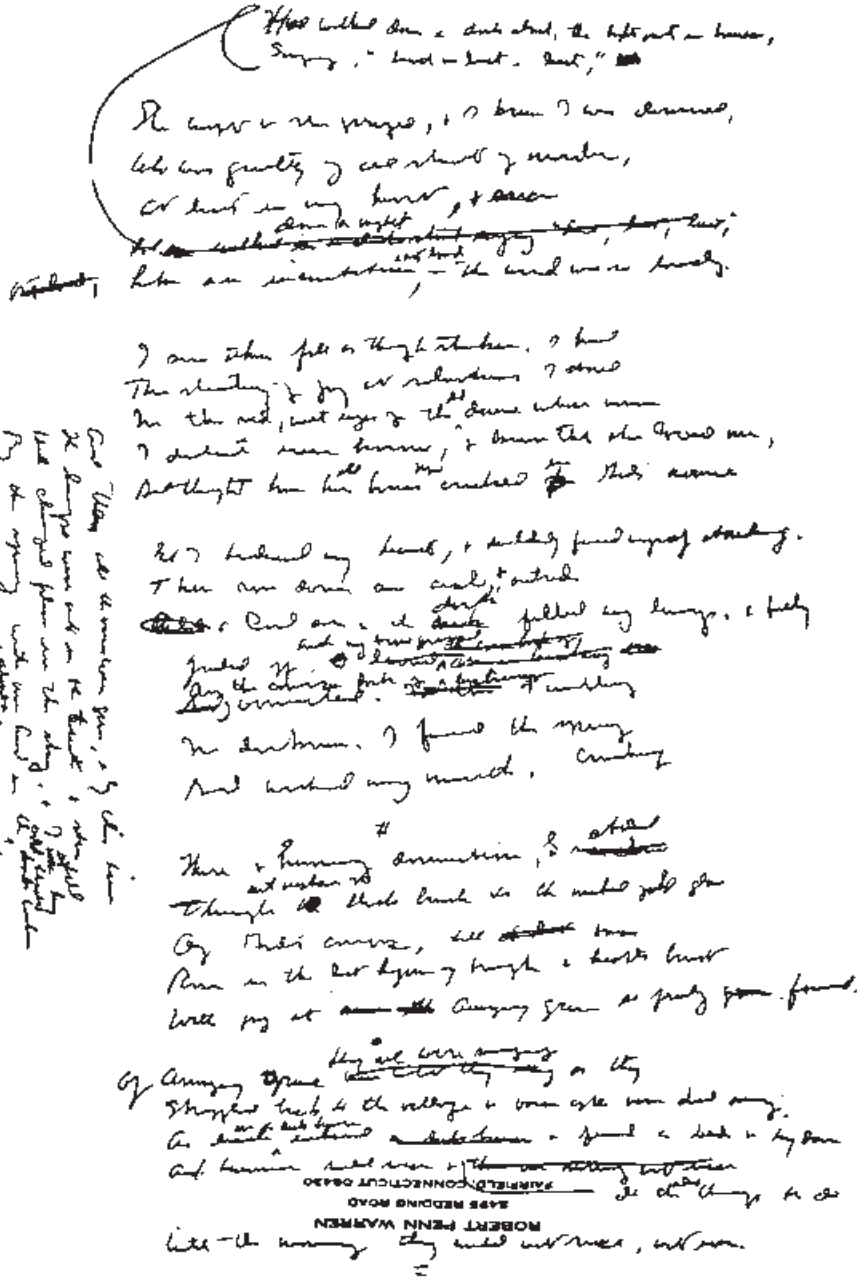
Amazing Grace

Under the star-strung sky of August,
While fair & crowds crowded the dark,
There by the woods, where [illegible] of the old farms [illegible]
Yet [illegible] a [illegible] on young ground, they
Had pitched the tent, [illegible] a [illegible]
Of some half-[illegible] [illegible] around the [illegible],
To [illegible] with the [illegible], [illegible],
[illegible] and [illegible] with [illegible], [illegible],
Plus a [illegible] middle-aged [illegible] with [illegible]
All [illegible], & [illegible]
A [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].
The tent was old & patched,
Lit under by [illegible] garden lamps.
That, [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible].
But we crowd [illegible] [illegible]
To the glory of [illegible] with [illegible]
And by, [illegible] [illegible], and [illegible] as [illegible], and [illegible]
The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of [illegible].
As the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] as the [illegible]

[illegible] Faith & the [illegible] [illegible], aged [illegible],
So [illegible] with [illegible] [illegible],
Shouted the [illegible] & [illegible], with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Short [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible], and
Eyes a-glaze with [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

II

But now at my [illegible] crowded [illegible] [illegible]
In worn-out black robes, crowded [illegible]
In her eyes [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] to kneel
And [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
Before it was too late. She wept-


ROBERT PENN WARREN
BARE REDDING ROAD
FAIRFIELD CONNECTICUT 06430

AMAZING GRACE

Under the star-stung sky of late August,
While first crickets crinkled the dark,
There by woods, where trees of the old forest-time
Yet swaggered and hulked over upstarts, they
Had pitched the tent, no bigger than one of
Some half-bankrupt carnival come
To town with fat lady, human skeleton, geek,
Man-woman, and moth-eaten lion and one
Boa constrictor for two bits to be seen being fed
A young calf; plus a brace
Of whores to whom menopause surely
A memory now, and with gold teeth and one
With game gam, but both
With aperture ready to serve
Any late -lingerers, and leave
A new and guaranteed brand of syphillis handy -- yes,

The tent was old and yellowed and patched,
Lit inside by three gasoline lamps hung on wire,
And outside, through the threadbare canvas were muted to gold.
No carnival now -- a tabernacle
To the Glory of God, the Most High, now with corn
Laid by, business slack, such business as was, and
The late-season pain gnawing deep at the human bone
As the season burned to its end.

God's Word and His Glory: and I, aged twelve,
Sat there while an ex- railroad engineer,
Burned revivalist, shouted the Threat and the Promise, with sweat
On his brow, and shirt plastered to belly, and
Eyes a-glaze with the mania of joy.

And now by my knee crouched some old dame,
In worn-out black silk, crouching with tears
In her eyes as she tugged me to kneel
And save my poor, twelve-year-old soul
Before it was too late. She wept.
She wept and she prayed, and I knew I was damned,
Who was guilty of all short of murder,
At least in my heart and no alibi there, and once
I had walked down a dark street, lights out in houses,
Saying, "Lust -- lust -- lust,"
Like an incantation, out loud -- the word was lovely, fresh-minted.

SPACE

SEE page 2

amazing grace - 2

I saw others fall as though stricken. I heard
The shouting of joy at salvation. I stared
In the red, wet old eyes of the damned dame whose name
I didn't even know, and knew that she loved me, -
Pore Little Lamb, - and I thought
How her old bones now creaked in God's name.

But the Pore Little Lamb, he hardened his heart,
Like a flint nigger-head rounded slick in a creek-bed
By generations of flood, and suddenly
I found myself standing, then
Ran down an aisle, and outside,
Cool air and the dark filled my lungs, and fifty
Yards off, with my brow pressed hard
On the scaly bark of a hickory tree,
Vomited. Fumbling
In darkness, I found the spring
And washed my mouth. Humped

there, and knowing damnation, I stared
Through interstices of black brush to the muted gold glow
Of God's canvas, till voices
Rose in The last hymn of triumph, and hearts
Burst with joy at amazing grace so freely given,
And as they moved out into darkness,
Of amazing grace they still were singing, singing as they
Straggled back to the village, and voice after voice died away
As each in a dark house found bed, and lay down
And tomorrow would rise and do all the old things to do,
Until the morning they would not rise, not ever.

And then all the voices were stilled, and by now
The lamps were long out in the tent, and stars
And changed place in the sky, and I still lay
By the spring with one hand in the cold, black water
That showed one star in reflection, alone, and I
Wondered and wondered how many mornings I
Would rise and what grace would find.

But that was a long time ago. I was twelve years old then.

Robert Penn Warren.

If this is still malleable, I'd suggest that it could be revised in the light of its 4-beat or 5-beat line. I think only the exceptionally long or short line should be allowed to resist what I hear as a tetrameter matrix.

Wm Meredith

Wondering & wondering how many
A morning I'd ...

Robert Penn Warren: Poems of Homage

The opening event of the Robert Penn Warren Centennial Symposium was the "Homage to RPW Poetry Reading," an extraordinary gathering of poets and writers of national and international reputation (together with younger poets), all of them assembled to pay tribute to Warren. In his introduction to the program, H. R. Stoneback, host and moderator, read greetings to the audience and tributes to Warren from a number of celebrated writers who had been invited but for various reasons were unable to attend. Warren's daughter, Rosanna Warren, Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, sent her regrets that she could not attend because she had to teach her class that night at Boston University; thus the audience was reminded that her father—poet, novelist, literary critic *sans pareil*—was first of all a *teacher*. Other leading writers who sent messages of tribute to Warren included Wendell Berry, Billy Collins, Richard Wilbur, and Tobias Wolff. Collins, our recent Poet Laureate, sent appropriate words of praise for Warren, our *first* Poet Laureate. Wilbur, Warren's near-contemporary who is still writing extraordinary poems in his mid-80s, wrote that, although house-bound at the time, he wished he could attend "to help celebrate Red Warren, who deserves all sorts of remembrance and acclaim." Dave Smith, distinguished poet and Coleman Professor of Poetry at Johns Hopkins, was scheduled to read but had to cancel due to illness; he sent both a poem for and a reminiscence of a visit with Warren (see below).

Of the readers who did participate in the celebration only two are not represented in the works collected here. Chinua Achebe, internationally acclaimed and widely regarded as the father of African literature in the English language and one of the most important writers in world literature in the last half-century, praised Warren's work—especially *All the King's Men*—and regaled the audience with informal commentary on Warren's themes of responsibility, identity, and redemption interwoven with his reading from and discussion of his own masterpiece *Things Fall Apart*. (Unfortunately, there was a video and recording malfunction; thus his commentary cannot be reproduced here.) Joan Murray, award-winning poet and author of numerous works, including *Queen of the Mist* and, most recently, *Dancing on the Edge*, read from her work in honor of Warren.

Robert Kelly, author of more than 50 volumes of poetry and fiction, mesmerized the audience with a poem of tribute to Warren composed for the occasion—"Robert Penn Warren Puzzles Over A Variant In A Stanza of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'"—here printed for the first time. John Burt, War-

ren's literary executor, read the selection included here from his forthcoming volume of poems, *Victory*, and perfectly exemplified what Warren meant when he instructed his writing students at Yale to ground their work in history. Donald Junkins read from his most recent of ten volumes of poetry, *Late at Night in the Rowboat* (a collection that deploys as an epigraph a quotation from Warren's poetry). And H. R. Stoneback read an excerpt from his sixth volume of poetry, released on Warren's 100th Birthday (24 April 2005)—a book-length poem entitled *Homage: A Letter to Robert Penn Warren.*

William Bedford Clark, leading Warren scholar, read poems from a volume-in-progress, including his meditation here on Warren's house in Fairfield, Connecticut. James Finn Cotter, President of the International Hopkins Society and translator of *The Divine Comedy*, added a variation on the same street address in his "The Onion Barn." Lynn Behrendt, founder of the Cosmic Baseball Association, author of several volumes of poetry, paid eloquent tribute in her "To Robert Penn Warren." Dennis Doherty, author of a recent collection of poems, *The Bad Man,* saluted Warren with "Tattoo." Robert Waugh, widely published poet and author of a recently published critical volume on H. P. Lovecraft, evoked a Warrenesque meditation on Time.

It is particularly gratifying to witness the engagement with Warren's work that reverberates in the poems written for the occasion by a younger generation of poets and Warren aficionados. The relationship between the grand canonical poet and his inheritors is not always and only agonistic. Michael Beilfuss, William Boyle, Damian Carpenter, Brad McDuffie, and Matthew Nickel—all current or recent graduate students and TAs at New Paltz—honored Warren with their meditations on the central themes of his poetry and fiction. I feel certain that the Warren I knew, who was *always* a teacher, who valued profoundly his connections with students and younger writers, would find joy and deep delight in these poems that salute him as mentor. These poems have a way of *knowing* what David Milch—one of Warren's students and great admirers (and creator of *Hill Street Blues*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Deadwood*)—knows and means when he declares that he finds it necessary to reread Warren's poetry "at least three mornings a week."

When I was a graduate student (at Vanderbilt in the 1960s) my generation of young poets loved Warren's poetry, especially the later work. In 1969, when *Audubon: A Vision* was published, a poet and songwriting colleague got hold of a copy before I did. He called me long distance, well after midnight and instructed me to "get a bottle and *listen*." He then read the complete *Audubon*—it was one of the great poetry readings, just the voice on the phone, Jack Daniels and me. That reading was in the back of my mind when I chose to conclude the Warren Centennial Poetry Reading with the closing lines of *Audubon*:

Tell me a story.

In this century, and moment, of mania,
Tell me a story.

Make it a story of great distances, and starlight.

The name of the story will be Time,
But you must not pronounce its name.

Tell me a story of deep delight.

Taken together, the poems of Homage to Warren gathered here tell a story beyond unpronounceable Time, distanced by deep delight.

—HRS

Warren's Flowers

Dave Smith

Out of the chalet, chests warm with bourbon
poured lunch long, we moved in leaves
Vermont lay down season after season,
going to the pond Warren dammed up,
where each lap, he said, sounded a line
he strung over the water, over blackness
it made my skin creep to look down upon.

But now I saw his writing room out there
under the great canopy where the sun
occasionally starred the resolute dark,
its walls only screen, the roof flat,
sloped like a face nothing here loved.
As if some interrogation was in progress,
in the middle sat a plain desk and a chair.

Blossoms white as camellias, some fat
like magnolias, budded the understory,
emerging from the earth no one had
disturbed with plow or foundation,
fecund as answers. Already we had come
to log-steps he hacked in the hillside,
crows jeered our intrusion, a web's flap

grazed my face. Things moved. I'd been in
the pond already, the slick newts eyeing me,
the moss that clung like unsloughed skin,
a bottom no weight could hold long on.
"What flowers grow up there?" I asked.
"The never finished kind," he laughed.
Soon he'd go under. But then "new poems."

EDITORIAL NOTE: Writing to the editor about the background of this poem, Dave Smith recalls that Warren's homemade pond, where he always invited guests to swim, "was awful, though funny." Like other visitors to Warren's Vermont place, Smith comments on Warren's swimming attire (black tank suit and white bathing cap) and his swimming style ("like a

strange dolphin"). Warren told Smith that he wrote poems in his head, trying out the lines as he swam. On one visit, Warren, laughing, showed Smith a book where some critic reported that Warren swam regularly in his Olympic-sized swimming pool.

—HRS

September Song

Donald Junkins

Butternut squash flowers bloom on the edges of the late
picked fields, and the hurricane season languishes
in the glow of Penn Warren's hundredth year, the anguish
of New Orleans in the autumn air, our state
of mind. His *Band of Angels* tracks us down
again, "sold down the river" in high yellow season
again, the nation's old theme. Long fuses, vines
bursting into trumpet flames, Amanda, brown
become "yaller," the genitalia of the map
the slave journey's end. Robert of Kentucky knew
King Louis' delta earth, the fecund sap
of life: mockingbirds, trombones, the brew
of bodies intertwined. When the walls came tumbling
down, the angels wept, fearing at the rumbling.

Robert Penn Warren Puzzles Over a Variant in a Stanza of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"

Robert Kelly

Why does *lonely* become *lonesome*?
I am lonely, you are lonesome?
Lonely means to stand alone
when someone else is wanted,
needed, absent. Desired even.
This poem does not speak of desire.

Lonesome is just a place, a place
can be lonesome without me.
O love. I love you for your
etymologies. Lonely means
lone-bodied. The other
—any other?—is *lone-full*,

full of being alone. The mariner
so full of anguish on the lone sea
refers his terror to the crowded land,
and he finds an absence there,
a complex literary metaphor,
a road that breaks my heart.
Why, why won't it leave me alone,
alone as his road. A road, a road
goes on the land from place to place,

an empty place, or road, or house, is
lonesome (1834) where once, one,
only, you alone, the text, the woman
was *lonely* (1798). The road
was lonely, the man was in his body
all alone. This place is full of alone—

I turn around and look back
over my shoulder—why?—to see
what my body has left behind
after I have passed through the world.
To see if I am alone with my body

on this road. What does a body
do on a road that needs alone?

What does a man do with his body
when alone? He looks behind furtively
and sees he is not alone. A man
is a woman on this road, a woman
is a lonely place, a lonesome man
keeps walking towards her, walking
away from what he knows. At evening
moving west his shadow would be behind him

clear. He is followed by what he chooses,
a man's act is always waiting behind him,
step by step, advancing till the man and his deed
come together. The shadow becomes the man.
But all his life Coleridge fled from his deed,
from all the busy doing that sucks the mind
from kindlier shadow, the silence place,
and leaves him alone with what he must do.

Nothing. What road is this? Alone with his body
already is a crowded place—man, deed, shadow,
road, all jostling to be alone. Alone with him.
He yearns all his life for a lonesome place,
a house with nobody in it. My body is a house
with nobody in it, not even me.

Because I am lonely on a road? No, the road
is always talking, loud and soft the way they do,
all day long the crows or cars or phones are calling.
Phone is a Greek word for voice but phones have
no voices, only crackling sounds that make like words
and frighten me, scare me the way a noise
behind me makes me spin around and look.

And nothing's there. Nothing's ever there.

At noon the church bells have a fit
and make the merchants hungry, hurry
to their silly lunches and a maiden's eye
wary as she takes their orders and I outside
stare past the roast beef to their sprightly unions,
communions, I stand outside, sick
with poetry, tricking myself to feel,
to feel that every rhyme is coming home.

What does a dead man have to do with the living?
What can we learn from dead Coleridge
that the girl across the street could never tell us?
He makes them all come back to life,
Arise, arise his shadow says, *I spill these words*
along the pavement so that you follow, follow.
It must be you I see when I spin round
to check the empty road behind every word,
the eager terrifying hungry shape
that flees from wherever we have been together,

flees towards us trying to *mean*. Words
try to hide themselves in thee. In me.
Embedded in our distances, we flee
into each other, there, ahead
of any place we've ever been, free
of any scent or flavor, the pure alert
apartness of the future, the only place
still free of me, still room for me
to find a lonesome house to store my mind.

We read what no one wrote.
We wrap ourselves with wind
and claim to be trees, gaze
at the interminable sea
and think we have something to say,
even about it, the sea, naming,

naming, speaking birds out of high heaven
to ride the masts of our imagined ships.
No ship, no road, no man, no fiend
behind him hurrying. Just one word now,
another word thirty years later,
and more years go by we try to read.

So little happens in a life but living.
It is terrible to be drunk and read a book,
we try to read everything as if it were a book,
what else can we do, only read, only mark
down words on pages that make us feel
that now I'm reading, this writing business,
just to pretend there's a text I'm reading,
terrible to be drunk and reading, never
knowing where the words are taking,
my own breath so loud I can't smell the words.
They have their own mouths too, *phonai*
the Greeks said, voices. I have no voice
and if I had I would not listen,

Like one who on a sunlit lawn
        Sits trembling in his chair
And having once begun to think
        Stops short and thinks no more
Because he knows some frightful thought
        Commands him to despair,

no, I don't want to think about it.
Anything. I want to sit here on the lawn
and drink. Forget his strange moon horns,
his broken bird, I have icebergs of my own,
this lawn, *this body round my thought*—

did I say that? A line I have to use.
Write. But never think. Sit here in the sun
like a man who sits quietly and drinks.

But drinking is a kind of thinking,
lonesome thinking that bursts into song,
raucous, a drunk is always young, adolescent
baritone, Coleridge springing up the Devon path

singing. Not for me to sing. A little Mahler
on the phonograph—Jesus, the word means
writing the voice!—then a little Patti Page
until one is drunk enough for no more drinking,
rhyming poets are always heavy drinkers,
why is that, no more rhyming, hence no more thinking.
This dead albatross between my legs,
this Freudian universe I see in every mirror,
no different from the lonely road
that stretches out before me when I close my eyes.

30 April-1 May 2005

from **Homage: A Letter to Robert Penn Warren**

H. R. Stoneback

VII

Here, now, in France decades later, I struggle
to finish this letter. Totemic sculpture
whines and whistles in the wind in the dunes.
The house, the yard, is littered with art: weird tunes
played by the sea—our hearts and this lonesome coast
one vast Aeolian Harp. We were lucky, or cursed,
to get this place. Met them at the Countess'
townhouse in Paris. Got on well. He's mad—
She's a poet, translator of René Char.
Tonight, by candlelight, I find it hard
to read poetry. I must find a way to hear,
to say what I'm missing here, get it to come clear
for History, Truth, Art. Tomorrow in Paris
I'll mail this: will I then feel shamed, embarrassed?

Today in the village pumping water from the well,
I heard the boy's choir, voices singing in the church.
Walking back from town, I shouted songs
to curious cattle contemplative
in their free-range sea-pastures,
songs I had not sung since boyhood: 12 years old, revivals,
camp-meeting. I loved the old songs about Joy and Grace
(and I sang them for girls with those names) and how I came
"Just As I Am" and we were "Almost Persuaded"
and I knew I was wretched but I could be Saved.
Then I remembered old songs I did not like:
"I want to be in the world, not *of* it,
I want to avoid its sin, not love it."

I knew even then that was bad poetry, bad songwriting,
and I knew too that I wanted to be all-totally
in and of the world and sin could not be avoided,
I wanted the fire of the World's Body
in my eyes and its flesh against my skin

touching, always touching, like guitar-strings
under my fingers. And I knew then that if I could have
and love the world that way I could at last
learn to love God for I was never a Gnostic
and from age six at least I abhorred the Abstract
for I knew that the World had to be God's Body
for I knew that complicity would set us free
and that was the only way we could *be*, *love*, in Time.
(I wept with this knowledge when I was 12.
I wanted to give away what I didn't even have.
I wanted to sing everything into silence and love.)

It is because I have seen this, and more, in your writing
that I send you this homage, this awkward windy letter.

What I must try to tell you has come to me:
The Time is September 1962. The Place is Louisiana,
the Sugar Cane Festival in Cajun Country.
Dancing and singing everywhere in the streets.
Walking the world with my guitar, finding festival,
I was enlisted to sit in with the band that played—
fiddles, accordions, guitars, washboard—the stage
was a flatbed farm truck. After I sang some Hank,
the leader of the Fête adopted me. Shoulder-slung,
crossing his chest like bandoleers, two Clorox jugs
of "homemade absinthe" (thus he named it to me,
and I believed,
in the yellow cloud and shudder of that liquid poetry).
He shared sips with others, jug-chugalugs with me.
At some point, when he had started speechifying
over the microphone, someone told me he was the heir
to the local Tabasco fortune. He kept talking about Oxford,
raising an army to march through the swamps to Ole Miss,
said it was every red-blooded American's duty to resist,
to fight the Federal government's "occupation of Missippi,"
to stop the "damn Yankee invasion of Oxford."

We sang for hours in the dancing streets. Things got crazier
when he kept making his speech.
Pickup trucks with gun-racks
and truckbeds full of guys with ax-handles began to line up
in formation down a sidestreet. One of his lieutenants
wanted to know if I'd ride with him, said "you know this ain't
about race, this is about States Rights."
I of course had no intention of riding or marching to Missippi
with his army to resist anything.
(Hell, I'd read your *Segregation*. I was already a Civil Rights
Troubadour, if not Crusader. Even been to jail over it.
By then I'd read Faulkner—
Lucas and Sam Fathers were my brothers.)
I was only concerned with the song I was singing
and the weightlessness of the guitar in my hands.

I could not stop them,
but I'd had enough of Original Ab(sin)the.

At some point in the curve of the bleached dawn
our Clorox Captain and his hot-breathed regiment
had gone off towards Mississippi, to pass out in the sugar cane,
to cough up their last gas somewhere in the vast and lost
bayou and shadow
of the ever-receding Missippi of their dreams.
(I heard later they never made it to Oxford. But others did.)

We were picking and singing in the last lit bar:
in that numinous place, a living chronology,
exact sequences of all the hieratic country songs—Jimmy
Rodgers, all of Hank Williams, Webb Pierce, Roy Acuff,
early Elvis and Everlys, Fats Domino, Johnny Horton
and some jambalaya jukejoint tunes.
All sung out at dawn, we felt *placed*, near and safe,
and we talked softly, languorously, about crazed crusaders
gone off into the night, slouching towards Yoknapatawpha.

Then a tall Tulane blonde,
sultry in the sad detritus of her innocence,
down from the Garden District to slum with the rednecks,
announced: "Did y'all know Bill Faulkner is dead?"
It had been some weeks; everybody had heard
but me—news travels slow when you move fast on the road.
There was something in the studied way
she said it, the presumption of that "Bill,"
the voice's unearned familiarity,
that set my fingers moving on my guitar—
Thus I hardly heard the old man behind the bar
mumble over his bourbon:
"I wonder what Red Warren would say?
He's all we got now."

I have not thought for years of that bartender
in New Iberia, Louisiana,
and I have not stopped to wonder
between the intervening accretion of facts
and the accumulating burden of the past
whether that bartender was maybe a student of yours at LSU,
writer of freshman themes or senior papers
or even a poem for your *Southern Review*.
But now, from this mammoth isolation
where I seldom hear the news,
here, under the miraculous rhetoric of the sea,
in the storm-flawed grammar of this forlorn shore of Brittany
where a grand theory of manners disciplines our violence,
under the sentence of vast indiscretions of dying summers,
seasons where I sweat and dread the coming of letters,
and the winter's allotment of non-sequiturs,
I am obscurely moved to make a pilgrimage to bayou country
for the next great harvest festival,
to seek out that old man behind the bar
(reading, I fancy, *Brother to Dragons*

between poised dispensations of bourbon).
And after an hour of yearning innocent guitar
and our common portions of whiskey, and night,
in the quiet complicity of dawn, in the original light,
I would turn to him and whisper hoarsely against the day:
"I know what Red Warren would say,
and he's all we got now."

Les Moutiers-en-Retz, Brittany & Paris
(December-January, 1973-74)

The Passing of the Armies

Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, 1865

John Burt

He was at Falling Waters in a dream.
The horses picked their way on shuddering planks
And clambered up the rubble on the shore
Under the furtive sibilance of leaves.
Gaunt riders whispered in moon-spattered dark,
Drew into shadows, noiseless, shifting, mortal.
Each time he knew how it would go. First, scouts,
Then skirmishers, and then, all through the night,
The wary tireless regiments of shades,
Lee's men, groping back from Gettysburg,
Slipping the trap, escaping into war
While he was huddled, silent, miserable,
And rooted terribly upon that bank.
At Wilderness, at Spotsylvania,
That steaming night in front of Rives' redoubt,
Where, as he bled through stinking bandages
And orderlies pulled dead men off the cots,
His broken boys, tangled between the lines,
Moaned all night for water, for their mothers,
For someone to crawl out beneath the guns
And blow their brains out (Jesus! do it now!),
Or in the hospital in Maryland,
He'd watched those riders feeling their way out.
And now, again, the war all over with,
And Lincoln in his grave, he had that dream,
Outside of Richmond, marching his troops home.

Someone was shaking him. "Sir?"

"O.K. What is it?"

"I'm sorry, sir. It's just your horse again."

"What's spooked him now?"

"He's kicked Lieutenant Keene."

"He hurt him?"

"No. But he's just getting started.
We thought you'd know the way to talk him down."

"All right. I'll see to him." And thought, "My horse.
Five thousand men do what I tell them to,
But not my horse." And he could hear the stamping
(As he eased his sore feet into boots)
Thirty yards away, the snort and whinny
Of a horse about to rear, the murmured "Easy … "
As the orderly edged closer, "Easy now … "
Crooning, wheedling, the straining self-control
No horse would fail to see through and disdain.
"It's all right, Joe," he called out from the tent
And stepped into the smoky moonlit camp
They'd pitched in darkness, hungry and annoyed
To march so hard in peacetime, and so long,
To God knows where. Near Hanover, he guessed.

A dozen campfires smouldered past the trees,
Red haloes in the distance. The surgeon's lamp
Inside his rotten tent cast silhouettes.
But no light near. He saw the shadows scuffling,
Peered hard a second, then came trotting out
In darkness, through the brittle, ragged pines.
Their needles, thick and soft, gave underfoot,
And stayed him with their clean and bitter smell.

Then something grabbed him. Something underground
Reached up, and took his ankle, pitched him down
Hard in the leafmeal, wrenched him to his knees.

He stood, and brushed his trousers sheepishly.
"General?"

"I'm all right."

"Look—my God!"
And there was what he'd stepped in, a dead man's heart,

The broken bone-house just beneath the leaves,
And then his horse kicked loose what made him rear:
A half-crushed skull he'd pawed up from the dirt.
Before the horse was calmed they'd found ten more,
A bayonet, a buckle from a belt,
A blue cap with a little 2 attached.
All round he saw, as the moon washed through the clouds,
The pale ribs swamped in litter, drifting there
Like spars and tackle shattered in the surf.

This was Peake's Crossing; a little fight, their first.
These were his townsmen, from the Second Maine,
Left in the night retreat three years ago.
They had not, in the dark, known where they were,
And in the light might not have recognized
That muddy hedgerow where they'd stood their ground,
Ramming muskets through the tangled brush
Till night fell down and both sides slipped away.
Now, on their way to life again, they met
Their other selves, still waiting in death's harbor
For the long slow crossing into nothingness,
And they were nothing too, stone-blank and spent,
Sick with war and mystified with peace
If this was peace, this armistice with death.

Next morning, as they marched, their fractured salvage
Stowed in crackerboxes one by one,
Bands of ragged Freedmen trailed them, laughing,
Cheering, begging food and shoes, half-starved.
"What will they do," he thought, "How will they live?
Will anyone remember how to live?"
He passed each gutted house, each gullied field
Asprout with burdock, thistle, clouts of brush;
Each one, he thought, is rooted in a man.

"Dimly in dusk after the harbor fight,"

—How often he had parsed this passage out,
In freezing classrooms full of eager kids—
"Demosthenes and Nicias could see
In twos and threes, with every soughing swell,
White swollen bodies of Athenian boys
Swept up the sand, with flopping outstretched arms,
Then dragged back down into the bitter foam.
The Syracusans sealed the harbor mouth
And sent detachments out to block the fords.
The ships were gone. They had not men enough,
Unless they drained the courage of despair,
To force their way by land that night and flee
The chains of those they came to put in chains,
But nothing less could save that army now.
Each man left his dead there for the crows,
The laughing ones, the pluckers-out of eyes.
And, knowing what would happen soon enough,
Abandoned too their wounded in the tents.
All those too weak to go clung to their necks
As men in shipwrecks clutch and drown their friends.
But, fearing worse, their brothers shook them off
And marched to meet, next night, defeat and shame."

He shook himself, and tried to turn his mind
To Brunswick (Maybe he would teach again.
Teach what? What did he know that mattered now?),

To Fanny (not a single word came back
Of her last letter, pale and general
As letters turn when nothing is to say).

We had no thought that war would master us,
Would lay to waste what war was meant to save.
Down Pennsylvania Avenue, next week,
Our shades will march in triumph in our place,
Still tempting us as more and less than men,

Still taunting us with what we have become.

Destiny, not men, will rule us now,
That goddess freshened with the taste of blood,
Whose many names are synonyms for death.
Now every man goes tense for the command
He serves, is driven by, but cannot fathom,
Past all knowing, past all right and wrong,
Swept up in something grim and great and fatal,
Till he is nothing but what he is in fire,
And freedom bends itself back into force.
Every spirit builds itself a house,
And in it builds an altar to necessity:

"For our part, look, we'll skip Speech Number One,
How Athens drove the Persians from your gates
So you owe her your freedom (Give it here!
We'll keep your freedom safe for you for sure!);
For your part, spare us all that rhapsody,
How Sparta has no stake here any more,
Or how you mean us well if left alone.
That kind of talk's for equals, not for you.
You know we'll take your city in a week;
Save us the effort and we'll let you live.

"At least we have the honor to be frank,
So don't pretend the gods are judging us,
As if a human quarrel bothered them.
If what we do were any grief to Zeus
He could have stopped us any time he wished.
Gods don't take sides until it's over with.
They're just like us: they conquer when they can,
And love those most who make the most of chance,
That chance that you'd have taken if you could.
Don't tell us otherwise: we too were weak,
And made the little speeches you've rehearsed,

And talked down other cities, till in time
We had the force to use more forthright means.
Another day may come, and when it does
We'll take it as we have to, just like you."

Behind him rolled the dust, all gold in blaze.
Ahead lay Washington, half swamp, half shrine.

2495 Redding Road

William Bedford Clark

It takes some time to raise a barn or two:
The tardy glacier plants its hoarded stones
Reluctantly, and timid woods push north
One season at a time—retreat, regroup,
And harden toward the beams they will become
Once Yankee pluck and cagey faith arrive
With bar and adze to make the most of what's
At hand. Unsanded planks embrace the peg
And corner-notch, confound Atlantic gales
That leap the Sound to be at ox and man.
Spring thaw, like sleet, tries stone and timberwork
Alike for well one-hundred years and more.

Fairfield indeed, though farmers drop their bones
Small landholds merge, new peoples are declared,
Then tear apart and reunite, renewed.
The not-so-placid 1950s come:
A Southern man and Yankee bride take charge.
Derive upon those stones and old-growth wood
A place of sturdy grace, turn out their books,
Raise up their get, eat well, drink long with friends,
Invest a home with royalties and sweat
(The latter most exactingly applied),
Then shed their bones in turn, but in an age
When reconstructions fail to fetch the price.

Location's where it's at, so build anew.
It takes no time to raze a barn or two.

The Onion-Barn

for Robert Penn Warren

James Finn Cotter

On Redding Road the lawns are as white
As the snow-solid sky. The old onion-barn
That became your home is no longer there:
All that is left are a field-stone foundation
And a solitary water tank in the backyard
Overlooking a meadow where sheep once grazed.

For thirty eight years you and Eleanor lived
And wrote in the barn you converted yourself,
Restoring the wooden doors, planks and floors,
Plastering walls, fitting stones in the fireplace
And hammering three-hundred-year-old beams.
At first you had to chase cows out of the barn.

A fifteen-room modern colonial
With tennis court and pool on three prime acres
Has replaced the barn. Four large SUVs
Are garaged where cows were once stalled and milked.
The real estate agent reports that the house
Once belonged to the writer Warren Penn.

Kentucky mountain farms, Tennessee woods,
A kestrel hovering in a Montana sky,
The nightmare wave towering down the street
Haunt me like a grandfather's clock in the hall,
The nettle of innocence and peach-pit of pain
That blisters the finger at its touch.

Remember the sunlight in your high windows
Like indigo reflected on the Nile,
And the pyramid-smooth walls around you,
Red, as you sat at the table and wrote
Hieroglyphics on parchment leaves of grass
Spelling the riddle of our part in the world.

Waiting It Out

for Robert Penn Warren

Robert H. Waugh

Give it time, give it time,
we've not yet bitten in,
the ground's as hard as it can be,
the word as wiry,

the times as wiry, the frost-heave,
the rock and the bitter suns
you grapple on, you wait on spring,
you die in winter's taproot.

Why should it matter? (A boy
puts his hand to a second hand
that moves and does not move) our slow
life's rooted elsewhere.

Give it time, give it time,
we've not yet bitten in,
the sleet and the snow-driven rage of the land
you laugh at, bitten in.

Tattoo

Dennis Doherty

Our long concrete walk from the ramshackle,
tar splashed road (lane of honeysuckle hedges
and loving-hand-placed stones in the nut butter sun)
to the house of open doors, open arms,
the three story house of many rooms,
summercool with the breeze of open windows,
dank with the odor of cuttingboard wood …

not yet to enter the home, but that biding walk
beneath the tree, now a livid, spongy mat from
the purple venal bleeding of her mulberries,
the stains of the quick stamped into concrete
by summers of naked family feet, in glee,
in anguish: flight to bosom, or flight from womb.

Can random pattern be possible on a walk
palimpsest of legends in bruised rosettes?
In the soul's dark night longing for mother, father,
I dream rhyming bursts of red and blue in twos.

Walk's living, livid sod of knuckly rootlets
grows a dream of towel wrapped necks after raft wars,
the jangle of dancing life jacket buckles
flying loosely out and back again,
of bare toe's recoil at the fleshy squish.
My ticklish lungs still ache with air of that bay.

Now walk's a lively busy bed, as under tree's arms,
prolific and profligate, we heard the birds
at her boiling flesh, toed the seeds at our feet,
and learned what the beaks of birds will eat.

We calloused our soles chasing phantom manhood
up the rutted gravel drive (yearly less stone,
more piercing assault from isolate points),
blackened in the circuit of warm road tar,
empurpled upon eternal entrance, exit.

The next owner paved the drive,
perhaps to trap and save his way.
He blithely lopped the tree.
Whence, my drop-fruit memory?

I lost a lover once, who, when she came from me,
flushed like a drunk on the wine dark sea.
Areolae bloomed from her nipples to her chin.

Daughter in a shop today bore her aura
from the balls of her bop, rolled her eyewhites,
popped the sacs of a berry, my capillaries,
and I stopped. Closed the eyes (for the dark) of my face.
Dreamt in colors, ever to enter reclaimable space.

To Robert Penn Warren

Lynn Behrendt

There was a hawk with a glass eye
Landed in the shuddering leaves once
An anti-emersonian bird at the tip of a high blue hill.

And there was boy on a dark road at night
in a certain season beyond seasons, listening.

In an earlier maniacal century
in a poem you didn't write
John James Audubon had a dream
and forever tied a string onto the leg of an eastern phoebe
to see if it would return
come Spring. He learned that it did.
They do. Some things return.
Some never leave.

Sixteen darknesses have come and gone.
One hundred bright mornings …
Is it easy to shout Here I Am
cross the chasm of death
or does the ruckus of the books get in the way?
No matter. The evidence is still here;
what was is; and we can still stand
to learn something about piety, epiphany, passion,
the truth not necessarily in capital letters, reading,
and readying; preparing for, as you wrote, eternity.

Some of us who are still awake begin to feel, reading your lines
a circular blur of tumbled darkness
and a remembered spruce or cedar toward sunset
leans northward in our minds and the road
seems to lift up off the earth.

Red's Song

Michael Beilfuss

I first read the first page of *All the King's Men*
On the sunny spring steps of a youth hostel
In Jefferson's pristine Romanesque Capitol where,
The night before, a prostitute in a car propositioned me.
I don't think the two are related.

I read the last page of *All the King's Men*
On the sunny steps of Hasbrouck dining hall
In the last dashing moments before class (American Lit III).
I thought I knew something of Jack's Burden, the web, and time.
Then I read *Brother to Dragons*, later that summer,
And I really heard Robert Penn Warren's voice.

I read it aloud, in my living room, on Elting Corners,
Just to hear the long rhythms.
A slight southern accent crept down my throat.
RPW started speaking.

My housemate Chris walked in.
I kept on reading, aloud.
He dropped in a chair and listened.
Then Jim came in, grungy, home from his roofing job:
"What's going on?"
Chris didn't answer and I kept reading.
He dropped into the stained third-generation Salvation Army sofa and listened.

We all watched as the words floated off the page
And fluttered out into our living room.
I wasn't reading anymore.
RPW read, said, his poem. His words hung
In the air gaining weight and texture.
Their density silenced us, the characters crowded us.

Jefferson, head high, stood there, on our dirty green rug
Then crouched in the corner sweating and biting his nails.
Lucy, Lilbourn, and Isham, gathered in an opposite corner,
Whispered, glanced at Jefferson, met us in the eyes,

Stared at our broken furniture and cracked dishes.
Jim and Chris and I huddled, crouched with the other slaves.

We heard the thunk of the axe on the meat block,
We felt the earth shake, kicking up the dust of ages
Past in our living room on Elting Corners.

The two-dollar clock hanging above the empty doorway ticked on
But that evening, that moment (at no place, at any time)
Silently followed us, stayed with us.
Red's words traveled over the hills and valleys of time,
They whispered through the dense air of memories,
Light as autumn leafs on their spiraling journey
They touched ground in our souls
And rested, to fertilize the coming years.

The Original Sin Boys

for Robert Penn Warren

William Boyle

Gravesend sweats at the skull with snow, the sky Rebel
gray. I carry your books with me—pack heavy with your
books—on the D train home. Old women with scissored
shopping carts watch me as I read your *Collected*
Poems. At Bay Parkway the doors spit open, and I

step out onto the platform. It's quiet. Deadly
Brooklyn quiet. First thing I hear is the church bells
from St. Mary's on 85th Street, the church where
I was baptized, where I received First Communion
and Confirmation. And I remember what you

wrote in your blizzard poem: "Bless coverings-over,
forgettings." I leave the station, stopping at a
bodega for a six-pack, put on my headphones,
listen to Tim Hardin's "Black Sheep Boy." I walk past
St. Mary's, past Augie's Deli, where I used to

buy Topps baseball cards, past P.S. 101, where
my buddies and I played stickball, tag, and football,
where we talked to pretty girls with braces and hair
like root beer, where I could roof any spaldeen, where
I stood and stared, staggered and soared, and saw life as

Glory. I spent years trying to forget those things.
Left Gravesend at eighteen. Rode the train and wondered
if it was really there. Forgot. Blessed forgetting.
Have had to keep that sin tight in my left hand since.
Have had to learn again about Glory and Guilt,

Communion and Complicity, History and
Sin, Mystery and Grace. Have had to learn on long
walks to Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Red Hook, and Park Slope,
feeling empty and hollow, dull and picked clean. Have
had to face the nightmare. Now I know: Nothing is

lost, ever lost. So I have come back to bless my
mother's tired heart, to bless my grandmother's eyes,

to bless my grandfather's ears, to kneel and to pray,

my pack heavy with your books.

Hey Mr. Warren (Awake with a Branded Soul)

D. A. Carpenter

How I've wasted these last few years in bars and on binges!
I could have been memorizing *The Wasteland*
And writing it on dorm room walls.
Instead I made a bet on the Eliot vs. Pound fight at the Titanic
And lost five bucks.
But then there was you who helped me break into another world;
A world I never knew
As I stood next to you on tiptoes looking for Arcturus.

You said: "Things exist in you without your knowing it.
You don't know what comes out
of yourself, but it comes. It is you."

I thought: How long do I have to wait for it?

Rereading *Audubon*,
I dreamed how you could have been some lost dauphin
Naming the world as that dapple-dawn-drawn evening hawk sinks in amber light.
Although I know you stood
Firm on the ground
Like some old bearded oak.

Hopkins said he knew the "beauty of our lord" by a single bluebell;
I know the inscape, the truth, of the human soul by every single line you wrote.
It's not always pretty, but it's real, something you can touch, a promise
That there's a space between a morphine scream and dreamland garden.
It's good, it's bad, it's ugly and hysterical;
It's here.

The truth of it can never be spoken but in dream;
It's there.

I know you were only a man, as am I,
But there's one kind of favor I ask of you;
See that the blessed drift of your words cover my soul and keep it true.

I often talk with other tongues;

Echoes of thoughts I wish were mine,
But this is me,

Tellin' you now.

God Have Mercy on the Mariner
… where … the girls wear … no panties … and have smooth little faces to break your heart …

Brad McDuffie

Where
In a peach of a dream the other night

I was pushing 90 on a high desert
Plain; a black gravel slab that caught
No sight of the end in the distance,
But was rather like the end anyhow—
Like the slow drip of a preacher's tie
Set against the white
Of the shirt his wife had pressed
On Sunday Morning.

And I can see, here in the tomb of this black car,
All the King's men,
And to my side she's sitting there low in the seat
Letting the breaths of air
Catch up under the seam of her dress.
I can make out the pattern of it—
½ faded in yellow with purple whispers
Flowering all about it.
And I can see the way the sun beads about her skin,
Like diamonds, upon the upper of her lip, breasts,
And ankles;
And I feel something like Lazarus in Hell
Asking my Lord for a drop of water.

I am thinking out towards evening
In Kentucky
She's in the swing that father hung
Out under the Willow,
She ripples in & out of my sight.
Her dress dances against the wind
The seam catching more of the ghost now
She leans her head back—

Her hair falls—
And I say to her gently from the distance:

"Let's go out into the night babe,
You can toss your dress off in the grass,
We're gonna eat of the tree
That will bring us back to life,"

"We'll fix everything Adam & Eve
Didn't get right;
We'll swim in the new moon
& dance in its white light
& pray the Final Flood
Will come and bless the hearts of men
With His enduring love."

Not Just *La Patria*—
Homage of an Expatriate

for Robert Penn Warren

Matthew Nickel

Walking out of Notre Dame, I could see, beyond
The pigeons, Charlemagne, Roland, and Olivier
Facing the west, lingering like ghosts brackened
Green on the edge above that aged bronzed river,
And this would be my final week in Paris, alone,
Before I moved south for the winter

I looked across to the left bank of the Seine
Remembering the nights before and having read
Warren's *A Place to Come To* silently beside
A window facing Notre Dame and how she held
The sky's dazzling light slanting through the dusk
And I thought about the question of *la terra*,

Thinking that I came east in my attempt to avoid
Running into a vision of American western solitude
Knowing that running anywhere can leave us with
A deadly empty happiness of survival, selfhood,
A pastlessness: to be just another puppet twitching in
The Great Orgasmic Imperium Intellectus

I wanted to relinquish something, a deniable guilt
About love and neglected people who love us the most
My life had become the subject of my thesis, no longer
Me, being outside the going on but at the same time
Inside it; thinking this, I was startled when overhead
I heard cathedral bells that tolled the time, and

I thought of home, wherever that was, and
Having fled to some place, to some woman and
Her waiting sex sweating with contempt
For the actual context of the bleeding heart
I remembered wanting to spill my contempt, to see it
Raw and swollen, that I was real in all that emptiness

But Warren made the past's burden salvageable

Taught me to reject the dark alley and its wind-swept
Scraps as the terminus of solitude, taught me to reject
The incunabulous spontaneity of the *carpe noctem*;
I was still alone having left much behind and not
Wanting to shore against it, but I had found in Warren

A place to come to, and have since, willingly, come
Nodding home where by the banks of the Hudson River,
I have clutched a handful of familiar dirt, knowing
Atonement is the final professor of Love, the final gift
Of a place to come to, a home, a family to return to,
So I lift up this raw earth, my terra, to you.

Four Poems in French

(with facing-page translation by H.R. Stoneback)

Roger Asselineau

Editorial note: Professor Roger Asselineau of The Sorbonne is an internationally renowned Whitman and Hemingway scholar. One of the leading Americanists in Europe for more than half a century, his distinguished scholarly work is matched with his superb craft and art as a poet and translator. We are pleased to present here facing-page translations representing his work in both modes: 1) several poems from his *Poesies Incomplete II* (Paris: Le Meridien, 1989) translated by H.R. Stoneback; 2) his translation of Wordsworth's "England! the time is come..." (originally published under his *nom de plume*—or *nom de guerre*—Maurice Herra in *Poemes de Guerre* 1939-1944).

Scholar, poet, translator and member of the French Resistance during World War II—Professor Asselineau's record of distinction seems endless—he will celebrate his 88th birthday next year with the publication of another collection of his poems. And he hopes to visit SUNY New Paltz to renew his acquaintance with faculty and graduate students he has met at International Hemingway Conferences.

—HRS

I

Pourquoi donc se méfier des mots
Et chercher querelle au langage?
Les mots chantent,
Les mots dansent
Sur la page
Mieux que moi.
J'aime les mots,
Sinon je dirais: oh!
J'aime leurs entrechats,
Sinon je dirais: ah!
Je le crois vrais,
Sinon je me tairais.

II

Les rimes, les rimes,
Ça ne sert à rien.
Ce ne sont que des enluminures des temps anciens,
Lentement, patienmment dessinées sur vélin
Par des moines myopes depuis longtemps défunts.
A bas la rime! Vive la rime!

III
La Moto

Sa moto bien serrée entre les jambes
Et couché sur la selle, il fonce dans l'espace
A deux cent kilomètres à l'heure—et le viole
A perdre conscience
Et à perdre haleine,
Longuement—aspiré par l'horizon
Qui recule sans cesse,
Mais, furieusement, il fonce.

I

So why not have faith in words
And why pick a fight with language?
Words sing
Words dance
On the page
Better than I can.
I love words,
If I didn't I'd intone: Oh!
I love their leaping entrechats,
If I didn't I'd declare: Ah!
I believe their truth,
If I didn't, I'd shut up.

II

Rhymes, rhymes—
They are absolutely useless.
Nothing but numinous illumination from the old times,
Slowly, patiently painted on parchment palimpsests
By myopic monks long defunct—
Down with rhyme! Long live rhyme!

III
The Motorbike

His motorbike held tight between his legs
and low mounted in his saddle, he charges
at 200 kilometers per hour—space-rape—
losing consciousness
losing breath,
sucked in towards the horizon
that retreats recedes endlessly:—
Yet, he rushes into the Void, furiously.

IV
Camargue

Mariage du ciel avec la terre et la mer
Dans ce pays où autrefois
Telle Vénus
Les Saintes Maries sont sorties
Des eaux.

Et il y a tellement d'eau
Pour emprisonner la lumiére
Qu'il n'y fait jamais vraiment nuit.
La delta luit dans les ténèbres.

La mer, la terre at l'air sont si entremêlés
Que les oiseaux plongent dans l'eau
Tandis que les poissons s'envolent.

Les taureaux noirs,
Avec leurs cornes comme des croissants de lune,
Sont venus tout droit de la nuit des temps.
Les chevaux blancs couleur d'écume
Sont, eux, fils de Neptune
Et ils courent ou coulent sur les grèves
Comme des vagues
Sous leurs crinières qui ondulent.

Les Gitans, Peaux-Rouges de l'Occident,
Viennent ici rêver
A leur Asie natale
Et humblement prier Sainte Sarah,
Leur Déesse noire de la fécondité.

L'église-forteresse
Des Saintes Maries de la mer
Est une caverne de pierre.

IV
Camargue

Marriage: sacrament of sky and earth and sea
In this country where long ago
Like Venus
The Holy Marys came up from
The waters.

And there is so much water
To imprison the light
That it's never really night:
The delta's candleglow in tenebrous darkness.

The sea, the earth and "the air" are so intermingled
That the birds dive into the water
As the fish fly their finny flight.

The black bulls,
With their crescent-moon horns,
Have come directly from the darkness of Time.
The white horses, spindrift-seafoam-colored,
Are sons of Neptune
And they run or break on the beaches
Like waves
Under their undulant manes.

The Gypsies, "Redskins of the East,"
Make the Pilgrimage here to dream
Of their autochthonous Asia
And humbly pray to Saint Sarah,
Their dark Goddess of Fertility.

The fortified church
Of the Holy Marys of the Sea
Is a stone cave.

Wordsworth's "England! the time is come…"

(a French translation)

Roger Asselineau

Angleterre, l'heure vient de sevrer ton coeur,
D'écarter de toi tout aliment non viril,
De rejeter enfin tout mensonge futile;
Notre ordre ancien s'écroule, édifice trompeur.
La récolte pouvait être combien meilleure!
Mai tes crimes ont rendu la terre stérile.
Aux Indes et en Afrique, égoïste inutile,
Tu ne fais qu'exploiter l'effort du travailleur.
Toutes les nations sont d'accord pour t'accuser:
Mais bien pire et bien plus redoutable, qu'il aime
Ou bien qu'il haïsse, est ton Ennemi lui-même.
C'est pourquoi il est sage aujourd'hui d'oublier
Le poids énorme de tes péchés. O tristesse
Que nos plus chers espoirs soient en toi qui transgresses.

England! the time is come when though shouldst wean
Thy heart from its emasculating food;
The truth should now be better understood;
Old things have been unsettled; we have seen
Fair seed-time, better harvest might have been
But for thy trespasses; and, at this day,
If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,
Aught good were destined, thou wouldst step between.
England! all nations in this charge agree:
But worse, more ignorant in love and hate,
Far—far more abject, is thine Enemy:
Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight
Of thy offences be a heavy weight:
Oh grief that Earth's best hopes rest all with Thee!

Translations from Dante and Petrarch

A. M. Cinquemani

Dante addresses Arnaut Daniel in Provençal

El cominciò liberamente a dire:
"Tan m'abellis vostre cortes deman,
qu'ieu no me puesc ni voill a vos cobrire.
Ieu sui Arnaut, que plor e vau cantan;
consiros vei la passada folor,
e vei jausen lo joi qu'esper, denan.
Ara vos prec, per aquella valor
que vos guida al som de l'escalina,
sovenha vos a temps de ma dolor!"
Poi s'ascose nel foco che li affina.
(Purgatorio, xxvi. 139-148)

Petrarch encourages a young man to learning

La gola e 'l sonno et l'oziose piume
ànno del mondo ogni vertù sbandita,
ond'è dal corso suo quasi smarrita
nostra natura vinta dal costume;

et è sì spento ogni benigno lume
del ciel per cui s'informa umana vita,
che per cosa mirabile s'addita
chi vol far d'Elicona nascer fiume.

Qual vaghezza di lauro, qual di mirto?
"Povera et nuda vai, Filosofia,"
dice la turba al vil guadagno intesa.

Pochi compagni avrai per l'altra via:
tanto ti prego più, gentile spirto,
non lassar la magnanima tua impresa.
(Canzoniere, Sonnet 7)

Dante addresses Arnaut Daniel in Provençal

And freely he began to say to me:
"Your courteous demand so pleases me
that I cannot and would not evade you.
I am Arnaut, who weep and, singing, go;
afflicted, know my former foolishness;
with joy can see close by the wished-for day.
I beg you now, by virtue of that force
that draws you to the stairway's highest step,
remember me in time, and all my pain."
Then he withdrew into refining fire.
(Purgatorio, xxvi. 139-148)

Petrarch encourages a young man to learning

Gourmandizing, sleep, the easy and obscene,
have banished every virtue from the world,
and human nature, vanquished by routine,
has very nearly come to a dead end.

The loving light of heaven is so gone
(by which the life of mankind was informed)
that whoever draws a stream from Helicon
is taken for a weirdo and a fraud.

What is this wish for myrtle and for bay?
"Books and learning are so, like, uncool,"
Is what you'll hear from any MBA.

No one will go the way you want to go.
So much the more I beg you not to blow
this chance! Transcend the mediocre rule!
(Canzoniere, Sonnet 7)

The laundering of Laura's veil

Non al suo amante più Diana piacque
quando per tal ventura tutta ignuda
la vide in mezzo de le gelide acque,

ch'a me la pastorella alpestra et cruda
posta a bagnar un leggiadretto velo
ch'a l'aura il vago et biondo capel chiuda;

tal che mi fece, or quand' egli arde 'l cielo,
tutto tremar d'un amoroso gielo.
(Canzoniere, Madrigal 52)

The laundering of Laura's veil

Diana did not please her lover more,
when quite by chance he saw her bathing nude
that day, immersed in water cold as ice,

as that harsh mountain shepherd girl pleased me,
bent as she was to wash a lovely veil
that keeps the wind from touching her blond hair;

so that, even now with the sky on fire,
she made me shiver in a loving cold.
(Canzoniere, Madrigal 52)

Translation of Folco de Baroncelli

Catherine Aldington

Editorial Note: Catherine Aldington, daughter of the noted writer Richard Aldington, is a poet, translator, and President Emerita of the Association for Provençal Culture in les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, France. We were pleased to present a selection of her recent poetry in Volume XII of the *Shawangunk Review*, and in the present issue we include her translation of a poem by Folco de Baroncelli, who, as she explains in the introduction to her volume of his poetry, associated with some of the greatest figures of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Provençal literature and initiated many of the local celebrations for which the Camargue is now famous. He was also a breeder of bulls.

Catherine Aldington's "New Paltz Connection" dates from 1996 when Professor H.R. Stoneback, Director of the VIII International Hemingway Conference in les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, invited her to be the Camargue Coordinator for the conference, which brought more than 300 scholars and writers to the ancient pilgrimage village on the Camargue Coast of the Mediterranean, including a number of New Paltz graduate students and faculty. In 2000, she and Prof. Stoneback co-directed the First International Richard Aldington Conference, at which several New Paltz faculty presented papers.

The Sacrifice

Venus, what can I offer up on your altar?
If, as in the past, we held the custom of sacrifices,
How humbly, how gratefully, I would have delighted
To bring you, from the marshes, the bull
Who is renowned from the Saintes Maries to the Cevennes.
With pride I saw him born in the wild herd,
For he comes from famous stock. Eagerly I watched
His horns grow to perfection as his breed demands.
Today his great shaggy withers
Exceed by a span his velvet back.
He is black as jet, his eye is dark, indomitable;
He has unrivalled horns, and the crowd becomes frantic
The moment he bursts like thunder into the arena.
He paws the ground, glaring and rumbling—
Woe to the wretched razeteur*
Who for glory or gain seeks to touch his forehead.
He is adored like a god and I named him Provence
In honour of this land.… Venus, I would have led him to you,
A rope on his horns, furious, rearing, held back
By twenty superb youths, trousers rolled up to their thighs,
For you, sweet pale Venus.
You have been good to me! I have known
The heavenly ecstasy hoped for by one in ten thousand
Of the pilgrims who, in ancient times, swarmed to your cities
And pressed into your temples.
All men believe they have found love, all strive
After ardour; sooner or later all give a shrill cry of pleasure.
But how many have bathed in your radiance?
How many have had their eyes marked by your irresistible finger?
How many have you taken by the hand, descending from Olympus
In human shape? Young men, you who speak of Love
As though it were like any other pleasant and transitory thing,
Be silent. Love is a great force
Which begets worlds and gives life to flowers.

—Le Cailar, 14 November, 1908

**In the Provençal games the object is not to kill the bull but to snatch a ribbon from between the bull's horns. The person who does this is the razeteur, who makes a series of running passes at the bull's horns.*

Lou Sacrifice

Vènus, de qué iéu pode óufri sus toun autar?
S'avian, coume àutri-fes, lou biais di sacrifice,
Umble e recouneissènt, auriéu fa moun delice
De t'adurre lou tau que desempièi li clar
Di Santo enjusqu'i mount Cevenòu, èi celebre.
L'ai vist naisse em'ourguei dins l'escabot menèbre,
Car sort d'un sang famous. Ai regarda buta
Si bano segound l'èime óubliga pèr sa raço,
Atentiéu. Au-jour-d'uei a'n coutet que despasso,
Large e pelous, d'un pan, soun reble velouta;
Es negre coume un jai; a l'iue sourne e ferouge;
Es couifa coume ges e lou pople vèi rouge
Tant léu que dins lou plan intro coume lou tron:
Tiro braso, espinchant de-galis, roundinaire,
E s'espóusso e malu au paure rasetaire
Que, pèr glòri o gasan, vòu ié touca lou front;
L'adoron coume un diéu e l'ai nouma Prouvènço
Pèr l'ounour dóu païs.… Vènus, dins ta presènço,
Embourgina, rabin, encabra, mantengu
Pèr vint droulas superbe estroupa jusqu'is anco,
Iéu te l'auriéu mena. Car, douço Vènus blanco,
Siés estado pèr iéu tant bono! Ai couneigu
Lou bonur celestiau qu'un ome sus dès milo
Di roumiéu qu'autre-tèms emplanavon ti vilo,
S'esquichant dins ti tèmple, aviè'spèr de gagna.
Tóuti creson d'avé l'Amour; tóuti s'óupilon
A crema; de plesi, quauque jour, tóuti quilon.
Mai dins ta lus quant n'i'a que se siegon bagna?
Quant n'as signa dóu det sus lis iue, decidado?
Quant n'as pres pèr la man, umano e davalo
De l'Oulimpe? Jouvènt que parlas de l'Amour
Coume de touto causo agradivo e mourtalo,
Teisas-vous: l'Amour èi la grand forço eternalo
Que coungreio li mounde e qu'empregno li flour.

—Le Cailar, 14 Novembre, 1908

**In Provençal "tiro braso" literally means "pull the coals out of the fire," a resonant (and perhaps untranslatable) expression used to describe the bull pawing the ground.*

A la France

André Spire

O pays adorable
Toi qui absorbas tant de races,
Veux-tu m'absorber à mon tour?
Ta langue modèle mon âme.
Tu m'obliges aux pensées claires.
Tu forces ma bouche à sourire.
Et tes grandes plaines si soignées,
Et tes forêts aménagées,
Tes forêts où l'on n'a plus peur,
Et la mollesse de tes lignes,
Tes fleuves lents, tes villes, tes vignes.
Me voilà plus qu'à moitié pris.

Est-ce que je vais aimer les joutes de paroles,
Les fanfreluches, les rubans;
Les cafés-concerts, les petits théâtres;
Les décorations, les salons?
Est-ce que je vais être sur de moi-même?
Est-ce que je vais être au carré
Comme tes jardins maraîchers,
Mince, exténué, épuisé
Comme les chênes taillés de tes haies?
Vais-je m'étaler près de terre
Comme tes dociles pommiers?
Vais-je compter sur mes doigts des petits vers rimés
Pour des minaudières, vaporeuses de tulles?

Politesse, moi aussi tu voudrais m'affadir!
Blague, tu voudrais jouer à rétrécir mon âme!
O chaleur, ô tristesse, ô violence, ô folie,
Invincibles génies à qui je suis voue,
Que serais-je sans vous? Venez donne me défendre
Contre la raison sèche de cette terre heureuse.

To France

translated by Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

O beloved land,
You who have absorbed a multitude,
Do you want to absorb me, too?
Your tongue shapes my soul;
You oblige me to think clearly.
You force my mouth to smile.
And your vast meticulous pastures
Your manicured forests,
Your forests where no one need be afraid,
Your sweet mollifying shapes,
Your gentle rivers, villages and vineyards.
I'm more than halfway yours already.

But do I have to love the endless wordplay,
Frills and ribbons;
Café-concerts and *petits théâtres*;
Decorations and drawing rooms?
Must I be self-possessed?
Must I be squared away
Like your vegetable gardens?
Narrow, extenuated, exhausted
Like your avenues of pruned oak?
Do I have to fall flat to the ground
Like your docile apple orchards?
Do I have to count on my fingers little doggerel verses
For ladies' handbags, lined with vaporous lace?

Politesse, you want me, too, overcooked!
Blague, you want me to joke, shrink my soul!
O warmth, sadness, violence, folly,
Invincible genies to whom I've pledged,
What would I be without you? Come defend me now
Against the arid reason of this happy earth.

Paris

André Spire

O reprends-moi, recueille-moi, apaise-moi,
Ville indulgente.
Sauve-moi, défends-moi de ces hautes montagnes,
Où le ciel, les torrents et les cimes blessés
Ne parlent que de mort.

J'avais cru en fuyant tes lumières fiévreuses,
Trouver, dans l'air allègre,
La santé, la justice, et la simplicité.
Je n'ai vu que des ruines
Où des voluntés durers criaient:
Obéis-nous.

O ville claire,
Que des hommes bâtirent à la taille des hommes,
Lance tes avenues au-devant de mes pas.
A l'entour de mon corps jette comme un réseau
Tes rues affectueuses et pleines de sourires.
Au-dessus de mon front étends la courbe sobre
De ton ciel modéré. Et je me croirai libre.

Paris

translated by Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

O take me back,
Collect me,
Calm me,
My old haunt,
My indulgent town.
Save me,
Defend me,
From those tall mountains
Where the sky and storms and broken treetops
Speak of nothing but death.

I used to believe
If I could leave
Your feverish lights
I'd breathe fresh air,
Allegro,
I'd find health,
Justice and simplicity.
I saw nothing but ruin in you
Where obdurate *want* cried out:
Obey me.

O bright town,
Men build you for men, they
Throw your avenues down before my step.
All around my body, networks are thrown up, scaffolding . . .
Your familiar streets flood with smiles while,
Over my head, your moderate sky hangs
In a sober arch: I will believe myself free.

Autopsie d'une Semaine

Yves Nedonsel

Lundi

Le gris plombé des nuages torves
Me fait songer aux longs silences
Où se prosterne la Sainte Alliance
Entre le Rien et l'Absolu

Mardi

Les discours s'entrecroisent
Se compliquent, s'embrasent
Tout heureux d'étaler
Leurs symboles ravalés
Ravaudés, maquillés
Pour enfin ne briller
Que des restes aseptiques
De pourquoi trop simplistes
Pour que ces quelques mots
Vous atteignent, machines,
Sous les stocks d'images
Que déversent des mages
Surnommés spécialistes,
Mandarins des geôles
Où s'entassent les jours
Enfermés dans des tours
Clôturées de grands murs
Recouverts de froidures
Qui font dire qu'il est doux
De crever dans son trou

Autopsy of a Week

translated by Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

Monday

The grim clouds' leaden grey
Has me dreaming of a long silence
Where lies the Holy Alliance
Between Nothing and the Absolute

Tuesday

Our speeches intersect,
Complicate, flame out
All too happy to parade
Their debased symbols
Renovated, repainted
To shine forth at last
The aseptic fragments
Of simplistic questions
For only these few words
Reach you, machines,
Under the stock of images
Unreeling magi.
Nicknamed 'specialists,'
Those big men on the cell-block
Who pile up the days
Locked in towers
Boxed in between high walls
Who will say that it is sweet
To die in one's hole

Vendredi

On m'a parlé d'hier
Pour m'acheter demain

On m'a charrié d'idées
Putassières ridées

On m'a saoulé de rêves
Tordus qui s'entrecrèvent,
De reliques, d'odeurs
Chavirées de langueur

Je n'ai vu que des masques
Dégueulant sous les miasmes
De grosses fesses bien molles
Qui tremblotent, s'affolent
Dès que tombent les coups
De l'horloge-saillie
Celle-là même qui fait
Se dessiner les rais
De deux soeurs jumelles
Qui se battent et s'emmêlent
Pour cerner d'où jaillit
La grande peur d'hier;
Pour savoir qui devra
S'accoupler à la pioche,
Cette horreur qui creuse
Nos demeures terreuses
A l'image sans fard
Du grand vide plumard

Friday

They spoke to me yesterday
Trying to sell me tomorrow

They have me smuggling ideas
Wrinkled venalities

They have me drunk
On crooked dreams
That blow themselves up
On relics, on odors
Overwhelmed by languor

I saw only masks
Vomiting in the miasma
Of fat buttocks soft as hell
Quivering, panicking
About the blows
Of the mantle-clock
The same one that conjures,
Illumines the contours
Of two twin sisters
Who wrestle, contort
Only to trace the gushing source
Of yesterday's terror;
Only to know who among us must
Couple like a pickaxe,
Like the horror that shovels
Our mud-brick dwellings
Over the unmade visage
Of a big empty bed

Samedi

J'ai deux coeurs imbriqués
S'opposant deux esprits;
Dualité pernicieuse
Où se mangent les heures

J'ai deux tripes emmêlées
Qui s'étripent-boyau
J'ai deux tripes vrillées
A deux coeurs étranglés

J'ai deux coeurs étripés
Machonant les années
J'ai deux tripes écoeurées
Dégueulant leurs idées

Dimanche

Le vent qui gifle
Les troncs d'arbre figés
Nous injecte sans fards
La barbouille d'un siècle
Qui se gicle l'horreur
Sous ses airs blasés

Saturday

I have two twined hearts
Opposing two minds;
A pernicious duality
Where the hours are served cold

I have two tangled guts
That disembowel one another
I have two tendrilled guts
And two strangled hearts

I have two gutted hearts
Gnawing on the years
I have two disheartened guts
Vomiting up their ideas

Sunday

The wind that slaps
The deep-rooted trunks of trees
Injects us, unpretentiously,
With the stain of a century
Oozing horror
From its bored yawn

Je suis deux . . .

Yves Nedonsel

Je suis deux
dans un creux
L'un attend
l'autre se pend
De savoir sans miroir
Le futur qui suppure

I am two . . .

translated by Alex Andriesse Shakespeare

I'm split
in the pits
One half waits;
the other hangs himself
To know, without mirror,
The suppurating future

Imagiste: A Sequence of Eight Short Poems

Catherine Aldington

Editorial note: Catherine Aldington's recent poetry—and we are pleased to present here a selection of these poems from her forthcoming collection, *Poems to Be Blown Away*—carries a certain resonance of Imagism. Thus we have entitled this selection "Catherine Aldington: Imagiste," with a deliberate echo of Ezra Pound's nom de plume for Hilda Doolittle—"HD: Imagiste." HD (1886-1961) was Catherine Aldington's friend and colleague. Catherine's father, Richard Aldington (married to HD 1913-1937), was a friend and colleague of Ezra Pound, W.B. Yeats, D.H. Lawrence and many others—a veritable rollcall of key figures in Modernism; and Aldington was a central figure in the movement known as "Imagism" (his disavowal of that role notwithstanding). In recent years, Catherine Aldington has on several occasions hosted the visits of New Paltz graduate students and faculty to les Saintes-Maries, including most recently the 2000 International Richard Aldington Conference (which she co-directed with H.R. Stoneback), at which several New Paltz English Faculty presented papers.

—HRS

I
The Egret
For Norman

Outstretched, the egret
dips a toe
into the mirror
of the marsh.
He does not know
the beauty
of his oriental sketch
reflected.

He is looking for a fish.

II

Lightly the leaves fall
Like feathers, delight.

III

Spiral, upgoing wing,
scratch, plunge, down-up
ways to be.
rays of sunburnt blue
diving.

IV

Oleander yellow sliding
the dark way off.

Though the grey marshes
tend to the flight of the birds,
none can say where the beast is hiding:
Out there?
Or somewhere far along the shore?
Or just by the tamarisk shivering in the wind?...

This is a country of dreams and dreads
where all, even the strongest river,
come to an end.

V

Time drives time.
Pain meets pain
Where does the path
lead me?
through what waters,
Calm or turmoil?

I need you, whatever...

VI
Over

Jet black vomit
gushing fumes yellow.
month ink scrawling over
pages insane

are you afraid?

Yes.

But now it is almost over.

VII
Tramp the road

As far as I can see,
when it comes to flying,
the gulls know the way
without even trying;
the drunks know the way to drink,
the tramps, tramp their road
without ever asking...

But, as far as I can see
when it comes to dying
we don't know our way
for all our striving.

VIII
Chocolat Medal

Real good soldiers,
that's what we are.
We stand up under bombs
where no bombs are,
we stand up to fire
where not a shot is fired,
we live in the hell of war
where no war is fought.

We stand
UP.

Here's a medal for the poor
here's a medal for the sick
here's a medal for being a child
here's a medal for being a man
here's a medal for being.

And here is chocolat for all.

Have a chocolat for your pain.

The Corporate Body

Robert H. Waugh

They have no taste, no touch, no odor but the whirr
of air-conditioners set on low, they do have
infinite spaces in our hearts and purses,
they peer across the gold braid of our coffins,
they have no boundaries.

The sun at noon
drools grey compulsions, they possess the sky.

They are alive, the law allows them life,
the buttocks on the benches have pronounced
a legal fiction on their life, they are
alive! They open leaden eyes, they move
ponderous limbs, a monstrous rank
of the half-dead, but they have learned
to put themselves in fashion
and walk out in their double-breasted suits.

Like cells they pulse, diversify and merge.

They compose their bodies of iron,
of oil and coal and breakfast flakes, they flex
stiff muscles in the sheaves of law, they excrete
emptiness on the land.

The empty malls and heads
attest to their ferocious emptiness,
sales copulate in sales,
limpness in limpness where fluorescent lights
flitter across the whitened cerebella
and the depressive ceilings,
empty air makes a motion through your ribs
and the presumptuous aisles, your heart
spasms grey matter, plastic will not save you.

Picking up Shells

Robert H. Waugh

Picking up shells, the diverse works of time,
to whiten on the paths up to my house,
while the unstable waves fall at my feet
in a white froth and streak the sand where high
tides slop and slide in the lop-sided moon:
soughing dry froth exasperates the sand
that dribbles from my boot. I am resigned

picking up shells to diverse images
of a lop-sided time, already bleached
by the low sun. In some time pearls, goes round
in tunnels to itself, in some time pools
as though in a baptismal font, in some
time hulks and leaks and dribbles back in sand,
in some time swirls and makes a washing sound.

Picking up shells invents those diverse times,
the harmonies within this incoherence
we hear within each other, your time meets
my time and says farewell to it, my time
looks after yours, but all shells shatter, soon
my house shall lie in a pool of shattered moons
and a glow of shattered time that points us nowhere.

The Road Long Traveled

Laurence Carr

Along the road
Blacktopped and tiger-stripped.

A road that once had been a path
for red-skinned traders
their beads and shells long buried.

A road for white-skinned
journeymen, moving on
to manifest their destinies.

The old post road
carrying news of birth and death
to the four corners.

The logging road
shaping timber plank and beam
to build the staid and staying.

A road named for the
long-forgotten hero
who fought to save
this patch of ground
for those
now here
leisurely jogging its length
without memory or destination.

Looking down the road,
along its cindered shoulder,
lies a fox, or
what once was fox
now doornail dead.
Caught in a world we made.

Once russet fur sleek with prideful shine
now dusty gray and scraped away
by rough and seething winds.

Crossed bones.
Cross-hatched.
An anatomy of neglect.

A head, or what once was head,
A skin of thin dry vellum
Stretched beyond a thought.

An open mouth, what once was mouth,
a gaping anguished cry;
frozen like that child
in that bleak and bitter box car
training to the camp
in the haunted winter of zero absolute.
Caught in a world we made.

And when I walk enough to satisfy,
I'll turn around and head for home.

And with each step
I hear a voice
muttering a selfish prayer—
our selfish plea:

Not to end like fox or that
Small child in that small room

Without comfort
or understanding
or tomorrow.

Tor House Pilgrimage

Michael Lutomski

months after the trip
to the coast
August's hold snapped
and the season passed into
September perfection
golden days that stand still
except for the path
of the giant silent sun
new job at a book store
big collected Jeffers
at the front counter
to show a new friend
I look and realize
that Jeffers sitting there
all tall and lanky
skeleton man with a pack of smokes
does not have his talon curved body
leaned against a cliff side
he sits on the western
edge of his hawk tower
there: the inscription
beyond: the immense sadness
of the wild pacific
and my memories rush
for I have seen exactly this picture
with my own eyes
in color
without Jeffers sitting there
my pilgrimage
to touch stone Jeffers touched
to pray for the wild day moon
to feel the weight in the air
of the room of the bed
that is still by the sea window
and my moment with the cypress

that he crafted and nurtured
like poetry still standing
eighty years after
I pulled a piece of bark
to keep in my pocket
or around my neck
to remind me
that crafting and nurturing
are necessary

Granted

Michael Lutomski

Sometimes
especially when the
light first begins to linger
past supper time in early March
like a timid animal at the
edge of a clearing and the air
smells of the melt and the first mud
I catch something so fleeting
I catch something just beyond reach
it's not a smell but a thought
an angle skewed slightly
where the buildings seem
like bricks placed one by one
by careful hands and the streets
seem laid out in a chosen direction
the mourning doves coo a learned song
and somewhere spiders wake with the
memory of a crafted pattern
even the earth turns away from its
favorite star ever so slowly on
a well carved well worn groove

I become aware of the process of things
I become aware that what is here
once was not

It passes though
just a glimpse
the way a pine top
might rise above the
rolling fog for a moment
the way a passing wind
from a coming storm might
bring me ever so briefly
the smell of rain and wild scallions
scraped up from the quiet of the forest floor

Fool's Family Album

William Trowbridge

This is Fool's Crest smile,
stained with humble pie.

His license smile
on his learner's permit.

His blend in smile,
somewhere in the picture.

His singles bar smile,
after four Mai-tais.

His have a nice day smile,
some read as "Kick me."

His may I help you smile,
which scares the children.

His line in the sand smile
and Chamberlain blink.

His who me smile,
nimble as dead meat.

His my turn smile,
if it's ever his turn.

His true love smile,
lonely as Orion.

Fool Enters Corporate Woods

William Trowbridge

The sun swerves its hot rod past Security
and onto the herringboned lawns,
where windows fire from every angle
and ricochets flash among trees
posed to look exactly like themselves.
Fool watches its fishtail getaway,
brash as snatching flowers off the dead.

He makes his bobble-headed way
among rock gardens that bring up flowers
smelling like coffee grounds and toner-
sprinkled carpet. As in Fool's angelic life
at Empyrean, Inc., the reigning power
is unseen, and everything must be
duplicated for the next quarter.

For a moment, Fool's back straightens
at what sounds to him like the Exodus
theme from *The Ten Commandments.*
Anthem of reprieve? Nope, just those
underground conduits hymning power
into the few hands meant to fondle it.

Lost among lobbies buffed bright
as mausoleums, Fool clutches
his portfolio of door prizes and certificates
of participation, which he thought might land him
a comfy slot in Inventory. But his power tie's
binding and his Florsheims pinch. When a door
opens, he bolts for daylight, juking topiaries,
cowlick rising through the Brylcreem.

Special Section

Hurricane Poems and Benefit Reading

A poetry reading to benefit New Orleans and Gulf Coast poets and writers who were victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was held at the Oasis Café in New Paltz on November 3, 2005. Organized by Dennis Doherty, Matthew Nickel, and H. R. Stoneback, the event was sponsored by the William Vasse Poetry Board of SUNY New Paltz. Some twenty poets read—including many New Paltz English Department faculty and graduate students (along with several undergraduates), and other poets from the community and the Hudson Valley region. Poets who read were asked to contribute five cents per word, and the audience was invited to choose poems and match the donation made by the poets. It was a highly successful fundraising event, and all proceeds were sent to the Maple Leaf Poetry Programs in New Orleans.

The Everett Memorial Poetry Reading Series at The Maple Leaf in New Orleans is often said to be the oldest poetry reading series in the South. The hurricane-wrought devastation temporarily ended their poetry program and seemed to threaten its ongoing existence. However, when they received the generous donation made by the New Paltz poetry community, they were able to restart their poetry programs. Thanking the New Paltz Poetry Board for the "life-support" we contributed, the program directors wrote: "The struggle continues here. Many of us are still living without electricity more than four months after the flood that followed Hurricane Katrina. … However, your heartfelt giving has lifted our spirits. It has paid for a new microphone and public address system and it will be providing monetary and inspirational foundation for publication." Their plans to publish a post-hurricane anthology (with a dedicatory note to New Paltz poets), the directors indicated, will give hope to about 100 writers from the hurricane-afflicted New Orleans and Gulf Coast region whose work will be included in the anthology. Finally, they sent their greetings to everyone in New Paltz who participated in and donated to our fundraising reading, thanking all of us—"for sharing your love and reverence for the arts. It has showered us with hope."

The poems that follow are printed as an evocation of a truly remarkable and memorable evening of poetry. They are also printed as a reminder that poetry sometimes does have consequences in a very real and ravaged world; poetry can create ripples and reverberations of renewal and hope.

The poems are arranged here not in the artificially privileged order of the alphabet (forward or reverse) but according to some deeper musical or compo-

sitional principle involving the cadence of the movement from shorter poems to longer poems, and the sequence of particularity of the hurricane motifs in the individual poems. Not all of the poems are *about* hurricanes, but all of them address—obliquely or directly—what the reporter for *The New Paltz Oracle* called "the universal spirit of grief, loss and compassion that informed" the reading (10 November 2005: 5B). It was an evening of words anchored in the spirit of human community and deeds of concrete compassion. It was one of those rare occasions when words—a nickel each—were deeds.

—HRS

The Storm Dance

Robert H. Waugh

Through Bourbon St. and canny Canal St.
ignorance pours.

You can hear the ignorance roar.

Far out to sea on a deep wave crest
a ray of the sun
brushes a drop of the spindrift, they rise and dance,
they link their tendresse to another drop, they rise
sparkling and glittering, kick off
the turn of the earth.

Listen,
we open the air, the smallest drops of our burning
crack holes in the sky, the sun
cracks through our frail, dread
earth to the sound of trombones.

The cotillion of the air
turns on itself, sing
the natural grace of the earth
we inhabit where ignorance pours
from the monstrous
contentment political powers
wrought for a monstrous
profit.

The surge-lift
pours through the levees, your ignorance
of tide and time pours through
the doorways and windows, roots shudder
and loosen, walls rot.

More suns,
more wind and more weight
stream through the live-oak drenched
in moss, through knobbled branches
and bring them down, bring you

all down, the release
of profound waters
pours through the streets where a willful
ignorance pours.

Dance, storm.

Back in the alleys, back in the bayous
odor of resin rubs along those wires
wound up for music, in squat accordions
all in a rage, they rattle
Attention, mon coeur, my heart
is broken, where Lake Pontchartrain breaks
through levees my heart
is broken—

where through my blackened
valves a deaf, brash, bickering
ignorance pours.

And the sun roars.

Sing it.

North South

Pauline Uchmanowicz

Leaves turn color
and dappled apples
drop down
in a town
ringed by mountains
hiding horizons,
hawks circling
northern sky.

South of there,
flattened by winds
along Lake Pontchartrain,
houses lay
under water in graves
and weathercasters index
for the national
hurricane gazetteer.

Down to Wine

William Boyle

Holed up with four cases of wine, two cases of cold beer, and some leftover shrimp. Listened to records—Sarah Vaughan, Fats Domino, Johnny Cash—until the power went. Sat down at the table with a candle, ate the shrimp, the storm outside dark and loud. Read Warren's "The Ballad of Billie Potts." That part about being dipped in the healing flood, about being dipped in Time. Finished one case of beer. Next day, finished the other case. Ate whatever else I could find: bread, beans, cheese. Started in on the wine. Emptied one bottle. Found a pen, the one Joyner had left behind when he was over for cards. Found a piece of paper in the kitchen junk drawer. Wrote: "To whom it may concern: Please send immediately (one) ice-cold chest of Coors Light. I'm out at this time. Down to wine. Shrimp and oysters would also be appreciated. Thank you." Gave my address, stuffed the note in the bottle, corked it, went outside, and threw the bottle into the high flood-waters. Watched it float away.

Next day, a guy from Wildlife & Fisheries came by in a boat. I was out on the front porch, drinking wine, playing solitaire. The guy said he got my note, found it drifting on Canal Street. He said he was going to frame it because it was "pure New Orleans." But he didn't bring any beer.

Dogs of Disaster

Dennis Doherty

When you're touched by the news too large for real—
At your bedstead: doom's lecherous caress—
Mama, baby— "These joints weren't crooked for air!"
In the earth's crust: a shrug, misery's abstract
Numbers, the body politic interred,
And a lost dog is all the lens can hold …

When the towers crash all monument buckles
And ground becomes the pile of trash
Where history begins to fail—
Rerouted future, dissembled past.
Is a scum muzzy dog some balm, at last?
Who throws the scraps? Rolls over?

In a death dream I'm the black dog,
A shivering self-shitted pelt
Surfing flotsam through ghettoes
And grandeurs of great cities gone down.
Gas bubbles rise from the bodies and pop,
Nosegays for hangmen. Waking woes stench,

Radial in reach, extends the sin-sweet
Intimate shoulder taps of ever ends,
Of a speck or a sweep, death by heartbreak
Or pressure drop. When these throes greet again
I'll quail, then, by my fatalist's pen,
Obey true tales, defy all fools, fall to.

Last Call Before the Flood

Brad McDuffie

Katrina comes in like Babylon's Whore
Riding the beast of the apocalypse.
I watch the men step up to take their
Turns upon her hurricane wheel
With their microphones and lenses.
And I hear them all decry, decry—
But I'm no prophet and here's no
Great matter
Please bring the president's head in on a platter.

Let them line up the politicians in the streets
Like shots of whiskey
And we'll wash our hands
Like Pilot before the masses
Who called out, "Crucify Him."
"Crucify Him."

Oh, Katrina may spit but it's we who swallow.

We've got one last pilgrimage to make—
Like Sherman on a Yankee Charge—
Down through Natchez for one more storm before
The Storm.
You can hear the existentialists on the road
Crying out in whispers,
"What don't come, don't go."

But I'm hearing you
Lucinda Williams,
Louisiana's angel,
And I too have a reason to go
Up 90
To Pass Christian.
And I know, I know, Lucinda
That I better get right with Him,
But I got blue skies and there's so much good going on tonight.
We'll take that bridge over Lake Pontchartrain

And go one last time down to the Crescent City.
Where
Katrina's gonna blow like
The devil's Fat Tuesday

And I've got a Walker Percy vision for all that
Will be
Not so much a vision for the end of the world
But for some apocalyptic blank
That lets the dead and the living
Go coughing on
Like backwards sailors pissing into the wind.

Yet, all my doubts subside when
I see Stoney rise against the Crippling Tides—
When I see him stand up, stand up,
For His fallen city,
Like a Homily sung on Ash Wednesday.
And we rise, sing and clap—not so
Much for him as for whom he stands for.

And I know that in that Day
That black will be black
And white will be white—
When, in last full measure,
The earth's tide draws its final
Breath,
And we all fly away.

Just Things

Julie O'Niell

They are just things, people say,
inanimate objects lacking earthly souls.
Only material goods, they console.
You have your health; everything else can be replaced.

And as you wander empty street after empty street,
where so many neighborly houses once stood,
comprehending crude crosses crafted from rubble,
the gravity of lost lives pierces your fog.

You say: yes, I am one of the fortunate,
while surveying incomprehensible destruction
wrought by nature's bitch,
murderer of the innocent,
devastater of humanity.

You think: I am alive. I am lucky.

But as you near the plot where your own house once stood
humble and yet proud, new and yet old,
the Southern hearth your gypsy children finally could call home,
on this tiny parcel nestled in the land of your people,

the land to which you had only recently returned after a lifetime of running,
bringing with you beautiful tokens of your extraordinary journey,
Vietrian pottery, Bavarian wood-carvings, Korean chests of drawers,
which you placed next to family heirlooms
from the house on Jefferson street in the Garden District,
your childhood home
your home,

and you think of photographs, countless pictures of shining children
in sun-drenched Italian fields and snow-covered Alpine towns,
children now grown and returned to their native land,
far from their familial South, but happy to visit you there,
glad you have come full circle …

as you near this place, a once cozy museum of your past,
a shrine to your ex-pat life and a new beginning on your old Gulf Coast,
the first house you ever owned,
now just a slab of concrete covered with sludge and wood,
you feel yourself sinking into that bottomless molasses pit of loss.

You spot a corner of a wooden frame, recognize it as one of the
family photos which used to line the hallway wall,
you pull it from the mud
to find the image now waterlogged and undecipherable.

The salty wetness on your cheek is not a remnant from her,
the evil Lady Katrina,
but from you, a lapsed Southern Belle,
who finally realizes that she is allowed to grieve,
that there is no valediction forbidding the mourning of her loss,
even if not for lost lives, but for lost memories,
lost representations of a strange and rebellious life.

And, finally, you rise up
out of your cane syrupy abyss
and stand, tall and strong,
like the ancient oak in your front yard,
whose Spanish moss has been brutally ripped from its limbs,
but whose roots still plunge deep and defiant.

Popinjay in the Japonica

Sarah Wyman

Dame Elaine shined silver, wore lace, and painted teacups.
Some decades past, wrapped in cream satin, with orange
blossoms in her hand, she'd made a match with a Rock-
erfeller, his family mansion, and vast grounds.
I, the gardener, enter the picture, a fly
on the wall, tending the boxwood, pruning this tree

or that. My quiet life on the estate, country
calm after city living, pleases me. A cou-
ple of marriages taxied by like butterflies.
More than ornamental cabbages, or orange
rays of sunset dropping their warmth on the ground,
I like to think and watch my thoughts take off like rock-

ets in a spacious place. *She* sits on her rock-
er, doing just what I do, counting seams on trees,
conversing with bees, shaking cold coffee grounds
into the leaves. But Dame isn't the same, her cup-
id's bow lipstick awash in tears, her brow and orange
wedge of worry, and every birthday Shoo-Fly

pie comes out burned, since the night I watched her hope fly
out the window. She saw a boy atop a rock,
standing bright, steady and still as a lighted an-
gel. He took aim and shot at a spreading tree,
knocking her popinjay from its japonica.
(*Please* don't tell that I saw her bird hit the ground.)

In a Picasso confusion of form and ground,

tears melted the colors and quince, her high flier
was dead: split beak and his broken body now cup-
ped in her hands. She buried him under a rock,
patting the earth with her pink Pappagallo, tre-
mendously moved by the last feather, torn orange

aflutter, as it fell on the fresh grave, arranged
with trefoil and leftover lilies. Her heel ground
a hole as she rose and spun 'round to scan the trees.
She did not spot me, only a lost lonely fly
catcher hunting for nest sites or bugs, rock to rock.
When Dame Elaine sees me nights now, I lift my cup

up to her (always alone), rocking in her cup-
ola, orange ground around the japonica tree.

Enlightening Jack

Sarah Wyman

The last pumpkin sits
bored and tan as a lifeguard in August
waiting for nothing
but the rare thrill of catastrophe
as ants go for the corn
and worms into tomatoes.

He stays cool in his slick shell,
spread slats save him from rot
in the dark woodshed corner.

Discovered one day,
a man takes him home.
The first slit in his skull,
well, the thought makes him groan,
but the pressure relief is really a boon.
Seeds come scraping out as the light filters in,
a whole world entering through star-cut eyes.

A thought grows in his stem
as he sits on the front stoop,
spilling shaped light on the street.
He wishes to move—
some legs or a wheel or a catapult seat.
The cars swim mindless below.

So fervent his wishes,
the poor Jack starts a trembling
then a crash down the hill:
a bright gash of orange
in the new fallen snow.

Transmission of light outside tradition

David Appelbaum

A cloud of mirror
        a mourning
bowed in a dark ring
that held the dawn sea
in a green cup
        I imagined
pagodas and stone spires
where people talk
in solitary pairs,
their meager life counseled
by the rift
into which tears must fall.

When the grey osprey darted
at the sun's irradiant eye
the glint gave light
to that fissure, I drifted
there a phantom on unloved streets
a caul child
        to my own heart
and its vagaries.

Then a salt wind came
from beneath the water,
within reach above me
that common line
that divides one
        from no thing.

Things forbidden to say

David Appelbaum

Thirst in a glazier's dream
waters to pluck a cold eye
and smack with fat red lips.

But it's too warm for love
under heavy wool covers
where sleep jams the joints

the dog wants breakfast.

There, from a counter window
the image looks through
the outside deck of the glass

grains rasped powder white
in never-written night script
that melts in its own grasp.

Untitled

Lea Weiss

The seedlings so constrained in their tight pots—
Their coiled roots search for that which would
Hold them up and by extension in.
They coil round their boundaries and become
The boundaries of themselves, naked in the
Wet air, and vulnerable to all that would
Fly, gust, or graze. They are all lined, awaiting
The fetid soil hot, reminding
One that all growth is the decay of fallen
Leaf, stem, man. Their stems must not be broken,
Though roots be damned to darkened earth and walls.
All care on the green that grows and feeds the eyes.

Lotus-Eater

Lea Weiss

I
The noon chill early.
Walls crease in the corners
Upon the meeting of the side board.
Vases and wall hangings of men with ocean wave left and fire lateral.

II
When I speak the body politic,
I pull mosquito pines from medusa curls,
Stick and rock debris.

When I found you Odysseus,
You cried like an Aeolian wind,

And now, your glasses straightened, and your bald head newly shorn
(like oldenglish *sceap*),
Camel suited, lined in mystery leather,
Farewell to Circe,
You sailing make for home.

III
The intercostal muscles only fibers
Our organs seep without,
Navel collecting seamless.

IV
Patroclus cooks the feast
With Trojan warhorse meat
And demon femur-sticks.

V
The pissants scurry in the red crag,
Plaited hair makes for arm bands.
Come out from the sun
And ford this recluse.
He's spread a serape for the child in

The brown-haired arm.
There's a note in the air,
And he sings of what he shapes.

Scarecrow

Howie Good

How's it look? I ask,
slipping my arms into the sleeves

of the scarecrow's battered coat.
Good, she says,

but I already know the truth,
and by portentous coincidence,

the sky has just turned the same
disquieting shade of gray

as various diseases of the mind.
I hold my arms out like so

and assume the somber expression,
including opalescent eyes,

of someone remembering something
he wished he didn't,

children overtaken on the road
by claw-footed shadows,

regardless of ancient promises
and the shrill little cries of the sun.

For the Woman Who Walked Out during My Reading

Howie Good

To what should I attribute it,
an upsurge in sunspot activity

or the general decay of manners?
Please don't say it was me,

the dull sincerity of my words,
their untreated depression,

that sent you rushing off.
Let me think there was a man

(with a ponytail, perhaps),
a vase of dried wildflowers,

a bedroom wall on which
you put a hand for balance

as you stepped out of your skirt,
your micro panties, and then yourself

and delicately into a love poem.

Instructions for a Spy

Andrew C. Higgins

You find your reputation's been besmirched,
let's say, over drinks one night, or better yet
via a mysterious text from bendablebrett
@thirstforme.com. But you've been churched
in all the finer points of subterfuge
and so don't know just what you could've done wrong.
Or what you could've been *caught* at doing wrong.
Whatever it was, you claim you were just a stooge.
Your best plan, though, was to keep your mouth shut tight.
"Own nothing," the incarcerated say.
Refuse them even the spark that could ignite
the little fire, the blaze that would light the way,
the slow red burn that would lead them, would invite
their flashlights in, where they find you, held at bay.

For Faye, in Tidal Pools

Andrew C. Higgins

Because the seaweed breathes on a rising tide,
Because the rose hips turn orange in a hot July,
and the ring-billed gull can pivot on one wing,
and dive.

Because the crabs dash madly from the upturned rock,
Because the brine shrimp spiral in turbulent pools,
I write for you my daughter, secure in cities,
and alive,

master of braids, shoe-averse, self-tattooed,

because you spot the vultures in the August sky,
because you bring me fists of wild garlic,
I fear

you will weave them into your yellow, unwashed hair.

War Pantoum

Shonet L. Newton

The men eat fire
raw and ready
like fireflies
that explode at night

raw and ready
to die in battle
and explode into the night
every time they kill

they die in battle
a little more each time,
the times they kill
are endless and enduring

a little more each time
like fireflies
that endlessly endure
the men who eat fire.

August Storm on Graham Lake

Jonathan Gates

Uplake five miles, or more, cat-scratch lightning
Tears and slices the charcoal Northern sky.
I've learned to wait, not rush too quickly for shore,
For after the presaging rain dimples the lake
And puffs of wind shiver across the water,
A grey-black calm creeps over me and hovers
While impending gusts, slant rain, and the deadly storm draw near.
The lake's eagle hides and croakers in the mud fall silent.
In these few moments I cast for one last bass,
Pausing to catch at tigers in red weather
Then reach for the oars and guide my boat back to shore.

*Inspired by Juan Sanchez Cotan's painting "Quince, Cabbage, Melon and Cucumber" (1603)

Special Section

Johnny Cash Memorial Reading

On October 1, 2003, the New Paltz Poetry Board sponsored a Memorial Poetry Reading & Concert to mark the death of Johnny Cash. Many cultural commentators, nationally and internationlly, have written on the extraodinary outpouring of grief, around the world, over the death of Cash. Magazine covers (e.g. *Time, People*) featured Cash and writers vied to outdo each other with tributes to and exalted rubrics for Cash— "Poet of the Earth," "Poet of the People," etc. ad infinitum. Even a highbrow journal of religion ran a feature story on "Johnny of the Cross," thus conferring a kind of popular sainthood (cf. Saint John of the Cross) on the "great-souled, rare … authentic" troubadour, who (in the view of Peter M. Candler, Baylor University Professor of Theology) on his final recordings was "teaching us how to die," teaching a "culture that … loves death but does not know what to do with it" what it "might mean to die well" (*First Things*, December 2003: 6-8).

All across the country, national (televised) and local community memorial programs and concerts were held to honor Cash. One of the best (as many Hudson Valley residents have observed) was the New Paltz Poetry Board's event held at the Oasis, attended by a standing-room-only audience. English Department faculty, together with current and former graduate students—Bill Boyle, Dennis Doherty, John Langan, Matt Nickel, H.R. Stoneback, Chris Tanis, Robert Waugh—read poems in honor of Cash; in the concert segment of the program New Paltz faculty and former TAs and graduate students—Kevin Cavanaugh, Tom Impola, Stoney & Sparrow, Chris Tanis, Dennis Winter—performed many of Cash's songs. The entire evening was so highly charged, so numinous—as one of the organizers observed—that no one remembered to collect the advertised $3.00 cover charge intended to fund future programs of the Poetry Board. That was as it should be for an "In Memoriam" gathering.

The poems that follow in this section were read at the Cash memorial.

—HRS

Thorn Tree In A Whirlwind: In Memory of Johnny Cash

William Boyle

The first time I heard Johnny Cash I was fifteen
and I was in a bar in Bay Ridge. The bar was called
The Dodger and I was there with a skinny, awful girl
called Sarah. We'd used her brother and sister's id's
to get in and we were drinking Budweiser in a dark
corner, hardly talking, listening to the jukebox. When
Cash came on—it was "Cocaine Blues" from the Folsom
Prison album—I sat straight up and listened. Sarah said
something to me, but I didn't hear it. I was listening to
Cash with everything. I was listening hard. I'd never
listened so hard to anything it seemed (My grandfather,
maybe, when he was drinking scotch and talking about
the miracle of my grandmother). Cash's voice coming
through those tinny jukebox speakers was a revelation.
For months after that I wore black. I grew my sideburns
out and tried to play guitar. I talked tough—I lied about
taking shots of cocaine in the bathroom at school. I said
I was going to rob the Brothers and take off for Mexico.
I got all the Cash I could: The Complete Sun Singles;
Hymns; San Quentin; Folsom Prison. I learned how to
drink whiskey alone, in my basement, listening to Cash
records. The first girl I went with hated Cash (I nearly
dumped her for it, but didn't have the sense at seventeen).
I argued with her constantly. "It's unfortunate that you
don't get Cash," I said. "Damn unfortunate." She told
me to shut up. Who did I think I was kidding anyway?
I was a kid from Brooklyn, a city kid trying to be country,
she said. I lost that girl somewhere along the line—Cash
helped out with that one. After that, I learned how to
drink cheap wine alone, on a bench under the Verrazano
Bridge, listening to Cash on a busted walkman. When I
was twenty, I heard American Recordings for the first time.
Cash did Nick Lowe's "The Beast in Me" and Tom Waits's
"Down There By The Train," his own "Delia's Gone" and
"Redemption"—I did nothing but drink and listen to that

album for four months. Those days were draped in darkness—
the good kind of darkness, the kind that takes you over and
empties you and refills you. I read a passage from Cash's
album notes on American Recordings about his childhood
over and over: "At night, on the front porch where we always
gathered, I could hear panthers scream in the woods around us,
but my mother's guitar and singing was like the harp of King
David that we read about in the Bible. It brought a closeness
and comfort that couldn't be found any other way." I read the
passage like a prayer. I copied it out and folded it away in my
wallet. I listened to the songs on repeat. They always got me
in the gut. I mixed wine and whiskey to those songs. I didn't care.
I cried. I doubled-over and cried and laughed. It was the harp, it
was the closeness and the comfort . . . Next was Unchained and
Solitary Man and The Man Comes Around. I listened to
"Kneeling Drunkard's Plea," "Unchained," "I See A Darkness,"
and "The Man Comes Around" every night in my car, driving
around, just driving, taking back roads, driving over the
mountain, sneaking sips from a beer under my seat.
It was the harp, the closeness and the comfort, the great good
darkness . . . Singing Cash-prayers on the cold dark road . . .
I wept and laughed. It was always good to be somewhere, anywhere
with Cash on the radio. It always made me feel gently free.

Paul: An Elegy for Johnny Cash

For H.R. & Sparrow Stoneback

John Langan

What Muse can I call on? My Greek's non-existent:
I can't tell Calliope from Cleo from—there's another problem:
Their names—number, too: was it ten, twelve, or just
Eight? Not a good way to begin an elegy for—what
Am I supposed to call him? A shepherd's name? I doubt
He would have minded the convention—he picked cotton
As a boy, professed the faith of the Good Shepherd,
But, all the same, what kind of name is a shepherd's name?
Sue? He'd laugh at the joke, no doubt, and that laughter
Should not be forgotten in the midst of all the trains roaring
Down the tracks, the men shot just to watch them die,
The pain in and out of the songs—Hell, the first I
Remember seeing him was on *The Muppet Show,* singing
"Ghost Riders in the Sky" as muppet damned cowpokes
Hooted across the stage—All the same, I'd like to give
Him a name with a tad more *gravitas*: so how about Paul,
After the Man in White, as he called the apostle in the one
Novel he wrote? As for the Muse: what must the Muse
Of Country Music call herself? Patsy, I imagine,
From the Latin, "Patria." (You can see my Latin's not
Too much beyond my Greek.) So Patsy, let me call
On you, let me ask you to step away from the ears
Of the Dixie Chicks for a moment, saunter over here
In your white cowboy boots, and help me raise
A fitting tribute to old Paul, who is, as my wife's
People say, away. I'm not asking for what you gave
Hank Williams, no, I don't want to be able to write heartbreaking
Songs at the drop of a hat. I just want to mark
Paul's passing. Come to me, Patsy, and bring
The house players: Hank, yes, I don't expect
You could keep him away, and Elvis, too, in his favorite
Gold suit, shining like the glory of his own voice, and probably
Carl Perkins will want to squeeze his blue suede
Shoes in, too. Let them come, and if Saint Kurt Cobain
Of the Ruined Face wants to sit in, don't keep him

Away, or Blessed Roy Orbison, either, or
Janis, or the other Patsy, your namesake. (If I don't include June,
It's only because she must be rejoicing at the end
Of their brief separation, and it doesn't
Seem right to intrude on that happiness.)
Let them come, and if Orpheus feels his fingers
Twitching for his lyre, or Dionysius his for his pipes,
Then the more, the merrier. Dylan, I think,
Said his voice came right out of the middle
Of the earth, and with the way the weather's
Been these weeks since he's left, storm after storm
Breaking itself against this or that shore,
You could almost believe the globe itself
Is in mourning, the sky pouring itself out in torrents,
The trees swaying to faint, the ground dissolving
In tears. You might say that the very elements
Are struggling to fill the hole he left. Surely,
Someone should have prevented this; whoever
Was supposed to be watching out for him was
Asleep on the job: fair enough, the drinking,
Drugs, were a burden he took on himself, chains
More than one artist has felt the need to shackle himself
With. But the misdiagnosed disease, the poison
Treatment, the broken jaw never healed true,
The constant pain: who let those slip through? If
You, Patsy, were too busy watching this
Or that flash-in-the-pan try to pass off
Resuscitated seventies rock as "The New Country,"
Then surely you, Elvis, or you, Hank, could have stepped
In, tried to help a fellow who had eluded the hellhounds
That caught you in their needle teeth; surely you could
Have prodded that doctor to a better
Diagnosis, restrained that over-eager dentist.
Who knows? maybe you were busy with your children—
A handful, to be sure—whatever the excuse, the result

Was the same, and now the grievers line up,
They start at this mic with Stoney and Sparrow,
Chris and Kevin, Bill, Bob, Dennis and Dennis, everyone here,
And wind themselves out across the everywhere old Paul
Had been, to Dolly in her amusement park and Willie
Picking his faithful guitar. We mark his passing as a blow
Struck into stone, a point that divides before from after.
I guess the more philosophically-minded among us
Will ponder the justice of it, the man struck blow
After blow as if he were a great tree, an oak, having
Its limbs lopped off one by one by a careless and inexpert
Woodsman. Simone Weil was right: the real mystery isn't suffering,
It's affliction. I don't suppose there's a need to rant
And ramble on about such things: in the age of instant
Information, we all sup daily on a surfeit of horrors.
Times are bad: maybe they always have been.
If I knew more about flowers, then I'd be able to offer
A proper bouquet, here, but no matter how hard my wife
Tries, I can't seem to remember the names of much more
Than roses and carnations—sunflowers, too. Oh, and thistles:
The flower of Scotland. I like thistles,
Like their purple and green tenacity. I read—I
Think it was when my father died, and we were trying
What to have carved on his headstone—
That thistles symbolize earthly sorrow, but I chalk
Such association up to English propaganda. No, I think they're
About the beauty that roots itself in difficulty
(Which isn't a bad description of Paul's music,
Now that I mention it). I'll offer a thistle,
Then. The end, I reckon, is almost upon is: all
That remains is to find some consolation to carry
Home with us. I'm not a good enough or
Bold enough versifier to try to invoke Paul's own faith,
Though I'd be doing his memory a disservice
If I didn't point out that it consoled him—

As for other consolation, I suppose Paul himself
Already beat me to it: how many songs is he supposed
To have recorded? Fifteen hundred? Sure, they weren't
All good, but so what? If you know his work, then you know
How much of it was—is—remains worth listening to.
Speaking about "Amazing Grace," Paul said, "A song
Like that—well, you could be in prison, and as long
As you had that song, you'd still be free."
The world without Paul in it seems a little
More a prison, now—but we have his songs,
And we are still free.

Death Can Make All Places Strange, Even Places Where You Dream

Matthew Nickel

There was mist that morning and
It was early and I walked the whole
Length of the street until I came to it
And sat at a table and dreamed myself
Seeing them all there and not knowing
But the faces quiet and the silence—
And they held their glasses high
In one unbroken toast, unbroken circle.
I remember reading about this café
Late into sleep and
Must have come into the story in the night
Where nothing could touch me
But the word and his voice.
If we are all the sons of many fathers
I saw my father there
My father is a poet, musician, teacher
And my mother told me on an island far-away in gin and tonic tears
"There are no others."
How would he think if I told him I was going to be a writer
Bring it all to the edge of epiphany—
He started to sing
"Son, this world is rough, and if a man's gonna make it he's gotta be tough.
Son, get tough or die."
That was my father's voice,
And his father's voice before him, sitting alone in the
Corner alone, having just died and joining us all
In the order and tenderness and piety
In the grace of good wine and good friends.
Everyone smiled and welcomed J. C. into the circle.
I had never seen him before. He was shy.
You would be too, having just gone through that,
But he came back:
I guess you just remember the color and smell
And taste of certain life-shaping moments.
Remembering something about the voices

Something about your voice and their faces there
And the presence of our voices together
In the present moment of precision.
The morning is bright now; there is peace in the streets

"The word in the desert is most attacked by voices of temptation
The crying shadow in the funeral dance
The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera"

I can only think something about your voice and the
Word.

Hear That Train: Elegy Written in a Country Music Churchyard (For Johnny Cash)

H.R. Stoneback

for almost fifty years I've sung your songs
on stages of a hundred states and countries

Oh hear that train a-coming and weep, not
for Adonais, not for Lycidas—
here we banish all fat phony shepherds,
all silly swilling swains. We sing for Johnny Cash
this Elegy from a Country Music Churchyard:

hear that train a-coming and walk the line
through the ring of fire till the Man comes 'round

Far longer than Faulkner and Hemingway,
far deeper than Milton, Shelley and Keats—
for fifty years the dark power of his gospel
growl bit my bones, plucked my mind, howled my heart
since that hum and Sun (Records) also rose in Memphis:

so yield, pastoral elegy conventions,
to these Hillbilly Heaven intercessions

In the '50s, innocent kid in blue suede shoes,
singer, leader of my own rockabilly band,
I wrote songs for Johnny, found his publisher's
address, hitchhiked to New York with guitar
on back, in the rain, to sing Johnny my tunes:

how high's the water, Johnny—guess things happen
that way—don't take your guitar to town, boy

Haunted that Tin Pan Alley skyscraper
three days, doors slammed in my face, waiting outside
in the rain, sleeping in all-night Times Square
theaters—then kind janitor said: "Son, music bidness
don't work that way. Mr. Cash don't come 'round here"—

hear that train Sunday morning coming down
get rhythm and hurt till the Man comes 'round

Then I rambled other roads with my own loud
rock and folk and sometimes I almost forgot—
though Johnny was always there on the jukebox;
and sometimes, late at night, one of his songs
would come to me on stage, like Hank's,—damn the crowd:

dream on dream on teenage queen this boy's sixteen
and you done seen the last time I'll walk the line

In the 1960s, many lifetimes later,
when we lived in Nashville, we used to see
Johnny around town: on Music Row, at stores,
at the old Ryman Opry, especially
at the Farmer's Market—he loved to shop.

because you're mine walk that nashville skyline
and give my love to Rose and Ira Hayes

Between Old English and Shakespeare at Vanderbilt
I kept working the clubs and writing songs,
coming back to deepcountry, thinking of Johnny
again, writing some new songs for him—one
was well-known around town, a club-tested hit:

at my door the leaves—everything falling but snow
the good songs always sing you where they want to go

Had connections, got an appointment with Clement
(Cowboy Jack, Johnny's producer, songwriter's god):
he listened to my demos, smiled, left the room;
(Cash was in the building); Clement returned, said:
"We'll use one or two on Johnny's next album."

(history weeps for the songwriting shepherd
with an ego larger than Folsom Prison)

In those days we feared that good songs would get
buried, lost, in an album; we wanted
our songs released as singles; I knew mine

was a smash hit single so I looked at
Jack Clement—I can still hear my voice say:

(and will you still say when the Man comes 'round
and the ring of fire frees you from that prison)

"Sorry, Mr. Clement—it ain't an album tune."
He looked at me as if I'd just told Moses
I wanted my commandment listed first.
By sundown, all the songwriters had heard
my words and knew I was through in that town.

I shot a song in Nashville just to watch
it die—lonesome whistle—hang your head and cry

In a long life of penance, joy, remorse—
old betrayals and new fidelities,
mingled with selfless satisfaction
over things achieved, given—I cannot forget
or forgive my unrecorded song, my one regret:

non rien de rien non je ne regrette rien
if there's still time Johnny I give you my tune

And now, these last few years, I have watched you
Johnny (as I watch the Pope), feeling fate
lately intertwined: we have all ceased to walk
but still we sing in the way of our wheel
and the chariot we ride in songs and prayers:

hello my name is not Johnny Cash: Bless
me Father, I still dream of walking, I still miss

Until the end, they say, you liked to go
to supermarkets, transfer from your wheel-
chair to the store scooter, race down the aisles
among the lonely onions and the forlorn corn
and sing the joy of all things grown and given:

Cashmobile, Popemobile, Stoneymobile
who can walk the line on fortune's weird wheel

And on your last day, 9/11/03,
did you watch from your hospital bed
the twin tower ceremonies, did you weep
as I did for fallen heroes and blasted bones
did you write one last song for them as you died:

ah the music never stops inside the head
can we play it by ear after we're dead

Into that dark midnight I watched long hours
of commemoration, the still-falling towers,
until finally I slept and the TV-drone
like a voice in a dream said "Johnny Cash is dead."
I raised my electric hospital bed:

snow in my doorway I still miss someone
time's passing slow like the clock ain't been wound

Waking, I learned it was not a dream-voice I heard—
Oh all the channels agreed and proclaimed
your name and I grieved through the night to the dawn
when I went to my desk and sent the sad news
to a hundred old friends at far ends of the world:

somewhere in a Baghdad bazaar your song
echoes somewhere in a Beijing hutong

E-mails flowed back—a tough Air Force Colonel
said: "My heart is finally broken today";
an Alabama philosopher said,
in his southern way, "Johnny was always
one of those low-down sinners with a halo":

everywhere in truckstops, on all the car
radios of the world, the people mourn

Another old friend wrote: "Even the rocks in my stream
grieve". . .And the news tells us the Milky Way
is expanding, devouring dwarf galaxies,
heaven's getting crowded or just making
room for your massive presence, your ample spirit:

and all the ghost riders in the sky
see your halo, call your name as they ride by

And so we gather, in churchyards, in bars,
in the broadcast communion of solitary
cars, to grieve, to sing your name and glory.
And since we're sort of old friends, Saint Johnny,
I have personal petitions and questions:

will there be any wheelchairs in heaven
will the circle truly be unbroken

Will prophets and angels walk on crutches
or will we all rise, walk, sing hallelujah
anyway—save me that handicapped parking space
by yours just inside the pearly gates where I'll join
you in amazing grace and give you all my songs:

I hear that train a-coming and if they freed
us from this prison we'd see the Man come 'roun

Coming Back

Robert H. Waugh

It takes me aback, that night in the old igloo,
a pint of a hundred proof rum, a ragged candle stump
while the night was dropping cold outside and black outside, we talked
about the cold, about the flame, about
those blocks of black ice piled around that held us warm, we talked
about survival I suppose, we talked about nothing at all.
Come back to the cold, Harry.

It takes me aback, that evening warm, listening to the Atlantic
and still it's chiller, making a fire against the sloppy roar
of the tide churning in on us, but we said nothing, we
grunted hunh, the fire sputtered, the logs
peaked upon each other hissed, and chugging beer we grunted
hunh, spiking the meat to char, saluting stars. Come back,
come back to the fire, Harry.

It takes me aback, those years and years, it takes me aback, the years
freezing us into something else
than grunts and guesses, those black
blocks of ice and ashes of the bonfires, that smoke rolling
over the waves, for since that time I've shed conviction while
you've put it on. Come back,
come back to the years, Harry.

It takes me aback, for I have no conviction
that we can slay the enemy, that we can turn a hip
or back to its blunt horns, I've no conviction that
a grace can save us, none
of our grace, not in the face of the cold,
not in the face of the fire, not in the face of the tide. Come on,
come back to our death, Harry.

Special Section

Hemingway Centennial Reading

At the Eleventh English Graduate Symposium in April 1999, which marked the Hemingway Centennial, a reading of creative work was for the first time featured at the annual symposium. Thus the first issue of the *Shawangunk Review* to include poetry was Volume XI, which appeared in April 2000. The Hemingway Centennial Poetry Reading was held at the Locust Tree Inn. Our keynote speaker, Valerie Hemingway, and a group of the nation's leading Hemingway scholars—Richard Davison, Robin Gajdusek, Allen Josephs, Robert Lewis, and Linda Miller—read passages from Hemingway that illustrated the poetry of his prose. Two graduate students, Mark Bellomo and Aaron Zeidman, read fiction inspired by Hemingway. And three poets included here—Dennis Doherty, Donald Junkins, and H.R. Stoneback—read poems of homage to Hemingway.

—HRS

Swagger (for Hemingway)

Dennis Doherty

Guilty. And why not?
You've had a fine day's
work; the world can
curse your cocky strut—
beard to the horizon—
and wish you toward your crux,
for you've done something
cleanly and well: fixed
a fractured sentence
knitted stronger at the wound;
cooked stew that smelled
of onion, herb, and fields
of wine soaked cloves;
declared love in words bold,
fatal as Roland's song;
thrilled children with spikes high
sliding into home;
planted bulbs in a good place:
the fast and tragic April sun.

Refine the death that whets the air.
Each moment is an act of grace;
each action is a runic stone.
Construct the rhetoric
of guts; birth bricking towers
of ritual basic as bread,
of chords, peril plumbed.
It's pretty to think on buds
in chance clusters, but
fibrous will's muscle forks
roots of purple stock in mad
union with the ground it pounds.

Soon, the antidote to structure, sleep—
doom—confounder of control that
can't be cornered. Don't pick about

this petty mort; drink its grape-red blood.
Artifice, that universal intersect,
is your communal human proof.
Embrace what's wild and what's been bred.
Stride through fools and faults and fears
toward your soul's roving own.

Walking to the "Indian Camp"

Donald Junkins

something about a meadow soaking wet with rain
in late October, and the golden
leaves, about coming around a bend
above a thin creek, and Indian names,
something about the Indians
gone, a logging road running back into the hills,
about new turnips broken
and scuffed in the trial, something
about a great earth mound
at the clearing where shanties fell down
and yellow leaves blazing in the rain
something about not dying
and dying
something about yellow leaves and names
where an Indian girl had lain
something about a yellow wood
on a Sunday in the October rain

Michigan: Summer 1961

From The Hemingway Variations: Spinning the Centennial

H.R. Stoneback

Summer 1961: I am working as what they call
The Social Director at what they call a Dude
Ranch in Northern Michigan, just down the road
From Hemingway's Horton Bay and Petoskey.
When I get my paycheck I go to the village bar
And drink with the lumberjacks and the fishermen.
It is the second of July. Firecrackers, Cherry
Bombs shatter the night, shudder and split the streets.
The village is preparing to celebrate the Fourth.
On the big old green-tinted tv over the bar
We hear the news, the shot heard round the world.,
The shots that ring out a lost world,
The shots we remember better, where we were,
Who we were with, than those new frontier shots
Two years later in Dallas. The tv says:
Hemingway died from a gunshot accident in Idaho.
The bar community agrees—no accident, must be suicide.
An old whitebearded man, like some ancient lost Nick
Adams, sits at the end of the bar, crying over beer,
Saying over and over again: "Papa betrayed us.
Papa betrayed us." I did not know what he meant then,
But even then, just a kid, I knew it was not betrayal.

Oh hold him tight, he is in much pain.
Hold him very tight.
We owe God a death but I am utterly unable to resign myself.
Those of us who know walk very slowly,
And we look at one another with infinite love and
Compassion. Twenty years later, Mary, in double-martini
Tears told me how it was that morning when she heard,
When she found her husband.
And Renata was not there, no one was there,
To give the grace of a happy death.
But Mary said they sang old folksongs on his last night.
The huge filthy birds are hunched.

The hyenas are whimpering.
The bicycle policemen are coming.
And there, through that waterfall, toward that mountain,
Great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun—
Is that where we too are going?
Happy Birthday, Papa—Happy Hallelujah Birthday anyway.

Contributors

Jacqueline Renee Ahl holds the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz, where she is currently the Specialist for Disabilities and Learning. Summers, she teaches writing, theater, and philosophy courses for the Summer Institute for the Gifted at Vassar College. Her play *Fear Itself* was produced in St. Louis after winning its third award: the Tin Ceiling 2008 Playwriting Competition.

Catherine Aldington (see editorial note, page 141 and 157)

David Appelbaum is a Professor of Philosophy at SUNY New Paltz. He is a biker and inveterate hiker of the Gunks, former editor of Parabola Magazine, and publisher of Codhill Press. Author of Nieuw Pfalz (Books 1 and 2), his most recent book of poems is Window with 4 Panes (2009).

Roger Asselineau (see editorial note, page 129)

Lynn Behrendt is the author of three chapbooks: The Moon as Chance, Characters, and Tinder. She edits the online Annandale Dream Gazette, a chronicle of poets' dreams. Her work has appeared in numerous online and print publications, most recently including No Tell Motel and Satellite Telephone. She was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Michael Beilfuss holds the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University. He has presented conference papers and published on Ernest Hemingway and Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

William Boyle graduated from SUNY New Paltz with an MA in English in 2006 and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Mississippi. He has published stories, essays, and poems in *Plots With Guns, Countries of the Heart,* and other magazines and journals, and he has recently completed his second novel, *Rough North*.

John Burt, Professor of English at Brandeis University, is a leading Robert Penn Warren scholar and author of numerous works on Warren. Editor of the definitive edition of Warren's *Collected Poems*, he has also published several volumes of his own poetry. He serves as Warren's Literary Executor.

D.A. Carpenter holds the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University. He has presented conference papers on Hemingway, Warren, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

Laurence Carr currently teaches creative and dramatic writing at SUNY

New Paltz. He has had numerous dramatic works produced in New York City, regionally, and in Europe. His prose and poetry have been performed and published throughout the country. He is the author of *The Wytheport Tales* and editor of *Riverine: An Anthology of Hudson Valley Writers*, both published by Codhill Press.

A. M. Cinquemani is Professor Emeritus of English at SUNY New Paltz and the author of *Glad to Go for a Feast: Milton, Buonmattei, and the Florentine Accademici.*

William Bedford Clark, Professor of English at Texas A&M University, is a leading Robert Penn Warren scholar and author of numerous works on Warren. Editor of Volumes I and II of *Warren's Letters*, he also serves as General Editor of the multi-volume Warren Correspondence Project.

James Finn Cotter, Professor of English at Mt. St. Mary College, is a widely published literary critic and poet, and President of the International Hopkins Association. He is the translator of the Center for Italian Studies edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Joann K. Deiudicibus is an Instructor of and Staff Assistant for the Composition Program at SUNY New Paltz, where she earned her MA in English (2003). She has read her poetry locally since 1995 and has been published in *The North Street Journal, Orange Review, Literary Passions, Fortunate Fall,* and *Chronogram*. Her work was selected for the Woodstock Poetry Festival, 2003. In 2007 she presented a paper at the Spring NYCEA Conference. She is the Associate Editor (poetry) for the forthcoming *Hudson River Reader*, an anthology celebrating the Hudson River.

Mary de Rachewiltz is a distinguished poet, scholar, and translator—author of numerous volumes of poetry in Italian as well as several works in English (e.g., *Whose World: Selected Poems*). Along with her award-winning translations of her father's poems (Ezra Pound's *The Cantos*) she has done Italian translations of e. e. cummings, Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, H. D., et al. Her book *Ezra Pound, Father and Teacher: Discretions* stands as one of the most distinguished literary memoirs of the twentieth century. She has lectured widely in Europe, North America, and Japan, and for over twenty years she served as curator of the Ezra Pound Archives at the Beinecke Library (Yale University). She continues to lecture in the summer programs of the Ezra Pound Center for Literature, conducted annually at her home, Brunnenburg Castle, in northern Italy.

Dennis Doherty is an Instructor in English and the Director of Creative Writing at SUNY New Paltz, as well as Chair of the Poetry Board. He has published essays, stories, and poems. His first book of poems, *The Bad Man*, was published in 2004, his second collection, *Fugitive*, appeared in 2007, and his third collection is due out late in 2009.

Jonathan Gates is a Professor of English at Nyack College. He is a Tennessee Williams scholar who has presented numerous papers and published essays on modern dramatists including Tennessee Williams and Ama Ata Aidoo.

Howie Good is a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz and the author of three poetry chapbooks: *Death of the Frog Prince* (2004), *Heartland* (2007), and *Strangers & Angels* (2007). He was recently nominated for the second time for a Pushcart Prize.

Joshua Gran holds the MA in English and a MAT in English-Secondary Education from SUNY New Paltz, where he currently works in the Office of Special Programs and also in the English Department as an adjunct Composition instructor. Formerly, he taught at Dutchess Community College and Monroe-Woodbury High School.

Andrew C. Higgins is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. His focus is on poetry, especially the work of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. He has published on Walt Whitman, Longfellow, Sarah Piatt, and Civil War soldiers' memoirs. His poetry has appeared in the *New York Quarterly*, *Footwork: The Paterson Literary Review*, *Limestone*, *Chronogram*, and the *Portland Review*.

Donald Junkins is Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), where he served for many years as the director of the writing program. A widely published and award-winning poet, he is the author of numerous volumes of poetry, including *Journey to the Corrida* and *Late at Night in the Rowboat*.

Robert Kelly, the Edelman Professor of Literature and Director of the Writing Program at Bard College, is the author of more than 50 volumes of poetry and fiction, including *Red Actions: Selected Poems 1960-1993* and *The Time of Voice: Poems 1994-1996*.

Daniel Kempton is an Associate Professor at SUNY New Paltz, Interim Chair of Theatre Arts, and Director of the English Graduate Program. He is the coeditor of *Writers in Provence* (2003) and *New Places* (2005), essays from the first three International Richard Aldington conferences, and he has recently published an essay on Pound's "Seafarer."

John Langan lives in upstate New York with his wife, son, and a pair of neurotic cats. His first collection of stories, *Mr. Gaunt and Other Uneasy Encounters,* was nominated for the Bram Stoker Award; his first novel, *House of Windows*, is forthcoming.

Michael Lutomski is an MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. He has been published in SUNY Rockland's *Impulse* magazine and was the winner of SUNY Rockland's Henry V. Larom Award in 2001 and 2003.

Brad McDuffie is an Instructor of English at Nyack College. He has presented papers at many conferences, including the American Literature Asso-

ciation Conference, the Ezra Pound International Conference, the South Atlantic Modern Language Association Conference, the New York College English Association Conference, and the Robert Penn Warren Conference. He has published essays and poetry in various books and journals, and most recently his poems have appeared in the *North Dakota Quarterly* and *Aethlon*.

Shonet L. Newton received her BA in English with a concentration in Creative Writing from SUNY New Paltz. She is now an English MA student and Teaching Assistant at SUNY New Paltz. She plans on traveling and exploring Europe once she finishes her MA.

Matthew Nickel holds the MA in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. He has presented conference papers and published on Richard Aldington, Hemingway, Burroughs, Durrell, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and has published poems in *Florida English* and the *Hudson River Valley Review*.

Julie O'Niell is an MAT student at SUNY New Paltz and an attorney in New York City. She has presented a conference paper on Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

Jan Zlotnik Schmidt is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor in the Department of English at SUNY New Paltz. An expert in the field of composition studies and writing across the curriculum, she has given presentations and workshops at the local, regional, and national level. Her poetry has been published in many journals, including *Kansas Quarterly, Cream City Review, Syracuse Scholar, Alaska Quarterly Review, Home Planet News,* and *Phoebe*. She has published two volumes of poetry, *We Speak in Tongues* (1991) and *She had this memory* (2000); two collections of autobiographical essays, *Women/Writing/Teaching* (1998) and *Wise Women: Reflections of Teachers at Midlife*, co-authored with Dr. Phyllis R. Freeman (2000); and a multicultural, global literature anthology, *Legacies: Fiction Poetry, Drama, Nonfiction*, co-authored with Lynne Crockett and the late Carley Bogarad, now in its fourth edition. Her current field of scholarship is Holocaust Studies, particularly first-and second-generation women's memoirs. She teaches both undergraduate and graduate Holocaust literature and film courses.

Alex Andriesse Shakespeare earned his BA in English from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a doctoral candidate at Boston College. He has presented conference papers on Ernest Hemingway, Richard Aldington, Elizabeth Madox Roberts, and Geoffrey Hill.

James Sherwood holds the MA from SUNY New Paltz and is currently a student in the New Paltz MAT program. He presented a paper at the 2007 NYCEA Conference and has published fiction and poetry.

Robert Singleton is a long time adjunct instructor in English at SUNY New Paltz. He is also an adjunct at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, where he teaches a number of writing courses. He has two beautiful grandchildren, Jessica

and Andrew, of whom he is enormously proud.

Dave Smith, the Coleman Professor of Poetry at Johns Hopkins University, is former editor of *The Southern Review*, author of many volumes of poetry, including *The Wick of Memory: New and Selected Poems 1970-2000*. His most recent book is *Little Boats, Unsalvaged: Poems 1992-2004*.

H. R. Stoneback is Distinguished Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. He is a Hemingway scholar of international reputation, author/editor of nineteen books and more than 175 articles on Durrell, Faulkner, Hemingway, Roberts et al. He is a widely published poet, author of eight volumes of poetry including, most recently, *Amazing-Grace-Wheelchair-Jumpshot-Jesus-Love-Poems* (Des Hymnagistes Press 2009) and *Hurricane Hymn & Other Poems* (Codhill Press 2009). His recent critical study *Reading Hemingway's* The Sun Also Rises (2007) has been nominated for the prestigious SAMLA Studies Award in Literary Criticism; his most recent critical volumes (2008) include three co-edited collections of essays, one on Richard Aldington and two on Elizabeth Madox Roberts.

Chris Tanis learned everything he knows about literature from his professors in the SUNY New Paltz English Department, where he earned his BA and MA. He currently teaches 11th grade English in Brooklyn. He is married, the father of two boys, plays in a band with other English teachers, and drinks large amounts of coffee.

William Trowbridge's poetry collections are *Enter Dark Stranger, O Paradise, Flickers,* and *The Complete Book of Kong.* His poems have also appeared in such periodicals as *The Gettysburg Review, Poetry, The Georgia Review, The Iowa Review*, and *New Letters.* He lives in the Kansas City area and teaches in the University of Nebraska low-residency MFA in Writing program.

Pauline Uchmanowicz is a freelance writer and Associate Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. She is author of poetry chapbooks *Sand & Traffic* (2004) and *Inchworm Season* (2010). Her poems, essays, and reviews have appeared in journals such as *Chronogram, Crazyhorse, Indiana Review, Ohio Review, Massachusetts Review, Mudfish, New American Writing, Ploughshares, Provincetown Arts Journal, Radcliffe Quarterly, Southern Poetry Review, Woodstock Times,* and *Z Magazine*.

Robert H. Waugh is a Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz and Director of the annual Lovecraft Forum. He is the author of *The Monster in the Mirror: Looking for H. P. Lovecraft* and many articles on science fiction, horror, and fantasy literature, which have been published in such journals as *Extrapolation* and *Lovecraft Studies*. He is also a widely published poet, and his chapbook, *Shorewards, Tidewards* appeared in summer 2007. In the summer of 2009 a second chapbook of selected poems is scheduled to appear.

Lea Weiss graduated from SUNY New Paltz with an MA in English in 2008. She is currently a secondary school English teacher and an acupuncturist.

Sarah Wyman is an Assistant Professor of English at SUNY New Paltz. Before joining the New Paltz faculty, she taught at Chapel Hill, NC and Konstanz, Germany. Her scholarship treats the parallels between verbal and visual expression in the work of twentieth-century artists.