joe soap's canoe

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Editor: Martin Stannard
298 High Road
Trimley St. Martin
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and to the man in the green felt hat who made such an impression on me when the world was one big pimple.

****

And thanks to all the contributors

****

for Timothy & Andrew

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Welcome to JOE SOAP'S CANOE!

Contributions of poetry for future issues are welcome; equally important, Joe Soap is looking for articles on modern poetry or literature whether they be of a straightforward informative / educational nature, or potentially explosive / obnoxious arguments or opinions.

The Editor retains the right to publish, in whole or in part, letters received, unless the letter be specifically marked "Not For Publication".

Oh yeah, it is also "Editorial Policy" to attempt to reach as wide an audience / public as possible, including (ideally) non-poetry people; copies of the magazine will be placed in schools, libraries, and other institutions (even prisons & borstals if possible) in an effort both to reach this wider public, and also to try to break that seemingly lethargy-inducing circle of poets / contributors / subscribers which seems to have drained so much energy out of the current small-press poetry scene. Cliche it may be, but poetry should be intended to reach outside the circle of other poets and meet the outside world, and as a magazine with albeit limited resources JOE SOAP'S CANOE will do all within its power to achieve that aim. Naive it may be, and yeah, it's been tried before, but it's gotta be done, we gotta get some energy from somewhere.....

Anyway, this is Issue Number 1, and carefully avoiding any nautical references, it's time to take off thine underwear and move - - - - - -

OUT THERE

Time carries its own length:
in the north west of Scotland
I saw a man and two grey women
drive up to a lonely kirk.
The man unlocked the door
while the women waited, severe
and upright. It was a Wednesday
and their reasons weren't obvious
for there were no flowers
when he left. No smiles, either,
as they drove down the hill,
only the cold smell of bog grass
and the sea. He wore a pin-stripe
suit and it was a Wednesday.

****

JERRY ORPWOOD
****

SOMETIME BEARDSLEY STRANGENESS

There are breasts in my coffee
which gradually emerge as I drink
from the perspex cup.
I thumb the nipples,
pass my fingers
over alabaster smoothness.
They refuse to go away,
they multiply to fill the cup,
flowing over the rim
into the saucer like delicate foam.
I fear to leave them,
fear they will disappear,
fear their erotic whiteness,
know that they will destroy me
as soon as I turn my back.

Across the terrace rooftops
the moon spills painful splinters
of ice across the window,
and I cannot look away.

****

ANDREW DARLINGTON
****

TRIBAL MOTORBIKES

Plastic means pliable.
I am plastic.
Take off your clothes,
you are property.
Down on your knees,
you are property.
Drink my body
until there is nothing left,
we are property
of one another.
We are pliable.
You take scissors from
the nail on the wall,
you cut my shirt
into neat strips,
you cut at the curls of hair
on my stomach and balls.
We are pliable.
I taste you.
You are plastic.
You taste me,
armpits, flesh, cock, lungs.
Plastic means pliable.

****

ANDREW DARLINGTON
****

THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

Why do shirts wriggle so much ?
Squirming into my head like earwigs,
Shirts are like drugs
And I think about them when I should be thinking
about you.

Why are shirts ubiquitous ?
They are strange symbols or talismen;
Their patterns are like the man's fetish,
But they are too cheap to form a city under.

Why do shirts inveigle ?
Today I have been thinking about green shirts in
general,
And a brown Tab Mason shirt in particular,
I thought about it when I was walking.

Why did I change from the battle in the disused chapel ?
When I was young I used to think about a battle in
a disused chapel,
And now I think about shirts.
I don't know if I've made any progress.

****

IAN McMILLAN
****

HIGH NOON

This dinnertime we will speak on
injuries at work.
Dick sits near the blue paint, sweating,
and his seconds feed him sandwiches and soup.
Near the red tin of Butane,
a visitor in surly overalls
chews noisily at a pipe.

By half past one, work has clicked back into motion.
Dick waves to the overalls
who charge out, clutching invoices.

On the floor are a million limbs,
and the afternoon shift hangs its hat on a severed head.
Hushed ghostly porters ferry bits of welders
through corridors full of men holding outsize black
fingers.

Tomorrow possibly
it will be "my most drunken stupor" stories,
and we will sleep the afternoon away like stones.

****

IAN McMILLAN
****

SOCIAL DISEASE

My feet smell. Now, writers
are allowed many ailments
such as blinding headaches
or a slight limp; scars,
eyes which look three ways
at once or no ways at all,
hands which shake, elbows
which rattle in a high wind;
but we are not allowed feet
which if they were in Beano
or Dandy would have HUM
written above them in large
letters and PHEW in think
balloons issuing from the heads
of editors and readers. Life
as you know is not like Beano
and less like Dandy so all
that happens is that you get
deodorant sachets with your
rejection slips which no
longer contain the traditional
prayer but now say "The Ed
read your work but he could
not concentrate on the words
because of the stench from your
feet; please try again
when you have changed your
socks..." This may be just
fantasy but it is quite
a good criterion by which
to edit a fine magazine.

****

IAN McMILLAN
****

BUSKING WORDS: AN INVENTION FROM THE FAMILIAR

by RUPERT MALLIN

I view much of British poetry today as a blues man might try to comprehend the world of John Cage (the man and his music), yet I believe the poet's task is greater than making "silk dresses out of worms" as Wallace Stevens had put it. The ordinary must be extraordinary, a revelation of invention beyond logic and the discovery of things that already exist.

The dilemma with poetry, as I see it, is one of systems: a justification of what is being created has superseded the need to justify the rejection of metric rule of the time honoured formulas of containment. The scene is further complicated by the academic line: poetry written and or selected for critical analysis, which is in opposition to the desire of poets to touch people through poetry as enjoyment. As a busker of words I disagree with Steven's "no wing like meaning." The way ahead cannot be the academic line, though the study of poetry is an enjoyment, the application of the logics of critical analysis is a great sterility, is death. Nor is the way a fractional path, the exponents of each roaring great cucumbers at the sincerity, the cleverness at the crack of light they adorn.

We no longer use the traditional forms to contain, package and move the sound and contents of poems, and yet the various justifications of factional interests herald not the new age, but the break up of the old. And as a pedestrian faced with so many engines, knowing all can walk, I am frustrated by the entrenched attitudes of the self-assured. The Seventies suffer from cleverness. A reaction against the popularisn of the Sixties, the emergence of concrete poetry that has challenged the very concept of poetry, to the absurdist popularity of Pam Ayres.

The poetry of the Oxbridge contingent and its wake are more concerned now with the poem's own non-communication. They have little to write about and nothing to react against, except their own staleness of emotion, often displayed in verbose meanderings of exhaustion. This loose group of mild experimenters have links with the older generation of academics who fill the pages of The New Review, PN Review and the Critical Quarterly. They too have more to invest in literature of the past as a source for their own writings rather than from their lives.

The cleverness has come full circle since the posturings of Eliot, though his age was more despotic. As though an art that is as complex, or more complex than the society could make a better poetry or a better society. Eliot, Anglo-Catholic classicist, lead in part to Auden's reaction, together with the political immediacy and awareness of the thirties, through a high technical skill sustained much that was light and crusty in his work. Dylan Thomas's enthusiasm for the flesh of language in the Forties did so much to excite, though the post-war Movement and the lower

middle-class values of the semi-detached Larkin redressed the enjoyment with dry cynicism.

The Sixties, thankfully, belonged to men and women with clearer voices and visions. The common ground between Hughes, Plath, Mitchell, Logue, MacBeth and The Liverpool Scene was a directness, Hughes and Plath particularly seeking the correct words rather than the complex ones, while Mitchell's voice of the socio-political type was aware of the currents sweeping in from the Atlantic. McGough and Henri created a vogue poetry from the town itself and the new age of good pop song lyrics.

While the father of the American syntax, Olson, was postulating upon the open ended poem of Projective Verse, the surrealists (both the soft American surrealism of Stanley Kunitz and the "European hysterical surrealism" of such West Coast poets as Philip Lamantia and Diane Wakoski) made for an uneasy duality that gave way to the unapologetic, bohemian "beat" generation of Ginsberg, Corso and Ferlinghetti, whose influences included Rimbaud, Artaud and Whitman, laying aside those of the clever main-stream. Though the beats and American surrealists have found some favour here, it is the craftsmen in the wake of Olson that are most favoured. Men like Creeley, Dorn and Duncan, while the French influenced Koch and O'Hara with their "stylistic variousness" have found little outlet. Indeed the Penguin anthology of Contemporary American Poetry pays little voice to the beats or to prolific writers like Frank O'Hara. Yet the American voice is far more vital and strong than his English counterpart and when I pick up an English magazine I head first for all that is away to the west.

It's as though the Little Englander sets out to cut the crystals into the finest jewels and fails, while those concerned with the fleshy desires of men and women give us something far greater, enjoyment. NEW POETRY magazine, issue 28, saw fit to include a discussional piece on 'Valid Poetry'. Norman Hidden formed 'A Criteria of Creativity' and stated that poems should "give out increasing energy, both stimulating, and satisfying, as additional meanings, significances, interpretations, associations, connotations..." and that the poet should use the devices of "surprise, appropriateness, transforming effect, multifold layers of continuing significance," which is the foundation perhaps of poetry that uncovers, but is far from invention. A.L.Hendricks, an issue later, took up the criteria as an attack: "It seems that verse today tends too often to be a word-game, an intellectual, often academic, exercise -or, worse, an exhibition of verbal acrobatics...", and then ruining his argument by denying the main source of invention, the fault he said being an "obsession with superficialities: personae, private mythologies, the writer's own hang-ups, the bizarre, and with words themselves". Then Hendricks quoted the very singular, traditional Sitwell stance of the Fifties: Poetry ennobles the heart and eyes, and unveils the meaning of all things upon which the heart and eyes dwell." Kryptos in NEW POETRY 30 added: "the struggle to impose form or order, or shape, upon their material results in a tension which releases a communicable energy," and thus winding on the clock of the gem stone and stopping the clock on Steven's 'Adagia': "The essential fault with surrealism is that it invents without discovering. To make a clam play an accordian is to invent not to discover. The observation of the unconscious, so far

as it can be observed, should reveal things of which we have previously been unconscious, not the familiar things of which we have been conscious plus imagination." And yet Stevens would have been the last to conjure wine from water, far too interested in the process of fermentation. It is the very familiarity that gives the invention of surrealism great power towards a life more abundant. That is discovery enough. As for understanding, half-wits have understood, while a lot of great men have been idiots and bigots.

I began writing vers libre under the influence of the magazines of the day, with nouns pushed to the ends of lines, acute images, naturalistic placements and themes as precious as a tie pin. I realise now, the exercise over, the essence of poetry is a search for life with more substance, less device.

Recently I paid homage to Frank O'Hara's "Personism" in a manifesto on "Nervism" ("Nervism is saying in public what one dare not say in private") which I opened with a quote, not from a poet, but from the artist Francis Bacon who stated that every artist today creates outside a tradition.

Further to this, I would like to make two, possibly three assertions: firstly, there is no uneasy dichotomy between the oral rendering of a poem and the poem on the page; secondly, I believe that invention out of the familiar is a far greater cry than discovery.

Poetry is of voice and page. Those that maintain only one avenue are making chin-music for their hobby. It has for some time been a criteria of art that its function is to open up the universe for our understanding. It is not. Understanding creates no new world.

I note with interest the increasing number of quotes from Andre Breton appearing in the smaller small press magazines, and although the poetry there-in is sometimes weak, long in the tooth, there is a glimmer of the dearest objects to me. The best poetry has to be taken in literally ("Beautiful as the chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table" as fact). And in the sultry Seventies there is a great need in this isle for a flesh poetry, unapologetic and unashamed. The larger presses and organisations care not one iota for change, they see it as yet another faction, and therefore the smaller magazines must purvey a new poem, a poem of invention from the familiar.

Yes, that Cage is clever, is spatial, there's tones and textures, and prunes, and I've read from his Black Mountain "Diary" of fragments and I'm dry, thirsting for the belly of Bukowski, the Breton inventions, the baleful tones of a blues man.

****

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE SKY

The details of my life are unknown. I was born at Burton-On-Sea in 1900. When I was 19 I accidently shot myself while playing Russian Roulette. In after life I became an electrician called Scarface as daylight was turning to darkness on an empty wet road somewhere. When my love was manifested in certain things I could not name or understand and could only sense and wonder at beneath the dying sky as Scarface spoke of the power of electricity of sparks and currents and voltages, amps wires and fuses and the mysterious forces that move the human heart. And scarface said "I am a stranger here of the air I breathe. Be not afraid." And he passed into me without sound or movement that winter night on a cold wet road leading somewhere I have now forgotten.

****

CORY HARDING
****

HEART OF STONE

As I drove my little blue aeroplane over the North Pole, with my hair set in curlers and the glossy photograph shining beneath my fingertips, I would often remember my past life in Wimbledon and the ugly little sarcastic negro hunchback called Sammy whom I grew to worship, and how he would play Chopin on his mouth organ every Sunday evening as it rained and church bells tolled for the faithfull, and how Sammy would follow me down the road to the church, and while I prayed for his soul he would stand outside the church leaning against the wall, whistling, with his hands in his pockets and his legs wide apart and his face upturned to the sky.

****

CORY HARDING
****

PORTRAIT WITH GERANIUMS

And how you clutched with your marbled hands
geraniums
in precious pots too fragile
for your clumsy fingers;

and grained the floor with spilt soil
staining
the carpet where we walked
with warm tilth.

Not that age could be claimed as a reason
for frailty,
or that attracted to the bloom
like a roaming bee,

the suddenness of sunburst flame had burned
too deeply
for your tired eyes
to bear with ease.

And how you stood with your marbled hands
strapped
to your side as if by bonds
in mute acknowledgement,

this was the final destruction for you,
astonishment
bridging your eyes
in admission of defeat.

****

GEORGE A. MOORE
****

SLIGHTLY SCHIZOID

If there's a chance
of rain then I'll
take it. I would rather

stay in bed than
risk a meeting. And
I've heard what
fresh air can do

to a man. And anyway
it's windy and would
ruffle my immunity.

There is no possibility
of leaving the house
today.

****

BERNARD YOUNG
****

FROM THE IDEAL POSTAGE STAMP ALBUM , The British Empire 1915

aitutakiantigua australia
tangany karaj peepla domi
nica ascension camer oons
kuwait canadacayman queen
sland st helen abarbuda b
ermuda barbadosbahamas ba
tumbruneibushire gambia u
gandaj amaica jammuand ka
shmir madagascar zan zi b
armalta marsh allmaur iti
us bechu ana land falk
landkelatanheligoland hol
kar nab hahongkong pahang
palestine papuapenrhynper
akp oo nchrang oo nrajnan
goon putialla granadaguia
naj hala war johor kedah
gibraltarkishengrah tas mania

naurunepal negrinev isn
ew brunswicknew found lan
d nyasa land newzealand..
nigernuienborneotrava cor
en rhodesian scotiast luc
iasamoasarawak montserrat
fakri dot gilbertgoldcoas
t figi indiavictoria inon
ia iraqirishstate********
moroc comosul soruth no
wangartren ganu selanger
s udan s ungeichamba coch
ia orchacook islands*****

****

IAN DURANT
****

SnaP CraCkle PoP the
DiP PeBBle and floP
of suNday

willienmillie peddling their fancy
cuddle candy floss
scallywag scattered
the trumpet wheezes
& they scamper
hamster-like
to mother
symphonic waves
bubble rush boil
in the SnaP CraCkle PoP the
DiP PeBBle and floP
of suNday
willienmillie peddling their fancy

****

IAN DURANT
****

TAKE CARE OF THINGS

The window box's marigolds,
beneath them, the frame

and also wrought iron rails
with cherry trees in blossom are

inert, but your green carboy
distorts them in uneven glass.

Light globules on the brass
hanging basket shimmer. Look,

a heart-shaped bread plant leaf
is unravelling itself

and now the settled appliances
shift under her regard.

Draw sided toaster, kettle,
for him they are hard, still,

to her certain utensils,
not as she left them.

I've not touched a thing.
You confront the changes.

You say, Again I have to
clear everything away.

****

PETER ROBINSON
****

IF I HOLD THE WORDS

When I hold the words in focus, she's soft colour fringe against white margins, and merges into forgotten textures of chair and wall, photography.

The street turns away from my page's access, and it can't be helped. Where cars pause at the lane end, she smiles and at a corner disappears.

His articulated trailer twists, the driver, demolishing the lamppost opposite - night darkens.

Should I stay at the ledge a young couple will kiss in the close phonebox.

Imagine it occurring to me then. At concealed entrances the trunk road, like memories, promises return.

You reappeared at half past nine.

As if I'd had it planned.

****

PETER ROBINSON
****

THE POPULIST ETHIC AND THE PROFESSIONAL POET

by PAUL ANDERSON

"They should really have farms
for poets poets should be like cows
milked twice a day
and those that don't produce should be eaten..."

Michael Horovitz quotes these lines from Pete Brown in the essay which accompanies the Penguin 'Children of Albion' anthology of British underground verse of the sixties. Their context and content make them a microcosm of one of the orthodoxies of that underground which remains with us to this day, the dream of the poet recognised by society as useful and nurtured as such. The purpose of this article is to bring into question the validity of this dream in the light of what has happened to the underground in the last ten years.

The problem stems from the very roots of the movement. It existed, as it does today, basically because there were a small number of poets who had become professional, to the exclusion of those who were to become the underground of the Horov-itz anthology. In the early sixties poetry was dominated in Britain by an elite with Oxbridge educations who were included in Alvarez' Penguin anthology 'The New Poetry'. The coherence of this elite was apparent enough on a number of levels for the application of the label "establishment" to have more than a degree of accuracy. This state of affairs would perhaps have been justified in pre-modernist times in terms of critical excellence, anobjective quality based on the technical skill of a poet within largely predetermined forms. All that had, however, been altered by the advent of modernism in the late nineteenth century. Through the efforts of the surrealists, Eliot, Pound, Williams, the expressionists, the futurists and all the others, poetry moved to a position whereby its aim became to express what the poet wanted to express, whatever that may be.

As a result, the critic was faced with a seemimgly intractable problem because of his chronic inability to get into the poets mind. One way out was to pretend he could by using psychological stereotyping, claiming to know what the poet had in mind and judging his "sincerity" as a measurable quantity. In reality, however, only the poet himself could analyse his writing process in this way. The critic could only offer subjective comment on how a poem hit him, working on the foundation of "poems are all different, not good or bad, and different people will like different poetry".

To relate all this to the sixties underground, it was this broad critical approach which justified their opposition to the literary establishment's monopoly of resources. The establishment were different rather than better poets, and they certainly did not say everything that was to be said, what with the narrowness of their social, educational and political backgrounds, and their conservatism with regard to the English language. Not that they had no right to exist; simply that they did not have sole rights, but then nobody did.

Yet the whole thing has flopped. Although the leading lights of the underground were given a living through grant aid, the Observer review pages and other habitats of the establishment remained in the same hands. It is all the result of the obsession with "a place of our own" as full-time paid writers, which has destroyed the dynamism and open-mindedness of the beat generation, creating a second establishment. At present, the position of the old underground is similar to that of the lower middle classes of Victorian society, fearing the rise of the proletariat considering it, moreover, a bigger threat than the capitalist class, thus adopting a position of stagnant defence, rather than expansion of positions already gained. Poetry has become factionalised, when it needs something akin to permanent revolution; there is no room for the professional poet who is against others taking equal status, since populism in doctrine, elitism in practice is nothing short of hypocrisy.

****

ripped posters

pale
girls stare back
& black rain
waiting

****

DAVE WARD
****

u blew me away
dandelion dat i wuz -
blew wite bits of me
into ma black stream.

ah cud ave found
t time to luv u,

but u only wanted to
scatter ma hopes

bare strands of
petals & stalks
i remain.

****

BLACKIE FORTUNA
****

READY FOR MAGPIES

Who punched the iron clock into my chest ?
Blindhandedly I reel while castanets
Cast on the unseen wires, click and clasp.

I am a time-teller that rusts,
Flung by a yellow hand into this bramble patch,
Into a resonating summer of burnt tar & dust,
Of real green anger.

Amputated, I face other refugees
Spread out across the tracks -
Ten years can flicker by so fast.
A small wheel turns. A signal drops.

Curving a metal claw, I stroke the smooth flesh off -
Ready for magpies now, the white and black.
While I am not dissolved the berries ripen.

****

MARK BURKE
****

BUT STILL THE SHIMMERING MACHINE

But still the shimmering machine,
Sleek muscle packed into a canvas skin
That I must carry on my shoulder
Like a game of 'Guess the Stranger',
Carting around encyclopaedias
Of looks and gesture.

Loose tiles crack free of roofs like wild applause -
Each has a motto and a holly leaf:
Mine says EMBODIMENT. Dissolves in laughter.

Not yet the city and its statuettes -
Far out of town we pick wild blackberries.
Five unexpected steam engines arrive,
Strayed from a different time
Before the pylons, after sheep.
We share our secrets.

****

MARK BURKE
****

THE DEAL

Approaching the chemical factory,
paused to take the long route round.
I gave up that sort of thing years
ago. 5 days after getting the
confetti out my foreskin.

No. Proceed retrospectively.
One must. I must. Before this
factory was sucking in the
diminishing dole queues,
potatoes tasted like potatoes,
beef like beef, etc.

We played hide and seek,
later cards to selectively
undress by. Esther always got
the best hand, we saw to that.
She'd only complain
if the ground was wet
or particularly cold.

Passing the chemical factory now.
I avoided it politically
not so long ago. It made
no difference, no difference.

Proceed unchemically. Gym
knickers slowly coming down over hips.

****

EDDIE HARRIMAN
****

PEOPLE & THINGS

Artefact face
travelling through
a manufactured landscape,
swoops on glass & steel storefront
and carries off treasure to its tenth floor eyrie,
already littered by magpie glitterings.

In spite of international terror
and socio-economic strugglings
and sporadic warfare,
this species
is in no immediate danger of extinction.

****

JIM BROWN
****

from BUS

Night: a simpler pattern.

Gripped the seat handle
and craned my neck
for a look back

all those lights.

The city 'a natural condition of man'

To the north-west
a thin sprinkling of lights,
where the hills are
during the day.

All we lack
is a form, a music
to accompany our habits

and

'if I could talk poetry
that's what it would sound like'

Someone else's radio.

There is a switch
above my head. But
I don't feel like reading.
It's good just to ride.

****

MARK WILLIAMS
****

POEM

The sea a blue
benzedrine rush -

clamour of gulls
around the pier -

the same quiet
men fishing

and the way
the breeze excites

your hair.

That moment,
this one.

****

MARK WILLIAMS
****

IN THE FIELD

The sun shines also for the farmworkers here
The three doors in the black yard
For today the window's open
A bandage lets the brow be seen
of the wounded sky which clears
And those who were returning go
The animals were arranged
This was just an image
You'd placed there some men in attendance
The voyager arrived in departing the landscape
And more
All of the flank inclined to the right
You could look to the depths of some hole
Where a little water poured
The air became softer
The ground was about all these persons
Even lower
The earth
And all of the animals who do not cower

****

PIERRE REVERDY

translated by Peter Robinson
****

BEYOND

There isn't a trace
in the passage
the head departs
The air current on the stone
quicker in the river
And always lower
When the deaf noise resounds
That uplifts the man
And the passing day falls
at the edge of the square
where the other will die
All those who are there attend
don't understand
And the looks which tire
are used
are detached
The eyes slide
toward another place
To the crossroads of six routes
Our steps halt there
You'd go further on no doubt
But you don't dare

****

PIERRE REVERDY

translated by Peter Robinson
****

ON THE THRESHOLD

In the corner where she huddled
Sadness or empty
The wind turns
You hear a cry
No one wanted to complain
But the lamp was just extinguished
And passes without a sound
A tepid hand
Upon your eyelids
Where the finished day weighs
All arises
And in the world which hurries on
The objects mingled in night
The form that I had chosen
If the light
Was reviving as you awake
It will have remained in my ear
The glad voice which watches over it
Reentering had chased after me

****

PIERRE REVERDY

translated by Peter Robinson
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A NOTE ON PIERRE REVERDY

by PETER ROBINSON

Pierre Reverdy died in 1960 at the age of 71. He was born in Narbonne, southern France, but between 1910 and 1926 he lived in Paris for the most part, associated first with the Cubist painters and poets, especially Apollinaire, Jacob and Juan Gris, and then with the Surrealists, though he never officially joined Breton's movement. In 1917 he founded, with Paul Dermee, the review 'Nord Sud', publishing cubist, Dadaist and Surrealist poetry. The most succinct statement of his aesthetic, "L'Image", appeared in the 'Nord Sud' for March 1918:

> "The image is a pure creation of the spirit.
> It cannot be born of a comparison but of the drawing together of two realities more or less remote.
> The more the interrelation of the two realities drawn together will be distant and just, the stronger the image will be - the more it will have emotive power and poetic reality.
> Two realities which have no relation cannot usefully be brought together. There is no image created.
> Two contrary realities are not drawn together. They oppose.
> You rarely obtain a force from that opposition.
> An image is not strong because it is brutal or fantastic - but because the association of ideas is distant and just."

The juxtaposition of distant and separated realities, matter-of-factness and poetic intent, the word's varied actuality and its use in advancing a narrow theme, these are the terms of an aesthetic for poetry which emerged with the reinterpretation of Cezanne by the Cubist painters for their analyses and redispositions of pictorial space.

In 1926 Reverdy left Paris and lived for the rest of his life near the Abbey of Solesmes, coinciding with a spiritual move towards religious faith. In later years he came to scoff at the association of his work with that of the Cubist painters - "Poesie cubiste? Terme ridicule!"

However, by bringing into the scope of his poems widely seperated realities, his work redisposes the reader to more of the interrelated mass of phenomena in the world than he can singularly be aware of in his own immediate life, imaginatively enlarging his conceptual understanding of the world he must limitedly inhabit. Occasioning the encounter of disparities, of differences of view, both opinion and sensation, gives back to the poet the limits of his own existence, which are as broad or narrow and partial as those of anyone else, even as it allows his imagination and memory to construct the world beyond those limits, making real the various presence of what already exists.

Pierre Reverdy's poem 'L'Homme et la Nuit' concludes:

"And when the day comes on to enlighten the world
It's us at last who have opened our eyes"

Or as Frank O'Hara put it in 'A Step Away From Them':

"My heart is in my
pocket, it is Poems by Pierre Reverdy."

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THE SEAFRONT PARADE & THE SINKING MAN

The red-hot-hot-rod wheelchairs sped over the edge of the
    cliffs of a continent
into the sea,
but it would be wrong to compare breakdowns,
the falling apart of a civilization like it was a peach
    cloven by the hands of a squirrel from the neck of
    the woods,
and the man with no neck at all, no collar, no tie,
    no shirt.

When we get home dinner will be ready-cooked and probably
    half-eaten.
In the 26-storey office tower with the tarmac'd windows
the automatic VDUs sing to the air-conditioning and the
    lifts are out of order now for 2½ weeks.

Three blocks away,
I take a razor to dissect the goldfish and stick it back
    together again with Aruldite, then dissect it again
    this time with a masonry chisel, then stick it back
    together again this time with Sellotape before
    burying it at the end of the garden with the 2 cats
    Minstrel and Muffet both dead by car.

All to show that suffering is not important,
not where it's at.

When the black thunder clouds turn into the businessman's
    black umbrella shielding the world from strange radio
    waves,

2 teenagers roast a gull under the cliffs and have it in
    a basket with chips and drink from a gully of sweat
    or dew, it's hard to tell from a distance.
And it would be wrong to compare lips or teeth,
                                eyes or eyes,
                                deaths or deaths.

The only way to die is standing up,
the history books say so,
that the breakdown of civilization is caused not by the way
    we treat ourselves but the way we treat our animals.

We hear that the overhead railway is not to be built
    until 1982, but it is already costing us money.
But it would be wrong to condemn dreams.

No
No
No

It is not suffering that is important,
but the pursuit of white horses from castles into the sea,
albeit by those who are unable to swim.

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MARTIN STANNARD
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LETTUCES

from Fruit & Veg

Firm and crisp or soft and floppy,
lettuces grow in neat rows
and look best against black earth.

Slugs are entitled to their share
because they like lettuce.

After eating lots of lettuce
you will become beautiful,
and sleepy.

Lettuces, whether you've grown
or bought them,
are nice to come home to.

Children, sometimes, are named Lettice.

A lettuce among lettuces
is just another one.
But what of a lettuce
dumped on the lounge table
and left there by itself?
To the rest of the room
it becomes the mysterious stranger,
ogled at, whispered about.

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DAVID CARR
****

MISSING PERSON

Muldoon?...Muldoon?...
Shall we be hearing from you soon?

Muldoon?...
It's wrong, Muldoon, it's wrong
that you should stay away so long.

Muldoon!

Muldoon, shall we
be hearing from you soon?

Muldoon?...Muldoon?...

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DAVID CARR
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THE MARQUIS DE SADE

The Marquis de Sade got back inside the erupting volcano
That he came from
With fringes still on his beautiful hands
His eyes like a girl's
And that reason no different from every man for himself
that was
His alone
But from the lounge phosphorescent with the lamps of entrails
He has not stopped issuing mysterious commands
That open up a breach in the moral night
It is through this breach that I see
The large crackling shadows, the old undermined bark
Dissolving
To allow me to love you
The way the first man loved the first woman
In complete freedom
That freedom
For which fire actually made itself human
For which the Marquis de Sade fended the centuries off
from his huge abstract trees
From tragic acrobats
Clamped on the thread of the Virgin of desire

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ANDRE BRETON
****

translated by Keith Dersley
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REDDISH-PURPLE EYES

Reddish-purple eyes of the little Babylonian girl who
is too white
Her navel the setting for a stone of the same colour
When the hand of Jacqueline X
Opens like a casement window on a garden at night
How hurtful you are at the bottom of this hand
Timeless eyes forever wet
Sweetness, you could call yourself the reticence of the
prophet
That's what it is made of, today, yesterday and to-
morrow
I sing the unique light of coincidence
The joy of leaning out of the great wheel-window of the
glacier above me
The marvellous percolations that one realises one fine
day have made a trumpet out of the floorboards
The gateway of occurences strange but at first sight
insignificant
And their gift to myself of a final dizzy appropriation
I sing your fatal horizon
You who screw up invisibly in the hand of my love
Between the curtain of life
And the curtain of the heart
Reddish-purple eyes
Last letters
Of the secret alphabet of absolute necessity

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ANDRE BRETON
****

translated by Keith Dersley
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NO-PLACE

Art of days and of nights
The balancing of wounds whose name is I'm Sorry
Red and sensitive balance with the weight of a bird's flight
When the horsewomen with necks of snow, their hands empty
Push their chariots of vapour on the meadows
This ceaseless maddened balance I can see it
I can see the well-mannered ibis
That comes back from the pond laced in my heart
The wheels of the dream enchant the splendid ruts
That lift themselves very high on the shells of their robes
And astonishment leaps here and there on the sea
Go away dear daybreak, don't forget any part of my life
Take these roses that climb in the wells in mirrors
Take these flutterings of every eyelash
Take everything, even the threads that hold up the steps of
the high-wire dancers and those of the drops of water
Art of days and of nights
I am at the window very faraway in a city full of terror
Outside men in opera hats follow each other at regular in-
tervals
Like the rain I used to love
Although it was such a lovely day
"God's Wrath" is the name of a public house I went into
yesterday
It is written on the white wall in letters even paler
But the lady sailors who glide behind the window panes
Are too happy to be timorous
Never bodies here, always a murder that can't be proved
Never the sky, always silence
Never any freedom except for that of freedom itself

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ANDRE BRETON
****

translated by Keith Dersley
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Silence
in a living room :
a naked girl
cuts strips
from a blanket
a man
with a luminous
eyepatch
slowly
licks his fingertips
as the outline
of a hand
diffidently
draws circles
on the window.

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IAN ROBINSON
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