

POETRY LOS ANGELES I



POETRY LOS ANGELES I

Edited by

JAMES BOYER MAY THOMAS MCGRATH PETER YATES

First published by Villiers Publications Ltd., London, 1958

A reset edition, with an introduction,
biographical notes and notes on publication

Poetry Los Angeles I was first published in London by Villiers Publications Ltd., Ingestre Road, London N.W.5, with the copyright notice “© Villiers Publications Ltd. 1958” on the verso of the title leaf. It was printed at the Press of Villiers Publications. The book is frequently cited as 1959; the object itself says 1958.

This edition reproduces the complete text of that book — every poem, the editors’ prefatory note, the dedication and the Acknowledgements — reset in modern type from a scan of a copy of the first and only printing. It is not a facsimile. The introduction, the note on the text, the biographical notes, the notes on publication and the note on rights are new, and are the responsibility of the present edition alone.

The 1958 book stated, on the verso of its half-title: “Permission to reprint work herein, other than quotations for review purposes, must be obtained from the authors.” That instruction still governs. Villiers’ copyright notice was taken for the benefit of the individual poets, and rights in these poems rest with their authors and their estates, not with the publisher of record and not with this edition. See “A Note on Rights and Provenance” at page 125.

Set in Palatino. Prepared August 12, 2026.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: A READING IN LOS ANGELES, 1957–58.....	1
A NOTE ON THIS EDITION	9
POETRY LOS ANGELES I (1958)	
The Editors' Note	15
Dedication	17
Josephine Ain.....	19
Melissa Blake	25
Gene Frumkin	31
Guy Daniels	37
Sid Gershgoren	41
Stanley Kiesel.....	45
Thomas McGrath	51
James Boyer May	57
Bert Meyers.....	63
Gil Orlovitz.....	67
William Pillin	71
Lawrence P. Spingarn	77
Ann Stanford	83
Edmund Teske.....	87
Zack Walsh	91
Mel Weisburd	93
Curtis Zahn.....	97
Peter Yates.....	103
Acknowledgements (1958).....	109
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.....	111
NOTES ON PUBLICATION.....	121
A NOTE ON RIGHTS AND PROVENANCE	125
SOURCES	129

INTRODUCTION: A READING IN LOS ANGELES, 1957–58

Everything we know for certain about the Poetry Los Angeles reading series is printed on the second leaf of this book. Poems were read aloud in public somewhere in Los Angeles across roughly a year; three men chose to gather what they had heard; the poets themselves picked which of their poems went in. The series, the note says, “was founded to help poets engross their work by reading it aloud,” and the book is “an extension of the same mutual self-interest.” Then a sentence that sounds like a definition and is really a description of a room: “A poet is one who in company thinks alone and offers his experience as a poem.”

No venue is named. No founding date is given. No later account of the series has been traced — not in the standard histories of Los Angeles poetry, not in the finding aids of the participants’ archives, not in any accessible contemporary press. What survives of Poetry Los Angeles is this pamphlet: about sixty-eight unnumbered pages in pictorial wrappers, eighteen poets, printed in London, never reprinted. Bill Mohr, who has written the standard history of poetry in this city, calls it “scarcely bigger than an issue of a little magazine” — and also the first anthology of Los Angeles poets of any significant length, after which nothing of comparable scope appeared for decades.

That combination is what makes the book worth resetting. It is slight, and it is a hinge.

THE THREE EDITORS

The most surprising thing about *Poetry Los Angeles I* is that its three editors had no institutional reason to be in a room together.

James Boyer May (1904–1981, on a single uncorroborated source) ran *Trace* from Los Angeles from 1952 to 1970. *Trace* mattered less for what it

printed than for what it listed: it carried the running international directory of little magazines that became the direct ancestor of the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*. May was a switchboard. He connected Alan Swallow in Denver to Len Fulton in northern California, and both to correspondents in Tokyo, Sydney and London. He had no university post and little critical standing of his own. He had, instead, everyone's address.

Thomas McGrath (1916–1990) had taught at Los Angeles State College from 1951 until his dismissal, which followed directly from his appearance as an unfriendly witness before the House Committee on Un-American Activities when the hearings reached Los Angeles in 1953. He declined to cooperate partly on aesthetic grounds — art, he told the committee, offers “a view of life according to probability or necessity, not subject to the chance and accident of our real world” — and partly on the plain ground that a teacher who tacks with the political wind cannot teach. He spent the rest of the decade blacklisted: secondary-school teaching, occasional film and television scripts, a spell manufacturing wooden animals. He called these his years of wandering in the wilderness. His house at 2714 Marsh Street in Elysian Valley was the address where the “Marsh Street Irregulars” met on Wednesday nights, and the address that opens *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*, which he had begun in 1954.

Peter Yates (1909–1976) founded Evenings on the Roof in April 1939 with his wife, the pianist Frances Mullen, in their Schindler-designed house at 1735 Micheltorena Street. The first program was all Bartók and the audience was nineteen people. Within fifteen years it was the most consequential new-music series in the American West, championing Ives, Cage, Harrison and the Second Viennese School, and Yates ran it in the evenings — for twenty-five years his day job was employment counsellor for the California State Employment Service. In September 1954 he handed the series to Lawrence Morton, who renamed it the Monday Evening Concerts. By 1957 Yates had been free of it for three years. He was music correspondent of *Arts & Architecture*, the magazine of the Case Study Houses, and the finding aid for his papers at UC San Diego describes him, without apology, as “music critic, author, teacher, and poet.”

An editor with an address book, a poet who could not get hired, and a music critic between projects. The book itself tells us how they met: “To Mae Babitz, who first brought us together.”

MAE BABITZ’S LIVING ROOM

Mae Babitz (1911–2003) was an artist and preservationist — she made more than forty drawings of Los Angeles buildings marked for demolition, and with her husband, the violinist Sol Babitz, she co-founded the committee that saved the Watts Towers. She is now most often mentioned as the mother of Eve Babitz. The finding aid for her papers at UCLA records, in one sentence, what the dedication is pointing at: she “hosted regular meetings of like-minded artists, poets and musicians,” among them the Stravinskys, Bernard Herrmann, Ingolf Dahl and Kenneth Rexroth.

No document has been found that describes Mae Babitz introducing May to McGrath to Yates, and none may exist. But the contributor list argues for the salon rather than the seminar. It includes a photographer of real distinction (Edmund Teske), a studio potter (William Pillin, who threw the vessels his wife Polia painted), a music critic, a smog inspector, a picture framer and gilder, a kindergarten teacher, a screenwriter on contract to Columbia, and one poet with a university teaching career behind him and ahead of him. That is an arts-scene roster. It is not what an English department produces.

It is worth naming the shape of the thing directly, as an inference rather than a fact: the Poetry Los Angeles formula — a serial, non-commercial, performer-centred public presentation founded to help poets “engross their work by reading it aloud,” with a book as an extension of the same mutual self-interest — is Evenings on the Roof transposed from chamber music to verse. Yates described his concert series as existing “for the pleasure of the performers.” No source states the connection. The two sentences state it well enough on their own.

TWO MAGAZINES THAT BARELY SPOKE

Los Angeles in 1957 had two literary networks that overlapped only slightly, and this book is the one object that puts them on the same masthead.

Coastlines was founded in 1955 by Mel Weisburd and Gene Frumkin, both students of McGrath's — Frumkin came to poetry through an adult-education class McGrath taught, Weisburd through his course at Los Angeles State College, and both were Marsh Street Irregulars. It was locally rooted, politically committed, and funded by readings held in supporters' hillside houses, often with jazz, which Weisburd recorded on a reel-to-reel tape machine. Weisburd's day job was inspector for the Los Angeles County Air Pollution Control District: he was, in the most literal available sense, the smog-era Los Angeles poet. Four contributors to this book came out of that circle. Sid Gershgoren and Josephine Ain both appear in Estelle Gershgoren Novak's later anthology drawn from *Coastlines* and *The California Quarterly*; Frumkin and Weisburd founded the magazine it draws on. Bert Meyers moved in the same circle.

Trace was the other network: international, unaligned, indifferent to locality. It is the likeliest explanation for the presence in a Los Angeles anthology of Gil Orlovitz, a Philadelphia-born New York poet and novelist who happened to be in Hollywood on a Columbia Pictures screenwriting contract, and it explains the magazines in the Acknowledgements at the back of this book. Alongside *Poetry* and *The Sewanee Review* you will find *Kast* (Japan), *Prism* (Australia) and *Pan*. None of the three has been identified, and all three are May's own credits — as is a fourth unidentified title, *Poetry Broadside*, credited to Daniels. They are exactly the sort of ephemeral English-language sheet that *Trace* existed to map and that left no catalogue footprint at all.

THE YEAR IT WAS NOT

The dates matter here more than usual, because 1957–58 is a narrow window between two national stories about West Coast poetry, and this book falls into the gap.

Behind it: the Six Gallery reading of October 1955, and then, on 25 March 1957, U.S. Customs seizing 520 copies of *Howl and Other Poems* as they were imported from England. The obscenity trial that followed made City Lights and Ginsberg national news.

Ahead of it: Lawrence Lipton's *The Holy Barbarians* (1959), the Gas House on Ocean Front Walk, and the national arrival of the beatnik — a Los Angeles story, told about Venice, by a promoter most of the poets in

this book could not stand. Weisburd's attack on Lipton in *Coastlines* was titled "The Merchant of Venice."

Mohr's observation is the sharpest thing anyone has said about the contents of this anthology: "None of the poets in Venice West (such as Stuart Perkoff and Bruce Boyd) are included in *Poetry Los Angeles*." That exclusion was not corrected for fifteen years, until the Vangelisti-Bukowski-Cherkovski *Anthology of L.A. Poets* in 1973.

So the assertion being made by this small book, in the year it was made, was double-edged. It said that there was a Los Angeles poetry distinct from San Francisco's. It also said that the Los Angeles poetry about to be sold to the country was not it. Read now, the second claim is the more poignant, because the beatniks got the century's attention and the poets in these pages mostly did not.

WHY A LOS ANGELES BOOK WAS PRINTED IN LONDON

The imprint is not an affectation. Villiers Publications Ltd. of Ingestre Road, London N.W.5, was a jobbing letterpress house that had become, for a few extraordinary years, the printer of American West Coast poetry. It printed at least eight of the first ten titles in the City Lights Pocket Poets series — Rexroth, Patchen, Ponsot, Levertov, Williams, Prévert, Duncan, and *Howl*. The 520 copies U.S. Customs seized in March 1957 had come from Ingestre Road.

May had a standing relationship with the firm. He is identified in one small-press history simply as "Villiers' James Boyer May," his papers at California State University, Fullerton index Villiers Publications as an associated name, and he had already produced a London-printed American anthology, *Eight American Poets*, in 1952. The usual explanation offered for the practice — that British letterpress work was cheap enough in the 1950s to make short runs of poetry viable — is plausible and often repeated, but no source consulted for this edition states it, and it is set down here as folklore rather than fact. What can be said is narrower and sufficient: this is the printer May used, and he used it again.

One consequence is odd enough to note. On this book Villiers is not merely the printer. The copyright stands in Villiers' name and Villiers appears as publisher, while the front matter simultaneously directs all permissions to the individual poets. A London printing house was

the publisher of record for a book that was, in every other respect, an American production made by people who had met in a house in Los Angeles.

WHAT IS IN THE BOOK

The order is worth a word, because the book does not follow its own contents page. That page lists eighteen poets alphabetically; the sequence actually printed departs from it twice, setting Frumkin before Daniels and Zahn before Yates. This edition follows the printed sequence, which is presumably the editors' arrangement — the note says the poems were "arranged by the editors" — rather than the alphabetical list.

The range is wider than a scene anthology usually manages. Josephine Ain opens with a long sequence of spare, aphoristic fragments; Melissa Blake follows with what is essentially a syllabic sequence; Frumkin and Daniels are formal and sardonic; Orlovitz arrives with a page of staggered, Joycean commercial delirium in which the Song of Songs is rewritten as a stock quotation. Yates closes the book with poems to Ives, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, a twelve-tone joke, and a view from his own window of "the fabled city in the triangle between mountains." The editors' disclaimer — "The poems, as grouped here, do not represent any predetermined thesis or posture" — is unusually truthful.

Two things in the book deserve to be better known.

The first is McGrath's contribution: Section IV.1 of *Letter to an Imaginary Friend*, headed "(for Alice)," for Alice Greenfield McGrath. Part One of the *Letter* was not published as a book until Alan Swallow issued it in 1962. The complete four-part poem did not appear in one volume until Copper Canyon Press in 1997. The printing here therefore precedes the poem's first book publication by four years, and no source consulted for this edition records it. That is a negative finding, made against the sources reachable without archive access, and it should be checked against the acknowledgements pages of the 1962, 1970 and 1997 volumes before anyone repeats it as a bibliographical claim. But it appears to be an early and largely unrecorded appearance of one of the significant American long poems of the century, in a sixty-eight-page pamphlet printed in north London.

The second is the quality of the near-invisible. Josephine Ain published, so far as can be determined, no book of her own; nothing whatever is recorded of Melissa Blake or Zack Walsh. Their poems are here. Whatever else an anthology does, it is sometimes the only place a body of work survives at all, and three of the eighteen poets in this one are known to posterity through these pages and, for two of them, nowhere else.

POETRY LOS ANGELES II

The numeral on the cover announces a series. No second volume has been traced in any bookseller listing, library catalogue or bibliography, and Mohr's history moves from this book straight to 1973. The group dispersed quickly: McGrath left California for New York in 1960, Frumkin for New Mexico in 1966; *Coastlines* wound down in the mid-sixties and *Trace* ran to 1970.

The likeliest reading is that Poetry Los Angeles was a year of evenings and one pamphlet, and that the "I" records an intention rather than a series. It would not be the first time a small press numbered a first volume optimistically. But the readings themselves are not lost beyond recovery. Mel Weisburd's papers at California State University, Los Angeles include forty-two reel-to-reel tapes from his own collection, several of them digitised. One, catalogued simply as a Los Angeles poetry reading of 1 March 1958, has Weisburd and Frumkin reading, and several unidentified poets besides. It falls inside the year this book says it draws on. Nobody has yet said who else is on the tape.

A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

This is a reset edition, not a facsimile. The complete text of the 1958 book is here — all eighteen poets, the editors' prefatory note, the dedication and the Acknowledgements — but it has been newly typeset, and the physical book has not been imitated.

SOURCE

The text was transcribed from a scan of a copy of the first and only printing, sixty-nine imaged pages. The scanned copy carries a pencilled library call number beginning PS 572 — consistent with the Library of Congress schedule, where PS 561–572 covers collections of American literature of the West and Central states — and pink felt-tip annotation by a later reader on four pages. Those marks are recorded below but not reproduced.

METHOD

The scan carried an optical character recognition layer. It was used only as a first draft. Every page was then read against the page image, and the pages were additionally measured: rendered at 200–300 dpi, with the vertical position, height and left edge of every line of type computed directly from the pixels. This matters more for verse than for prose. Optical recognition reliably drops the blank line between stanzas, flattens indentation to the left margin, loses italics and silently normalises unusual spelling. In a book containing Gil Orlovitz's staggered four-stop indentation and Peter Yates's permutational settings, a transcription that trusted the recognition layer would have destroyed the poems while appearing to preserve them.

Stanza breaks were therefore confirmed by measured line gaps — roughly double the normal line pitch — rather than inferred. Indentation

was reconstructed from measured left offsets. Line counts per page were checked against the measured number of rows of type.

The exercise found real errors. Two entire stanzas of Bert Meyers's "Rainy Day" and the whole opening stanza of "Once, in Autumn" had been dropped by the recognition layer, along with the title of "Because There's So Much Speed"; all three losses fall exactly where a later reader's pink highlighter crosses the page. The refrain of Gene Frumkin's "Poem for Childhood" — "I haven't heard from Crazy Horse in years" — is italic and had been set as roman. Whole lines had been merged with their neighbours in McGrath and in Curtis Zahn.

WHAT HAS BEEN PRESERVED

Every line break, stanza break and indentation as printed. Original spelling and punctuation throughout, including *Thru*, *savour*, *tranquilize*, *trees*, *layed*, *marmareal*, *giddeap*, *siderial* and the accent in *ambivalence*. Nothing has been corrected. The epigraph to Guy Daniels's "A Federal Poet" is printed "Spring, 1985" in the original, which is a compositor's transposition of 1958; it is left as it stands.

The book's printed sequence has been followed, which differs from its own alphabetical contents page in setting Gene Frumkin before Guy Daniels and Curtis Zahn before Peter Yates.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

The 1958 book set the poet's name in small type at the foot of every page. That device has been replaced with a section opener for each poet and a running head.

The original was letterpress-set in the Continental manner, with a thin space before a colon, semicolon, question mark or exclamation point — "daybreak !", "Rose Red :". This is uniform house style across all eighteen poets, not authorial punctuation, and it has been closed up. Where the compositor set a wide space after a sentence period he did so inconsistently, and modern spacing has been used throughout.

The 1958 compositor also set each poem's text block at a different distance from the left margin, and the same poem can sit at different margins on facing pages — Ann Stanford's "The Bear" moves more than

an inch between one leaf and the next. This is page make-up rather than prosody, and each poem has been set flush to a common left margin. Indentation *within* poems is fully preserved.

Five long lines were too wide for the 1958 measure. The compositor broke the word with a hyphen and ran the remainder onto the next typographic line, in four cases setting the runover full-out to the left, further left than the poem's own block. A turnover is not a line break, and each pair has been rejoined here into the single verse line it was: *forty-seven* in Frumkin's " 'Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska' "; *upright, posterred* and *also* in May's "And Keep This Christmas All the Year"; and *punningly* in the same poem, which is May's own coinage and has not been regularised to *punningly*. Frumkin's hyphen in *forty-seven* is the poet's and has been kept; the other four hyphens were the printer's and have not.

Poem titles were printed in small capitals and are set in small capitals here. A very small number of unusually long lines, chiefly in James Boyer May, Peter Yates and Edmund Teske, exceed the measure of this page and turn with a hanging indent; in the original they did not turn.

WHERE DOUBT REMAINS

Three matters could not be settled from the scan and are recorded rather than resolved. Whether a stanza break falls at four particular page turns in the Kiesel and McGrath sections cannot be determined from a page image, since a break at the foot of a page is invisible; none has been inserted. The exact quad measure of the deepest indentations in Orlovitz, Yates and Daniels is reconstructed from measurement and is accurate to about one character width. And on page 55 of the original, three untitled short poems by Zack Walsh are divided only by white space; they are treated here as three poems rather than one poem in three stanzas, on the evidence that the gaps between them are more than twice the height of a stanza break elsewhere on the same page.

The later reader's pink marks fall on the editors' note, where the words *Poetry Los Angeles* are highlighted; on the contributor list, where *Bert Meyers* is struck through; and on pages 36–37, 63 and 68, in Meyers, Zahn and Yates. Beside the title of Yates's "From My Window" that reader wrote: *nothing personal in L.A.*

One consequence of that felt-tip is worth recording, because it is a trap for anyone working from a scan of this copy rather than the copy. The stroke through Bert Meyers's name on the contributor list destroys it for optical character recognition, so a machine reading of these pages returns a seventeen-name list with Meyers missing — and Meyers then looks like an anomaly, a poet printed in the body and credited in the Acknowledgements but left off the title page. He is not. The list has eighteen names, his among them, and the page image says so plainly.

POETRY LOS ANGELES I

Villiers Publications Ltd., London

copyright 1958

New poetry from Los Angeles, representing work heard during the past year at public readings of Poetry Los Angeles, chosen by the authors and arranged by the editors, James Boyer May, Thomas McGrath, and Peter Yates. The poems, as grouped here, do not represent any predetermined thesis or posture. The editors accept no responsibility for the manner or content of any poems but their own. Poetry Los Angeles was founded to help poets engross their work by reading it aloud. This book is an extension of the same mutual self-interest. A poet is one who in company thinks alone and offers his experience as a poem.

Certain of these poems were originally copyrighted by the publishers of the various magazines listed on the page of Acknowledgements at the close of the book. Permission to reprint work herein, other than quotations for review purposes, must be obtained from the authors.

POETRY LOS ANGELES

Josephine Ain
Melissa Blake
Guy Daniels
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Gil Orlovitz
William Pillin
Lawrence P. Spingarn
Ann Stanford
Edmund Teske
Zack Walsh
Mel Weisburd
Peter Yates
Curtis Zahn

VILLIERS PUBLICATIONS LTD.

The contributor list as printed on the title page of the 1958 book. The poems themselves appear in a slightly different order: Frumkin precedes Daniels, and Zahn precedes Yates.

To Mae Babitz,
who first brought us together.

JOSEPHINE AIN

ASPECTS

I Water

How lakes resemble standing up
And pines a labyrinth of prone

Finally the fear
Falls like a star
To be wished upon.

Thru water, water is a
Stubborn dream,
An infant walking by a fountain,
Milk of a landscape of stone.

By the bridge one sees possibilities
And one is not disturbed.
Forever the lakes of trees rot in the clouds
And fester with birds
And one has not pity left
But the compassion of nearness.

From city to city there are only rivers.

II Music

Fate that is mine the music shades,
An exquisite husky elm.
I rise from being in the sound

Of sainted apparitions.
Enchanted clouds vanish invisible suns,
Corona without light
But meaning well.

And I surround the fragrant porch
With angels from a classic wood.
Transparent statues shine
In far indulgence.

The genuflections of the wind
Remembering the infinite
Of all beginning.

Repeat again, repeat the agony
Of true excuses.

A tree heavy in evening
An evening not available

Excess of sacred sense
Spain where we do not dwell.

III Night

Shadow where the song
Is like itself
Into which a lake may sink
And be remembered.

Shadow where all my privileges wait
A discreet distance like a lewd image,
Shall I refuse to sleep
Amongst kinsmen?

Shall I refuse to walk
After the sensuous shepherd?
Morning is a vision without shelter
Morning of an inexorable charm.

I have exacted what the night exacts
A lit dream, exalted silence.

Mine is the vow without sanctions
And without myself.

With what flowers the mystery colors
My stupidity.
I am not even humble.
For I am sleep.

IV Man

There is finally the rain
In its sheltering time
All things cease in want.

Only a man is different
Who is what he is not.

If you would save him, you must not despair.
He is in earnest with all his selves.

Accompanied by a sky
Correct with destiny.

And we pretend to understand
Why the angel should be afraid
And why the messenger should stammer.

Country-clad itinerant
Have you a road of your own?
You pass by cities
As one obsessed
By a journey.

You are manifestly lonely
On the road always a road
No matter what.

What if one day the excursion end?
Will the domain of your freedom
Extend even to death?

V The Soul

Who imagines that he lives
Imagines he becomes.

An image in a startled glass
Raising its doubled fist.

Tell me, oh frenzy,
What windows break?
Existence, you may not assault.

Anger is a tendency to bloom.

The antique vigor of a kiss.
The ancient house of a new birth.

Sometimes a longing is strong
To want perfection.

Where space its lucid shaft
Idiosyncrasy of light
Makes permanent the dark,
Where love seraphic asks
Am I not my own self?
Or am I not even yet?

Meaning to love forever
I must first become immortal.

Around the angels fountains gleamed
A lucid light of law.
For order was their harmony,
A grace of being so.

Rest in the raptures of the soul
Was like a journey of the whole.
Nowhere to go.

Leave me severe in morning pure.
The sensual adore God.

Lyric Mother, let love go.

After the dream of heaven
Only may heaven be.

The matter of fact blue
Of imponderable skies

This ever letting go
Of beauty and of God.

MELISSA BLAKE

I

From what source will come
Sharp words to savour the life
Of this bare moment?

Facing the warm stove
Window of sun at my back,
Waiting to begin.

Shared experience
Is not to be counted on.
Separateness is.

In such brevity
The musical worth of sounds
May be lost or torn.

The face of a word
Bears only one expression
In this, my language.

But ambivalence,
The naked mode of all life
Flashes in the eye.

Nothingness lonely
Can be, can be drowned in, drowned
In five syllables.

On paper pages
Spiral wheeling nebulae
Carry me along.

In a diagram
The nucleus of an atom
Pierces my bland skin.

Drugs may tranquilize,
A cup of tea enliven —
I am neither one.

But outside the self
One ant cleans up the debris
Of a dead cricket.

Why must this be said?
How can it be understood?
At times I almost ...

II

To write more haiku
May not add to my prestige
But the form seems right:

The haiku gives me
Permission to ask questions
Apostrophize birds,

Record the weather,
Celebrate other creatures
And the growth of plants.

'Haikai is simply
What is happening in this place,
At this moment.'

Or so Basho said
When reproached by his teacher
For neglecting Zen.

Basho quoted then
A haiku he had written —
A rather strange one:

'A Rose of Sharon
Growing by the roadside;
The horse has eaten it.'

The master exclaimed:
'Is there such a deep meaning
In haikai also?'

III

Materialist
Inspired — or even forlorn —
May become Buddhist.

An intuition
Of microcosm implies
Plenitude of awe.

Even a casual
Enumeration of stars
Blinds like a lash.

Decision can be,
After much baffled searching,
Accept acceptance.

In either world view
Living creatures must endure
Desolate transience.

To forego the hope
Of acquiring true wisdom
Is discouraging.

Nobody believes
Truth can be trapped by reading
Pages and pages.

To strive, and then leap!
To the secret of all things!
An attractive choice.

Ten difficulties,
At least ten, separate me
From revelation.

First: meditation
Produces, not awareness
But more poetry.

Identifying
With each living thing may be
Merely aesthetic.

Also, step by step
Balancing on each action,
Each thought, is painful.

Involuntary
State of poverty is not
The same as a vow.

Eating little food
To avoid gaining more weight —
Asceticism?

As for attachment:
Thousands of frail spider webs
Broken, then mended.

Arrow's directness
Is deflected, thwarted
By duality.

The mirror reflects
Today's self, and not that face
Before I was born.

How does one practise
Such exquisite precepts

In the stolid West?

No one can help me.

The path is obscured by weeds,

All of them fragrant.

GENE FRUMKIN

THE HAWK AND THE LIZARD

Attacking heaven, the hawk loses his prey,
 melting into the sun,
at first a sparrow then a midge
 and finally the wind.
 Heaven becomes
a mountainous solitude.

In the fields the wheat is ancient with rain and sun,
 beards on the stalks
shaking sadly at some holocaust,
 old men believing death
is manna, life a long starvation.
 Heaven is a hard landlord,
taking the rent of mind and body as
 it swallowed the hawk's flight.
But what is orchard, what is farm
 without belief?
Are the roots secure, believable?

 The lizard has no doubts
but is the solid faith of the stone
from which he follows the sun diurnally.
Such golden navigation suffices him,
 each quick swallow of his throat
 recording adulation.
Held by the great hypnotic eye,

the lizard feels the sun's direction
toward him, always toward him.
And if his tail falls off, there will be another,
another endlessly, till the sun falls too.

But in the night the hawk returns
(the intellectual night
when heaven is a cold, black slab)
and there, above, still darkly strives,
his desperate wings beat at the moon,
attack again the ages' invisible prey.

Belief exceeding belief.

THAT GIRL WHO FOLLOWS ME

That indestructible girl, shaggily striding,
(stocky, with fat fingers, her breasts round loaves,
and thoughts a cage of squabbling doves)
finds me in whatever cave I may be hiding.

Between us was the field of my disdain,
that barren mood her loving flesh patrolled
with good humor and patience. Unkindly, my cold
eye called her cow; she squeezed her milk from pain.

I knew, and now know better, what dreams can do:
how they dissolve the factual terrain
until the world contracts to the scope of the brain,
and what we hope, in our gypsy ball, is true.

In buxom optimism, bold she grew,
became the bull and I the frightened maid.
I leaped her fence of dreams (though she still stayed)
and ran where her love, I thought, could not pursue:

to other arms, more delicate and downy.
I too have falsely turned my cards of love,
for she, hot in my blood, trails my each move
and hunts me down, she cowboy and I pony.

'IOWA, KANSAS, NEBRASKA'

Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska,
all combustible country
under a tortured sky.
Nothing ever happens here
except loneliness;
wheatfields squirming in the sun,
the plains dry as biscuits.

Yet the people grow.

In the Oklahoma air
oil is prince of blossoms;
Texas is the Kingdom.

Fortune's richest man
plays croquet in Dallas.
He is seventy,
afraid of centipedes,
hesitates at watery places,
for a gypsy slipped him once
the dark blue ace of drowning,
never kissed a woman
(nor a man either),
likes to ride his zebra
several times each morning
round his private race-track,
bought the Lone Star his third
year collecting our planet,
later added forty-seven others: stars, white,
plays croquet in Dallas
at four o'clock in starlight.

Yet, somehow, the people grow.

LAKE REVISITED

It is a perfect autumn:
the water moves the curlbrown leaves to life

and we are again together in the sum
of many scars of weather,
in the same boat on the duckcloud lake,
your husband and my wife
mere leaves lazily turning in our wake.

I speak as if I loved you once:
that was a lie we shared.
And when you said you loved me,
it was only the pain of your body
caught by its own sensual bait.
I remember now your former presence:
a breath within my breath: a silence.
Our love is late.
This drifting indolent mood
reflects the lovers' gaze we'd never dared,
and we know the way the water moves is good.

POEM FOR CHILDHOOD

By the coast of the sea of glittering hair
we walked the nighttime tide on stilts
hearing the talk of birds
on the waves far below us:
quicksilver cries shooting through air
to show us
the world is swift as slippery tears.
But now what do they say? I don't know.
I haven't heard from Crazy Horse in years.

My child's brain agape with wonder —
aquarium of darting thoughts —
swallowed all it saw and heard;
the world those days was joy enough to plunder.
But it tightened, grew small as tears
(so quickly I didn't even know).
I haven't heard from Crazy Horse in years.

The green heroic soldier died,

his tunic chipped and bayonet broken;
the gallant fortress finally tore
in the middle of a war;
the ambulance ride
stopped at the spot
where the fourth wheel
vanished beneath a cot.
(My baby's pants are always wet,
and that is real,
and her game of grins and tears).
Custer's last word was spoken
on my Big Horn rug a World War Two ago.
And I haven't heard from Crazy Horse in years.

GUY DANIELS

A PROPHECY

(After Lermontov)

A year will come — for Russia, a dark year —
When the crown so long worn by the czars will fall;
The crowd will lose its former love for them,
And many will be fed on blood and death.
Then innocent young children and young wives
Will not be guarded by the trampled laws;
And Plague from stinking bodies of the dead
Will roam the streets of mourning villages,
And Hunger's teeth will tear at this poor land,
And reddening skies will make the rivers red.
On that day will appear a powerful man.
And you will know him, and will understand
Why in his grasp he holds a blade of steel.
And woe to you! Your weeping and your groans
Will only make him laugh. And everything
About him will be frightening and dark,
Like his black cloak, beneath his towering brow.

THE SAIL

(After Lemontov)

A lone sail makes a patch of whiteness
Against the blue mist on the sea.

What is he seeking in far places?
What has he put behind, to flee?

The waves leap up, the wind is whistling,
The mast is laboring, and creaks.
It isn't happiness he flees from,
Alas! not happiness he seeks.

Below, the sparkling bright blue water;
Above, the sun, golden and round.
But he, rebellious, seeks the tempest,
As though in tempests peace were found!

SONNET FOR ANNE

Somewhere beyond all music was that place
I travelled to: the way led through strange lands
Where words were noisy rattles in the hands
Of shrunken, bearded babes; where Mother's face
Flowered and died and bloomed again; where fires
Of fear swept through the tangled past, and all
My loves came running wildly, to fall
Dead in the clearings of black-stumped desires.
I came at last to that place where Before
And After meet and merge into those things
That even music cannot say. Dark wings
Eclipsed the sun; dark, lonely was the shore
Of your deep fragrance, wherein every sound
Was stilled, and all my dark-eyed girls lay drowned.

THE MOORING LINE

(After Paul Fort)

Why try to patch up the affair?
Is loving worthwhile after all?
The mooring line's broken, my dear.
Was it you that was tugging too hard?

Was it me? Was it God? Was it somebody else? Well,
It's broken, and who's to blame no one can tell.

Love goes into so many hearts,
It's a line passed to so many ships,
And it's wound around so many bitts,
Whose fault is it if the line parts?

There are too many lovers on earth all heaving away at one sin.
Is it really the fault of love if the rope is worn so thin?

Why try to patch up the affair?
Is loving worthwhile after all?
The mooring line's broken, my dear.
And it's you that was tugging too hard.

A FEDERAL POET

Beloit Poetry Journal

Spring, 1985

(Composed upon learning of the existence of an organization
calling itself the Federal Poets)

I'm stuck. My images are all cartoons:
Churchill and his cigar; the French premier's
Romanesque nose; the smirks and solemn sneers
On the faces of Congressional buffoons.
Or when (frustrated journalist) I'm moved
To fantasy, I prophesy the year
Of Armageddon, and profess to hear
The stirring of the next bombs in the womb.
And so it goes. Good God! I'd rather be
A pure Romantic, quite unfederalized —
Old Wordsworth, watching (from some pleasant lee)
The sun go down between a milkmaid's thighs;
Or Baudelaire, seeing in his dark Ennui,
Reflections of his own hypnotic eyes.

A BIOLOGIST LOOKS AT THE CIVIL SERVICE

This curious growth, labelled a noxious weed
By every politician,
Is actually part plant, part pedigreed
Academician.

And though at times they scarcely seem alive,
These very much neglected
And misused florae and/or faunae thrive
Where least expected.

In fact, it has been claimed they'll live forever.
But most experts incline
Towards the French view: they sometimes die, but never
Never resign.

ENVOI

For best results, spray with Security,
Promise higher positions,
And keep in humid, crowded places, free
Of Inquisitions.

SID GERSHGOREN

CLEANING WOMAN

Kneeling to no one she lights the empty lengths
of cooling halls that all doors open on —
the used up passion of abandoned places —
nightly: till her labor break through to daylight.

Kind now, she gilds each tarnished grace
to an impersonal perfection that glows.
Turns to compartments in their singular needs.
Over the magic lamps she hunts to brightness.

'But (roaring of seashell) she hollows out a room
and finds the shirtsleeves of a night's madness,
finds the unappropriated mirrors of a dream,
the lost manifestoes in the numbing light
of countless closets, and finally the paintings
cursing with no one in the empty room.'

But sick in a frond of lightbulbs explaining
a hallway, she will go home and there will find
the perfect order waiting on her doormat,
in the simple living that admits only one angel:
The small personal radiance of her desires
amidst the impersonal huge throats of her labor.

THE TROUBLE WITH THE TIMES

Although the wood never laments
soaking in the wounds of varnished bars, judging
the broken bread full of static like a radio,
or judging those holding in the moon-alleys the cracked tennis ball,
wondering where the motion went,
or those poor souls that cry at the sight of chains —
the world caught between commercials leaves the night ajar,
and the rose of blowing sheets is never dead.
Therefore the horse perpetually winds a tunnel for a violin,
and the bones on melting snow find fires;
and a light oiled in winter's wound up siderial lexicon
proves that the tautologies of tides are never useless.

And that hawk is not a mobile
(at night, as in proof, the moon cracks its cheap plaster)
He hovers over the always-cellophane fox-fields.
Oh, all is clear but blurred gold
and the country is only a barn, a talking tree,
a face of catcher's masks under strong wind
where no fox weeps for our Chanticleers
and the wanderer, sick with radios, has gone staring
off through the old valleys.

WHITE SANDS CINERAMA

On lines of purest sundial
the smoke, like morning of Samson,
pushes bomb and reality away.
A suture of wind to the smoke
and all that's left is
Scarecrow Cactus,
sole propagation of questioning man.

The sidewinder understanding,
weaves a wonder in the sand;
a lizard's tongue blows
a stringy sibilant

to the wind's mandolin,
and the copper foxes
are pierced again
by the metal light,
yet somehow are immortal in their element.

But where are the dips in the road
that operated on my stomach last year?
And where are they,
the bandaged bankers
with their frozen beards?

Now, only the harsh sound of cracked corn
over the cold stones of ornamental order.
Only the little mornings with the moon,
acicular sunsets,
the hoarse, the speechless birds.

STANLEY KIESEL

FOR THE MAN FROM MARS

The Capitol was the armpit of the nation.
The elected man nothing but a noun.
Thieves were stock-piled. A child matured
In the presence of cockadoodling from the Left
Or decrepit whining from the Right.
Congress was a prevalence of phlegm.

The city was the senior fissure
But in the environs it was worse:
The towns were pimples; grudges were mayors;
Everywhere, men pregnant with blotters.
Streaked courts; armed sentiments;
All, all in thankless rapport.

And what of the World? Europe had a broken neck.
Flunkies scraped her monuments. Asia's thoughts boiled water.
Spain enlarged her oars. And on a bone of gratitude England chewed
And chewed. A plague of unfrocked calendars: Israel;
And France: a prostrate nickname whose little crutch was Paris.
South America: stench. Malicious sunsets in Japan.
And in the 'boot': rankled hearts serving wrinkled fruit.

In the year of nineteen fifty four
The world had a hump on its back.

There is no one man, gift-wrapped, we can run after for directions.
There is no one man who can give our pretexts a blood test.

There is no one man who can connect the wires of wisdom.
And not one who can sew up the holes in our doors.

Go sick a dog on love, deal out derangement's playing cards,
Play, play with the drastic winds of your well-groomed bombs
Masses, Whores, (when have you *not* been kept?) Presidents,
Arch-Pimps, and purveyors of deaths in small pieces;
Those of you with a fence round your genitals
And those of you with outspoken thighs, prurient and hard;
Celebrate your sore; manacle delight; oust honesty;
History at last has taken your temperature:
Shall strew you — with a high moral purpose —
In fractions over the breastworks of the earth.

ON FRIDAY AND ON MONDAY

Shine lemon moon
On the overt harp
Of her Friday foot,
And on the Sunday part,
The lowest part, because it's practised miles
Posting the loveliest rationales.

Shine lemon moon
On the rhetoric vehicle
That rode on the mailman;
For hours my hackle
Was raised, grazing in her letter.
Who's neutral? Not I from the treble
I hear, declaring, scribble, beloved, I'm better.

Sail lemon moon.
The exquisite news
Is postmarked Noon
In the Monday mail,
That her favorite shoes
Remain lost in my room.

A SKETCH

Love was a polar pose, a starched
Pause, a way of being fed
Intravenously; masseurs took liberties;
The night was anybody's door.

At twenty, nation's ping-pong
Made him angry; in a rain of rites
He blasted world and wetnursed beard;
Sly, he'd raise a flag of mirth.

He found, to copulate
With printed matter would
Save him; and wrote. An age
Dismounted from its infancy.

Sending mouth airmail,
Listening to the weather purr,
He was, at last, able to sense
That the world had deserved him
And grew red-faced and hummed.

He grew tenderer
Wearing the night round his thighs.

Seventy, he sat in a smile's museum,
Pathetic, the only mature cloud
In the world. And died
Writing with a yawn's pencil, in a park,
Giving alms to the weather.

AT A PARTY

Comes in neighing, pitching his smile
Like a horseshoe through the room.

I'm here, he said, upholstered, and for sale;
And with that assertion misreads the entire
posture of the evening.
He did the same last year while voyaging:

Would autograph his underwear and sell it underdecks.
But the ocean's not so simple as to bear him
for no fee — he paid a toll:
In the cabin was a sergeant, who fisted him, I hear.
Since that time — I'd heard — he'll touch no
possible till sure.
— Before, there wasn't a negative he wouldn't disarm,
he was so confident.

I loathe him when he's in his war-canoe
Ballyhooing over rug and chair
Hello, hello; I wish he'd take that
Portable disposition of his away;
Or be a sentinel and guard his eyes,
And not be such a plaque hung up for any man to read.

It's the treble, not the bass of this disease
that bothers me.
But then I've had too much to drink;
Better let grin, that old draft horse,
Pull my heavy rage out, giddeap, to that tennis court,
Whose balls possess more gender than that idiot can own.

GONE

Hands, sweaty; bags, warm; spittle, drying.
The grilled screendoor gives way to the hound.
On the loose boards an exchange of time with the
old dawdler
With the cracked eye-shade. For you and friend a
glass of feeling;
And pocketing what he puts in your hand.
The tracks thrum. It rains; and you see a black
puff
That floats down like an aria and off, far off,
Someone running; and then, like a warrant for your
arrest:
The train.

The shoelace-come-loose and the trunk intrude at the
last . . .

The witlessness of a blank reply easing the hands
away.

Then the eye, barefooted, runs . . . flutters around the
tall upraised arm,

Alights on the twig of a smile until the face,

Bolting glances like a food, swings away and is gone.

THOMAS MCGRATH

LETTER TO AN IMAGINARY FRIEND

(for Alice)

IV

1.

The immortal girls, the summer manifestoes
Startle the buzzard in the corpse-bearing tree.

Explosion of daisies in the stricken field.
The lilac is lifting its lavender toward Arcturus ...

Noon's incandescence, autonomy of night
Cracked open throttles on my resurrection bone
My moon-steered master, midnight fisherman
Bound for the Indies ...

Coiffeur of dream, oh bright improbable gold!
The blonde-haired women, crowned as with surplus light,
Curls crisp as lettuce on their bellies porch
And slick and secret when the armpit yawns,
Hair! dimension of heat!

Lit by subliminal suns

That shrink their dresses half way up their thighs
It ripens outward.

Furry as a peach

It licks the hand that hungers at the knee;

And where the back and buttocks sweetly mate
Like queenly empires joined in natural peace
(Equation of the palm! O sweet division!)
Glints like shot silk. And where the pubis thrusts
Into my world to light me into dark
Is stiff and secret as a buried fence
Or bristles friendly as a welcome mat.

Yes: and those soft brunettes, their eyes like caves
Their third eye winking in the knowing dark!
O ox-eyed honeys with the wine dark hair,
Branches of midnight where all moon long and climbed
Punching our tickets on the train toward dawn —
How black your hair!

Belly of smoky wheat,
Buttocks of solid water, legs like a slow dream —

O, as to a citizen of Jupiter's moons
Your soft enormous breasts, over the bare horizon,
Loom, golden and dusky rose, tremendous planets
Pendulous ...

Iris toward the nipple and the nipples pink, veiny
Shot with faint blue ...

And your eyes, O magnificent black-haired women!
Invincibly glazed or wet as a pool-side stone,
Heavy with sleep; and your mouths wide and elastic
And your lips, thickened with heat, which your tongue keeps wetting!
Ah, woman with your ass as thick as a pillow,
With your thighs like deadfalls and the black nest of your sex
Like a midnight hungry quicksand where I drown!
Drown and am born. Upborne! Resurrected!
Startling the buzzard on my shoulder tree.
— I've come through your black pass many's the sunny night!

And the brown-haired women, slim, with their lenten graces,
Or short and thickset and busy as a bear,
Their knees dimpled and their hips slung like a hammock,
Their bellies snug to my gut as a flesh muff;
And the red-heads, electric, with their buttermilk skin,

And the tickle inside the knee, and their burning bush,
With its wise unsleeping bird, more dark than their eyebrows —
Bucking like goats, quicker than minks, randy
As the wild strawberry roan: Sunfishing by moonlight
They have ridden me into a stall where I sleep standing up.

2.

Sweet Jesus at morning! the queenly women of our youth!
The monumental creatures of our summer lust!
Sweet fantastic creatures, as full of juice as plums,
Pneumatic and backless as a functional dream —
Where are ye now?
Where were ye then, indeed?

Walking three-legged in the sexual haze,
Drifting toward the Lion on the bosomy hills of summer
In the hunting light, the marmareal bulge of the moon
I wooed them barebacked in the saddling heat.
First was Inez, her face a looney fiction,
Her bottom like concrete and her wrestling arms;

Fay with her breasts as hard as hand-grenades
(Whose father's shot gun dozed behind the door);
Barefooted Rose, found in the bottom lands
(We layed the flax as flat as forty horses,
The blue bells showering); Amy with her long hair
Drawn in mock modesty between long legs;
And Sandy with her car, who would be driving and do it;
And June who would roll you as in a barrel down hill
(The Gaelic torture); Gin with her snapping trap,
The heliotropic quim: locked in till daybreak;
Literary Esther, who could fox your copy,
And the double Gladys, one blonde, one black.

O great Kingdom of Fuck! And myself: plenipotentiary!
Under the dog star's blaze, in the high rooms of the moonlight,
In the doze and balance of the wide noon,
I hung my pennant from the top of the windy mast
Blue peter, sailing the want-not seas of the summers.

And under the coupling of the wheeling night
Muffled in flesh and clamped to the sweaty pelt
Of Blanche or Betty, threshing the green baroque
Stacks of the long hay — the burrs stuck in our crotch,
The dust thick in our throats so we sneezed in spasm —
Or flat on the floor, on the back seat of a car,
On a groaning trestle table in the Methodist Church basement,
And far in the fields, and high in the hills, and hot
And quick in the roaring cars: by the bridge, by the river,
In Troop Nine's dank log cabin where the Cheyenne flows:
By light, by dark, up on the roof, in the cellar,
In the rattling belfry where the bats complained,
Or backed against trees, or against the squealing fences,
Or belly to belly with no place to lie down
In the light of the dreaming moon.

3.

Dog watch and silence.

In the high school yard, the dust
Settles; of vanished cars, the vast nocturnal migrations.
Under the moon
Paler than flowers the condoms gleam on the lawn.
Delicate, blue
Fragrance of lilac drifts in the night air, purer,
Sweeter than moonlight.

The lilac points to Arcturus.

Points down the street to my Grandfather's clapboard house
To the gimcrack mouldering porch where a beehive sleeps in the wall,
Toward his Irish keening.
'Ay-you, Tom. Avoid the occasion of sin.
You're a quick hand with a book. Pick up an education
And don't run about be the night!

Boy, its a wide
Road runs down to hell and its clear coasting
And the skids are greased for the poor. Boy, be learning!
And up to bed, past the squeaking third step, bearing
Through the whispering grandfather dust, in the bellowing night

of my sex
My little learning (Gladys and Daisy) bearing
The golden apple of my discontent.

4.

The dust settles. Settles like time. The years
Swing round my head like birds.
It is fall, now, evening,
The long and lonesome season.
The car bumps on the wagon road. In the lights
The dust is thick. The cattle hump and shuffle.
The smell of the autumn river in the cold night air
Is wild and alien.

Out of the river pasture,
Out of the gone summer we drive the cattle.
They plod the road, blind in the carlights' dazzle,
Docile enough. The car bumps and complains.
Wally is driving. The car crawls in low gear
And the dash-light gleams in the hair of my littlest brother.
'Where will you go?' he says. 'Is it far to the town
Where they keep the college?'
He is five years old, maybe seven.
'What will you learn to know?'

I know it is warm in the car. The night stiffens
With black frost but the car is warm.
What shall we learn
In the cold? In the cold country where the books are burning?
Across the classroom of the north forty
My father professes his love and labor.

In the black field, burnt now, where the flax
Small breakers ran, the Wobblies' footprint is buried.
A cold moon hangs in the trees.
'I hate September,' says Wally. 'The damn blank lonesome fields —
What will you learn anyway?'
And Jack says, sleepy, leaning his furry head
Into my side:

'Is it far? Is it long?'

5.

And returned then, up the coulee hills from the river
Later than gopher light, with the colder and older moon
Riding my back like a buzzard.

Past the squeaking third
Step on the grandfather stair, past the dusty
Belfry and Daisy caught in the lilac,
Past barns where the country wenches were singing like
cardinal sins —

And do they sing in the dust still?

Do their bones
Sing in the golden dust in the stallion summers?

O small girls with your wide knowledge, you lead me
Into the continent of guilt and forgiving, where love is.
Thru the small gate of your sex I go into my kingdom.
Teachers of men! O hot, great-hearted women
The world turns still on the axis of your thighs!

JAMES BOYER MAY

THE SHOUT WHICH PRECEDES

Not the scorned, crying angrily after —
not the beaten, less-trying, who whimper ...
but, more ruthless than jaegers whose nurture
must be gained from tail-tortured amercements
on all preyers less fierce in flown meanings,
 SCREAMING out passionate wailings —
 double in pained abreactions —
 choking in blood-sobs from triumphs —
 these are the knowers!
 These are the holders
of what life everlasting: their pinions
dilate-purple with power for presently
 seizing on venerated presents!

As for lust, as for game, as for living —
in the chase, in the plot, in the longing,
 Strength holds the mustering answer.
No vain weakling-browed simper's disturbing
to those surging engorged by flight's passion.
They can miss even fellow impressions —
their successes, their intimate winnings:
 Joyfulness paired with mad pillage
of their each sad ambition's soared-after death.

OF SAGE AND RUINED TEMPLE

My youth, my never-lasting youth! —
dreamed the hoary brother to the plinth;
 he plead beneath his ghost-now column,
crumbled, unerect, gone bloodless as
the mating stone, dry-cold, denies the worm ...

Restore, restore! O, try what replica!
 — never can a root be born ... and always,
always must ripe soil re-clasp the rock.

What ages unto ages passed down man
his penile menacer to daily death!
What eons to be prickled by what suns,
before an earth has cooled to mold the roughage
for entablatures so manly held and writ upon?

LEITMOTIF

Out of the salt past, into the sung past —
grew coral islets, formed in the billows ...
Seeds flown there too, feathering white into green ...
Men did not sack then pale guano for learned-land grievings;
sole unrepose where new soil knit from compost,
 snowed by grey birds of creation ...
Soughing, contrasting, and blue-moving sea,
 storming when storming, but never
 to lash red disruption ...
All life — past then or out of —
 took flight or swam.

NOTE ON THE TENSION OF THE UNTENSE

Not sharp, not vague —
but plain-shaped shadowed there —
the outline of the great
expectant show ... the image, bound
with fond synopses how

could stage-effect each scene
portended in one argument ...
a line of rendering
translatable to dialogue
and gestures, there immediate,
for smell- and touch-imaginings
across some blue-green footlights
in a hall of radial red reality.

Here-present time is not
immediate ... the shadow's moralized
and yet untypified. We find we have
a chorus with no principals.
Or principal's the self, the NEXT
and closed role for whom
we seek a flaming relevance
to what *particular* performance
might, this moment, instrument great prescience.

THE DISSIMULATING LUNATIC

whose realm is ever present, spaced in careful
careless pause upon his whimsical desires so
dreamed, unmet ... He wills to not-will his
discoverment of fantasy, through testing
whether these are servants on his vast estate — nor
trying if one ordering of change
can move a wall or lop one tree or budge one post.

His happiness relies on self-controlling
vision, holding back command, while reveling in
sanctuaried thoughts of genius,
his own; for ALL could disappear, *supposing*
only that he'd stop his measured pacing bounds of
measureless domains and speak hoarse word
to cause split earth to gobble up his hates.

AND KEEP THIS CHRISTMAS ALL THE YEAR

There *are* known ways of rendering
without obeisance: trees
are worshipped, burned, and built upon
and other-with and nailed erect
for Jesus, canted by
false brittle balls of glory, upright on their crucifixes, bleeding not
one single man's salvation, posted, posterred for an oversoul — a Jungian
myth
mistold? — which feels how life has also worshipped life by murder-
ing it
in multi-forms. If man could smite
the source, he'd blot the sun.
Then — agony enough, in ending all?

Well-contemplate significance
of cocktails sipped before a withering tree —
how least of these is not forgiven. Flank
no thieves — this Christ, itself, was stolen from
some first-snowed slope, while olives for
martinis had their seeds replaced by pearls
of onions, knowledgeless, unwittingly
here soaked by alcohol which pickles brains
alive on shoulders of these jolly folk
who carol homely reminiscences
of dear old Nell . . . Noel . . . so knelling puningly with ghastly laughter,
maudlin talk
confessing no salvations shared.
They realize their tortured torturing plights,
with tears like pine-tree needles falling where
their gutless gifts to human genitals
lie scattered. Offerings upon wronged hope
of future lives they might inseminate.

Oh, come — let us be joyful! Merrily,
come ring new year's ensuing orgies soon,
at last well-daring strip our bodies to
adore what all this flummery's disguised!

We'll pray to *being*, sing for virile selves'
creative acts, halt crucifixions now
before dread formulae to blot out suns!
Oh, leave green trees to grow, erecting facts
and not dead symbols! Nailing Christs WAS NOT
the meaning of this holiday — but life!
 and those possessing spring in them
 can sing without wassail — they hold
exhibits holier than Eucharist,
high means of giving thanks by exercise
of what was meant by Him whose parables
were later falsely exegeticised
to mumble over corpses — death-in-birth
equated by a pagan tree. BUT HE,
 LEFT DEAD, HAS LIVED ENTIRE! Leave off
reprisals, murdering denials of
 the flesh — behold,
 the Living God
is of us! We are One!

BERT MEYERS

PICTURE FRAMING

My fingers feed in the fields of wood.

I sand pine, walnut, bass,
and sweat to raise their grain.

Paints, powder and brush
are the seasons of my trade.

At the end of the day
I drive home
the proud cattle of my hands.

ONCE, IN AUTUMN

Once, in autumn, I saw the sun
pause in the wrinkles of a tree
like passion on an old man's face.
My father, armed with shears, came out
and trimmed the little shrubs to death.

And always, in a wild backyard
my father fell into his flesh.
Those blind galoshes struck the earth;
and tough as trucks, his hands ran loose
killing the plants they couldn't name.

A lawn — or passion — if ignored

BERT MEYERS

may rise around a house like fire.
Son, my father said, Fight back
the garden with its big green hips.
I fought a beast of leaves instead.

But, with a scowl, my iron dad
cut down the grass to a proper flame.
He said: Too many flowers. And then
(though with a hose I'd been their stem)
my scowling conscience cut them off.

RAINY DAY

Outside, nothing moves; only the rain
nailing the house up like a coffin.

Remember, in childhood, when it rained?
Then, the whole world sailed down the alley:
leaves, paper, old shoes, the buildings,
everything like a circus going to sea.

Now, the rain, the iron rain, with its little keys
is closing all the doors . . .

and I think we're all dead. See how the sky
sits like a tombstone on the roofs.

BECAUSE THERE'S SO MUCH SPEED

Because there's so much speed
without any place to go,
and naked, blind as light,
we rush from stone to stone
and bump against the world,

I like the silly snail:
wrapped in its wooden fog
it crawls across my yard;
and where it goes, it paints
the ground with useless roads.

Day and night, in its world,
leaves fall without a sound;
and flowers become suns
that bugs like little planets
in a green astronomy
go round and round and round.

GIL ORLOVITZ

M'SIEU MISHIGA: 7

love turns, sausage-souled, a sprig of vertigo,
in slidingdoor faces and bongo cravats, on
thy belly is as a heap of malt, thy
spine specifications of clavichord spittoons,
fingernail plectrums down the lizzardlyring lacquerlooms,
the stock-quotations antiphonal to a lads magic phallolamp
rubbed at the epitaphal turnstile,
love the foreign-correspondents accreditisation,
parenthetical paradise,
the veiled cripple hobbling on thermometer crutches
to interlocking directorates of scalar mistresses,
I am a very testicle of young finance, thy
breasts are as my twin expense-accounts, thy
neck as of the Waldorf Towers, thy
navel as of a rough diamond
mined by a South African
Black and withheld from
the Market, thy
thighs are as of near-East oil
coveted by Stereoslav and Jazzamer, thy
rumps as of the rocket-launching
platforms of the
diplomats, love
is the preferred dividend,
the very homewrecker of the Communist State

Comrades, I confess I loved,
Gentlemen, the Small Business of Love cannot be tolerated in our
Industrial Reflex,
THE SEXUAL CONGRESS MUST BE ADJOURNED,
love turns, sausage-souled, a sprig of vertigo,
under the cartographers crotch, at the foot of the analytic
couch stood upright as at the American Wake,
Death to Love! the littleboy revolutionaries shrill at the barricades,
Death to Love! the conservatives pass the memomasturbators among
themselves,
Death to Love! for there are animals in my mind
 buying and selling feel-estate
 converting fingertips to sequins
 replacing nymphs with lymphs
 haggling over bearded bombs
 charging admission to my catacombs
 full of mens low earnings
 out of pity turning the wheel for the ox
 out of pity working for God he's SUCH a child
 out of pity hauling up the bottoms of perspectives
as the mist rises from the earth it is the cold sweat of the men of

 low earnings crying
Life to Love turning,
sausage-souled, a sprig of vertigo,
the decalcomania of light torn from blind martyrdom,
the labor-leader calculating where shall the agony of my men be best
 applied,
the board-chairman calculating how shall the agony of my anus be least
 affected by the pinnacle,
the despot calculating how the agony of an uprooted population can be
 rooted in agony once again:
tell us how many kilowatt-hours are there in love;
 how much slag and how many coupons
initial capital investment?
communal property?
GIVE ME A BREAKDOWN ON
 republican love
 democratic love

marxist love
catholic love
mass love
upperclass love
DIDDLECLASS LOVE

in the countries with a helicopter in every heart,
an electro-oestrous engineer for every five-year cycle,
a cabinet-crisis for colonial harems,
a caste of untouchables for the very CHUNKSHEER of passion
these are the very cossacks riding pogroms of love is the
kike, the
nigger, the

love is the

paleolithic clown, the
fagpicker, the
murderer rising on his beast, the
bacillus wearing a black bandbody round its
evacuole, the

air of the horse begging that its eye be pumped into a gunmuzzle
I LOVE YOU for the sugar cast up by the salt of the sea,
for the dumb spigot of the sun dealing the unparalleled torture
of slowly-dripping lightdrops onto the hunchbacked black skull,
for the money printed on liberty,
for the crossed swords of the genitals as the newlywed powers giggle
through,
for the clothespin ICBMs nipping off the ducts,
for Jesus Christ slaking his thirst at the Strontium 90 waters

WILLIAM PILLIN

A COUNTER-THEME

1.

The real gone moment
comes again and again
crazily, dancingly.

If we must die
let it be tomorrow
or the day after tomorrow.
Today we soar like wild swans,
blind to what compels our flight,
feeling only
the amplitude and glitter of the world

*

Half the night I stayed up
hearing through weeping pages
a poet with death in his eyes
waving darkness at me
as if it was a banner.

What with aches and distractions
and rarely enough money
to have this clown tell me
that the sun will surely sink, etc.,
as if I don't know it;

and to whom I say

that even on this haunted planet
the real gone moment
comes again and again
crazily, dancingly.

2.

Waiting and waiting
for wings and Messiahs,
for the State to wither
or the Crisis to pass
or the computer to signal
the zero of ultimate sunburst

we are trapped
in a week of death-days
under carrion skies
where no flowers bloom
and the birds are silent.

Meanwhile the lovely dancer
whose astonishments pass swiftly
tiptoes away
on death's empty highway.

O, wait no longer!
Make a memo to whisper an ardent arietta
to love's unappeased and infinite progress,
put on agendum
laughter in dawn's small hours,
make a notation
that we still are alive for at least a day longer!

3.

There comes a time
when the enchanted heart
utters the absurd hope
that this day the world is created anew,
that we who by day

perform rehearsed gestures
will, when the jungle shudders
through the sleeping city,
rise gravely and go
with moonlight seeping into our blood, go

to the subtlest cricketing of drums,
(foot forward, shoulders bent back)
past taverns, garages, power plants,
to the burning rhythm of streetlights.

Everybody

will, go, go, go,
their heads aureoled with small birds,
the night swelling
with their full-throated wail.

AUBADE

Life, be fresh with daybreak!
Though papers print death
by wind, by fire,
and wolf teeth are bared
at curving hollows
where little homes sleep,
may I wake, my storms scattered
on lovely landscape of her body,
and wonder at life's small matters
that continue forever.

Light jostles

sea-waves, ghosts cough
in trees, the twig
drunk with raindrops
snaps, falls
to junkyard of dead leaves;

all these will last
beyond the moment of being
as the wind of flutes persists
past the bright hoard of sound.

TWO JEWISH POEMS

1.

The rabbi noted: it is worse to violate
your neighbor's place beneath the blue
than to sin against the Holy One. For God
is where you are, in field or home.
His address known
your moral litigation can be solved
by a contrite and an absolving sigh.
But if your neighbor move away
how will you find him? To what teeming street,
what far-away and unfamiliar shore
will you address regrets?
And you will carry all your years
the memory of someone's downcast eyes
and grievance unredeemed. Somewhere will walk
a murdered man, your knife between his ribs.

2.

Take what is at hand
as sparrows take to doorways
when rain whips oak-leaves.
Take to the lonely hills
to gather silences
when wolf-eyes gleam
in the green valley.

Better, though the work is beneath you,
to sell your muscles to a mason
than to ask favors from God.
Take what is at hand
to look freely
in God's blue eye.

You, rider of clouds, wake up!
You can starve waiting
for singing tomorrows.

Black bread freely eaten
makes a calm melodious Sabbath.
Wait no longer for tinselled
mitsvas from heaven
but light your candles
to bless what is at hand.

LAWRENCE P. SPINGARN

ROCOCO SUMMER

After split skies and tardy thunder, rain
Recalled the children in their pinafores
To porches tense with sportsmen. Bores
Peddled the myth of Vicksburg once again.
Grant himself, bribed with a fine cigar,
Sinister, taciturn, sick with his cancer,
Snatched from a silver tray the cabled answer,
Read he would die, smiled, headed for the bar.
The sky protested. Mallets clicked dismay.
Beneath wet elms the darkey waiters served
Tall, minted juleps. Sudden horsemen swerved,
Missing a child, reining another way.
The sun returned . . . Oh, what is left to tell?
No pen stabs reputation. From the lawn,
Duly escorted, not without a yawn,
Women moved gravely toward the dinner bell.

JACK OF DIAMONDS

Be nimble, Jill. The legends in your purse
Drug me for slumber like the autumn rose
That stings and pricks us both while budding out.
Each boy invades your cavern with a shout:
Each fails, but still assumes the martial pose
When garments scatter and your guardians curse.

A subtle moth predicted such pale freight.
Paired silver wings abetted me, then fled
Beneath a fog of blankets. Your harsh lips
Urged greater speed, more pain than comes from whips.
Clouds festered in the weird glow from your bed.
Mist soiled the windows. Storms unlocked the gates.

We drowned in satin, favored by no star.
The captious waves that groomed me for your stud
Must steer you landward in a greener smock
And wind be quick to bind you on this rock
Before the dragon that will suck your blood
Consumes at last the kindling that you are.

THE BEACHCOMBERS

When Circe, whose sly tongue was thick from wine,
Begged cleaner sheets in which to vend stale wares,
Ulysses thrashed her. Wanton by design,
He followed steep and labyrinthine stairs
No dolphin ever trod before it died
Downward to ageing nymphs at coral fairs,
Met drunken Neptune, who broke wind and cried
For mortgaged realms, spent vigor, fallen hairs.
While sailors jounced fat wenches on their laps,
Ulysses puzzled over magic squares.
The weather, omens, mutes in Phrygian caps;
All hands divided into agile pairs.
Heedless and blithe, clad only in loud socks,
They sweated, grunted, worked on equal shares
The silt of pleasure through one narrow box:
Night squandered darkness, but the coin was theirs.
High tide drew baths for cooling fevered lips.
The ocean growled in subterranean lairs.
As cardboard gulls christened the bankrupt ships,
Kelp bound delirious wretches to strict chairs.

DIARY OF A HEAVY MAN

In any house his problem was at poise:
Noise in the hall, a sly fetch by the door
Where night had ripened out like cheese to sight.
With him, that slow retard was very slight.
Regard him with pale diffidence; no more.
He quite deserves the envy of slim boys.

A wretch who suffers from such yeasty nerves
In east or west strait-laced across the waste
Of what was good or better or the best,
Believe me, he has understood the test
And with that Roman wight moves double-faced
Against the household people whom he serves.

He simpers with that privilege of the bold;
Gold in his fist, the sun of every coin
Reflects the temper which his tongue protects
(One never knows whose victim will be next),
Shines on the blade that carves your tenderloin:
A rib, a rack, a limb grown quickly cold.

Withdraw to safety, then, you who withstand
Raw sound, the failure of his passage south;
Mouth of the wind, a wing — or anything.
Conclude, come to repose, to this hope cling
Like man to a rope. Put sweets in your mouth.
Limp, weary band, from the heavy man's land.

A CLASSIC JOURNEY

I played the jokester in those Syrian days,
Dawdling along the shoe-shaped vestibules
Where frantic shoppers with decaying eyes
Rebuked my feet. I boxed with natives twice:
The hairy Greeks and marbled Portuguese
Outlawed my Mediterranean dreams
To grottoed isles of sacerdotal blue.
The bones I dug are fossiled into fame:

Antipater, the vetch-nosed Ptolemy,
Or Heraklita soaking from her pores
The merchant dye that proved her dignity.
A dark-eyed Spartan changed my coins to deeds:
She wore her shield of diffidence to bed
But yoked us with a chaste propinquity
As regents in the dynasty of sleep.
Wars parted us. My safer years racked up
Like saucers for Athenian coffee shops
When I was tourist at the ruins of love.
Now memory clicks within the shuttered dark
Of winter in this northern latitude.

WEST

Wyoming is a green and rampant space,
Thanks to the Mormon stint that made it so.
In California grow prodigious grapes.
The Puget fishes quarrel in their nets.
Nevada is a whistle in the wind
Below guilt's finger-pointing Idaho
Hugged by the bear, Montana, and the Snake,
A frantic river fencing Oregon.
Recall the snow-stocked ranches of the Ute.
The pine cone mesas of New Mexico,
The penitents at Denver, coughing blood,
Beaten by whips of red and acrid dust.
The hiker, standing by the Judas tree,
Will pick and choose his Buicks as they pass,
And where the silver dollars bounce like hail
The hennaed dealers spread their dental wares.
While dry conformity had many sons,
The census-taker never came this far
To mark the groves and derricks with his pins.
Your oranges shall fatten on extremes
Larger than legend, yeasty as the sea
Foaming green flattery upon the beach
Of malted milk and cactus real estate

Where tinted post-cards serve as dividends
For squaws and yogis anxious to invest
In Christian Science or a pension plan.
Appease your hunger with the obvious:
The travel-folder missions, Santa Fe,
The tourist boiling in his oil of speed
And Iowa, retired to Hollywood,
For these are totem to your history
Defined by breakers at the Golden Gate.
Pacific is the nickname for the quest,
Gain its red eye and thirst its parching tongue.
Now is too soon to measure such a vast
Oasis in Mohaves of your hope
Where all mirages lead to Panamint,
To fat white haunches of the Mother Lode,
Plateaus of folly, gulches of neglect,
The gin and tonic waves at Malibu.

ANN STANFORD

THE WEATHERCOCK

Wind shakes me
I am weak and spent
With every argument.
I doubt and hang
A breath disturbs me.
Sinewless and vain
The harsh and soft are one to me
Zephyr or gale, I turn my face to it.

North wind and south have whispered
And I go with each.
The dulcet evidence of bloom and spring
Or the cold reason of on-circling storm
Both have convinced me, and I yearn with them
Yearn as the smoke drift or the lifted leaves.

Yet I proportion my stance to the breeze.
Wind shall not take me
Though he shriek and bite
Frighten all other birds to leeward shade
Blow down the pigeons from the cooing lofts
Sail the hawk back downwind and send
Laborious eagles panting to their rocks.

I have set my claw
Deep in the roof's pinnacle,

There to hold
While solid objects knock about —
Each broadside thing —
Stiff in this hub to turn and, keen,
Broach to the wind a practiced waywarding.

Though the barn totters
And hay flies
And the wood is pierced by pebbles;
Till the ties of the timbers skew
With the beams ajar
And the shingles scatter
And the great roof falls

I crow though none may hear.
In the vast spinning world, I still point true.
I fly here.

THE BEAR

(From Grimm brothers)

Rose Red:

We have once more caught
This old humbug, sister.
Here he lies in his shaggy coat
Snug by our cordial fire,
Claiming to be a prince, or a lost Christian in disguise.
There are things of the chrysalis — the butterfly,
Plots that must be hatched, deeds long in doing,
But this is thorough bear, rumpled and earthen.

Snow White:

Remember, sister, other miracles:
The pellet seed, bursting to root and leaf,
The hard green bud to rose,
The thought newborn
That pecks at the skull like a rousing chick.
Great things from small,
The pearl from the ooze,

And the radiant soul
Rapt from its prison in a broken spell.

Rose Red:

Snakes drop their skins, but remain serpents still,
And the moth, long harbored in its chrysalis
Flies as a birthright to distorting flame.
Leaves spurt from seed, but only for the season.
No one has charted the sea-track of souls.
Bears sleep in winter caves and wake up bears.

The Bear:

The forest offers honey, hollow logs
Streams fraught with fishes,
Berries on the hills.
Yet here I ponder.
I am no common bear, for I have visions.

I dreamed I was a prince;
I walked in halls
Brilliant with torches.
Underneath this pelt
I feel the hardness of the golden mail.
Can such dissatisfaction offer proof
I am enmeshed in spells too fine to ravel?

Snow White and Rose Red, divert your clumsy wooer.
Some day we meet the dwarf and force the answer.

A SUMMER WALK

Love, the harsh fields declaim
Unchanging chaos where we walk tonight.
Cut in the stubbled hay the scent
Waits where it lies dissoluble in air
Spicing the season, calling the name.
It is the summer — pomegranate, heat, haze,
After acacia, wind, pine, fire, rain —
Come in its order, earth circle and sun,
Round the hem of a robe, pine, pomegranate, pine.

The oat seed perfect closes the leaf;
The warm air, raising the summer scent,
Lifts like a letter on the cooler wind.
Grasp the torn page, the preface, lest it be
Rosetta of the structure, unity,
The title, author, centerstone, or key.

I feel the dark wherein I shall not fear —
No dark of sense, nor light, nor warmth of hand,
Only a stillness that I shall not hear.
The residual spirit, naked, wakes again
Into a flame, a fire, a light, a world,
An abstract energy of mind on mind.
Ah, wombs that gave them life, can you decree
The spirits haunting immortality?

I once was young enough to dream and know
I was immortal since I wished it so.
But where the I who dreamed? The mirror frames
An aspect stranger to the face it wore,
Mortality grown constant as a chain,
Binding as water that is gone and flows.

From untouched outlands at the mountain's rim
The dove recalls us with a mellow cry;
The summer morning shimmers off to lose
Its sheer beginning in the ragged sky.
I see the curve of earth whereon is wound
The ever-present present, sanguine, loud,
The shade of oaks stretching across the ground.
The summer presses on us when we walk
Through fields called fields, whatever else they be,
And we imprisoned in a hedge of years
Look for a province and a dynasty.

EDMUND TESKE

IN THE DOOR THAT OPENS

In the door that opens
upon the garden of the great
house,

She sits
Bare feet
To the sun.

Her long hair
Is a cascade of time
Down her back and
About her shoulders —

It pours itself
Upon the canvas
Of my infinity.

I HAVE JUST CROSSED THE MISSISSIPPI

I have just crossed the Mississippi.
In the distance,
The dome of the capitol
Shines,
And seems to float
Over the fields of corn.
Somewhere above

The moon is a pale visage.
Soon it will be dark
And the moon will be bright.
Soon I will arrive home
To my Mother,
In the city of my birth.
Soon I will arrive home,
To be born no more.

YOU ARE MY DAYS' GREAT GAIN

Stealthily
In the acquiescent forest depth,
I come upon you,
Stark and
Tremulous as a bird.

Stealthily I move upon you —
I gather you in, and
Gently bound with white
And silken cords,
I carry you hostage
To the city of my love.
You are my days' great gain —
I am exultant.

I mount the stairway
Of my ardent desire,
The priests in the temple
of my desire, are

Tall —
Dark, and
Richly robed.
They are incisive
In the execution
Of their office —
They understand the need

ZACK WALSH

Have you listened
to the first half of the 20th Century
speaking of fabled heroes
from empty head pieces
disguised and covered under
fields of mustard?
Have you watched
fifty beautiful years
glamorizing front page copy
fingerpainting progress
and smiling into history books?
Have you touched
the dull fears of your life
into shocks of awareness
that make you wonder how and why
you feel like hiding under flowers?
Or have you seen yourself
in the first half of the 20th Century
pulling a shade to open a music box
that makes it so good
to keep on smiling
you could sleep that lullaby
forever?

This day
dry as seeds waiting
for the blackbird
fly

hanging on the wire high
high above the world
sick as sun without
fire without air without sky
hanging on the wire
high
high above the day
the blackbird is dry
as seeds waiting.

Come into this small quiet moment
and share with me a skylight of space
and a circle of time
around our closeness —
and our hands touch
and our faces touch
and we smile in the focus
of an instant.

april hearted frogs leap high
between the eyes of time
in that fraction of a
love-lash burning
moment of a tear
gone laughing
dancing down
the cheek
of a
kiss

MEL WEISBURD

WHEN I GO DOWN TO THAT SLEEP

When I go down to that sleep
It is to the marrowed villages that I go
Where the tail-bone sinks in the bush
And the marsh is shallow with fish.

I am hung like a possum from a limb
And nothing will harm me now,
The hunters are flat on the meadow
As they go down to their sleep.

My wife has moved a face-length
And has fallen from my arms
Into the bottom of her gravity
When she turns down to sleep.

Our baby drops deeper than us all,
To the bed of nutrient visions
And the simple remembrance of creation,
Where sleep first began.

Outside of houses like ours,
Power is wide awake,
Or the guards are playing cards.
Somewhere as the sun breaks

Pilots rub the sleep from their eyes
And fly above the darkened earth

In Alaskan and Siberian skies
And drop the bombs of nightmare.

And we are sound asleep
Drifting on the earth like wreckage,
As if our parts were laid on tables
Like books with open pages.

Let power read through the night,
Before they turn the light out:
Let them read our sleep,
Then turn down into their own.

Now you stir the lovely waves
That split the sun on me.
We lug ourselves from sleep
And love and fly away.

THE INTEGRATION OF FAILURE

1.

I am Lawrence, and by that name,
A *Lawrencian* system.
Somewhere in the stars I am known by
The center of my power in all its shapes,
And all the handsome characters of my ego.
See how the world gives in to me,
Inch by inch. It is lovely to be so free
Even in lapsing from my own principles.
Men have surrendered to me, or resigned
Themselves to oblivion. They are insipid
Scarecrows with all their fears.
Bankrupt and exhausted by my wit, surrendering
Their laughter and their admiration.
The truth is my lyricism,
But I can forge the truth
From each lie as well.
I am one of those undetermined

Infinite individuals.

2.

There is an excess of time to corrupt;
There are any number of conspiracies,
I am Lawrence and the name is bacteria.
I am the raw infected will; even the
Sun conspires to my putrefaction;
But man, but man is guilt,
And from that guilt men will make a man;
Not an image as Lawrence is;
But something real and unconscious as a fool
Something helpless and corrupt
Someone tame who bays at the moon.

3.

Now the stars are out, but I will not look.
I have not seen them in ten years.
It is dishonest to see them again,
Like a lover one has once rejected,
The stars are dangerous at my age.

There are vessels bound for troubled seas;
I have not bothered, though my courage aches to be born.
Who has filled my vacancy? Is he braver
Than I might have been? Am I Lawrence
To dream of what I might have been?

There are beautiful women, each a life
Of desire. Ten or so in each city;
There is even a nation of my children
To be born. There is my absolute
Immortality. But I am anchored deep
In my shallow sea. I will never travel.

And there are causes, but these are split and confounded;
Thank God, I cannot take the blame for these,
They were lost before my time. And there were

Enterprises whose imagination died with greed.
My dreams are sold for profit.

And there are the names of flowers,
Now dead in my weeds in my garden
That I have never learned. In all
This rubbish, I have the taste of greatness.
I am Lawrence of the feeble dream.

4.

And at that deep dark corner, at the
Very end of my rope, in that absolute
Rejection, Lawrence leaves me
And my name goes out. There is upheaval
And indigestion. Each contraction expels
Me further from that cozy world
As I am born again in a world I never claimed,
I am awakened by the landscape of my birth;
Goodbye Lawrence, do not worry,
I'm not dead.

Awakened by the murmuring landscape,
The paths relax in an afternoon spring.
The wind stirs the leaves of my pine,
And my neighbor's Eucalyptus.
There is a sense of being here
The conscious landscape of my birth.
And time is here where I've been busy,
And the brunette claim of my wife's smile,
Like the trellis filling with the growth
Of our marriage, is wordless, but full
Of my real name. Here, on this property,
Are the victories of my sinewy reach,
And here in my arms, my daughter asleep,
All this time, in my garden, on my knee.

CURTIS ZAHN

LATER THAN THERE IS NO NEVER NO

Later,
When you no longer wanted it;
Later, they said, save it
For later.
Soon,
But it could never be too soon.
Nor too early, only
Too late.

Too,
They said,
Too easy is too early for two; later
Will be soon enough.
Later
Is for non-profit ideas but now
Is for now,
Now is for things you
Need to need. Later is non-realistic
Now; later
Is for later, they said.

HOMAGE TO A GIRL NAMED CUPCAKE

First remembered as the imagined mistress
They dreamed that you stayed awake nights
To earn your livelihood by sleeping.

And you were born too late to be
Absolutely apropos, Baby,
Squeezed from the cooling Twenties
Until they could no longer lie about your age;
Leftover from something out of F. Scott Fitzgerald
Long after the last copy
Was called back.

Yet, I never saw your name among the uninvited then.
The face is gone; your crazy dialogue is something come to us
Just off the boat, wildly wet, and orchestrated
With laughs, screams, squeals too soprano for contemporary sex.
Now, only your classified smile holds solvent
Among the debits; and that, even,
Stripped of its built-in hysteria,
No longer's piped indiscriminately to collective mankind.

Who, how, retains the embarrassed hearts
Of the long, unlicensed line to the right?
The weary eyes that came to rest upon your hot slopes
Are merely migratory game,
Quacking flatly
In functional drawing-rooms
Over the state of the union;
And the promise once fraudulently drawn down
Deep inside your ermine —
The squish of your voice that made every wife old and tough
With protective invention —
Are the sounds of some cupie-doll, come unwound.

The wives? They're small and older now,
Saved by the belle
Finally tolled. It was they who hazarded
That your popularized bosoms
Were mere pincushions
For the underprivileged —
Dismissed as an architectural exaggeration
Or disallowed
As objects for the fumbling-of; promising

That any man willing to be unsprung against you
Was undeserving of rebuke.

You were nobody but Cupcake,
The woman with a thousand moving parts,
High heels, poodles, roadsters and a phone number.
And while our anxiety greyed into apathy
Some other world moved past your shaded afternoons
With a honk and a wave.

SUCCESS STORY FROM AN ECONOMIC ENGINEER

I took my ABC
1 2 3 for advanced aberrendophilia
At M.I.T.
Specializing in
Compressed Expanders, with 4-way pulsifiers
(Dynaformed on the logical principle
That torque was tantamount) and
As for belt-driven universals in cancelling phases
Everything already had gone over to
Rotogenetics; now
Employing the theory of cellular disintegration
I was ready
For a theoretical centrifigation
Of opposed exemptyfiers —
Whereas
Old B.F. had never taken his M.S. and
Though a good man
Around instantaneous decibles
He'd never really gone beyond
Shock-insulated spacifiers, being willing
To coast among the Suspension People
With their low-hung sibernetics
And latent octograms, thus
When they asked me, had I had
Exploded harmonics with refurberating exemplification
I was able to say Yes

And moved up
From there
Into hypothetical X-23's with perpetuating
Detonations; I was ready, at last
For eradification.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AS THE STATE OF THE UNION

Southwesterners
Who'd avoid clobbering doves on Sundays
Must forget remembering East
When an afternoon's wry glean was crossfiled with
Neo
Geo —
Political webbery; their humbled sky sucks
From exhausted Buicks
Some mysterious chemistry. And sad old steel towers
Have their backs to the wall
Heads in the clouds; it is
Time for Life
And ultrasimplification.
To reduce thought down to its lower common denominator
The highest brains draw tall salaries.
The months pass through
Whistling sternly.
A splendid year for removing old promises
For exorcising promiscuity from the premises.
And ashore, in the absolute west
Birds on spindles
With sticks for beaks bleat
For tidal deposits of paper milk cartons.
Exclamatory gulls commute to work
In the city's playgrounds
And the tested Coast comes a land of e-flat alto saxes.
Still a great Cadillac country
Reverberating its echoes to the forgotten east
Where remain
Secret wetnesses

On posteriors and exteriors.
And there exist acrid stratas, and ochre afternoons
In Pasadena's washes,
And high tension wires, and Ford-owners
Who perforate beercans with .22's
Their radios running full volume, unattended
And falling onto the Sunday side of it all. Sunday?
The children nagging donkey-rides; the parents
Hurrying home for factory-fresh cliches
And all
Promised always
The classified superiority of practically everything.

PETER YATES

IF A MAN CANNOT BUILD A NEW HOUSE

(A Message to Kenneth Rexroth)

Where shall I hasten to evade
this dutiful burden, being as I am
what time, persistence, and rough weather shape me?
If I take to the sea,
many are there drowned and dead
whom sweet singers call by name,
and others irony.
Robbers are on land, and wars course
ravenously;
air is heavy with falling.
If all from responsibility are fled,
shaking their distraught heads wagging
against responsibility,
who will feed on cropped beards or summon
diviner voices by their barked calling?

If alone, disaffiliate, I believe that I evade
what I am, where I am,
uncommitted either to go or stay,
shall I escape where others cannot
or remain where no others remain?
Is nature for the solitary
without luxury?
Is not luxury the man's mark,

marble head, pillar of his temple?
If he abuse, does not luxury
luxuriate
in his decay?
I cannot within these shores be absent
from perilous luxury.

Saving the oceans do not swallow me
and robbers leave me possessed
and the constituency of the air is not
poisoned or tyrannized;
I cannot, myself,
myself I cannot evade.
Look! on the food-gathering shore, involute, a crabbed
specimen, heavily shouldering my ill-fitting
carapace or borrowed hut:
love nourished me, or I were not:
I set this against others' hatred.
Fugitive out of the waste and the mosaic
ploughed contours

passion houseled me, in commune;
the stone city is my attic past.
Tomorrow is for me today
in consequence of yesterday: unless
I build a new house above death,
invite mockers singing to my trees
and expect stools in my garden: unless
I am responsible in my presence.

If a man cannot build a new house,
anyone may despair.
That is my message.

THE LONELY MAN

looks out the window and sees anybody
smiling, everybody
happy; the lonely man

looks out his window, and it's nobody
nobody, nobody

The lonely man
looks out the window and sees anybody
like him, everybody
coming, going; the lonely man
looks out his window, and it's
anybody unlike him

Out of his window
the lonely man
sees everybody coming going
somebody, anybody;
the lonely man, that lonely man
looks out his window, and it's everybody safely
inside outside him

Everybody outside
anybody smiling
nobody needing
anybody inside; in a glass window
that lonely man
somebody smiling
happy, happy
looking right through him

FOR CHARLES IVES

If there is left, men's God, in the world one single man
to speak of you and be friend, too many words
cannot hide you or deny you for that man.

He will be like a history when it is lived,
not yet made faith, and in him you in him;
the greens of leaves, the blues of seas will be no more tangible,
no more real.

He will come up like spring; in winter men will live in memory of him;
and death shall be forgetting, even as some man has forgotten spring.

This God who inhabits word and works in men
and who is real in the person, real and final as the speech
of one who, feigning, cannot feign to feign;

This real enduring stout truth's counterchange:
Death does not affirm and will not fail
him in whom living is a page in being.

A CONCEIT FOR STRAVINSKY

Seldom do I consult the score
to tell in music where I've been.
I score it by the mind's relief,
which thus restoring reads belief,
and in believing hears, a score
of years, those facts that soar.

And fated though one be to see
occurrences' presented grief,
each interval by less or more
detaches from the parent mould
and winged of human thought is bold
to bring me where I wish to be.

For when such intervals combine,
defying gravity and grace,
to press accustom out of line,
spring thought where empty beauty was
and by decision imprint space,
then music's human and made fit to praise.

Some build by tooth, with tail and claw;
You by the eager breath and resonant law.

Tragedy is the soul's release
that by a stage climbs nearer peace;
but music, though a floor the less,
climbs higher and is yet no place.

St. Mark the briefest Gospel wrote,

with less of Passion than of note.
Five domes in Venice honor him:
Under each you have set a stage
for tragedy, purged of its rage,
five praises concerting one hymn.

They bless who hear, or hearing less
contort, because they cannot bless.
Print shrivels to a light, and they
as crackled shadows twist away.
We are more blessed who can restore
through years our taste of your full score.

A TWELVE-TONE STATEMENT OF POPULAR OPINION IN REGARD TO ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
AND HIS MUSIC

If it were not for that, we could love you
Like anything, anything it were; if not
For that we like, love you.

We're for it; we could love you
Like anything, not that, if love
Were like — if for that
Could anything: it, not you, we love not.

Anything, we're for it: you like it if that
We love not like that.
If anything could, you were for it: we
Could love you for that.

Not anything like it! We were, if anything.
That you love we could like it,
If for anything, that you like, love, love.

FROM MY WINDOW

the freshened lamps of the city
flicker below me. Rain
has washed the air clean.

PETER YATES

The fabled city in the triangle
between mountains, city within
cities, flashes neon lights
against night. The branch
of the pine tree I do not own
lies across my windows. Nothing
that I see is mine. The tree
grows from my neighbor's garden.
I do not possess my wealth.
Mist steals my view.
A barren moon in the morning
will hang low over radiant hills.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Guy Daniels: A Prophecy, *The Colorado Review*; The Sail, *The Literary Review*; Sonnet for Anne, *The Fiddlehead*; The Mooring Line, *Poetry Broadside*; A Biologist Looks at the Civil Service, *A Houyhnhnm's Scrapbook*.

Gene Frumkin: The Hawk and the Lizard, *The Saturday Review*; That Girl Who Follows Me, *The Prairie Schooner*.

James Boyer May: The Shout Which Precedes, *The Fiddlehead*; Of Sage and Ruined Temple, *The Carolina Quarterly*; Leitmotif, *Kast* (Japan); Note on the Tension of the Untense, *Prism* (Australia); The Dissimulating Lunatic, *Pan*; And Keep This Christmas All the Year, *The Colorado Review*.

Bert Meyers: Rainy Day and Because There's so Much Speed, *The New Mexico Quarterly*.

Lawrence P. Spingarn: Rococo Summer and A Classic Journey, *Voices*; The Beachcombers, *The Fiddlehead*; Diary of a Heavy Man, *Mandrake* (England); West, *Poetry* (Chicago).

Ann Stanford: The Weathercock, *The Sewanee Review*; The Bear, *Epoch*; A Summer Walk, *The New Mexico Quarterly*.

The Acknowledgements page as printed in 1958, the whole of the original back matter. Twelve of the eighteen contributors carry no prior credit, which indicates that their poems here were previously unpublished — among them Thomas McGrath's section of "Letter to an Imaginary Friend."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The 1958 book printed no contributor notes. These have been assembled for this edition from library finding aids, archival catalogues, obituaries, scholarship on the period and the book's own evidence. The poets are given in the order they appear in the book.

Three cautions. Where a date or fact rests on a single weak source it is marked [*unconfirmed*]. Where nothing could be found, that is said plainly rather than padded — for two of the eighteen poets, “nothing is recorded” is the honest and complete answer. And several of these names collide with living people: the Melissa Blake, Stanley Kiesel and Zack Walsh findable today are, in each case, someone else.

Josephine Ain Dates given as 1916–2004 [*unconfirmed — a single source, and no obituary, authority record or genealogical record corroborates it*]. Nothing else about her life has been recovered: no full name, no birthplace, no day job, no address, no book. What can be established is her milieu. She is one of the nineteen poets in Estelle Gershgoren Novak's *Poets of the Non-Existent City* (2002), an anthology drawn entirely from *The California Quarterly* and *Coastlines*, which places her firmly in the circle around Thomas McGrath. She appears to have published no collection of her own, and no archive of her papers has been located. Her sequence “Aspects” opens this book and is, on the available record, the largest body of her work in print anywhere.

Melissa Blake Nothing is recorded. No dates, no full name, no birthplace, no books, no other publication, no archive. She does not appear in Novak's anthology, so there is not even indirect evidence that she published in *Coastlines* or *The California Quarterly*. It has not been possible to establish that “Melissa Blake” was not a pseudonym. Searches are dominated by a contemporary American journalist of the same name who

is not this poet. The four-part syllabic sequence printed here is, so far as can be determined, her complete surviving work.

Gene Frumkin Born 29 January 1928 in New York City, in Harlem, with his first decade in the Bronx; died 18 February 2007 in Albuquerque. His family moved to Los Angeles in the late 1930s. B.A. in English from UCLA in 1951, where he edited the *Daily Bruin*. He worked as a bank teller and then in journalism, and came to poetry through an adult-education class taught by Thomas McGrath; he was one of the Marsh Street Irregulars. In 1955 he co-founded *Coastlines* with Mel Weisburd and served as its poetry editor, so at the time of this book he was poetry editor of the principal magazine of the Los Angeles literary left and a former student of one of its editors. "The Hawk and the Lizard," printed here, became the title poem of his first collection five years later. Books include *The Hawk and the Lizard* (1963), *The Orange Tree* (1965), *The Rainbow-Walker* (1968), *Dostoevsky and Other Nature Poems* (1972), *Saturn Is Mostly Weather* (1992), *Freud by Other Means* (2003), *The Curvature of the Earth* (2007). He moved to the University of New Mexico in 1966 and taught there until 1994, editing the *Blue Mesa Review*; his students included Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko and Simon Ortiz. Papers at the University of New Mexico, Zimmerman Library.

Guy Daniels His bibliography is easy to document and his biography is not. No birth or death dates, no birthplace and no account of what he was doing in Los Angeles have been found; none is given here rather than guessed. The Acknowledgements credit him with more prior magazine placements than any contributor except James Boyer May, which establishes him as an actively publishing poet in the mid-1950s. He became a working translator and critic of Russian literature: *A Lermontov Reader* (Macmillan, 1965), *Russian Comic Fiction*, Progress, U.S.A. (a novel, Macmillan, 1968), and *The Falcon Under the Hat: Russian Merry Tales and Fairy Tales* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1969). He wrote for *The New York Review of Books* in the 1970s. No archive located. Searches for him are badly polluted by the Soviet dissident Yuli Daniel.

Sid Gershgoren No birth year, full name or biography has been found. His milieu is certain: he is among the nineteen poets in Novak's *Poets of the Non-Existent City*, so he was publishing in the Los Angeles left

journals in this period. He has no entry on the Acknowledgements page, so the poems here were presumably new. He went on writing, and remained in California — his publisher, Red Dragonfly Press, describes him as a Californian poet. His later work is formally eccentric and project-driven: *Negative Space*, *Through the Sky in the Lake*, *The Wandering Heron* (haiku), *Symphony*, *The Extended Words: An Imaginary Dictionary*, *Past Rentals* (a fictional catalogue for a company renting out situations in the past), *Mutual Breath: A Book of Villanelles* (2013) and *The Chanter of Norfolk* (2018). A family relationship to Estelle Gershgoren Novak is plausible but has not been confirmed and is not asserted here.

Stanley Kiesel No birth or death dates have been found. His identity, however, is settled by a 1981 Minnesota Public Radio interview with “Minneapolis teacher and poet Stanley Kiesel”: a native Californian, B.A. and M.A. in English from California State College, who spent most of a twenty-seven-year career as a kindergarten teacher in Los Angeles before moving to Minneapolis, and who described himself as “a writer before I was a teacher.” The college is almost certainly Los Angeles State, where McGrath was on the faculty from 1951 until his dismissal; whether Kiesel studied with him is unconfirmed. His first collection, *The Pearl Is a Hardened Sinner: Notes from Kindergarten*, was reissued in 1976 with a foreword by the Objectivist poet Carl Rakosi. His own site lists four further collections, undated: *Prick the Balloon*, *I Decline to be Human*, *Jump Ship*, *Songs with no Prospects*. He is now remembered not for the poems but for *The War Between the Pitiful Teachers and the Splendid Kids* (1980), a satire of schooling with a durable cult readership, and its sequel *Skinny Malinky Leads the War for Kidness* (1984). He was poet-in-residence for the Minneapolis public schools.

Thomas McGrath Thomas Matthew McGrath, born 20 November 1916 on a farm near Sheldon, North Dakota; died 20 September 1990 in Minneapolis. B.A. from the University of North Dakota, Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, postgraduate work at Louisiana State; served with the Army Air Forces in the Aleutians. He taught at Los Angeles State College from 1951 and was dismissed after appearing as an unfriendly witness before HUAC in 1953. Blacklisted for the rest of the decade, he worked at secondary-school teaching, film and television scripts and wooden-animal manufacturing, taught at the alternative Sequoia School with Edwin Rolfe

and Don Gordon, sat on the editorial board of *The California Quarterly*, and made his house at 2714 Marsh Street the centre of the Marsh Street Irregulars. He was married at this period to the activist Alice Greenfield McGrath, the “Alice” of the poem printed here. He began *Letter to an Imaginary Friend* in 1954; it occupied him for three decades and appeared complete only in 1997. Books include *First Manifesto* (1940), *To Walk a Crooked Mile* (1947), *Longshot O’Leary’s Garland of Practical Poesie* (1949), *Figures from a Double World* (1955), *Letter to an Imaginary Friend Part I* (1962), *The Movie at the End of the World* (1972), *Letters to Tomasito* (1977) and *Selected Poems 1938–1988* (1988). He left California in 1960 and taught latterly in North Dakota and Minnesota. Papers at the University of North Dakota. He is now securely established as a major American poet of the radical tradition.

James Boyer May Dates given as 1904–1981 [*unconfirmed — a single source, though his archived papers run 1923–1981, which is consistent*]. His papers are catalogued under “Amsberry-May.” He edited *Trace* from Los Angeles from 1952 to 1970, the indispensable register of little-magazine activity worldwide and the direct ancestor of the *International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*. He had a standing relationship with Villiers Publications in London — one small-press history calls him simply “Villiers’ James Boyer May” — and had already edited a London-printed American anthology, *Eight American Poets* (1952). His own collection was *Selected Poems, 1950–1955* (Inferno Press, San Francisco, 1955). At exactly the moment of this book he was hosting poetry and talk programmes on USC radio, 1957–59, and in 1959 he edited a Library of Congress project recording twenty-four American poets reading their own work. His six prior credits in the Acknowledgements — including magazines in Japan and Australia — are the clearest surviving trace of the international network *Trace* existed to map. Papers at California State University, Fullerton (SC.87, unprocessed): correspondence, *Trace* typescripts, broadsides. This is almost certainly the richest unexploited source for the Poetry Los Angeles readings and for the poets in this book about whom nothing is known. Note that the Wikipedia article on “Trace (magazine)” concerns an unrelated 1990s style magazine.

Bert Meyers Bertram Ivan Meyers, born 20 March 1928 in Los Angeles; died of lung cancer in 1979, aged fifty-one. He dropped out of high school

and was self-taught. He worked as a janitor, farm worker, house painter and printer's apprentice, and became a master picture framer and gilder — the trade of the poem that opens his section here. He was involved in communist youth circles in the late 1940s and moved in the poetry circles around McGrath. He married the writer and translator Odette Miller in 1957, so this book catches him in the first year of that marriage. In 1964 he was admitted to Claremont Graduate School on the strength of his poems alone, despite having no high-school diploma, and he taught at Pitzer College from 1967 to 1978; his students included Dennis Cooper, Amy Gerstler, Garrett Hongo and Maurya Simon. He held that a poet should be immersed in the world rather than isolated in the academy. Books: *Early Rain* (1960), *The Dark Birds* (1968), *Sunlight on the Wall* (1976), *The Wild Olive Trees* (1979), *Windowsills* (1979), *In a Dybbuk's Raincoat: Collected Poems* (2007), and the Unsung Masters volume *Bert Meyers* (Pleiades Press, 2023). Long a poet's poet, he is now being actively recovered. No archive located; papers may remain in family hands.

Gil Orlovitz Born 1918 in Philadelphia; died 1973 in New York City, aged fifty-five. He is the one contributor who was not an Angeleno, and the likeliest explanation for his presence is documented: he was in Hollywood on a Columbia Pictures contract, co-writing the screenplay for *Over-Exposed* (1956) and episodes of *The Adventures of Jim Bowie* and *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp*. Nine volumes of poetry appeared between 1947 and 1972, among them *Concerning Man* (1947), *Selected Poems* (1960) and *Art of the Sonnet* (1961), along with the novels *Milkbottle H* (1967) and *Ice Never F* (1970). Bukowski praised him in 1958; Chad Walsh called him one of the finest and most versatile poets then writing in English. He died poor and forgotten, and has undergone a genuine small-press revival in the past decade, driven by Tough Poets Press. No archive located.

William Pillin Died 1985; born 1910 [*unconfirmed*]. Born in Ukraine, his family fled the pogroms and he came to the United States in 1923, aged thirteen [*unconfirmed*], settling in Chicago. He met and married Polia Sukonic in 1927. They farmed near Albuquerque from 1936 to 1940, returned to Chicago, and settled in Los Angeles in the late 1940s, where Pillin Art Pottery operated out of their garage: he threw the vessels and managed the firing, and Polia painted them. He had earlier worked as a bookseller. *Passage After Midnight* appeared from Inferno Press, San

Francisco, in 1958, the same year as this anthology. Books also include *Theory of Silence* (1949), *Dance Without Shoes* (1956), *Pavanne for a Fading Memory* (Alan Swallow, 1963), *Everything Falling* (1971), *The Abandoned Music Room* (1975), *To the End of Time: Poems New and Selected* (1980) and *Another Dawn* (1984) — nine collections by his death, on the usual count. He is now better known through the pottery market than through the poems: Pillin ceramics are actively collected, and Polia has a Wikipedia article while he does not. No archive located.

Lawrence P. Spingarn 1917–2001. The Library of Congress authority form gives the middle name as Perry; *Contemporary Authors* gives Perreira. The conflict is unresolved and is recorded rather than decided. Birthplace not established. He was special assistant for the Hispanic Desk at the Library of Congress 1941–43, instructor at Pomona College 1948–49, lecturer at UCLA 1954–57, and professor at Los Angeles Valley College 1959–85 — so at the moment of this book he was between the UCLA lectureship and the Valley College post, one of only two contributors on an academic track. From 1968 he ran Perivale Press out of Van Nuys, a long-lived one-man West Coast literary press. Books: *Rococo Summer and Other Poems* (1947), *The Lost River* (1951), *Letters from Exile* (1961), *Madame Bidet and Other Fixtures* (1968), *Freeway Problems — and Others* (1970), *The Blue Door* (1977), *The Dark Playground* (1979), *The Belvedere* (1982), *Moral Tales* (1983), *Going Like Seventy* (1988) and the anthology *Poets West* (1975, editor). He placed work in *Harper's*, *The New Yorker* and *The Kenyon Review*. No archive located.

Ann Stanford Born 25 November 1916 in La Habra, California; died 12 July 1987 in Los Angeles. B.A. Stanford 1938, Phi Beta Kappa, where she studied under Yvor Winters, who selected her for *Twelve Poets of the Pacific* in 1937. She married the architect Roland White in 1942 and had four children. Through the 1950s she was raising them in Southern California and taking graduate degrees at UCLA — an M.A. in journalism in 1958, an M.A. in English in 1961, a Ph.D. in 1962 — so in the year of this book she was a graduate student and a mother, not yet a professor. She held a Yaddo fellowship in 1957. *Magellan: A Poem to be Read by Several Voices* appeared in 1958, the same year as this anthology, and its form is suggestive of the reading-series context this book came out of. “The Weathercock,” printed here, gave its title to her 1966 collection. She taught

at San Fernando Valley State College — later California State University, Northridge — from 1962 until her death, was a founding member of the Associated Writing Programs, and won the Shelley Memorial Award in 1969. The Ann Stanford Poetry Prize has been awarded since 1988. After McGrath, she is the most securely established of the eighteen poets here. A small collection at CSUN; no larger archive located.

Edmund Teske Edmund Rudolph Teske, born 1911 in Chicago; died 22 November 1996. This is the photographer, and the identification is certain: the Getty Research Institute, which holds his papers, describes the collection as documenting his life and work as “photographer, poet and teacher,” and Series III of those papers contains his poetry, dated 1940 to 1980. He studied at Hull House, exhibited first in 1933, and in 1936 joined Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin Fellowship, where he set up his first studio. He moved to Los Angeles in 1943, worked as a still photographer for Paramount, became associated with Aline Barnsdall’s Olive Hill, and knew Man Ray and the émigré modernist circle. In 1958, exactly the year of this book, he developed his signature duotone solarization. He began teaching at Chouinard Art Institute in 1962. He is remembered for the solarized, multiple-printed, mystical and frankly homoerotic portraits, and for his images of Los Angeles counterculture figures. Papers at the Getty Research Institute (2005.M.10), including a six-volume draft autobiography. The poems here belong to a documented forty-year writing practice of which they may be among the very few contemporary publications.

Zack Walsh Nothing is recorded. No dates, no birthplace, no books, no day job, no archive, no other publication has been found — for the name alone, with “poet,” with Los Angeles, with *Coastlines* and *Trace*, and against periodical indexes of the period. He appears to have left no trace beyond this book. He has no entry on the Acknowledgements page, so these poems were presumably new. The work is markedly unlike most of the book: short-lined, lower-case, imagistic — closer to Creeley or early Levertov than to the formal register of May, Yates or Spingarn. The likeliest surviving record of him is correspondence or a reading programme in the James Boyer May papers at Fullerton or the Mel Weisburd papers at Cal State LA.

Mel Weisburd 1927–2015. Born in St. Paul, Minnesota, separated from his mother at three months and raised by elderly grandparents; he grew up in Los Angeles and attended Dorsey High School. After military service he took an M.A. in English at UCLA on the GI Bill in 1950, then studied poetry with Thomas McGrath at Los Angeles State College — the formative event of his literary life — and was one of the Marsh Street Irregulars. In 1955, after McGrath was blacklisted, he and Gene Frumkin founded *Coastlines*. His own contributions to it included an account of his experience as an early LSD test subject and “The Merchant of Venice,” his attack on Lawrence Lipton. He organised the readings that funded the magazine, including a reading of *Howl* in October 1956, and recorded them. His day job was inspector for the Los Angeles County Air Pollution Control District. He later wrote the federal *Field Operations Manual for Air Pollution Control* and in the 1970s founded Pacific Environmental Services. Late books: *A Life of Windows & Mirrors* and *The Gloria Poems*. His papers at California State University, Los Angeles include journals from 1957 and forty-two reel-to-reel tapes, several digitised — among them a Los Angeles poetry reading of 1 March 1958.

Curtis Zahn No birth or death year has been found. Library of Congress authorities, obituary indexes and the Pacific Palisades local press were all searched without result; he was certainly alive and publishing in 1987. He lived in Pacific Palisades. His publication trail places him exactly at the junction of the two circles behind this book: *Venture* (1959), *San Francisco Review* (1960, 1961), *May’s Trace* (1961) and Weisburd and Frumkin’s *Coastlines* (1962). His significant book is *American Contemporary: Short Stories* (New Directions / San Francisco Review, 1963), introduced by Herbert Gold, which reached further internationally than the work of any contributor here except Orlovitz — Jonathan Cape in 1965, Suhrkamp in German in 1966, Penguin in 1968. He moved increasingly into theatre: *The Reactivated Man* (1984) and *The Plight of the Lesser Sawyer’s Cricket: Plays, Prose, and Poems* (1987). No archive located.

Peter Yates Born 1909 in Toronto to American parents and raised in upstate New York; B.A. Princeton 1931; married the pianist Frances Mullen in 1933; died in Buffalo in 1976. He is not the film director of the same name. For twenty-five years his occupation was employment counsellor with the California State Employment Service in Los Angeles,

1937–1962 — the most consequential new-music series in the American West was run in the evenings by a civil servant. He founded Evenings on the Roof with Mullen on 23 April 1939 at their Schindler-designed house at 1735 Micheltorena Street, championed Ives, Cage, Harrison and the Second Viennese School, and handed the series to Lawrence Morton in 1954, after which it became the Monday Evening Concerts. He was music correspondent and editorial associate of *Arts & Architecture* from about 1940 to 1967, and met Harry Partch through it. Books: *A Smaller Poem Book* (1946), *Evenings on the Roof, 1939–1954*, *An Amateur at the Keyboard* (1964) and *Twentieth Century Music* (1967). In 1968 he became head of the music department at Buffalo State, where he founded the Buffalo Evenings for New Music. His papers at UC San Diego (MSS 0014, twenty-two linear feet) describe him as “music critic, author, teacher, and poet” and contain scores by Ives and Harrison; they are the likeliest surviving place for correspondence about Poetry Los Angeles. His poems close this book with addresses to Ives, Stravinsky and Schoenberg, and a view of Los Angeles from the window of the house where the concerts began.

NOTES ON PUBLICATION

THE MAGAZINES IN THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Seventeen periodicals are named on the Acknowledgements page. Thirteen can be identified; four cannot. The pattern of what survives and what does not is itself informative.

The Colorado Review Fort Collins. Founded 1956 at Colorado State University and on hiatus by the end of the decade. Because that run is so short, the Daniels and May poems credited to it must date from about 1956–1958.

The Literary Review Madison, New Jersey; Fairleigh Dickinson University, founded 1957. It was a year old, so Daniels's "The Sail" comes from its first issues.

The Fiddlehead Fredericton, New Brunswick; University of New Brunswick, founded 1945, Canada's oldest continuously published literary journal. Credited three times here — Daniels, May, Spingarn — which is a measure of May's cross-border reach.

The Saturday Review The New York general-culture weekly, 1924–1986. Not a little magazine at all, and much the widest circulation in this list: a notable placement for Frumkin.

The Prairie Schooner Lincoln; University of Nebraska, founded 1926.

The Carolina Quarterly Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina, founded 1948.

The New Mexico Quarterly Albuquerque; University of New Mexico, 1931–1969. It printed a portion of McGrath's *Letter to an Imaginary Friend* ten years later, in 1968.

Voices *Voices: A Journal of Poetry*, edited by Harold Vinal, 1921–1965 — long-lived, catholic and somewhat conservative. Not the English *Voices* of 1919–21.

Mandrake (England) Founded at Oxford in 1945 by John Wain, later edited by Arthur Boyars; it printed early Amis and Larkin and folded in 1956. Spingarn's "Diary of a Heavy Man" must therefore date from 1956 or earlier, making it the earliest firmly datable prior appearance in the book.

Poetry (Chicago) Founded 1912 by Harriet Monroe. Spingarn's "West" is the most prestigious prior placement in the anthology.

The Sewanee Review University of the South, founded 1892; the oldest continuously published literary quarterly in the United States, and in the 1950s a flagship of New Critical taste. Ann Stanford's "The Weathercock" — later her title poem — appeared here first.

Epoch Cornell University, founded 1947.

A Houyhnhnm's Scrapbook Identified, and the pleasantest find of this research: a publication of the *New Orleans Poetry Journal* edited by Richard Ashman, letterpress-printed with deckled edges by the Talisman Press of San Jose; the traced issue is February 1957, thirty-five pages in stapled wrappers. A tiny, handsome, Swiftian-titled offshoot of the New Orleans little magazines — exactly the right home for Daniels's civil-service satire. Note in passing that the Talisman Press also published Ann Stanford's *Magellan* in 1958.

Four could not be identified: *Poetry Broadside*, *Kast* (Japan), *Prism* (Australia), and *Pan*, whose country of publication the Acknowledgements do not give. Each was searched by title with period, country and "little magazine"; all returned only false positives — *Prism* in particular collides with PRISM international, founded in British Columbia in 1959, which is both the wrong country and slightly too late.

Three of the four are James Boyer May's own credits. That is not a coincidence. May's position at *Trace* gave him access to a web of ephemeral, often mimeographed, English-language magazines scattered well outside the American trade, and that web left almost no catalogue footprint. The obvious route to identifying them is the little-magazine directory that *Trace* itself published, and May's own papers at Fullerton, which would likely contain his correspondence with these editors.

LATER PRINTINGS

Thomas McGrath The anthology prints, under the title “Letter to an Imaginary Friend” and the dedication “(for Alice),” section IV, subsection 1 — the fourth section of what became Part One, not Part IV — beginning “The immortal girls, the summer manifestoes.” The publication history of the poem runs: Part I, Alan Swallow, Denver, 1962; Parts I and II, Swallow Press, Chicago, 1970; Parts III and IV, Copper Canyon Press, 1985; all four parts in one volume, Copper Canyon, 1997. The 1958 printing here therefore precedes the first book publication of Part I by four years, and it is a book appearance rather than a magazine one. No source reachable for this edition records it — not Copper Canyon’s own account, and not the McGrath scholarship available online; the standard printed bibliographies could not be inspected. That is a negative finding made without archive access, and it should be checked against the acknowledgements pages of the 1962, 1970 and 1997 volumes before it is repeated as an established bibliographical fact.

Ann Stanford “The Weathercock” appears here in 1958 and gave its title to her collection *The Weathercock* (Viking, 1966), eight years later. Whether “The Bear” and “A Summer Walk” were collected there or elsewhere could not be confirmed. Her poems were gathered posthumously in *Holding Our Own* (Copper Canyon, 2001).

Bert Meyers “Rainy Day” and “Because There’s So Much Speed” are credited to *The New Mexico Quarterly*. His first collection, *Early Rain*, appeared from Alan Swallow in 1960, two years after this book; the title makes it very likely that the rain poems were collected there, but the contents of *Early Rain* could not be verified.

Gene Frumkin “The Hawk and the Lizard” became the title poem of his first collection in 1963, five years later.

No later book reprinting has been traced for the contributions of Ain, Blake, Daniels, Gershgoren, Kiesel, May, Orlovitz, Pillin, Spingarn, Teske, Walsh, Weisburd, Yates or Zahn. Several of those poets published collections, and a poem-by-poem comparison against them would probably turn up further first appearances; that requires the books themselves. Estelle Gershgoren Novak’s *Poets of the Non-Existent City* (2002) is the most likely place for individual poems from this anthology to have been reprinted.

A NOTE ON RIGHTS AND PROVENANCE

This section is research, not legal advice, and not a legal opinion. Copyright status for a mid-century book manufactured abroad is genuinely difficult and fact-dependent. Nothing here should be read as a conclusion that this work is in the public domain. Several of the databases that would settle the question could not be searched successfully, and every negative finding below means *not found in the sources actually reached*, which is a much weaker statement than *not registered*.

THE OBJECT

Villiers Publications Ltd., Ingestre Road, London N.W.5. Copyright notice on the verso of the title leaf: © Villiers Publications Ltd. 1958. Printed at the Press of Villiers Publications. Approximately sixty-eight unnumbered pages, octavo, pictorial wrappers. No ISBN — the book predates them. No US publisher, distributor, importer or price is stated anywhere.

The book is often cited as 1959; the physical evidence for 1958 is direct and the evidence for 1959 is second-hand. Two ordinary explanations for the discrepancy suggest themselves, neither verified: cataloguers assigning a receipt year to a title page that carries no date, or a distinction between the London printing and actual distribution in Los Angeles. Cite it as 1958, and note that it is often given as 1959.

It appears to be scarce. No OpenLibrary record and no Internet Archive scan were found; at the time of research a single copy was offered by each of two dealers; and it has never been reprinted. A small-press paperback in wrappers, printed in a London jobbing shop for a Los Angeles reading series, is a format with a low institutional survival rate. This is an inference from market and database absence, not a verified holdings count — WorldCat, the Library of Congress catalogue, HathiTrust and Jisc Library Hub could not be queried, so no OCLC number, LCCN, exact call number or holdings figure was obtained.

THE BOOK'S OWN INSTRUCTION

The most important sentence for anyone contemplating a reprint is printed in the 1958 book itself:

Certain of these poems were originally copyrighted by the publishers of the various magazines listed on the page of Acknowledgements at the close of the book. Permission to reprint work herein, other than quotations for review purposes, must be obtained from the authors.

That is an express statement that the notice in Villiers' name was taken for the benefit of the individual poets — the ordinary 1909 Act pattern in which a blanket notice on a composite work protects the individual contributions. It means that permissions run to the poets and their estates, not to Villiers, for which no continuing corporate existence could be traced, and not to the editors. Whatever the abstract status of the compilation, the practical answer is unchanged: clear rights poem by poem.

UNITED STATES

For a work first published in 1958 with notice, the 1909 Act gave an initial term of twenty-eight years, renewable by an affirmative filing in the twenty-eighth year. The renewal window here was 1985–86. Renewal became automatic only for works published from 1964 onward, so it does not help this book. With renewal, the term would now be ninety-five years from publication; without it, the work would have fallen into the US public domain at the end of 1986.

No renewal record was found, but the search failed rather than came back empty. A 1986 renewal would appear only in the Copyright Office's 1978 and later records — the printed *Catalog of Copyright Entries* ceased in 1982 and so structurally cannot contain it. Of the three databases that could answer the question, the Stanford Copyright Renewal Database returned a CAPTCHA on every query, the Copyright Office's public catalogue now redirects to a JavaScript application that served an empty shell, and the New York Public Library's search prototype refused the query. Anyone with a browser can do in five minutes what this research could not.

Two further complications are worth recording because they cut in opposite directions.

Foreign restoration. The URAA automatically restored US copyright in 1996 for qualifying foreign works that had lost it through failure to comply with US formalities. But a work qualifies only if at least one author was a national or domiciliary of an eligible — that is, non-US — country at the time of creation. Every contributor and every editor here appears to have been American; this was by design an anthology of poets reading in Los Angeles. William Pillin was born in Ukraine but had emigrated as a child and was resident in Los Angeles throughout the 1950s; his naturalisation status was not established, and it is the one contributor-level fact that could disturb this reading. On the available evidence the author-nationality condition is not met and restoration probably never operated, notwithstanding the British imprint. The one genuine ambiguity is who counts as author of the *compilation*, given that the notice names a UK company — an argument that seems weak but not frivolous, and that the publisher's own disclaimer further undercuts.

The manufacturing clause. This cuts the other way and is easy to miss. Under §16 of the 1909 Act, an English-language book had to be printed from type set within the United States for full statutory copyright to attach; §22 allowed a five-year *ad interim* copyright for a book first published abroad in English if a copy was deposited within six months, and §23 extended that to the full term only if a US-manufactured edition followed. The exemption for foreign works keys off the *author's* nationality — and here the authors are Americans. An English-language book by American authors, manufactured in London in 1958, may therefore have had a defective or limited US copyright from the outset, independently of the renewal question. No evidence either way was found as to whether an *ad interim* registration was made; that requires the Copyright Office's pre-1978 records.

UNITED KINGDOM

Term is life of the author plus seventy years. Because this is an anthology of eighteen separate authors, there is no single expiry date: each poem runs on its own author's clock and the selection runs on the editors'. Yates's poems clear at the end of 2046, Meyers's in 2049, May's in 2051,

Stanford's in 2057, McGrath's in 2060. Contributors who were young in 1958 push the term well beyond that, and death dates for Ain, Blake, Walsh and Zahn were not established at all. The anthology is not out of copyright in the United Kingdom and will not be for decades. Villiers' separate publisher's right in the typographical arrangement of this edition ran twenty-five years and expired around 1983.

IF A DEFENSIBLE ANSWER IS NEEDED

Search the title, "Villiers Publications" and each poet's name at publcrecords.copyright.gov and in the Stanford Copyright Renewal Database, in a browser. Commission a Copyright Office records search covering both a 1985–86 renewal and any 1958–59 *ad interim* registration. Obtain an OCLC record to fix the catalogue date and holdings. And regardless of what those return, plan to clear rights poem by poem with the poets' estates, which is what the book told you to do in 1958.

SOURCES

The primary source throughout is the 1958 book itself: its prefatory note, contents page, dedication and Acknowledgements. What follows are the secondary sources on which the introduction and notes rest, grouped by what they were used for. All web sources were consulted in August 2026.

THE SCENE AND ITS HISTORIANS

Bill Mohr, *Hold-Outs: The Los Angeles Poetry Renaissance, 1948–1992* (University of Iowa Press, 2011), and his blog at billmohrpoet.com, which is the source of the description of this book as “scarcely bigger than an issue of a little magazine,” of its length at roughly sixty-eight unnumbered pages, and of the observation that no Venice West poet appears in it.

Estelle Gershgoren Novak, ed., *Poets of the Non-Existent City: Los Angeles in the McCarthy Era* (University of New Mexico Press, 2002), drawn from *The California Quarterly* and *Coastlines*, which establishes the *Coastlines* affiliation of Ain, Frumkin, Gershgoren and Weisburd.

John Arthur Maynard, *Venice West: The Beat Generation in Southern California* (Rutgers University Press, 1991).

Brian Kim Stefans, *Free Space Comix* (arras.net), which describes this anthology and its editors and is the sole traced source for the life dates given here for Josephine Ain and James Boyer May.

California State University, Los Angeles, Special Collections: the Mel Weisburd exhibit and the *Coastlines* pages; and the California Audiovisual Preservation Project’s digitisation of the Weisburd reels, including the Los Angeles poetry reading of 1 March 1958 (archive.org, [c1s_000002](https://archive.org/details/c1s_000002)).

ARCHIVES AND FINDING AIDS

James Boyer May (Amsberry-May) papers, SC.87, California State University, Fullerton — unprocessed; correspondence, *Trace* typescripts, broadsides; indexes Villiers Publications as an associated name.

Peter Yates Papers, MSS 0014, University of California San Diego, Special Collections & Archives.

Thomas McGrath Papers, 1940–2003, Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections, University of North Dakota.

Mae Babitz papers, LSC.1740, UCLA Library Special Collections — the source of the statement that she “hosted regular meetings of like-minded artists, poets and musicians.”

Edmund Teske papers, 1933–1996, accession 2005.M.10, Getty Research Institute — Series III, poetry, 1940–1980.

Gene Frumkin papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico. Mel Weisburd Papers, California State University, Los Angeles. Ann Stanford Collection, California State University, Northridge.

VILLIERS AND THE POCKET POETS

University of Chicago Library, City Lights exhibition catalogue, and the Verdant Press checklist of the Pocket Poets series, for the Villiers printings of the first ten titles and for John Sankey’s correspondence with Ferlinghetti over the binding of Duncan’s *Selected Poems*. The seizure of 520 copies of *Howl and Other Poems* imported from England on 25 March 1957 is documented in the standard accounts of the obscenity case.

No corporate history of Villiers Publications Ltd. — its founding, ownership, or closure — was located, and none of the British little magazines it is commonly said to have printed could be substantiated by title. David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914–2000* (British Library, 2006), is the obvious place to look next.

COPYRIGHT

Peter B. Hirtle, “Copyright Term and the Public Domain in the United States,” Cornell University Library. US Copyright Office Circular 38B, “Copyright Restoration Under the URAA,” and 17 U.S.C. §104A. The Copyright Act of 1909 as amended, §§9, 16, 22, 23. The Online Books Page

(University of Pennsylvania) for the coverage and 1982 terminus of the *Catalog of Copyright Entries*. The Stanford Copyright Renewal Database, the Copyright Public Records System and the New York Public Library search prototype were all attempted without success, as described.

NOT CONSULTED, AND WORTH CONSULTING

Four things would materially improve this edition and none of them is available online. Mohr's *Hold-Outs* and Novak's *Poets of the Non-Existent City* in print, both of which may say something about the reading series and would likely supply real biography for Ain and Gershgoren. The May papers at Fullerton, which are unprocessed and are by a wide margin the likeliest place to find records of the readings themselves, and correspondence with the poets about whom nothing is known. Back issues of *Trace* and *Coastlines*, whose contributor notes are the natural home of hard biographical fact. And Rick Schober's biography of Gil Orlovitz, distributed by Tough Poets Press.
