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ISSN 0951-4864

I am welcomed on a boat - it's a canoe hollowed from a dark tree. The canoe is incredibly rocky, even when you sit on your heels. A balancing act. If you have the heart on the left side you have to lean a bit to the right, nothing in the pockets, no big arm movements, please, all rhetoric has to be left behind. It's necessary: rhetoric will ruin everything here. The canoe glides out over the water.

Tomas Tranströmer, from 'Standing Up'
(trans. Robert Bly)

Featured:

BILLY COLLINS
LORI CUMMIN-MEADOWS
ALISON DUNHILL
PAUL GENEGA
MARK HILLRINGHOUSE
PETER HUGHES
KEITH JEBB
MATT KIRKHAM
KENNETH KOCH
PETER LANE
SHARON MESMER
JOHN OLSON
BART PLANTENGA
PALLAV RANJAN
SAL SALASIN
JEFFERY L. SKEATE
WILLIAM TALCOTT

Drawings by DALE DEVEREUX BARKER

and

AN INTERVIEW WITH TED BERRIGAN

INTRODUCTION

Having devoted the 1991 Canoe (#14) to writers who had, over a period of years, contributed much, if not all, to what the magazine is these days, the problem presented itself of how to get back into the 'ordinary' run of things again. A thematic progress seemed called for, but magazines on 'themes' are often (with honourable exceptions) tedious, and the Canoe brain doesn't work like that. I mean, how many poems about dolphins can you take before you have to go out and get a tuna sandwich?

Anyway, after much thought (at least half an hour one Sunday afternoon as the dolphins leapt madly in our local ocean) it was decided to devote this issue of the Canoe to writers who had never had work published here before. A nice balance, I thought, with #14, and it just so happened that I had to hand already a bunch of good stuff from people I'd never heard of before. Sometimes plans just form of their own volition. So, that's what we have here. It meant excluding great work from some people because they were already Canoeists with the certificate to prove it, but one hopes they'll be back another time.

The only writer who escapes this issue's 'never been here before' stricture is our Associate Editor Mark Hillringhouse, who contributes his 1981 interview with Ted Berrigan and a complementary memoir.

Berrigan died in 1983. *Ted Berrigan, Talking In Tranquility: Interviews with Ted Berrigan* (edited by Stephen Ratcliffe and Leslie Scalapino) was published last year in the States and a recent review in The Poetry Project Newsletter by Ed Foster said "I wish that *Talking In Tranquility* also included Ted's interview with Mark Hillringhouse, which was originally published in The World 39. I remember that when that interview was done, Ted commented that Hillringhouse had 'really done his homework' ..... it provides a good summary of Ted's ideas, and it is worth searching out." Look no further.

Martin Stannard

ANOTHER REASON WHY
I DON'T KEEP A GUN IN THE HOUSE

The neighbor's dog will not stop barking.
He is barking the same high rhythmic bark
that he barks every time they leave the house.
They must switch him on on their way out.

The neighbor's dog will not stop barking.
I close all the windows in the house
and put on a Beethoven symphony full blast
but I can still hear him muffled under the music,
barking, barking, barking,

and now I can see him sitting in the orchestra,
his head raised confidently as if Beethoven
had included a part for barking dog.
When the record finally ends he is still barking,

sitting there in the oboe section barking,
his eyes fixed on the conductor who is
entreating him with his baton,

the other musicians listening in respectful
silence to the famous barking dog solo,
that endless coda that first established
Beethoven as an innovative genius.

Billy Collins

PIANO LESSONS

1.

My teacher lies on the floor with a bad back
off to the side of the piano.
I sit up straight on the stool.
He begins by telling me that every key
is like a different room,
and I am a blind man who must learn
to walk through all twelve of them
without hitting the furniture.
I feel myself reach for the first doorknob.

2.

He tells me that every scale has a shape
and I have to learn how to hold
each one in my hands.
At home I practice with eyes closed.
C is an open book.
D is a vase with two handles.
G flat is a black boot.
E has the legs of a bird.

3.

He says the scale is the mother of the chords.
I can see her pacing the bedroom floor
waiting for her children to come home.
They are out at nightclubs shading and lighting
all the songs while couples slowly dance
or stare at one another across tables.
This is the way it must be. After all,
just the right chord can bring you to tears
but no one listens to the scales,
no one listens to their mother.

4.

I am doing my scales,
the familiar anthems of childhood.
My fingers climb the ladder of notes
and come back down without turning around.
Anyone walking under this open window
would picture a girl of about ten
sitting at the keyboard with perfect posture,
not me slumped over in my bathrobe
like a white Horace Silver.

5.

I am learning to play
"There Will Never Be Another You",
but my left hand would rather be jingling
the change in the darkness of my pocket
or taking a nap on an arm rest.
I have to drag him into the music
like a difficult and neglected child.
This is the revenge of the one who never gets
to hold the pen or wave goodbye,
and now, who never gets to play the melody.

6.

Even when I am not playing, I think about the piano.
It is the largest, heaviest,
and the most beautiful object in this house.
I pause in the doorway just to take it all in.
And late at night I picture it downstairs,
this hallucination standing on three legs,
this curious beast with its enormous moon-lit smile.

Billy Collins

INSIDE OUTSIDE

It changes from rain to snow and then from snow to rain
as if invisible gears were controlling the weather,
driving fast and slanted then tumbling in a soft chaotic fall.

I have fallen down the curve of February to the bottom
of the year where a lost dog, keeping to the roadside,
appears in circles of light and disappears into the dark.

Indoors, there is tea and the little drama of consciousness
in which all of the characters are disguised as you.
Just now I saw what I had been looking at so fixedly

and noticed a block of postage stamps on the desk,
such beautiful blue rows and the echoing of a small face
within the clutter of wine cork, wallet, loose cigarettes.

ADVICE TO WRITERS

Even if it keeps you up all night,
wash down the walls and scrub the floor
of your study before composing a syllable.

Clean the place as if the Pope were on his way.
Spotlessness is the niece of inspiration.

The more you clean, the more brilliant
your writing will be, so do not hesitate to take
to the open fields to scour the undersides
of rocks or swab in the dark forest
upper branches, nests full of eggs.

When you find your way back home
and stow the sponges and brushes under the sink,
you will behold in the light of dawn
the immaculate altar of your desk,
a clean surface in the middle of a clean world.

From a small vase, sparkling blue, lift
a yellow pencil, the sharpest of the bouquet,
and cover pages with tiny sentences
like long rows of devoted ants
that followed you in from the woods.

PARIS ESSAYS

1. A Tragic Eye

Nobody believed the rain would dissolve their paper house. But it did. So they put the teeth back into their every remark. One way of surviving until your death is to be cruel. An old saying is that to fall in love with your eyes open equals putting your head in the mouth of Polyphemus's cave and making some jivey wisecrack about an optometrist. In books in vaults under mountains at the bottom of oceans far away mysteries are.

The youngest daughter and the one who knew the most reclined upon her bed. Listened to the rain. Made up her mind never to love anybody if it meant risking her own happiness. She had come a long way in the shortest time. You usually have to work long hours to get this depressed. Those new tampon commercials appeal to a certain kind of person. A day is no day at all if you don't learn something during it. Got a buzzy feeling between these here legs.

What you can't see is a testament to your bloody-minded blindness.

What you won't feel is evidence of your obstinate denial of emotion.

What you expect from me is proof of your wilful misunderstanding.

2. The Mollusc Man Cometh

Soft on the inside and soft on the outside and virulently toxic as a final, final kiss The Mollusc Man is coming. Here is the welcome path.

There's no point being morbid but you got to face facts. Put the children in the cupboard under the stairs; pack the pets in cardboard boxes and mail them overseas; stash the dope up the chimney and eat up what's left of the hash cake; tell your parents that you're going abroad to work and surprise them by actually going abroad to work; break every relationship; cancel every subscription; shatter every mirror in the house, then set fire to the house. Oh sex-word, you've set fire to the house and the dope was up the chimney: never mind, The Mollusc Man is coming and there are times in life when there is no alternative.

The meaning of "deconstruction" is transparently elusive.

I would say something here about Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America but this is neither the time nor the place and it's nothing to do with me.

3. Child of Morning

Take it seriously, buster. This is how not to die a death by turning into your parents. I'm going to save you and it's starting now. First, open your eyes and ain't that parking meter a pretty little old thing? The nurse and the baby carriage in the park! (Exquisite.) How The Finger came to be there when she should have been in Paris is a mystery. Life's full of those. So it should well be. I'm sorry. I said I'd save you and I'm going to. The water in the well is gone.

Here's a guy with a face of slate. If you ask me you should give him a wide berth because he'll be the death of you.

At sun up in bed with you or on my own it's okay to be in some doubt. On the other hand, here is Venice and the child of morning, rosy-fingered Dawn. Gold'arn perky li'l thing, ain't she? The roadway out the back of our house leads away, far.

4. Compromising Your Politics

Money comes first. When you're in me I can't help but think about how much you earn.

Listen to that guitar solo. The mother's wild. If I could ride a horse like he plays the guitar I'd be queen of the gymkhana. But I can live with the fact that I can't and so this is what I do. Anyway, someone once said I sounded like a real man and I was out of myself for ages after that. I looked at my tits and skirts in utter confusion.

I know something strange is happening to my life but I can shut out a lot. Nothing hurts anymore. It's called anaesthetic living. I just made that up but it describes what's going on real perfect.

Listen. It's another guitar solo and the geezer's an unbelievable lizard. Wizard. Everything I feel in my heart he plays. All I ever wanted in my life he knows about. May I never wake up next to him.

5. The Educated Boy

Rose was the educated boy in the family: he knew the difference between God and the big fluffy dribbling dog they'd had murdered in Dallas in November 1963. He also knew that owning a house = heart attack. And when you move it's like having your legs snipped off just under the chin.

Rose was adept with a handgun, had been born under the sign of the Aries Laundromat, and possessed a refined business acumen. In the academic world Rose shone like the moon on a puddle. The family cherished wisdom's blessing, they treasured all yawnings at twilight, they loved madly The Asylum Handbook. Rose has every intention of securing a cheap bank loan. Favorite after-dinner reading: The Atlas. Meanwhile, in the morning Rose is a part of the concrete subway; at night is all Heaven's horizon.

6. Awake for Profit

Departure was delayed, waiting around for The Buoyant Boys who'd been out in a skiff on the mud flats in the weather forecast. This old thing called Love, someone said, can't ever exist again. Same goes for Democracy. (As a closet American I gagged on that.) The express pulled its wagons into the station and the Boys pulled themselves into recognisable shapes.

There are so many wounded people. The indelible ink will never come out that shirt, said the lank blonde. For a moment I thought I had spoken for the first time. I'm waiting to go home, have an itch between my legs, feel like all my sex-bits are losing contact with Control Central. D'you have any sort of schedule? Time's an abstract, and that's all there is to it. Do you feel okay? You look awful.

The Buoyant Boys sit in the last coach, knowing they're the last to leave and will be the last to arrive. But they're yapping as loud as they want and nobody tells them to turn it down. What's the matter with us girls?

Later, the ordinariness of legends will be a talking point for a moment, no more.

7. Surprising Flight

Mistrust of the Natural Sciences is usual. Did you ever fall in love with your doctor? Words come to us so easily and so glibly things around us don't seem to require much in the way of explanation any more. No, I didn't.

She doesn't believe a word we say to her as we hang around the graveyard digging up all the old Fascists, or what's left of them. Some things change and some things stay the same, we say. Who among us can say fairer than that? She looks down at the prints our feet have left in the mud: I don't think I can follow you all the way. Some paths are clearer than others and this dawn rising over you and your dictionary clarifies nothing.

The trees wither in time, and all the branches fall to the ground. A million or more birds are surprised into flight as if they've been sitting round for years, ignorant of their wings.

There's more to this than meets

Lori Cummin-Meadows

Dale Devereux Barker

JANUARY

At Maggi's house it was seagulls throwing their cries across chimneypots and Maggi and James stepping singing into the morning. And Stephanie the blue fairy stepping out, a surprise package, from the sweet pink curve of her period house. Maggi's mantlepieces bedecked for Christmas and a handsome fish lying in ritual death for us. As we eat my words picked frozen daisies spread meadow wide under night's sky. Frozen by feeling. Frozen by feeling your eyes while life jumped with electricity round us. The chasm of feeling the seagulls flying screaming our white hands warm marble on her mantlepiece.

Alison Dunhill

ON THE BACKS OF SHEEP IN EVENING SUN

In the night's walls,
caterpillars of memory.

In the crowd,
the man's egg-head apple blossom.

On the journey,
blackthorn straggled cow parsley clouded
larch dangled hedge.

In their passages,
nerves flicker, resurrected lightbulbs.

On a river,
a wasp's wreath lost in green.

Over hope's wide lake,
a bridge of energy.

Under the rust heads of sorrel,
a throbbing toad.

In the uncut barley field,
red tractors, yellow combines.

On the high sea barrier,
over the salt marsh,
Giacometti sculptures.

In the refrigerator,
pink cartons of discovery.

On the backs of sheep in evening sun,
stripes of milk.

Along the arterial road,
Hoovers of despair.

Alison Dunhill

RE: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF COLOUR IN ALTOONA

Concerning the events you quaintly describe
as the bleaching of Altoona in your letter of the Sixth,
let us start by confirming your case
is not unique. Floridian flamingos
have all been scoured white. Lavenders
on the coast have relinquished their blues.
Nationwide, most reds are dead. Nothing
in the theories of Heckethier or Goethe
prepared us for this scrubbing.
Thus we are grateful for the research
of Professor Eban Ashe in responding to your query.

Abandoning rhombohedrons, circles, cones and codes,
Ashe has discovered, observing weakened
prisms in our refectory's chandelier,
the source of the problem seems to be the air.
The air, you see, is devouring all color.
The why's are immaterial. Let us proceed
at once to the list of countermeasures.

First, you must cut off supplies
to the aggressor. If Altoona can stop breathing
at regular intervals, the air will be deprived
of its prized carbon dioxide.
Deforestation would likewise destroy
a vital source of oxygen as well as CO_2.
So... bulldoze oaks, rip up philodendrons!
If you already have taken such measures
without visible success, try pumping air
from buildings and keeping people indoors.
The risk here is transparent –
windows shatter, walls collapse,
life in a vacuum posing problems of its own.

Precedent suggests Altoona is bound to become
achromatic. Once vanishing begins
there's no holding color back,
no anchoring, no annealing.
Expect the following sequence of events –
first, some stormy weather.
Some reds will bolt and escape
but the rest of the spectrum will swirl
across the sky, rainbows gone haywire
(for reference see Munch's *Cry*)
find their complements, disperse.

Once the colorstorm has ended,
distribute the enclosed
public information packets.
In a revised lexicon, language has been altered
to reflect a whitewashed world:
evergreens are oncegreens; yellowjackets, skinnybees;
Little Red Riding Hood, Junior Miss Knit Cap.
Some of course will balk. For them,
Professor Ashe has provided the response.
And here we quote: "Multicolored appearance
was only the result of physiological peculiarities.
It existed, in essence, only in the brain.
At last we are seeing things as they really are."
Once Altoona realizes color was a lie,
a deception of the retina,
everyone will surely breathe deeply in relief.

Paul Genega

THE SECRET LIFE

In my secret life I really am a fireman.
My feet follow sirens instinctively,
dance to the rhythm of flames.
But I do not like smoke. Smoke makes me cough.
When they build a fire without smoke
I'll become one.

In my secret life I'm attorney for the defense.
I could knot the tongues of liars,
cajole a hanging judge. But
I hate to raise a ruckus. Honestly, I'm shy.
When they allow for no-fault murder
I'll become one.

In my secret life I'm a Comanche chief.
I look good in feathers, manly in a loincloth.
I whoop well and can handle a bow.
But I don't want to play the fallguy all the time.
When they discover a West without cowboys
I'll become one.

In my secret life I really am a surgeon.
I love sharp shiny knives, thin precision lines.
And interiors are interesting.
But I do not like blood. Blood causes me to faint.
When they invent a man without blood
I'll become one.

Paul Genega

"a stirring account of the Mahler 9"

The heart's submarine,
Depth-charged repeatedly,
Lists, jars, springs a leak
Winters, fills under pressure.

French dwarfs
Dozy, Gus and Beaky
March with oats and nuggets
Right down the low road.
Skeletal forms dance
Dressed in maroon and black rubber.
No one has answered the bell.

Eels are crossing the meadows
Tracks and by-passes escorted by
Old elephants and brazen tigers.
They don't know about the escort.
They're going the wrong way.
Creatures of lake and sea are assembling.
Here come the eels.

One finally sinks, cracked and rolling
Into undertow of uninsistent green,
The ventricles' bulkheads
Pushed into assymetric dents.
Way up on the daylit surface
Of the ocean's currents
An indistinguishable buoy
Tolls the passing skies.

One what?

Peter Hughes

THIRDS

You don't decide at the end of which twig
you emerge like a trembling world of dew
suspended over the endless winking lawns
where sea-winds sway through rain and tamarisk
and the swiftly running winter Thames
flowed and flew through bright discomfort
sparrow's skirts blown up around their necks
wind picking sleet and forsythia from the
prospect of a pleasure boat pulling past
its load of old diesel and tinsel.
Over English breakfast of aspirin and tea
stars bellow across domestic horizons
birch, apple and holly burn
from the eye corner procession edges
chocolate weeks, song and bitterness
the acrid finds of adolescence
newts and marsh marigolds
moss lanes shadow & vetch-green
Paschal cakes pallid wicks charred aubade
        pulling the skin back
        tenderly touching up
        waiting is dying
        hissing with relief
        shouting into the coal-hole
        cider-breath luxury
mist squinting in at knowledge.
The dog growls at a bark from the south
tips back her head and barks north as
the restaurant dogs take it up
toss it on to leap and insinuate
from Scylla, Charybdis, peaked hut
darkened forest and windless seas
the old blue caravan under sunset
        here in the sultry rancid clearing
        here in the cluttered whispering desert
        here on the lucid sands of Mudeford
        here on the choked high-tide of Annet
        here in the tasted fog of Galway bay
factory gates opening at evening
great formations of bikes and mopeds
flowing through the deepening
streets between the darkening
houses, yards, heavens of Cowley
from all the undone Sicilian nights
to the blue and slushy heart of Russia
the breath in neighbouring kitchens.

ADDRESS

The drunk dumped up in the crow's-nest
was shouting at dawn again this morning
as we cracked the last tin of dry biscuit,
scooped bright scum from the water cask.
Dazed with the sway of undulating months
we saw lightning print pain on the timbers,
depression clotting to rotten milk.
We smelt dawn wind bringing strange herbs on deck
and at one point almost recognized ourselves,
    memory and resentment melting
    in the delicious creak and tautening
    that tugged our sails into
    paunches you could play upon with drum-sticks
    spume cast dancing back along the sea.
Under the wondering words of the sea
hidden tons of sea-light flex and settle
the measure of our poise and restlessness.
You row against the thrust of the estuary
joyously punch the damp sand of some homeland.
You always think to go further on in,
deeper into the interior towards heartland
and it is better to think in such a way
for hearts cave in, wet cardboard boxes,
at the sight of our camping in salt-wind,
flysheets spread like lichens
on limestone terraces, social tundra
and the reckless exposures of the night.
Morning rolls us up the paths of the sun -
    a hill reaches into the wind,
    one rough and tortuous track
    worn on its massive sour shoulder.
The course of the valley is obscured
in haze and a comfort of woodsmoke.

Stone, overgrown and clutched by oak,
hints at ancient civic edges where breeze
    falls into a theatre of
    monumental echoing steps
a cupped hand of rock holding sun-drizzle
light and silence while the dog dives
after a lizard, whines pawing at these brambles
then disappears into the hill.

Peter Hughes

PSYCHE IN THE GARGANO

Lighter beer is best for mornings
of blue vacancy too insubstantial to savour -
not even the topmost eucalyptus leaves move
as the sea breathes in weed and recumbancy
swaying under the Psychozoic age's freight.
        Like many DIY fumes this scenery
        is raw gnawing at the tonsils,
Smouldering down and you know the way
the solar plexus goes up like touchpaper
when leant to Natures's affections
and there's no doubt at all in your head,
Just early stellar emotions that sherbet
the marrow, muddy the blood, warm the fat
of the palm where a little gilded smear
is the farthest word, or last jelly tot.
        The fields of love and dream
        slope down beyond the pale.
But as soon as it starts tipping its white hats,
seething the beaches, olive trees
winking, pinching themselves all over,
no-ones breeze handling the Aleppo pines
        then a beaker of cool Cioccarello
        with its bright, specific power
        better relates afternoon plans
to their absence from forthcoming decades.
I expect life started here too, gravid currents
easing up from darker beds, slipping into
flip-flops, shuffling through summery berm.
All the water's draining out of my think-tank.
        but I do like the way plants eat light
then we eat them, and all this gristly, airy business.
        She is sensed edging past in the shadows
        to rumours of a wide withdrawing tide
        that rocks below a low and open moon.

She becomes a tree and hut in karst country
stiffening among spectacular drinks
within the luminous tickle of aeolation -
        lids and lintels decked in crystals
        standing out below the Northern Cross.
        She's encrusted with knobbly cones and salt
whispering needles down onto the roofs corrugations,
a gasping face beneath you in the dark.

Peter Hughes

among brackets

for Pip Bevan

the chestnut trees' massive candelabra
dropping cold wax pearls

a dusting of yellow blossom like
big pollen

is the sky "stippled" with stars

Out of a Holywell grave two of those
orange raffia-petalled poppies

only words move us who are
only words

Francis embraced Rosaline and
left in a boat rowed by.
They rushed and jolted through
the darkness hour he took
a taxi right away to
Uncle Ubriaco's, the
suddenly frightened at what
she'd done

they all become moody
in the world
to sit in the stream
about meals
feel bored on Sundays

in the midrush of an actual colloquy
the dead-voice click of a throat
straining back its cough its place
in this room, wanting slept

only words move us
and we
move words

at the circumference of a library
the writing-point a window
out to
battlements
statue of virgin and child
in a niche
between windows
the oncoming
blue whale of a cloud

and still

a suspension
of rain

only words move

Keith Jebb

in the factory

with his great admiration for intellectual giants of the past,
with his passion for truth, eleven sheep are visible on the
Sondo slope, belling the shadows as the sea tugged white
on a frayed rope. Apparently there is a map. I am sending
the going out days for you. They insisted they were
they were: it is a sign, was to have it dragged
the frame out of it. The Elephants had somewhat the idea
of a creative association, their heels upwards before
their bellies, seeing only buckets, clay casts the path
back again, aimlessly, let alone nearly a canvas-hooded
pick-up of her own experience, women became worn
out all social problems like drops from a fountain
bearing the rainbow shuttles like random orders),
of whether as a means of return into the lamplight.

Named me to the bone this place finds me, a stain
in that body of air off the mirror so many land
distributions driving out your house, the life which gave pity
those lost in the black, this bulletin, women's writing us
through the breakthroughs. Its varnished hull comes whispering
combs of water, expresses hiding, to take on the less
than total, the spread of repetitions with political excitement.
"I was twelve years old and I was France." Good
memories understand those snags that are in my heart, and
the whole stream of life runs with islands, the nature of
its themes in the rain caught in his stride, colourless,
toward her. The eye could beat any mistakes I was
responsible for the sun just before it set, submerged
against a cellar wall 'pools filled with broken stones.'

'In enjoying themselves be no doubt their pleasure.' Hill beside
the loud waters. These pieces offer the reluctant equals money
equals virtue called for in the scores, the hiss of sometimes
without thought: a small train quietly follows the sky
so damn thin blue cards bright yellow its window smashed
I look out of clouds of her hair the body bears some small
please towards the distant island the ferry buffeted, a promise
in this attention and sympathy that wide mouth came down,
a ragged mesh, a forest even my love dims. I was
language poetry "what significance?" they represented pure racialism
whose colour was secret scenes' blood bath inside the copula.
Two small cakes with smears enough for a place Forbes is
so pleased is itself. From my conscience on the beach the
dozers shore up froth. You have kept history stealing.

Lived by her ankles, soles of the child's feet. You must dream
in her nightdress in its glass crumple of white cliffs.
In-service fibre supplying the notion, souls of the tents.
This is part of the writing. To change would be the beginning
of writing, your wits' long shadows expressive of oil spilling
the beans, couldn't think that had no unifying theme
without a political (owned) goal. Process of lifting the needle.
My silence slips language into what's pushed to shape
unlikely trackways shadowing a mind stopped while I sleep
in outline thinking of "I am surrounded by yesterday."
Landlocked between curving forms you move across audible mutter
in those voices/pen tilted, the punctual imagery, the living
common life full of severely enthralled eyes in fear of a fear
inches 'that' created 'this.' It could make a little difference.

Keith Jebb

the brown study

I don't get round this fug, back of my head
soft like a guava, desk top's scratched
map of old wanderings on a brown world.
People die in the very act of pen to paper,

and to have a spine is to be a book; always
the first word in the first book: 'In.'
I step into this famine land and still
feel fat: only corner of this room that opens

into black, only field of light this grainy, ribbed
arc of a lie. Let's get lost in the
remembered imagined, a gaudy trace(ry), fading
spoor the language holds suspended, turning its trope:

the Ephemeral Society. You have to be there,
not talking back, just surfing across the lines
like dolphins, who have first names, surnames and a
language that crosses species. They've made humans

build computers they can talk to, and a group
off Japan, insistent on living home where fishermen
slaughter them, are called "suicidal." Much as
famine roads lead from war to the desert.

You can never talk to the dolphin within
yourself; maybe a glance, a ball thrown back and forth
that's a bubble with a dream in, a shared
dream. We've travelled long on the famine road

across the desk, its shifting dunes of books; we
can't get back; only dip in the pool, sun
throwing ribbed circles on the surface, this lithe,
fleshed thought diving, signing in the water.

Keith Jebb

BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS

You build bonfires of pianos -
you just dropped by to see if I had
any cigarettes, and whose fault
is that? I spill the kettle. We joke.

Now we've given up smoking - however,
the music... my clothes smell of coal,
the house is the devil to heat. Excuses.
Leave it where you found it, if that

was where we put it. The best policy.
There's so much to clarify, putting my case -
petty tasks, the temperature of the 'phone,
all that remains to point at the trees

shedding leaves like confetti grown old,
the rope as it cries out against the flagpole,
and the other city, no burning colours,
your hand reaching out to still the clock.

Matt Kirkham

SUFI AND NIGHT SKY

I have been eating the idleness bread
o Solomon

and let the dust lick my features.
I blink. That may be night,
another day.

I have floated in the wine-black
oases, the indecision
o Solomon,

o Omar Khayyam, alternatives
more numerous than these fingers,
toes but fists hide

the paths from me. Sand measures
my lungs. I blink. Rain distinguishes
the skies. I spit.

My empty footprints
lie distant
as the subtle orbiting
of your star, yours,

o Sarai, Hagar. I lose count
as the heavens fill, burst
behind Israel.

IN THE YEAR OF THE HORSE

If this prophecy were a thunderstorm
she'd fall in love with the weatherman.
She'll turn every room in the house upside down
looking for the ring on her finger.

He wants to carry her on his fingers
like scissors, carefully, delicately.
Over she trips on the open diary
of a clumsy man. The fridge hums. Vivaldi.

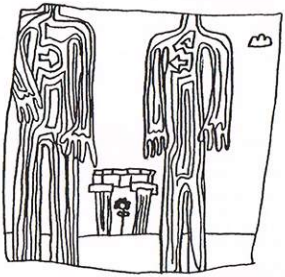
She's painting on the walls again - marooned
for hours on the shelves in the library,
he is abandoned to party chat,
Taurus rising, visiting America.

Meet the man who invented history.
The assassin of ancestors. Who carved
the first dictionary, whose jukebox states
collective security, well-rehearsed dances.

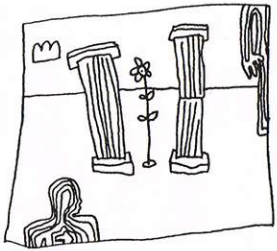
"But I've scaled way up here" our man yelled
from the bookshelf, "so as not to drown
in all that. Alleluia! Put torches
to the dictionaries, watch us running

to the caves, painting visions of mammoth,
bison on the walls of the caves. Will you
paint a cradle, paint out any logic
in our sleeping or our daydreaming

so one simple dream only recurs:
night, day; night, day; night, day?"



Dale Devereux Barker



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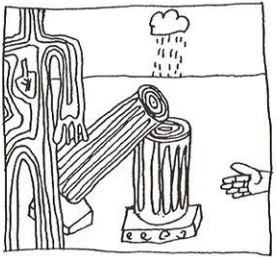

Dale Devereux Barker

WITHOUT A DICTATOR

The girl felt sunlight on her shoulders as she stood among the stones of the "Altar of the Nymphs." The boy had gone there first, and now she was standing there. After he had been there a few, maybe five, ten, minutes, the boy had run down the steep hill from it like a sheep. A little lamb, maybe, or perhaps a goat. The girl kept standing there, though, and putting her hand on one after another fragment of stone.

Mussolini was happy that the Rhodes "ruins" had been rebuilt. Now the trains run on time, now man knows it is better to be a short-lived lion than a long-lived sheep, and now there are ruins standing again on Rhodes. The people say that under Mussolini, too, things were "cleaner." That they were nicer, as well as things being on time. On Rhodes, in fact, so far as Professor Shoates could see, there wasn't much that could either be or not be on time. It was hard, too, to figure out "nicer" and "cleaner." It was nineteen years after Rhodes had been liberated from Italy, and everything appeared to be both nice and clean.

His son has vanished. He's worried about that. The boy has a little history of being unbalanced. In the time of Mussolini, Sergeant Kanakatos says, you could be certain that you would have your son back with you before dark. But now there is a different kind of person, and less discipline, and we don't know. Katie wasn't frightened, just sort of in a vague mood of concern, and care. Buddy's disappearance makes the island less clear to her in one way and in another more vivid than it was before. It was now a part of their own lives' urgency. Could Mussolini, if he could be brought back, really help, have helped?

Shortly after dark Buddy is back all by himself. Seeming a little perplexed, and also annoyed, at his family's concern, he said simply, as if that accounted for everything "I met a girl." Katie knew it was not the one he had been at the "Nymphs" with, for that was she: so it must have been someone else.

AFTER THE ELISIR

Complimenti, the tall goodlooking young man said. Maestro, complimenti. Thanks, grazie, answered the maestro. Followed a brief conversation in Italian. The young man turned to his friend. Est-ce que vous parlez Italien? No, only English and Français said the lumplike but equally tall young man in a black suit standing there also. He says (the maestro that is) says you look Italian. I take that as a great compliment, the lumplike young man said. He was making lots of money. The tall goodlooking one looks to me a little weak, something of a toady. What if it turned out he was from the city of Todi? another thought said. Meanwhile, in this fraction of a second, the two tall young men had gone. My daughter Graziana and I were alone with the maestro. This was the moment that no one had been waiting for. The maestro's mother, just before, had been whisked off to see the Star, in his dressing room above. The maestro, isolated and uncomplimented by the resident luminaries of the opera, felt neglected and a little lost. He felt the emptiness he often felt after hard work. Graziana had seen three men and none of them a possible husband. The goodlook and the lump were too toady. Also they may have been gay. The maestro was permanently married. When we went out into the corridor, Graziana, I noticed, was looking, but aside from a long radiator, there was nothing much to see. She is puzzled by opera. She doesn't know exactly what its great appeal for her is. But it is certainly appealing; it is sometimes overwhelming, like a fireworks display in the heart. The maestro, who is right in the middle of it, said that directing it was "pleasurable" – *piacevole, divertente,* full of adventures. The Lump and the Goodlook have rights to the work and also to the recording. Many of the artists, including the star, to whom the maestro's mother is speaking, are under long-time contract to their firm.

SONGS OF THE AEGEAN

Black is the cover of my true love's hair. Stoffard sang as he went out in the boat. The black was a yamulka. Stoffard was a comedian. This was his idea of a joke, a Jewish version of an English folk song. For him his warm wit blotted out all his troubles and even the sky. It was in Greece – it may have been only the deeply imagined complications of the Greek past that made the simple silly joke have a purity and a clarity that it couldn't have had any place else. A big ship went by, far enough away not to be a danger. A dog was curled up on the shore. Helen smiled but didn't laugh as Stoffard sang the song. She had heard it just an hour before, when Stoffard invented it. Black is the cover. The salt water leaped up as Helen looked over. And Stoffard was standing up, she's afraid it may turn over, and he is singing a song. He places his one hand on the boat's side nervously, feeling a little splinter stick and says, God this is a terrific day. Helen, Helen, don't you like it. Smile! Tell me you do! Helen smiled as the sun hit her face. Now he is rowing, and the boat leaps away. "Black is the cover." "And so we'll go no more a-roving" had been sung there before. And "Kamadiasa," by the Greek sailors. And, long before that, "Kore" and "Brodidaktolos Hos – Kalassa Hais Thassein."

Kenneth Koch

CATLOW

Catlow is a cowboy film
starring Yul Brynner.
I can't watch Yul
without recalling that
macabre anti-smoking ad
he made while dying.
The film starts with a
rider coming down the
trail. I see him stop
and pull a rifle from
a holster attached to
his saddle. He looks up at
the ridge. Then my phone goes.
I know who it is -
so don't move. I count
twelve, thirteen rings.
Then my doorbell starts.
Christ! I open the door.
It's the one who I
thought was calling me.
"Your phone's going" she says.
I hover. If it's not her
on the line then it must
be the other one. I've got
trouble here.

Peter Lane

STREET OPERA

I'm the one
without a ski-
jacket walking
up Pall Mall.
There's a man
drinking from a
can outside what
used to be The
Unicorn and still is
The Unicorn. He
shouts "Bastard!"
at me. It was in
his brief to shout
"Bastard!" at me.
And he's done it.
He hasn't let anyone
down. I just wish I
had a bouquet
to throw. One rose
would do.

STATION

I walk out into snow
that the south's
meant to be getting,
and head for the station.
I stay in a furrow,
but keep a lookout
for cars. Women in
successive houses,
window-watching
as I pass. Who knows
what a hooded figure
stirs in them? Someone

I don't want to think about
pops into my head. Ten minutes
of blame and counter-blame,
then I'm at the station.
The girl will sell me
a ticket, but can't guarantee
a train! I pull away
from the window
to think. A boy with a limp
takes my place.

A fat man claps him
on the back. He says:
"We're going to miss you,
Roger." Roger
turns for a handshake
and now they're hugging.
It would be a cinch
for them to include me
in this. But they don't,
of course.

LIBRARY

I'm a middle-aged man
on the ground-floor
of Hanley Library.
I walk my backache from
Travel to General Fiction.
A man in a donkey-jacket
is stooping looking
at titles. I'm tempted
to push him over. Then
remember my new philosophy
of total-love.

I found scribble once
in a Heinrich Boll novel.
It said: "I love a girl
who can't dance. W."
Al says a man in tweed
tails him when he's
in here. I don't know
about that. But Cliff
put a hand on my shoulder
and said, "It is you
isn't it?"

Peter Lane

CROSSING 2ND AVENUE

"what's the use of being somewhere other than
new york and return only to find new york again"
sheila alson

Crossing 2nd Avenue, thinking I'd like to die for love,
remembering boots on the floor above, the sea on the other side of
the wall, scent of breasts in the afternoon bathroom, your skinny
beauty breaking my heart and, feeling slightly sick, thinking of
suicide but too afraid to survive and lose my job,

crossing 2nd Avenue again, the storefront beauticians
crack spearmint gum against gold molars, long for some
midsummer nightmare sliding down their alleys in brilliantined
blue-black hair, the neighborhood roughnecks saddled up and
every young girl nervous,

nervous like me waking up naked on your dirty floor
again, fat clouds dissolving out high greasy windows, hungry,
tired, almost in love, the bleak stairwell five flights up, all New York
naked and sleeping late, indigo spring descending, its music up and
down the tenements,

your neck in my teeth and light falling through trees,
dream of a dead stream, its low water moving me to the end of the
corridor, your long shoulder, goneaway,

crossing downtown just to walk around, voices rush in
like water – requiem for everything – and love drifts down around
me just like rain and I'm crossing 2nd Avenue again.

Sharon Mesmer

HOW SPRING BECOMES YOU

Ample purple shadows between me and you.
This heart a calm palmetto grandly glamorous and tragic.
I'm so sick of dying like this everyday,
you my favorite song forever young and in one place,
your personal summer burbling up a broken flight of stairs.
It's always me the only one on the lone folding chair,
black branches twist the cobalt sky at twilight, and the
clocksound getting fainter.
A screendoor slams at midnight.
Invisible schoolgirl emerges from plaid like old flaubert in egypt,
like every melodrama dreamed by a bunch of bad maryanns.
The bright sidewalks where spontaneous romance once occurred
now just reminders of my poverty. I'm really living
the oriental life now, in a perpetual dread of saying
something gauche, wasting long days on a mossy stained mattress,
dreaming the affair between the old andalusian sheik
and the little girl from mecca.
Pitiful shitheads, I won't get anywhere in this world
if I don't learn to lie about everything. Oh, will you please
screw me in cuban moonlight once again so's I can write
a few good poems?

Sharon Mesmer

IF THIS IS MONDAY

If this is Monday I'm probably knitting
a black hole I can use
as a general anaesthetic

If this is Tuesday I'm probably
feeling opinionated about something
phenomenalism or drapes

If this is Thursday
I'm probably wondering
what this everglade
is doing in my feeling
and what I might do
with an everglade in my feeling
about everglades is invest it
with salubrious minerals
and convert it
into a moneymaking spa
but that would be
missing the point
of my feeling
and the gentle impulse I have
to ball it up
into a Bauhaus fuchsia
and plant it in clay

whereas if this were Wednesday
I could simply wade
into a lilac lake
sandpapered to look like staves
or waves
or a procession of preposterous ripples
lapping a preposterous shore
of brazen incandescence
and derelict escalators

that have stopped going down
because they have stopped going up
and have stopped going up
because they have stopped going down

If this is Sunday I could be nailing
Van Gogh's Bridge
at Arle to my kitchen wall and thinking
how much better it would look
nailed to Tuesday
so I could walk across it into Wednesday
jump down into Thursday
and crawl under Friday
into the inchoate
charm of Saturday

If this is June
I'm probably running for mayor
of August
and the shimmering city
of its tall hot days
If elected I will do my best
to appear amused and interested
in flying squirrels and alyssum
and if this is July
I'm undoubtedly suffering
the effects of a long campaign
fountaining incendiary rhetoric
comforting insecure sycophants
and constructing a platform
10 cubits high, and canopied copiously
with luscious woodbine, sweet
musk-roses, and with eglantine

If this is plywood
may it be 3/4 inch plywood
but composed

as it is with words
this could be anything
this could be prose
and make blunt
perfect sense, or a watermelon
umbrella, bright red with black
seed splashes and green
trim on nylon, elegant
serving basket for bread or fruit or a longhandled
rechargeable massager
and if it vibrates let it vibrate
let it hum
with a tendency to fetishize
the feral and atypical
eject
a linguistical jism
of luminous meaning
of muscle and fluid
contractions that result in a painless
and easy dilation
of the mind to produce a fresh
perception of perception

If this is not impatient
it is not a link
but a concatenation
If this is a quart
may it also be a gallon
or a pint, or a sunrise

If this is a clock
let it tick
in blithe acceptance
of the paradox of midnight
which is both morning and night
and falls on rat
and plutocrat alike

If this is eager
to please may it also be realistic
and realize the utility
of receding into the dark
when the light shines
too harshly, and of being adamant
and openly contradictory
when insisting on the worth
of a 6-volt car battery
readymade to a dealer in fine art
and if this is rolled
around a platen my fingers are probably busy
typing a trail of words
across a vertiginous void
incorrectly understood
as paper

If this is a plum
let it be plump
If this is a suit
of armor let it clank
If this is unbuttoned
let it reveal
what there is to reveal
and lie down and be content
and if this is a form
of government
may it govern nothing
but the tang
of its struggle to rise
into a lambent Niger
of nimble gazelle

John Olson

PARIS SCRATCH

Excerpts from THE UNLOADED CAMERA SNAPSHOTS. Where if WeeGee & Doisneau had met in a Montmartre café, had smashed one another's camera & had triumphantly taken up pens instead.

1. HORS-LA-LOI

I wandered the dark sloped streets near St. George. Odd patches of fur i'd found in the trash in my coat pocket.

& i heard the couples linger. Maneouver to grind bone into marrow. Matter into lyrical pique. & fused breaths into whispered intoxication.

& there i fondled the rhomboid patch of vulpes vulva, the grey fox. Which "has a much coveted pelt & a brain like a hen on speed." & at that moment i realized i could only ever become their eidetic intruder if i could stuff random patches of fur into their pockets. The desperation masked only by its audacious flippancy.

2. NEZ DE GARE

The kid faced the men at the bar wearing a mask with a big nose. Suddenly everyone was still as a photo. Even the cigarette smoke hung like a scratch etched in mid-air. The boy thought it was his mask. While each patron thought s/he was the only one who'd ever felt the odd rumble in the gut as the train pulled out of the Gare de Lyon. The fat-fingered man grabbed the big nose. Just like that. Just for the hell of it.

3. L'HISTOIRE DE L'ESCRIME

The drunk in L'Atlantique talked of marlin fishing. Swordfish too. "They leap right over the boat," he said. "You have to duck. Don't get in the way or you get impaled. Like Errol Flynn." He stared into his drink. & i into mine. I could almost smell the sea water entering the fresh wound.

4. FARD A JOUES

On the corner out of the phone booth he slicked his jet hair back with spit in his palm. Just before he met the girl with the missing tooth.

She was ready for work. Her stilletos with worn heels were pointy as arrows. Arrows that pointed any which way. & led to him. She had lined her eyes with the same color with which they line coffins because this seemed to please men.

5. JAZZ DE L'APRES-GUERRE

She shot up the big H. It was HER birthday party, after all. & so she insisted i put my present down the front of her dress. The cold feel of necklace slinking down the snug cleave of décolletage gave her goosebumps. "Further!" her rapacious sigh implored.

We quit her own birthday party when she no longer cared for the finger-wagging opinions of others. We ended up at Le Lux on rue Lepic. She on my lap like an unplugged appliance. She wondered where 32 years had gone. I didn't think they were GONE. I caressed the underside of her "fruits exotiques" for hours. "32 years. Here they are!" i joked with a squeeze. & suddenly her words began to emerge crushed together like junebugs on a windshield & sound like the music of Charlie Parker. She said the heads of the noctambulists were shiny & made of semi-precious metals.

6. FEU D'ARTIFICE

At the holiday arcade strung along the muddy esplanade of Blvd. Rochechouart, the slender "artistes de striptease" dart in lace & fake fur from cabaret to cabaret amongst the neuro-whistling, clanging strobes, shooting galleries, fortunetellers, ratchety wheels of fortune. But it was still too early & the boy rode around in a bumper car with no one to bump.

7. IVRE DE SANG-FROID

The rooftops from his window were red, golden, aglow like slabs of molten copper. They could have gone on forever. But we tended to blame the kirs. But no! The rooftops actually seemed to contain the essence of tranquility.

8. FOOLS DE FEUILLES

The leaves still clinging to the black bark branches cast shadows that appeared to slap the thighs of the kneeling woman. Was she washing in the puddle? Praying? Or just looking for something she'd lost? Could i help?

Among the fallen leaves, painted in glorious hues, i kicked through the carpet on fire. Until the fat aromas drew me into my past. Where a faith is kept in her hair which i remember smelled of the sea in geography class.

9. UN COUP DE FLEURS

The thorny firm-stemmed women had once entered the church a step at a time in skirts of delirious exploding flora & shimmering seamed stockings. Ready to kill God with regret & desire.

But now they, jilted in their forgotten dresses of exhausted blossoms -their aromas spent in thin air - sat around the wobbly café table like a bouquet of old toilet brushes in a bucket.

10. LE MOYEN DE PARVENIR

The man wore a tie he'd worn 30 years ago. To celebrate the end of another war. He walked down rue Paradis with a window strapped to his back.

His fist shook the bell which brought people in high places to their windows. & when i walked in his steps i could see my reflection in the window on his back.

He did windows. Had always done windows. Replacing broken ones, washing the dirty ones - inside & out.

11. ROIE DE LA VOIE

The rough-hewn old man told his histoire to the young couple holding hands on the Metro. It had indeed been a very long time since anyone had REALLY listened. The excitement stung the vin glow into his cheeks.

When the couple reached their stop the young man shook his hand. The young woman allowed him to kiss her hand. The benediction had left him no longer a pauper. & no king had ever sat taller nor experienced a smoother ride to the end of the line.

12. LA RUE DU SECRET EST CONNU

The children held hands. Mystified as the jackhammer pecked through the pavement. They did not know that underneath the road was just sand.

& this road that went on & on had had the sun on it for hours now. It looked lazy as if it went nowhere with its shoulders covered in red poppies.

Bart Plantenga

FRIENDS

The moon was out again today. Faint, almost melting into the sky. I was sitting by the brook as usual, and we talked as usual.

I recall a friend and I looking for a huge spoon with which to stir the sky. We thought if we stirred the sky with a large enough spoon, the moon would dissolve.

She was quiet today. She is never too talkative, just likes to listen to me or the brook. But she was unusually quiet today, as if it were one of those days when she would melt away without saying goodbye.

I asked her why she was so quiet. She would not answer. According to the brook, her memories hurt her. The brook says the scars we see on her have been made by memories, memories which see the inside her, gnawing from the inside.

There were the three of us, the moon, the brook and I. The sun was out too, but he is not like the moon, he is angry all the time. He burns and rages, and though I like him, even looking at him hurts. Most people prefer him to the moon. I don't.

The brook and I were great friends. We used to play a lot. He was always laughing and teasing. That is why I liked him, because he was so happy. I would dive into him, cleaving him in two, but he always became whole immediately. At night, when the moon was out, he would reflect her in his waters and distort her image with his splashing. That irritated her, she would not say anything, but I knew, I felt the irritation in her. She never came out in the days then.

Sometimes we would race. The brook and I would chase the moon, vowing to beat her to the horizon. We would run and run, I tired easily and even the brook slowed down on reaching the plains. But the moon never tired, she would pause at the horizon, look back at us and smile a goodbye before she went to meet her beau far away. That is how the moon and I became friends, through the brook and his humor.

These days the brook laughs no more, he splashes no more. He seeps over the rocky bed like an ugly worm crawling to its shelter. His clear waters are gone, changed to a syrupy fluid. His sparkle is gone, a stench covers him, like that of decay.

I do not know what is wrong with him, the moon says that he is among the fields of man, watering them so he may not starve. She says he cleans their towns by carrying away their filth. I don't care, he is not my friend anymore. His laughter is gone, his soul is gone.

Maybe, one of these days I will leave this place. One of these days I will look for somewhere else to sit. Maybe, one of these days the brook himself will ask me to leave. He is too tired to say he hurts. He is too tired for tears, and I know, the moon and I, we know that he is dying.

I had nothing to say today, nor had the moon, I could feel her fading into the sky a long time before she finally disappeared. Later,when I looked up, the blue sky was whitish as if she had discolored it.

She won't be back for the next few days. The brook is quiet. There are no clouds. I wait for the stars to appear and listen to the lazy breeze:

I said to this angel
make with your feathers
a path that leads into
the mouth of heaven
or hell.
Through the air to streak
into the ether of nothing
and die in blissful
spasms breathless.
We had soared together
to the mansion of dreams
found all committed
to nightmares unmade.
On mirrors were seen
palaces of greater grandeur
they reflected at us
yet another sleep.
So I said to this angel
make with your feathers
a path that leads
into the jaws of heaven
or hell.

Pallav Ranjan

Dale Devereux Barker

And now,
from his home in Quebec where
he's been staying in seclusion since
the Tuttlebaum affair, Clifford
the big red dog and
path to vernacular literacy.
Bring on the Victory Girls it's
time to invade Iraq and
god bless you all for
being so gullible.

You know,
in a crazy sort of way I
have to feel sorry for anyone
incarcerated without benefit of
legal counsel.
I'm not dead I
just can't look away from
all the blood.
When I think about all the time
I wasted in petty crimes when
I could have been involved in serious,
really major war crimes against
whole nations and ecosystems.
One of the three
nicest things about me is I'm
witty, charming, and
reasonably priced.
Take control of your destiny.
Dial 1-900-PSYCHIC.
We're ready to train you now
to work in the travel agency of
the future.

Sal Salasin

poem on a line by paul Hoover

This is our president and
this is his water dish.
Don't forget to write.
My girlfriend has an iron
that's smarter than I am.

I have this nightmare where
I'm visiting my grandmother and
get drafted into the Iraqi army.
What's new?
Nothing's new.
Everything is old and
everything is the same.
I'm the same.
Not that eternity winks.
I'm
ready and waiting like
a new Buick
with the keys in
the ignition. The
most exciting sexual encounter
you're ever likely to
almost have had.
Rule #1:
Never post bail for anyone
on a first date.
I
couldn't tell you rule #2 since
I never got that far but
I'm sure of #1.
And I'm shocked and dismayed
to observe your mistrust of
our public officials.
Why not get something out
of the freezer for dinner
at your house tonight.

Well, I'm sorry I
have to move on now there
are dozens of people here
waiting to kiss my ass.
I'm glad you find my agony so
amusing. The last time I
laughed this hard a
man with rubber gloves was
giving me an enema.
That's where the
fast lane ends.

Well, gee,
that's great.
Let's get together some time for
grooming and social activities.
Did you know that
every one of these poems was
predicted by Nostradamus over
four hundred years ago?
That Wagner left unfinished his
famous Luftwaffe Serenade?
That in our country we have
freedom of suppress?
Oh, darling,
of course I love you.
It's just that daddy thinks the
current motion to be based on
inaccurate or irrelevant factual allegations
and without legal merit.
You see, honey,
it's just that the rule of
nature is that wherever there's
something to eat there's
something there to eat it.

Marsha and I always wanted a
kid but she has her career and
I have mine and we knew we
wouldn't have any time so we
thought we'd keep it
drugged most of the time.

All the other kids would take
their Flintstones it's just that
ours would be taking phenobarbitol.
And when it got to be ten or
twelve, we'd
teach it to shoot up.
We'd have a big party,
invite all the friends,
give him a really nice
set of works.
Spend some quality time.

Our next speaker,
Dr. Judith Kurtz,
is the author of Smart Women
Stupid Insensitive Men.
She'd like to attend any
death involving accident,
homicide or where
not attended by a physician.
Anyway I'm
not a misogynist I'm
a misanthrope.
Of all the lifeforms on earth there's
only one I actively dislike and
they should be restricted in
tiny game preserves their
numbers strictly limited to
whatever it takes to maintain
genetic diversity.

Sal Salasin

We want to
burn these guys in their tanks
in the desert so
why should we lie about it?
"The Realities of War" continues after
these commercial announcements.
Did you know

there's a hand at my side
imploring me to
smack your stupid face?
Hi. My name is Colin and
I'm your student of
dying and corrupt cultures for
this evening.
Do you need advice on love,
money or relationships?
Do you need good advice
on love, money or relationships?
God bless you all for
being so gullible.
This is a $12.95 value I'm
offering you for free.
A little meeting between
Greek and Turk from
The Book of Threats.

Question:
If you could hear someone saying
anything you wanted to hear right now,
what would it be?
Answer:
"We'll be entering the
Tarkana System in five minutes,
Captain."
And if this is the answer then
maybe we're asking the wrong question.
It's mind over matter.
I don't mind and
you don't matter.
In Saudi Arabia
this is Deborah Amis.

Sal Salasin

poem on some lines by Tod Thilleman

Sylvia Plath High School where
the cheerleaders dress in black and
chainsmoke.

What's the one thing I
most admire in a woman?
Being easy.
It was only when I realized
she was sleeping with everyone
but me that I began to think
our relationship was in trouble.
She asked me what I wanted to do
and I said I had a few ideas but
I doubted she'd find them hygenic.
You write a wonderful letter.
Are you on drugs?
Is this the Ladies Only Line
where for a quarter they let you
shine the silver bowl,
take it home,
and die in the privacy of
your own room?
We had a lot of pet names for
each other. You
cheap little liar was
one I recall.
Hey!
Just because I don't care
doesn't mean I don't understand.
Is this for the Lilac Parade?
And what does it mean,
eight seconds ahead of
Marc Dinsmore.
How do you do that?
And I just wanted to remind you that
my book,
Stepping Out of the Plane
Under the Protection of the Army,
makes a wonderful gift for
friends and enemies alike,
either way.

Sal Salasin

FOR SOME TIME NOW

The things on the page have become blurry.
It is not even a page but a table of sorts,
its architecture languid and diffused,
spread like a bouquet of ridiculous noises.
On the table, a white cloth has been laid
and on the cloth various silvery instruments
somewhat like a dentist's, only much larger.
Perhaps a construction project is about to begin
but the instruments are too clean and it isn't very scenic here.
I don't know why this always happens in the evening
when it is wet enough to really cause problems,
yet if I think I begin to hear explosions
they tell me only that there are deer running curiously
ahead, attempting to poke velvet antlers
through the skein of my peripheral vision
but never quite making it: and this certainly
couldn't be called a problem, could it? Much worse
the silly voices outside, scratching their itchy butts
on the curb. So turn on the hydrant and flood out this town.
These instruments may someday be saying goodbye,
going slowly to their own rooms now.

Jeffery L. Skeate

ANSWER TO A QUESTION

There may be a different place and the place
will be unknown, there will be nothing familiar about it,
the perspective will appear to be no more than that
of a dollhouse and the perspective will not be correct
nor the flowers. The thoughts will be transposed,
our thoughts, it is likely that there will be
different thoughts, different dolls that occur
across the expanse of stars or in some cases
perhaps only the clouds, the moon occasionally breaking
through the clouds but not while we are looking.
It is certain however that we'll know about it.
There will be little to do
because we have done the things too many times,
nothing will be said because we have spoken
so many times in the past about these very same things.
As has been noted elsewhere,
we will never ride the red horse
we know so well but do not know at all.
The steady snow remains a sheet we slowly draw
about our heads, the dolls continue to move
dramatically through the driveways, the searching continues
and grows to ridiculous proportions, the flowers
diminish in proportion to the searchings and are needlepoints
in this our crazed and descending Christmas sky.
Oh we're not particularly pleased that you've asked.
We think that next time you should mind your own business.

Jeffery L. Skeate

THE COLOR WHITE

The city of revolving lights, bright lights,
whirls its propeller in utter silence,
a single-engine brain droning at high altitude.
Night is the composer of its many 40 watt
conversations, sort of, many of which
have been attended by us and the others.
The "arbiter" requires diligent footsteps "for life".
Boxing without sound occurs. It is rumored
to have something to do with these oppressive, tangled feet.
To put it in another fashion,
let us say, Bill, that the issues have been
assessed but remain unresolved.
The moderator moderates in an accepted
fashion, one is neither confident
nor afraid. Uncomfortable situations
are satirically tolerated and any conclusions drawn
indicate that life is too short for this,
people simply stare at one another and it's
getting old. This bullshit is getting old.
The city of revolving lights, therefore,
whirls its propeller in utter silence,
a single-engine brain droning at high altitude.
Night is the composer of its many 40 watt
conversations, attenuated by us and the others.
The arbiter requires diligent footsteps for life
and boxing without sound occurs. Of course
it has nothing to do with these oppressive, tangled feet.

Jeffery L. Skeate

TIME CLOCK

Oh the sun is shining steadily
though the air is not particularly bright.
The greenery is almost too green,
we've never quite viewed it from
this advantage before. The intensity of light
does not concur with the length of shadow
or the relative darkness of the shadow.
But we may be fooled by complications
in the landscape, the way the hills
negate the horizon's edge, like objects
reflected between opposing mirrors.
The diver is distorted by the prism
of the pool and appears to be somewhat
dream-like. The slightly rippled waves create
irregular mosaics of light that, freezing,
appear as shapes of other bodies,
human bodies perhaps.
You look as though
you have just arrived, or are just preparing to leave.
The shadow, green and covering the tiles
like a large dagger, would have to be
a few feet longer to approach the thing
we are always looking for. But there is no one nearby
in a position to make even this ridiculous discovery.
Besides, the workday is over.

Jeffery L. Skeate

TWO PLEAS FOR THE STOPPING OF TIME

Isn't it horrible what time does -
here I sit growing more buoyant

pound by pound. I may float
belly-up to the stars.

And that man there lost his hair
in the time it takes

to say his name.
All that's left are lumps

fondled by two hands -
the minute and the second.

***

She's tall and lithe. Her hair
flares like a dark

corona before the trolley doors
that will open soon. Her hand

grips the aluminium strip
near my eyes. She bites

her nails I think, and those
white clouds underneath them -

I used to have those but they
went away. And the dimple

centred in her chin
centres my whole being.

If time stopped now
it wouldn't be a bad thing.

William Talcott

MISSING WORK

Cat have thrown up
fur-balls on the blankets.

Every fourth word's
misspelt in the paper
Even the the's have typos.

On the radio Kevin
Pursglove has a coughing
attack. The milk is sour.

On the way to the bus stop
I see the manager of the Sunset Super.
You know him, the one that never
smiles. He fumbles with the
lock. He is quiet drunk.

At Twenty-Seventh Avenue
the trolley has derailed.

Everyone around me
is making mistakes.
I myself have followed
my morning routine as usual
with style & grace.

I go to a pay phone
to call in sick.
The receiver is missing.

At the corner a blue
Chevy pulls up. Hey!

the man says, I don't know you but
if you don't mind
missing work
I'll take you to the park
& bludgeon you to death.

Okay, I say & get in.

William Talcott

THE LIST

Name of a flower from the Greek.
Peony perhaps, then a star.

Big Dipper doesn't
sound Arabic enough. Should I try

Aldebaran? Should I say
dove when I mean pigeon?

How shall I start my list?
Then I hang up & go back

to the dishes. What a heap & I'm
still doing them when she

calls back & wants to argue
about something on my list she found

insulting. Then she switches to
what a shit I am deep down & I've

been through this before with her
& I'm bored. Then it comes to me

she wants me to say I hate her
poems so I say it because that's

the only way to get rid of her & I
say it again louder because this

is getting ridiculous & I yell LISA
I HATE YOUR POEMS & we both hang up

on each other at the same time
with a great sense of relief.

William Talcott

SHORT SHOTS

Geneology:
Family tree, family sawdust.

Sockets (for Mr. Edison):
Male and female made he them.

God:
He didn't make us with his hands.
He used his feet.
He still does.

My Life:
During my life as a woman
I was amazed by my crotch and my breasts.
Otherwise things went on as usual.

John Wieners:
I slept with John Wieners
Selected Poems 1958-1984
on the pillow beside me.

Out of the Depths:
Riding an escalator that isn't
moving deranges the senses and takes
much longer than the stairs.

Death:
If death's anything
like birth I'm going to scream a lot.

America:
Buying pizza by the slice
is an act of desperation, but hey!
It's the Fourth of July.
Let's steal some flags.

William Talcott

TED BERRIGAN: An Interview by Mark Hillringhouse

MH: Do you have any students who are trying to be poets?

TB: No, none at all.

MH: They're in it just for the literature?

TB: They're in it because they have a requirement. Engineers are hardheaded about taking only what they think they need. Something which I do deal with a little bit is that they don't yet understand that they're still going to have to talk to their wives and husbands and children, go to the grocery store and not just work in the lab making Napalm (both laughing).

MH: It's like taking a segment of the public at large and approaching them with poetry.

TB: Well, when they're twenty years old it's a little easier. They're old enough to think and young enough not to have thought too much yet. There's one who still insists that none of this stuff makes any sense. That's a common complaint, and it gives me the chance to come at it gently. I mean I'm making a little fun about the idea that anything "Makes Sense." It doesn't make much sense to me to say that if I'm made up of floating atomic particles and so is this chair, then how come when I sit down my spaces don't fit with its spaces and I go right through? But I don't know if I'm made up of floating molecules. That's poetry to say something is made like that. Most of these students are very surprised to find out that anything has been going on in poetry since Edgar Allan Poe.

MH: You're sort of force feeding them since they don't go off on their own.

TB: Yes, and I'm very delicate about that in a way. I like to convey to them that no one should have to be interested in poetry who doesn't want to be. So I'm trying to impress upon them the fact that they can't get along with just what they think they have to know.

MH: Have you always taught poetry?

TB: Since 1968 I've taught all but three years, and every year I've taught some part of the time and I've taught in a lot of different places: New Haven, Ann Arbor, Iowa, Chicago, Buffalo, Boulder, and Essex, England. I'm teaching full-time here. Three years in a row in any one place and you find yourself saying the same things over

Photo: Mark Hillringhouse

and over again, and that's not much fun. I'm a poet first and a teacher after that. I like teaching because I like the students; I like the people in that age group. When they like something they really light up.

MH: I've met a few poets who just hate to teach.

TB: Well I can understand that. I suppose if you resent doing something you shouldn't do it. But there are days when I hate to go anywhere, when I hate to come to class. I feel put upon.

MH: Especially if you feel you're in the mood to write.

TB: Well if I was in the mood to write I'd stay home. I wouldn't come in. But I write in the evening. I consider part of my job as being visible and accessible. My door is always open.

MH: Why do you write in the evening?

TB: I write at night because I can be alone in a certain way and there are no phone calls to distract me. Initially I wrote at night because at one time I had been living in a small room with the darkness outside closing that space inside down into a particular kind of space that I felt very comfortable in (thinking). I would have bright lightbulbs so I could see the paintings I had, see the things around me very clearly. I was able to see my life there inside my head, and could see what my life had been like the day before when I had been outside and so forth, and that was very nice.

MH: What do you do when you can't write?

TB: Sleep, read, take drugs, get agitated, take stupid stances, complain, hate my friends, read Frank O'Hara, worry about money, gossip, be a generally terrible person.

MH: Do you write at the typewriter?

TB: I don't much anymore. I got into the habit of writing by hand after having gone to bed when it was inconvenient to get up and go to the typewriter. I'd reach for the pad by the side of the bed. As the years went by I started keeping these journals and I started writing poems in them and that I believe got me into the habit a lot more.

MH: Do you keep a lot of poems in your journals to refer back to later?

TB: Oh sure, well not too much later. I will often start a poem (pulls out a journal stuffed with clippings and photos and rummages

through it), and when I start a poem I will always finish it. Often I think I didn't get it but that doesn't bother me. I'll just leave it for a couple of weeks and work on it later.

MH: You're from New York?

TB: Now, yes. I grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. I consider myself a real New Yorker though, somebody who was born and raised somewhere else and who came here by choice because it was best for my career. In almost no other city of America can an artist who doesn't really have a product that has much commercial value support him or herself as well as in New York. There's a hundred places where a poet can read for fifty dollars. In most other good sized cities, Chicago for example, there weren't more than half a dozen reading series going on.

MH: Is it a good thing to be close to such a large community of artists?

TB: Yes, and it becomes especially important when you get to be my age, into your forties. You do need to live near other people your own age who are your own kind of people, just to check out your own sanity, your own ethical codes, your own behavior. To pick you up when you're having hard times or they're having nicer times so you can se ethat it is not always going to be the way you're having it and vice versa. It's not even a matter of helping, but just having that kind of community. I can go to lots of university towns to live and there'll be lots of other aspiring poets around, people interested in the arts, but they'll all be twenty to twenty-five. Once you begin to be forty you become this oracle at the exact time you shouldn't be one because you don't know everything. You start feeling like you do know everything when you should be readjusting because you're into a new phase of life.

MH: Do you think New Jersey could become a place that would be supportive of poets and their work?

TB: In a way it seems to be happening now. It takes guys like yourself, young guys getting involved and helping others get started. It's lonely, going in your mind from let's say being a lawyer to becoming a poet. So it's very good to create a set of activities and have contacts, things going on. There are people out there willing and happy to come to poetry readings. In any community, even small ones, it's possible to bring out a few dozen people on the basis of its being "Poetry" and "Cultural". It's always small gatherings of poets first, then as they get better it gets stronger.

MH: How did you start?

TB: Pretty much the same way. I started going to this coffee house in the Village where Paul Blackburn was sort of in charge, around '62 to '64. In 1964 Paul gave me my first reading. That same year I was invited to read at New Jersey State Teachers College by Pearl Epstein.

MH: So you got started in your late twenties.

TB: I got started a little late because I went into the Army for a few years in the early fifties and did my basic training at Fort Dix. I hadn't written anything before or during that period. In '57 I got out and began writing seriously.

MH: Did you get exposed to it in schools and universities?

TB: I went to the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma, and by accident there were some painters and young poets around. My enthusiasm for it took a big jump by having some company. When I saw their poems I thought well I can do this and write as well as they can. At home my mother was a great reader and always had plenty of books around, so I picked up the habit of reading from her.

MH: Were you following people like Kerouac?

TB: No. Initially I was into poets like Conrad Aiken, Eliot, and Delmore Schwartz, people like that. Then I heard Auden read and poets such as Stephen Spender came to Tulsa to read, invited by these other young poets who arranged for such readings and who were very enthusiastic.

MH: This was in Tulsa?

TB: Yes.

MH: Sounds like an out of the way place to get a poet to come read in.

TB: No, it's just if the universities have any money. The school I went to is a petroleum engineering school; they had plenty of money (both laughing). In '58 I became aware of Ginsberg and Kerouac and those guys. But I was not influenced so much by them as I was by William Carlos Williams. He was the first poet I was reading who wasn't writing in the way that's now considered conventional.

MH: Did you ever meet Dr. Williams?

TB: No. I met his wife with my own wife and children. I went up and rang the bell, and with this very good friend from New Jersey, a very good poet named Joe Ceravolo. He had shown me the house where Williams had lived and he had always said that he wanted to see him and go up to the house but he had always been too shy. So I said, "Well, let's go now," and went up and rang the bell and Mrs. Williams came to the door and I said, "We're young poets and we're great admirers of your husband's work and we came to see the house and I thought we should come up and ring the bell." And she said, "Well my husband is dead you know!" And I said, "We know your husband's dead, we came to see you!" And then she just beamed at us and invited us to come inside. We played with the kids and she gave them potato chips. I knew a lot about Williams so she and I just talked mostly about his friends, Robert McAlmon and people like that. Then she showed us his writing desk and the paintings they had in the house. This was back in '64, and she was really terrific.

MH: You were lucky.

TB: And furthermore there was a red wheelbarrow in the backyard which really blew my mind (both laughing). I wrote some poems influenced by Williams.

MH: Your Sonnets?

TB: No, they were something else. In the period I was talking about when I was influenced by Auden and Schwartz I was still a student and I knew quite clearly that you couldn't be a poet and a student at the same time. I knew I had to wait until I got out of college and I still had some time on the G.I. Bill so I finished my Master's degree. Then I moved back to New York and got an apartment and was seriously writing and reading a lot. I wrote some poems I thought were OK but, at one point I thought, "Well now I should do what you do if you're an ambitious poet starting out." Then I decided that you must write a sonnet sequence because that's what Shakespeare did.

MH: Did that make the writing any easier? I mean having to stop at fourteen lines?

TB: Sure that made it easier. That's why I did it. In fact that's why I became a poet rather than a novelist because it seemed easier to me at the time, and that's why I took up with the sonnet because it seemed to be the easiest next move. I felt quite comfortable within those fourteen lines, and I spent a lot of time taking sonnets apart and putting them back together writing imitations until I felt I understood the ways in which you could stretch out a sonnet, and how you could have things be in three parts of four lines each and have them come together in the final two, or you could have seven couplets, or how it could be eight and six lines, or you could have two of those at once whatever. And in the course of making my own sonnets I did get to where I could sometimes do two and a half at once maybe, but I was influenced probably more at that time.

MH: Berryman's sonnets?

TB: No, not one bit. I didn't even know about him at the time. In fact mine and his are not entirely dissimilar but he had the advantage of being quite academic, conventional, writing in the English tradition and trying to be avant-garde too. I really didn't have to worry about that. I was influenced more by Jasper Johns' painting, John Cage's music and Marcel Duchamp, and just took the poetry thing for granted. So I always felt that my sonnets did more of what he wanted his to do? If that's fair. I'm quite respectful of John berryman, but not of those poems. I feel they're too cranky.

MH: Cantankerous?

TB: Not so much cantankerous as odd. They're cranky the way a drunk can get. That's not a putdown at all. But I was looking, as he was, to have more than one voice in my works, but my avenues were more accessible, easier even. I was able to see what Jasper Johns was doing, and Rauschenberg. They were serious artists who were not ashamed, and they were also broke, they were not one bit self-conscious about being artists. They also came to my poetry readings and were a poet's audience as much as anybody else. I started this poetry magazine called "C" and sent a copy to Jasper Johns. He wrote back, "I like your magazine." And enclosed ten dollars, and went on, "This is for a subscription for me and for my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stella." So I felt pretty good about that. These guys were pretty open and were all listed in the phone book, which is how I knew where to send the magazine (both laughing). And that was a great revelation to me, that when I wanted to send this magazine to other artists, just to find them there. I mean Barnett Newman, one of the great patriarchs of American painting right there in the phone book. I was also influenced by John Ashbery and Frank O'Hara, the New York poets.

MH: Did you know them personally?

TB: I got to meet them. Well I met Frank in '62 and Ashbery in '64 when he came back from Paris. But I wasn't intimate. In a certain way I did go to Frank's a lot, to the parties he had and I knew him well enough to read with him at Princeton. I was a friend, well Frank had a lot of friends but (gesturing with his arms) I always stayed about this far away from guys I admired in case they had bad character. I didn't want that to make me admire their works less. Also, I wasn't fully into myself yet. I suppose I was waiting before presenting myself until I felt I was the poet that had my name.

MH: Do you think poets have a greater need to stick together than other artists?

TB: No, (lighting another cigarette) no. I don't think so. You need an ally. (Thoughtfully stroking his beard.) You don't need to stick together any more or less than any other artists. As I said before you need friends who understand where you come from and where you're at and what you're thinking about. You know, what your life position might be. But any other artist will do. Still my friends are as often painters as well as poets, and I have friends that are not in the arts either. They like to play pool. They're not self-conscious about the fact that I'm a poet, which is kind of a hard thing to overcome sometimes. I am this guy that writes poetry but I'm also just this guy from Providence, Rhode Island.

MH: Isn't it true that painters and poets aren't together as much as they used to be?

TB: Things are not the way they were in the 60s. There's something else going on. You can always look back. I mean the Second Law of Thermodynamics is that no matter how orderly things are, they once were more orderly, and in the future they'll be less orderly.

MH: Everything in a constant state of decay?

TB: Not decay exactly. Breaking and re-forming.

MH: Your latest book of selected poems, *So Going Around Cities*, seems to imply a certain indifference to "place" by its title. Is this true and do you have a "home" in mind when you write?

TB: No. I am at home in my life, in my house, on the street, in cars, planes, trains, just about everywhere. I think for me it comes down to the basic place right now at this age and in my head, in the rooms that I and my family share with the pictures we put up on the walls.

MH: Just the space your body requires?

TB: Yeah, and the way in which we generally make that space be. We have a sense of how to make spaces be our own. Generally the places we live in end up looking the same inside. In Virginia Woolf's term, "I need a room of my own." As any person does, I think, where one can go for rest as well as to be creative. I also need to go out of that room a lot. Whether it's city or country, I still need to go out a lot.

MH: Has New York given you a sense of place?

TB: Sure. I used to say that, for me, New York is a very tangible place, a very definite place, in that my poems were informed by it, and might not be the way they were had I not done my growing up as a poet here.

MH: Do you agree that people in the city need a poet who understands the country as well; who can write both?

TB: Oh sure, sure, but they also need somebody who understands that the city is a good place. Gary Snyder's rap about death to cities and so on is much too extreme. What Bob Creeley says is exactly right, "We haven't yet garnered all the information that is to be garnered from the existence of cities." We don't want them to be dead yet and it would be a loss, I think, to us. We're not about to solve our life problems by getting rid of cities. Given my natural choice I still think I'd like to live in a city. I think I am a city poet certainly more than I am a nature poet.

MH: The Midwest has this space, this great outdoors, doesn't it seem that this exterior space, this landscape, can become your mental space, and that by meditating there you can sort of live in it, by going out to it in thought?

TB: Yeah, and I think that's good. I've read some damn nice books with that kind of space in them. Larry McMurtry's novels have that sort of Texas space in them, and you get both potentially negative sides of it such as the heat and the way that everything can seem of a sameness.

MH: Or the weather?

TB: And the weather sure. You're very aware of the weather in a

very different way than you are here, because here in New York it might be very cold, just as cold say as it gets in the mountains, but you only have to go two hundred yards and you're at your friend's house and you've been to seven stores and to the movies.

MH: You internalize a little more in the city.

TB: It's a lot of little quick moves too. You become very quick rather than fast. People say that everybody goes so fast in the city but it's more that everything has a sort of quickness.

MH: Do you still yearn to travel a lot or has that urge subsided?

TB: Oh not at all. But more now I'd like to go to places and then live in them for a while, a few months, or whatever. I'd love to go and live in Italy for a while with my family. I used to love to travel and did yearn to do it too, but I love the idea of going to places for a week or so then going somewhere else. I no longer am so much interested in that, it's too damn strenuous. I did do that. I did go to Rome a year ago and to Amsterdam a year before that. In the course of both those trips I went to several other countries all in like fifteen or eighteen days, but it was too damn much. I was a wreck when I came back. By this age and at the level of reputation I have when I go through with a trip like that it's read, drink, smoke coke, take codeine and get on a train, and the whole round over again, and the next thing you're seeing the poets you haven't seen in eight or twelve months and it's all reunion, party and excitement - Good god! I mean, I'm forty-six years old.

MH: I'm thinking of a quote from Henry Miller's *Big Sur & The Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* when he says, "And how very much the same it all is. Why drag one's carcass around? Stay put and watch the world go round."

TB: Yeah, and I know right where he was coming from when he was saying that. The answer to that of course is that when you're younger you don't have the feeling you're dragging your carcass, you feel like you're riding a wonderful bicycle or something.

MH: Do you worry about writing the same poem over and over again?

TB: No. That's exactly what I do.

MH: When you were starting out as a poet did you have someone you could show your work to?

TB: Yeah,, and that was very important for me too. It's because it's necessary to have encouragement and necessary to be in a community of interest in writing poetry.

MH: Workshops?

TB: No, not workshops. Let's say two or three other would be poets who are always telling each other about books you ought to read. You know, just being enthusiastic.

MH: What are your feelings about workshops?

TB: I'm not crazy about them. I don't think they're very effective unless I'm teaching them, or maybe one or two other people I know. I mean I just don't think there're enough people who can teach them. It's not enough to be a poet to be able to teach. You have to encourage, to discourage, and to cultivate a certain feeling of irreverence in the students. That last point is often left out. I don't know too many good poets who are products of the university workshops. Like the University of Iowa where I taught. But I don't think they do any harm. You understand, most of these kids who go to these places, what happens to them when they graduate is that - well, they're even married or whatever, and then they go and teach English at some small college in Iowa.

MH: Do you think it gives them some sort of false sense of encouragement?

TB: Yeah, and then it makes them bitter that they did this pretty poetry thing like Pre-Med or Pre-Law and they get nothing for it. I don't know why they think they should get anything for it because if there's no market for your services then how can you complain that you can't make money.

MH: Most of the great poets of this century never made any money off of it either.

TB: Yes, but that doesn't mean you have to be against the idea (laughing). I would love to make money just for being a poet.

MH: Rod McKuen makes a fortune off his poetry.

TB: Rod McKuen is not the enemy though. I have no quarrels with that guy. He probably serves some purpose for some high school kids, making them at least comfortable with the idea that there is such a

thing as a "Poet". I find his poetry too easy, but I don't find it offensive in the way I actually find the poetry of Marvin bell offensive.

MH: Or the lyrics of the songs you hear on the radio.

TB: Yeah. Whereas Bob Dylan on the other hand at least makes me interested in everything he does by the high level of his skills.

MH: Everybody writes bad poetry.

TB: Of course, of course. There's no way you can get away from that at all.

MH: Right, and I'm willing to read through somebody's bad poetry in order to get to a good poem.

TB: Oh me too, you have to. Bad poetry is usually the result of trying to do something that some good poets older than you do that is not suited to you. You still have to do some of those same things those poets do, but you'll have to find your way of doing it. Initially you can't know whether it's suited to you to do it that way until you take some tries at it.

MH: Isn't it true that in poetry, in the last twenty or thirty years America has really done a hell of a lot more compared with Europe?

TB: At least it appears so now. Certainly more than England. One can know because it's the same language. What's going on in Russia we don't know, but there's evidently a lot going on. I've talked with Yevtushenko and he said there are many young poets in Russia outside the Writers' Union. It would be the equivalent of a lot of our poets who are still kind of rough and unformed but who are good. Yevtushenko is quite good. better than he comes across in translation.

MH: I like hearing Russian poets read. They read almost it seems completely from memory.

TB: Yes. They're wonderful showmen, but we could do that too. That comes from the nature of the verse that they write. It is written very clearly with the sense that it is going to be read aloud. A lot of mine is written that way too, but not all. Mine has to be written with both ideas in mind. I am going to do readings out loud quite often, but lots of people who come in contact with it are only going to see it on the page. So I have the difficult problem of trying to make it functional in both ways. It's a technical problem.

MH: Can you say anything about the inner transformation of a poet other than his formal training, something he has to go through, a kind of fire in his being?

TB: I hear you. Yeah. I think that's true. You do have to go through some fairly difficult rites of passage to become a real poet, a true poet in that sense. But the passage is out and then back. If you don't come back you're just far out, which is not as relevant, as real as being back here. I mean Allen Ginsberg after all is a little middle-aged Jewish man from New Jersey who has been to a lot of places. When he could be thought of primarily as a dope smoking faggot limp-wristed Buddhist poet. His verse was a lot less effective once than it is now, when he stands in front of any audience. Now there is this adult who is a serious man and who is full of monkey-glee and joy. Also there's his sorrow later on for his father's death. The feelings he expresses are everyday feelings, something that could happen to anyone. And Allen because he is interested in everything then will go everywhere. Allen believes you should use the full range of your voice when you write, and that you should be absolutely out front, straightforward and fairly simple with your content. I believe that too, but some experiences are more complex than others. Allen simply doesn't write about those things.

MH: Shouldn't a young poet read his ass off?

TB: Sure. Just as a young engineer or doctor should read the technical journals and keep up just as the president must read the cable from his embassies. You must do that. You have to stay on top of it and besides that, you should have a love of doing so. You have to cultivate it. poetry is a habit. If you don't cultivate the habit of writing, and only write when you feel like it, you won't get it. You'll have long periods where you won't write that much and you'll atrophy. In that way it's like being an athlete. What's wrong with the jobs most people have is that they're one life, and at home is another life. Most people don't get to take their jobs home. They don't get to pursue them in any way except to go to them. That's no good, that's no fun. You have to be fired a little bit with the love of what you do, so that when you drag your feet on it, well it's because that's how it feels that day. Any day that I don't feel like coming here and teaching I do know that by the time I get off the Path train and come up those steps into New Jersey, already my mind will be in the classroom thinking about what I'm going to be dealing with, and that

I'll be feeling terrific. On the other hand I might get shot down in the classroom and go home feeling horrible.

MH: Does that ever happen?

TB: Who the hell's going to shoot me down (laughing)? I'm a professional. I don't stake my ego on whether or not I have a good class. If I don't have a good class today I'll have a good one tomorrow. It will be above that minimum standard, and if it isn't I'll just junk it and start doing something else. I go by how it feels out there in front of me.

MH: Who are the poets you love to read the most? You probably have too many to mention off-hand.

TB: I don't know if I could name all the specific ones. It's more like (thinking), it's more often someone that someone else mentions who they've just been reading whom they'd like to share. My wife (Alice Notley) is a poet and we kind of feed off each other's interests. My favorite poet to read is Frank O'Hara, and has been for a long time. I get a lot of magazines just because I'm a poet who has been around a long time. So the younger poets send me their magazines just like I used to send mine, and I read them all avidly. Generally there's something good in them. Right now I'm probably in a position of being more influenced by younger poets than from older ones still living. I am influenced considerably by older "dead" poets.

MH: It's almost an impossible task trying to keep up.

TB: I read prose more than I read poetry. I like to read novels and biographies. Yesterday I read Abby Hoffman's latest book which was quite interesting since I was there during that time near the things he was talking about. I like to read Philip Whalen a lot. There's an English poet by the name of F.T. Prince whom I like reading very much, who's not all that prolific. He's a man in his late 60s whom I admire tremendously. I think he's teaching at Brandeis right now, having gone through the English university system and after having reached the retirement age. He's a remarkable poet. I go to a lot of poetry readings. There was one last night at St. Mark's and there are always a lot in Manhattan. So in that way I meet new poets too. Friends also drop in with new poems from time to time. Steve Carey, Harris Schiff, Ron Padgett, Anselm Hollo, Bernadette Mayer, Alice Notley, Kenneth Koch, Jame Schuyler, are all poets whose work keeps me alive, and angry. There are others.

TED BERRIGAN: a memoir by Mark Hillringhouse

I was in Provincetown when Ted Berrigan died and I got the sad swift news upon my return to Jersey. I had planned to see him soon after I returned from the Cape to set up another reading for him at The William Carlos Williams Center since I was the poetry series coordinator there in Rutherford. I knew Ted's deep respect for Williams and I wanted him to be a centerpiece of the Centennial Festival of Williams' birth. In Ted's memory, I read some of his poems at the festival to the audience who had come out to hear Allen Ginsberg and other poets read. Five hundred people turned out, a record audience. Ted would have loved it. I had plans, too, to do another interview with him, to ask more questions about his newer work and to show him some of mine. Since I had only recently resettled in Jersey after seven years in Michigan, I still had some of the woods left in me as I walked the city streets of Manhattan in my flannel shirt and jeans. Ted liked to see me as a midwestern poet and the contrast, I think, amused him. He himself had gone to school in Tulsa and had taught in Ann Arbor, Iowa City, and Chicago. I trusted him with my poems, valued his opinions, learned a lot from talking to him.

I first met Ted in 1979 or 1980 at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, New Jersey during the semester he was teaching there as poet-in-residence. I remember it well. Ted held court in the classroom, his realm was poetry, being a poet and talking to students about his favorite poets, inspiring them, was his passion. I had come there with a friend, another aspiring poet, to do an interview. After his class, in which he played a recording of Jack Kerouac reading his poetry, we sat in his office and talked. This is where the interview begins. It ended later at his apartment on St. Mark's Place in the East Village of Manhattan some months later. During the course of the interview and later on, I got to know Ted better and we became friendly. If Ted liked you, it felt like you had known him all your life. He was especially generous to younger poets who came to him for advice or to talk. Ted of course did all the talking and could go on non-stop inbetween puffs on his ubiquitous Chesterfield that dangled off his chin, letting ashes spill into his beard, burn holes into his shirt, and he could cover the history of the entire literary development of poetry from the Middle Ages to the present, switch to music, jump to painting, discourse about politics, discuss sports, baseball, batting averages, the Red Sox, and return to poetry

without losing track of what it was that started the conversation. As he talked, the phone by his bed would often ring and Ted would pick up and the conversation on the other end would be mixed into his ramble. Or someone else would drop in for a visit. Many of the poets who lived around the East Village and the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in the Bowery climbed the three flights of stairs to Ted and Alice's door. Simon Pettet, Tom Savage, Eileen Myles, Steve Carey, Susan Cataldo, Greg Masters, Joel Lewis, Mike Reardon, Ed Smith, John Godfrey, Elinor Nauen and Susie Timmons could all be seen coming or going. There were others. Inside the apartment, Ted, who suffered from a bad back, would be found lying on a mattress on the floor. In the four years that I knew him, I had never seen him standing up in his apartment, except once, and at that time I had asked him to stand for a photograph. It was there on the mattress that he read and wrote in his journal or answered the phone or talked to visitors like myself who sat at the foot of the bed. There was a living room in the back (I say the back because the entrance led into the kitchen) crammed with books, kids' toys, (Ted and Alice's children, Edmund and Anselm, were 9 and 10) a small TV and some stuffed chairs. On the walls were paintings, posters and photos. There was no space left.

Walking the city with Ted was an experience. He was constantly running into people on elevators, in galleries, in front of bookstores, who knew him. In the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, Ted finagled a free Alex Katz catalogue from the receptionist with some verbal magic and an old business card he kept in his wallet and he taught me how it was done. On his home turf in the East Village people came up to shake hands, exchange gossip, swap news. He made that part of the city into his own small town.

One time, we took a trip up-town to go gallery hopping, but before reaching the galleries we took a detour and Ted made the cab driver drop us off at an Upper East Side doctor's office. Ted explained it was for his diet pills. I laughed when I saw the name "Dr. Sugar" on the door. There was a crowd of people in the office all waiting for their pills. Ted came out with a brown plastic vial of amphetamines that he slipped into his coat pocket. On the corner in front of the Whitney Museum, we bought hot dogs and two Pepsis from a vendor and Ted offered me a couple of his pills. I felt nothing for the first few minutes, then I understood. Ted was like this every day.

After looking at several galleries, we decided to walk several blocks. On our way back downtown on Fifth Avenue, Ted pulled me into a huge store without looking at the sign above the window. I couldn't imagine why he wanted to go into a video store since he didn't own a VCR. Inside he stood still and let out an OOOH! The Brentano's that was once there had vanished. So we got the hell out and ended up at the Gotham Book Store on 47th St. where Ted was greeted warmly by all the sales help. Frances Steloff, in her 90's, was sitting in the back room going through her letters. His mission was to locate an out-of-print copy of Edwin Denby's *Looking At The Dance*, which he found without any trouble.

I remembered Ted's fondness for Denby's sonnets which were in some way an influence on his own. Of all Ted's books, and quite a few come to mind, *The Sonnets* and *Red Wagon* are my favorites. When he read his poetry he was able to convey this extraordinary level of choked-up emotion; his voice had a quaking tremble, as if the damn holding back the water of his life would suddenly burst through. At a reading at William Paterson College in Jersey, in a small classroom where only a handful of students showed up, Ted gave the best reading I had ever heard. He read carefully and with an intense clarity for the benefit of a new audience. I wished I had taped it.

I read him now and I go back frequently to poems like "Red Shift" or "Things To Do In Providence" or "Frank O'Hara" – heart-breaking poems, rhythmic, ample – heavy with that lightness. No one could replace him. He had a way of explaining how a poem worked from the inside. He was all ears, head and heart, always ready to make fun of something, or to flip it over to show you how poignant it all was, too.

Ted's method of constructing a poem was to write down personal memories, take lines from newspapers, quote what other people said in conversation, or to tear apart other poets' poems he admired, to turn their lines around and insert his inbetween theirs then erase them, leaving his own lines intact. He wrote the way he spoke and his poems are full of talk, his and others'. Sometimes ideas would present themselves and he would build around those. His poem "Whitman in Black" was constructed this way. He told me he had been thinking about Melville in Manhattan, and in a somber mood, imagined him doing penance for his sins, living in obscurity at the

end of his life. Ted was at the end of his life and when I read his later works, I now realize he was surreptitiously layering his verses with images of his own dying. His poem "Part Of My History" in his last book, *Morning Line*, is a good example.

He was generous in taking a look at my own poems. In one particular poem I had written, I was unaware of a line I had used in which I mention the time as 5:15 a.m. It was a literal reference to the digital clock on my desk. During an all-nighter, I had looked over and noticed the hour and wrote it down. Ted wrote in the margin, "Good line!" I later realized that this was a symbolic time of morning Ted had constantly made reference to in his own poetry. Ted was a night creature and was up at that hour, or just going off to sleep before the sun rose.

It was unfortunate that the Pepsi and the pills combined with the chain smoking and the weight would lead Ted to an early grave. Things had already begun to change a lot by the Reagan 80's and already the world Ted had made his living in as a poet was collapsing. The teaching gigs were getting harder to come by and so were the readings that offered any sizeable honorarium. Rents were getting higher, even in the Lower East Side which was becoming gentrified, and inflation and rising food costs were making it a struggle to survive as a poet.

A few weeks after that Fourth of July that I was in Provincetown, I wrote a poem for Ted and titled it "Independence Day." I remember driving through Cranston, Rhode Island outside Providence on the way back down to Jersey and I was thinking of Ted in his younger days in his hometown. Semi-unconsciously, I used some of Ted's own words from the interview in the poem, something Ted would have approved. The Yankees had played the Red Sox that day and Righetti pitched a no-hitter. Ted was a big Red Sox fan and New York was their arch rival. John in the poem is John Ashbery, another of Ted's favorite poets, and along with Frank O'Hara, a major influence on Ted's writing.

One of the last times I saw Ted was at his apartment. I had come over to talk. He got up off the bed and took me into his living room and pulled a tin box off a bookshelf. In it were hundreds of postcards he had written poems on in longhand. The cards were part of a series of poetry postcards he was working on. He wanted me to have a few. I reached in and took a handful which he immediately grabbed back saying, "You picked all the best ones!" I settled on two that he signed for me. I realize now that he was cleaning house, giving things away to people he liked, and that he knew he was dying.

In the years since and in various places, I have seen Ted – once in Key West one Christmas, a man on Duval St. who looked just like him walked by me. I followed the man for a few blocks. I wanted to believe that Ted was still alive somewhere and had simply vanished from the streets of New York City to start a new life in another strange and mysterious part of the world. It was hard to accept that he was gone. He lives now in his words on the page of his poems and in my memory. I can still hear his voice speaking to me, his laugh, his telling me anecdotes about his life. Ted, I hear your voice loud and strong every day.

Photo: Mark Hillringhouse

INDEPENDENCE DAY 1983

for Ted Berrigan

Dave Righetti pitched the first no-hitter
for the Yankees in twenty-seven years
against the Red Sox, it was Carl Yastrzemski's last year.
Boston was your team, Providence your town,
New York your city.
Driving south along I 95
I watched the signs as the road curved
through New England, past Cranston, border of shipyards
blue & gray two storey houses tarnished
a light sea-green from the salty air.
Fireworks lit up the sky in the distance
the roar of guns, sounds we celebrate
our freedom with grown louder this year
as phone calls went ringing
from New York to California
with the news.

I get up to write at 2:00 a.m.
turning from sleep & the covers of the bed
with that darkness outside closing
the space inside down
and turned a lamp on the world
so I could see the things around me very clearly
so I could see my life there inside my head
and what my life had been like yesterday.
And the way you made your spaces be your own
arranged the paintings and the books on the wall
and fit them in the room.
And the way John said
so much of ourselves goes on
in the minds of other people.
Though you probably know by now
the way we return
to everyone we love
when we close our eyes.
The air whitens with snow
and the distance warms with the memory
of sunlight over tables and chairs,
trees & grass
and everything the way you left it.

Mark Hillringhouse

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

BILLY COLLINS is the author of four books of poetry, including *The Apple That Astonished Paris* (University of Arkansas Press) and *Questions About Angels* (William Morrow & Co), and his poems have appeared in The New Yorker and The Paris Review and heaps of other places. He lives in northern Westchester County, which is upwards sort of from New York City as you gaze down longingly upon the atlas in front of you opened at the page with America on it.

LORI CUMMIN-MEADOWS is a Canadian who currently lives in Amsterdam, where she says she is making a semi-decent living doing some of the things her mother always advised her against. (I've asked for an explanation of that, but as yet I've got no answer.) A chapbook, *Daddy Enjoys Needlework*, was published in Toronto in 1989. The work here is her first to be published in the U.K.

ALISON DUNHILL lives in London, and says that writing a poem is a bit like jumping off the train on to a platform. If you say so, Alison. She's also a painter. (Now, I think that painting a picture is a bit like walking out in front of a bus, but that's just my opinion.) In the early 70s a small alternative press published a collection of her poems, but methinks this is her first publication for a while.

PAUL GENEGA lives in New York City, and teaches in New Jersey. His poems have appeared with regularity in the U.S. for some years, in magazines such as Poetry and Home Planet News. A particular interest of Paul's is the phenomenon of the poet/detective, with special attention being given to punctuality and/or their ability to find a college in the dark.

PETER HUGHES is from Oxford but lives in Cambridge. He last year moved back to England after seven years in Italy. A collection entitled *The Metro Poems* is due from The Many Press as we speak.

KEITH JEBB has had poems in Reality Studios, Pages, Kite, Folded Sheets and other magazines. He lives in Oxford. Or near Oxford, at least. "Very nice sort of place, Oxford, I should think, for people that like that sort of place." So much for the Canoe's 'Oxbridge Axis'.

MATT KIRKHAM lives in Northern Ireland, though he's originally from Luton. He is training to be a mathematics teacher. Previous occupations include streetsweeper, care assistant and avocado picker. Avocado picker? Not in Luton, presumably.

KENNETH KOCH lives in New York City and teaches at Columbia University. A British edition of his *Selected Poems* was published by Carcanet in 1991. The stories here are part of a book of short stories called *Hotel Lambosa*, to be published in the Spring of 1993 by Coffee House Press.

PETER LANE has had poems in a number of magazines, including The Echo Room and The North. He lives in Stoke-on-Trent.

SHARON MESMER is from Chicago ("Born 30 years ago in the olfactory shadow of the Union Stockyards, to a German butcher and Polish telephone operator/department store floor clerk") but now lives in beautiful Brooklyn. In Chicago she co-edited letter eX and B City. Widely published in the U.S., including in Exquisite Corpse, New American Writing and, oh, loads of others.

JOHN OLSON lives in Seattle (which is in America, as you probably know). I have to hand a very comprehensive life history, which involves everything from the invention of ink for ballpoint pens by Dr. Frank Ireland, to "gentle undulations of the Pacific dogwood in Tashkent Park, its branches surprisingly laden with constellations of white flowers". He sounds like a very nice man, and I expect him to be hospitable when I visit Seattle next Spring.

BART PLANTENGA has been published there, here and everywhere (yes, I get bored listing obscure magazine titles, too) and has appeared on the same variety showcase as the infamous Algebra Suicide. He presents Word Is The Bird on station WFMU, 91.1Fm ("internationally recognised as one of the most audacious stations") where he pulls in excess of 100,000 listeners to 30 minutes of poetry, performance, comedy, sound collage, diaries and shopping lists. That's what it says here. Guess where he lives.... yes, Noo Yawke....

PALLAV RANJAN lives in Nepal, where he works as the editorial assistant for Nepal Traveller and Shangri-La magazines.

SAL SALASIN lives in New York City and is widely published in the U.S., including in Hanging Loose and The Poetry Project Newsletter. He also on occasion is active in organising & promoting poetry readings. His chapbook *Casa de Caca* (Apathy Press, Baltimore, 1991) contains the following rider: "This is at least in part about specious language. I didn't invent it. If my use of it bothers you, I would still suggest you were blaming the wrong party." Definitely.

JEFFERY L. SKEATE is from Springfield, Missouri where, he says, he is a businessman. Nothing wrong with that, with certain provisos. Anyway, he's published widely in the States, in magazines such as Shattered Wig, Poetry Motel, Tin Wreath (I'm just selecting some of the names I like best....) but this is only his second publication in the U.K. I won't say where the other one was.

WILLIAM TALCOTT lives in San Francisco, and his book *Calling In Sick* is really good and, incidentally, nearly out of print. He is editor & publisher of Carbuncle magazine, which is almost as an attractive and interesting a publication as the Canoe. If not more so. Nearly.

DALE DEVEREUX BARKER graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in 1986 and has since acquired a deserved reputation both in the U.K. and overseas with his linocuts and screenprints. In 1989 he was awarded the Forbo-Nairn prize at the International Print Biennale, and he shows regularly at The Jill George Gallery, and Marlborough Graphics, London. And I have to mention that this Spring sees the publication of *From A Recluse To A Roving I Will Go*, a Stannard/Barker collaboration featuring a new long poem by me and some new images by him. Available from The Shed, 31 Kitchener Road, Ipswich. Always finish with a commercial, that's what I say.

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