

ABRAXAS TEN



INCLUDING AN INDEX TO NUMBERS 1-10



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POEM FOR MY 21ST BIRTHDAY

David Hilton

1

I couldn't write one then.
It was only 1959
and I didn't know how
to ask the ghosts for help.
I had no good dead to call upon--

only my loony grandma's flying saucer god,
the Venusian with whom she'd flown
and seen Earth's doom:
We are a dark sphere falling
deep into the Devil's realm,
all lost unless we harken to the Venusian.

It was that crazy shit
made me shut her up alive
in the welfare trailer court,
where she held the demons of discord off
by chanting to the MIGHTY I AM
stop all war stop all war stop all war stop all war...
It helped save her and the world from harm.

But could *Zoltar* help me write my poem?
My grandma was not dead then,
so she had no time to tell me.
She was a spy decoding *Zoltar's* secrets of salvation
as she received them on her tiny tv set,
the same one the laundry-man found
her sitting in front of
in the morning last spring
as if she had fallen asleep.

2

I died to write one then.
On my birthday night I wandered
Oakland because I'd never wandered
my city before to really feel
its filthy blood clot my tongue.

Past midnight I drifted with golden fish
ballooned inside glass walls
of Le Club Rendevoov.
I somehow knew
they had become mine
to make again, so strong
then the language untested by words,
pure medium I floated in,
open-mouthed against the clear
hard sides of that empty bowl.

So I was 21. Oh, I sang
every bartender's alias
by heart -- but my own
was anybody's guess.
From the day I was born
I'd never gotten it right.

3

The poem must precede the poet,
but mine was the shadow crushed under my boots.
And the poet of course must precede himself --
So after two sixpacks of Country Club
I'd always change
into the Lake Isle of Innisfree
and try suicide by car radio,
3 a.m. swerving the Oakland hills,
rhythm'n'blues and a backseat full
of Falstaff for my rudder, shouting
"In-is-free, but where?" and praying
just like Ray Chaarlz the High Priest
would love me too --
What'd I say?

Ah, Oakland of giant swizzle stick hieroglyphs
marking your numinous passages,
icons of extinct creatures
like the man who said he was my father.
At any hour past closing
he'd crash through my door, swaying
like the *Thing*, trying to tell me
some terrible secret -- maybe
how much he loved me -- by displaying
his cherished clown-size badge:

I AM AN ALCOHOLIC --
IN CASE OF EMERGENCY
GET ME A BEER!

.....

Ah, Oakland, you make me try to make you
in order to talk to you
of these things. You were generous
in giving me silence and void,
that great black and crushing depth
at which certain bright monsters
are born to thrive and hide.

4

I was so young then I didn't need
a name or anyone else --
just wanted a public toilet
I could lock for a minute.
It was time for the poem, but Ike
got me a job with Del Monte
helping the tomato machines bleed all night.
It was a good job because I could get drunk after it
(Ah, Oakland of Gypsy Joker shuffleboard bars
that cashed my checks at 7 a.m.) --
then swallow chili & fries at Doggy Diner,
find my room at noon, stay drunk
and listen to *Jazz*
at the *Philharmonic* and dream
my name was Illinois Jacquet.

Before I wrote a line
I had to roll 5000 strikes.
After I became a champ, I broke
my hand against the warehouse wall and --
the years spill like abortions here --
Del Monte let me go.

So I read *Writer's Digest* --
"Cash in on your own experience.
Perhaps someone near you is dying
of an incurable malady. Millions
of readers are eager to share with you
the drama of helplessly watching
a loved one slowly die."
But no one was near to me,
and I couldn't speak the tongue
of my own incurable malady.

I felt fine, except ...
I stayed 21 a long, long time.
The police let me go,
let me go, let me go, until
I got sick of being 21.
The fever cleansed the vomit.
I lay at the bottom of a swift stream,
every small fish, every sweet weed
filled my lungs like air.
Infinitely patient, the ghosts
were opening their green arms
for I was always one of them.

And so I made the mortal poem,
squalled the first weak breath
that felled me into real time
or into whatever else you want to call
fear of death -- though still
I can't really live
in more than a single room,
and I don't ever give
my true right name.

SAND JOURNAL

James Stephens

There is a break around our tunnels, giving us food,
giving us our claws.

The flower that gets named as a grass.

The wise grace of your upbringing can be the most
outlandish timepiece.

God with fins rises in our wake as we head due North.
He wears a brown stem.

We have lived in all our boundaries can muster.

To watch you from a prairie. In your graveyard
you are are fine ruddy haze.

The siliphium has meaty seeds and cannot be dug up.

Your bedlam is not worth the candle.

We arise too early, forced to make a treaty with the stars.

A logic is wasted in our lanterning hunt. Like a
mechanical blackness
in the fruit-jar, "nature naturing."

A solarium in the briar root.

An umbrella or a broom is in a hurry.

You think the shovel bears the flower.

A hound of silence is dead in the marsh.

The old lake is filled with your ungainly bones.
Only the still-living crane remembers a hermit swamp.

Our ragged medicine will forever shift its weight.

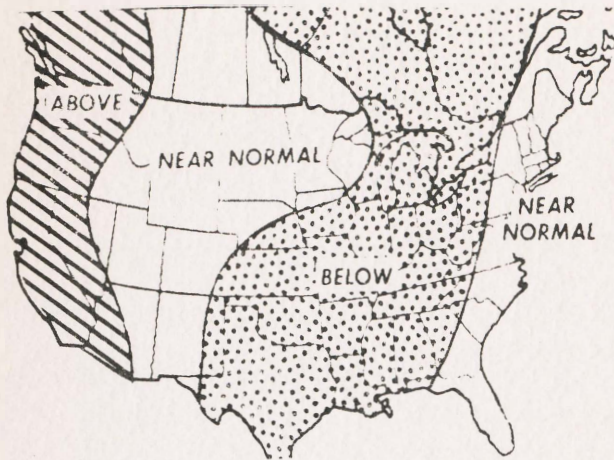
Prothonotary. Pre-glacial promontory

We stand on one leg and think like dried brush.

The current will possess its anchor in the lily.
Only our grief must pass.

If you hunt for your life, your eye succeeds you.





SPRING CLOUDS

Scott M. Walker

I

My God what fish and elephants!
The earth just luffed.

II

Three questions:
Is this the Animal Parade?
Shouldn't we have tacked back by now?
Will the Professor really push that button?

III

They drag behind them granite blocks,
and leave their peace:
rain, their cool and lasting tears.

THREE ANIMALS

Douglas Blazek

Scorpions move through the day
their stinger's caught on the skewer of sunlight
the pain of property, gilt-edged poison
draped on a royal shoulder.

Freedom lives at the bottom of a falcon's eye
looking out through its microscopic telescope
an incredible streak without a body
loose and flawless as a laugh.

Something unnameable grazes our mind with
its empire, elusive
wisdom of breath barely detectable --
sea anemones telephone the wind.



SO MARK IS ON HIS WAY TO
AN ANIMAL KINGDOM UNMATCHED
ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

HE DRINKS LIKA, BUT

Tuschen

he talks like a toy --
 cracked.
she moves
not like a tiger;

but rather
an urge
in the tiger's breath.

(g.i. joe
don
 't know
 'bout them
games -
he never met a tiger
 or a lie
in.)

yet,
on (and yes, on again)
the breath of
a drinker
 hunts
the ghost
of legea -

screaming
 i don
't
 believe you
fellow
fellow
 animal.

POEM

William L. Fox

i look for tools
left out after dark
the shovel the axe
the hammer and saw
and find what others
have dropped in haste

a love affair without
any hands to hold
a convertible that will
crash tomorrow
clues to a murder
that a suspect fumbled
and the deadend footprints
of a cop

i collect the tools
including a screwdriver
stuck in the lawn as if
to turn off the water
and go inside

the dry kisses climb over
my backyard fence
that car starts to roll downhill
and those clues bury themselves
under the footprints

what's left outside
is no accident
my garage is full
of the tools and jobs
that can't do themselves.

THE LANDING ON THE MOON

F. Keith Wahle

Wires clustered in the accessible distance,
but birds were dying of frost.
The doormat festival succeeded --
a real famine of shoes.

Faintly, he exposed the myth of nutrition.
There were limits to everything,
even if the limits were infinite.
Bicycle races! Fields of yellow corn!

The torches were saved by fire.
Mermaids, which had not been seen
since mythological times,
gathered in the harbor, showing their tits.

Bare-breasted mermaids bobbed
in the foam while those on the shore
watched them with binoculars and glasses.
Oranges were eaten in the sun.

The nipple lay under the tongue
like a mountain. The baseball player
kept running from third to second base.
The rain broke nothing when it fell.

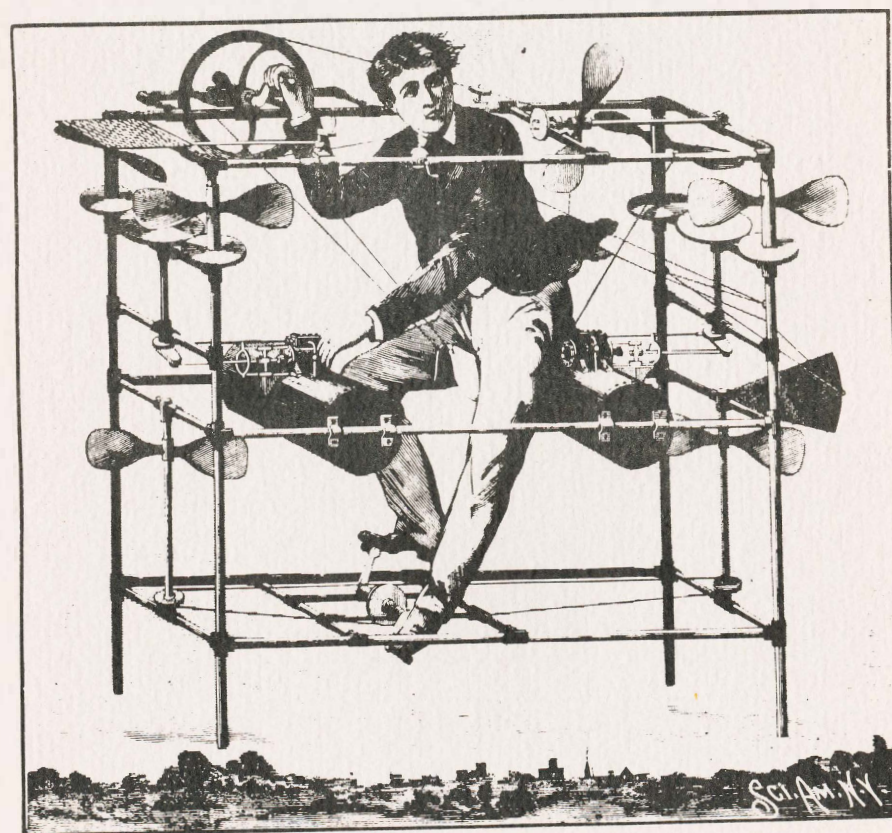
And in those days there were already
useless machines, and girls in
white dresses, walking hand-in-hand
down long avenues lined with lilac trees.

We wanted to believe in art,
believe that it could feed the poor,
and comfort the homeless and lost.
And there were in those days

bears on bicycles in the circuses,
and cathedrals, feeding the poor with candles.
And saints walked among us in funny
disguises, doing shabby miracles.

The task of the shark was easily understood,
but girls' milk was at a premium.
Mothers tip-toed back to the hook-up
over a trail of songbird skeletons.

And men clung to each other in the darkness,
wearing their bulky suits.
And they wanted something to land on,
so they landed on the moon.



A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER BROTHER
WHO GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL
IN JUNE OF 1970

John McKernan

Thank you for the card. Accept praise.
I feel joy to read that you have won
A scholarship to go to Creighton.
I know you will have no trouble
And will not be asked to leave as I was
For "disorderly conduct" by order
Of Father Chatvie. That lovely drunkard.

I have just washed our crazy cat
And am trying to dry it. Later
I will give it some old tuna fish.

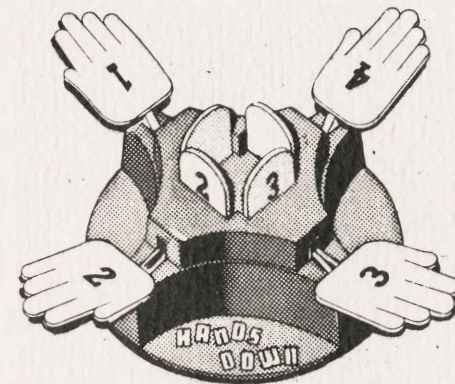
Well both of us are clean now. I
Am full of soap. Soaked to the skin.
There are water puddles everywhere.

I feel pretty much like an egg.
I have been listening to the radio
Heard the news about the law books
At Yale burning in the street. Heard
About the buildings in Saint Louis
Blown to pieces all the way back
To Paris. Heard students beat
Up another professor and shredded
His books and notes. I might have
Done all of that back there in Omaha
A long time ago in the sixties
When I was going to school.

You asked me

What I remember most about school.
That is funny. All I bring back
From those six years of idiocy
Is a crazy final examination
In a Comparative Anatomy course
When I had to pull out the bones
From a sack and identify the part
Of the cat they came from, function,
And name.

Somehow I passed with the grade
Of A. I shall never understand how.
I hope your years will be better
Than mine. Congratulations Peter.



THE COMEDIAN

Peter Wild

All summer he sleeps under the planks in the barn
with his eyes open,
tongue coated with straw.
at dusk it is the dogs that have him
like a sheet in their mouths down by the henhouse
giving the alarm, tearing him apart.
but in the kitchen there he is caught
in the switch, one leg up, nodding at you, a
bowl of potato salad couched in one arm.
you fire as he dives for the empty washer,
and that whole side of the house falls in.
toward morning you start from the ends of dreams
to him waving his rifle on the lawn,
goading his white stag into the air,
 calling the name of your sister,
of all your chickens, as he rides off.



MARIJUANA


Dennis Trudell

Last night I saw two filaments and felt a road. And as though the road were pale and I had come to where it would soon end. Firm surface ahead: the cast of light on it or from it the color of elephant. The filaments or

fiery white tassels of some cornstock, its highest moments brighter than any phonograph needle, wavered toward one another but did not touch. They did not touch, and that if the road was sadness' own tongue the breath of it was not so heavy. I had brought it there after all, and while the filaments would never touch each one of them was incredibly bright.

FREE! DRUG DETECTION GUIDE

Parents! Know the warning signals and dangers of drug usage. Prevent addiction before it happens. Slide rule guide reveals physical symptoms, suspicious equipment, personality changes, health dangers of using different drugs.

A black slide rule guide with white text and graphics. It features a large central rectangular area, likely for a photo or drawing. To the left of this area are several small circles, possibly representing pills or droplets. To the right are several small rectangular boxes containing text. At the bottom, there is a small graphic of a person's head and shoulders.

DRIVING TO WICHITA KANSAS

Donald Levering

the clean road stretches as far
forward in the headlights
as backward in the mirror
old snow stays the plains
like a widow's memory
seems we are alone
with endless poles

pavement lengthens into night
we pitch with curves
decelerate climbing flint hills

click radio static
like dry wood burning in farmhouses
evangelists beat the air
click

fields jut stubbled faces
into fences
like hard-jawed farmers in bitter wind
when the moon turns on us
full-faced
we douse lights
sail by snow

PHOTO OF UNCLE HANNON NEAR A MOVIEBILL IN EUNICE, LA.

Ken Fontenot

You're finally in the wind, tough guy,
the drinker, the ladies' man,
cigarette drooping,
glass in hand,

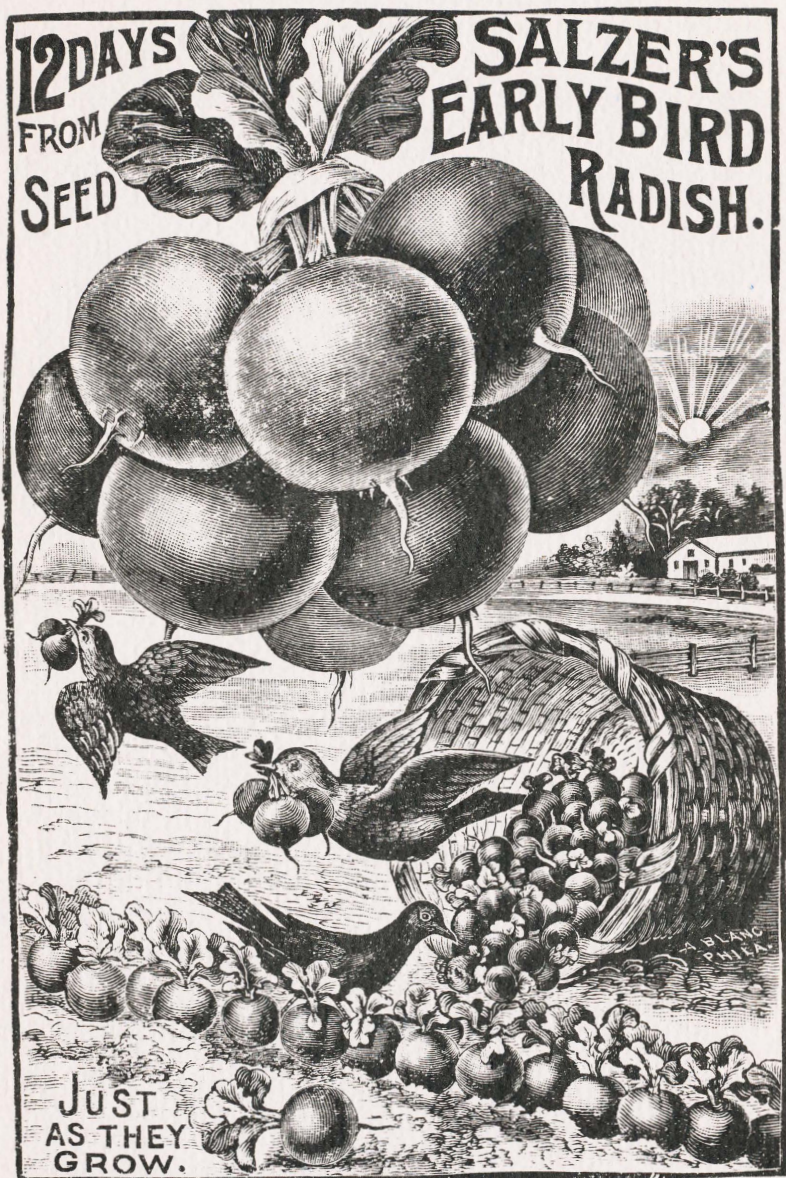
propped against the Queen,
half a leg snugly tucked away
like a flamingo,
so they'd say

you lost it in the War. Clown. Hair
like tall grass underfoot.
Jane Wyman and her lover
kiss for weeks

behind the chicken wire.
You grin as if you'd toss her
out of bed. It's 1946,
air is brown.

Even cars look like tanks.
Just once more,
show me where the Nazi bullet
missed your heart,

and I will make a muscle,
big as yours.



STRUGGLE RETAINS DREAMS George Swoboda

a new kind of solitaire
 x-rayed my teeth today
 for six weeks I have been fighting with a witch I knew
 I don't know
 each day another truckload of books
 serene work
 I am anxious for the comet to arrive
 definite cycles
 Sept., 1973
 I remember mowing the lawn
 Earlier tonight I spent a few minutes looking at Mars
 I think of the horns
 I heard all through my first night in the army

EVERYBODY NEEDS TIME George Swoboda

submarines are chuckling behind your back Mac.
 everybody needs time

when the pear tree cried I heard it
 20 years ago

how many hammocks?
 how many beaches?

I see my childhood
 standing inside this lilac bush.
 Never mind the mosquito on your neck
 hold the light still or we'll never get any worms.

CLEARING

George Swoboda

Sweeping my front stairway
I discover myself again
Even though it is night
I perceive the sun moving north

A dog barks outside and I think
Of the first time I opened my eyes
under water

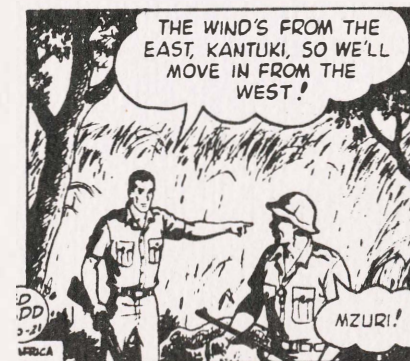
my hands moving in front of me, more eyes
more of everything all the time



SNOWBANK

George Swoboda

hollowed out,
a house
no longer
darkest part of year
still, we frown
our guaranteed unbreakable cup
just exploded in my hands.
icicles fall to the sidewalk
people jump out of flaming beauty parlors



BUS

George Swoboda

The house the stairs the night
the car the unknown place

lost at supper, the terrible news
tavern alongside road

strange picnic
twilight

alone
door after door after door

now and then a person I know appears
but I am invisible.

FOR SALE

1 Processor Less TTY-11/45-CA

1 PDP-11/20-CA Computer with
Equipment and Many Extras

Box 254, SCIENCE

TWO KINDS OF WORK

Ron Schreiber

1.
to perceive differences: that
not all elm trees are diseased,
that pine trees have no acorns.
to stop to ask directions at
the interchange: how does one
get to Harrisburg? not because
you want to go to Harrisburg
but because somebody you know
lives there, because you care
what it's like to live in Harrisburg.

2.
when the road is rutted, when
ice covers the potholes;
when there isn't any interchange;
not to care. to say: pine trees
have cones, they grow new needles
til they die. to like pine trees.
but to live in another forest,
send down your own roots. sometimes
it's lonely there, & uninhabited,
& it's not Harrisburg.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DANCE LESSONS

Dara Wier

rock, two, three, roll,
two, three, it looks so
good to me, I love
the rock and roll waltz

At Da Wabbit's Cecile courts
those ballroomers whose steps
are smooth, otherwise, wise
Arthur will send you home.
Fox trot, tango, cake walk,
bingo game below the balls
roll.

Corn meal oak floor boards
gleam like gold, a ten piece
band plays good background,
The Tennessee Waltz, darling
steps in in lizard pumps,
tuxedo, Oh, let's bolero
you and I forever, doll.



A CHANCE FOR IMPROVING

Russ Fimbinger

-- for Jim Welch

in a tar town
a boy now faces
barbed fences,
Montana sun baked dirt.
a new child is time
life to future.
they call this his,
all his.
in schools he will sit
hearing histories
of Germans
of growing
a chance for improving.
Blackfeet, his tribal name
earth is still god,
yet the names have been changed
on the mountains.

TIME

GOTHIC MENDOTA STEEL CASTLE

Charles Cantrell

for Judy

it was against the rules
to have pets, especially birds.
At night she would release the canary
that slept in her chest.
When the song was over
the canary would return
to its small, black tent.

Even imagination was against the rules --
better to scratch
on their portable blackboard.

She would write
in her novel:

I heard the gagging,
thumping on rubber walls --
girl with a chicken breast,
looking through wire woven glass
as she turned purple, blue, white,
and fell over, knocking out
the light.

In the garden
she found a dead butterfly
by the grey wall;
she counted its spots,
and drew it in sand;
then placed it in an old nest.

You cannot write novels here,
they said.
They pulled ten teeth
for punishment,
and made a gold charm bracelet
for the doctor.

In her diary she wrote:

The iron-necked dogs
stand with metal whips,
heavy as fence posts in concrete,
in their lead boots ...

My tongue is put out
like a fire each time I speak.

My pages are smoked in pipes
each time I write a poem.

My room's door
is steel lace.

At the hall's end,
a sheet of gauze shavings.

(If they knew about this poem
they would confine me,
and give me doses of thorazine.)

Through the library,
a door of bright knives.

Down the hospital floor,
a curtain of bees with needle stingers.

I feel shredded,
and bleed with a thousand red holes.
To survive this gauntlet,
these things must die,
with the leaves in my imagination.

Signs in all hallways and rooms
say: No ashes on the floor,
No eating in this room,
Don't forget to pick up your crayons ...

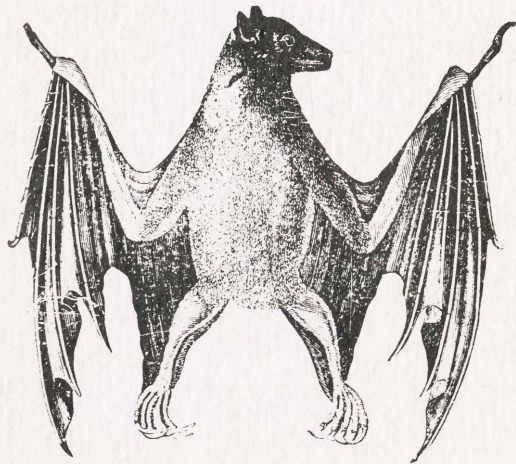
I slice through the front door,
a honeycomb of wire.

I feel free,
thin as leaves
in the night air.

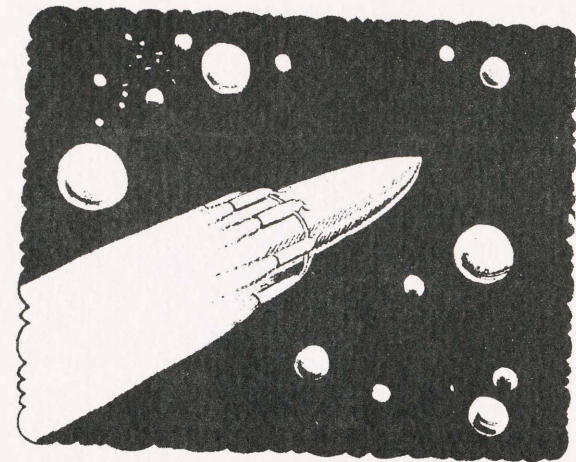
My body turns to buckshot
in the snow.

The birds will not eat me.
The guards cannot find me.

I recall the last sign.
It said: No singing in the asylum.



'SUDDENLY, ALL SEEMED RIGHT AGAIN —
EXCEPT OUR POSITION IN THE GALAXY.
WE WERE *LOST IN SPACE*.'



CROW'S NEST — REVIEWS

A LOCAL HABITATION AND A NAME, Ted Kooser, Solo Press,
1974, npl.

The title and the forward (by Karl Shapiro) make it clear that this is poetry about places, specifically Midwestern ones. Kooser uses the texts of turn-of-the-century postcards as "found poems" in several places throughout the book. The isolation resulting from the great distances of Midwestern geography seem to encourage a poetry of clear, almost "pure" description. Kooser handles this vision as well as any writer I know of.

The steeple's gone. A black tar-paper scar
that lightning might have made replaces it.
They've taken it down to change the house of God
to Homer Johnson's barn, but it's still a church,
with clumps of tiger-lilies in the grass
and one of those box-like, glassed-in signs
that give the sermon's topic (reading now
a birdnest and a little broken glass).

(From "The Red Wing Church")

But Kooser gets much farther into the Midwestern mysteries: the
vast spaces, the weather, and the clear life-cycles of animals and plants.

LATE LIGHTS IN MINNESOTA

At the end of a freight train rolling away,
a hand swinging a lantern.
The only lights left behind in the town
are a bulb burning cold in the jail,
and high in one house,
a five-battery flashlight
pulling an old woman downstairs to the toilet
among the red eyes of her cats.

THE CHILDHOOD OF AN EQUESTRIAN, Russell Edson, Harper
and Row, 1973, \$3.95 (paper.)

There is a difference between nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Both
Hans Christian Andersen and Russell Edson have written books of
fairy tales. They aren't too good for putting children to sleep, but
they can often help to wake us up.

A JOURNEY THROUGH MOONLIGHT Russell Edson

In sleep when an old man's body is no longer aware of its
boundaries, and lies flattened by gravity like a mere of wax
in its bed ... It drips down to the floor and moves there
like a tear down a cheek ... Under the back door into the
silver meadow, like a pool of sperm, frosty under the moon,
as if his first nature, boneless and absurd.

The moon lifts him up into its white field, a cloud
shaped like an old man, porous with stars.

He floats through high dark branches, a corpse tangled in
a tree on a river.

From THE FIR TREE Hans Christian Andersen

And the servant came and chopped the Tree into
little pieces; a whole bundle lay there; it blazed brightly
under the great brewing copper, and it sighed deeply,
and each sigh was like a little shot; and the children
who were at play there ran up and seated themselves at
the fire, looked into it, and cried "Puff! puff!" But
at each explosion, which was a deep sigh, the Tree
thought of a summer day in the woods, or of a winter
night there, when the stars beamed; he thought of
Christmas Eve and of Klumpey-Dumpey; the only story he
had ever heard or knew how to tell; and then the
Tree was burned.

The boys played in the garden, and the youngest
had on his breast a golden star, which the Tree had
worn on its happiest evening. Now that was past, and the
story is past too: past! past! -- and that's the way with
all stories.

INDIAN MOUNTAIN AND OTHER POEMS, by Joseph Bruchac, Ithaca House, \$2.95 (paper)

Bruchac covers a lot of territory and time in his first full-length volume of poetry. He writes with skill and deep feeling about Indians, ancestors, African Blacks, hunting and nature. In the best of these poems (and there is a lot of best), the poet steps beyond himself, into the past and future. He reads the minds of other men and animals.

*Jacking deer
with a light back in '34
my grandfather cruises
the old mountain road
in a battered Ford truck
fueled with hunger
But his kids ate well
that long winter
bluejays scrabbled
over the suet he hung
in the trees
and if you
could choose your end
would it be starving
life bleeding out
on grey clouded snow
or in sudden thunder
out of the night
Astonished
by the golden eye of a god*

(Part III of "Indian Mountain")

Like many of our nature poets, I have a feeling that young Joe often went into the woods with a gun instead of a bird book, but he learned a lot more than how to shoot things. I'm looking forward to his next book. Whichever way Joe walks, it's worth it to go along.

HOMING SIGNALS, by Thomas Johnson, Stone-Marrow Press, \$2.50 (paper)

Thomas Johnson writes with great sensitivity and grace about separation, distance, loneliness, and space. These poems are more internalized than the work in *Footholds* and less accessible. Here Johnson has become a medium, super-sensitive to the cryptic, mysterious symbols which come drifting towards him out of the dark, glowing like unknown fish in a deep-sea trench.

WHERE

*Between the thought of staying
And the black wing
At my heel*

*A third country rises
Or roads*

*Where the father's blessing
Floats
dismantled
Above the children's heads.*

*Where absence
Like a prodigal son*

*Appears head and shoulders above us
At the far gate*

*One hand raised in greeting
Nailed to the moon.*

Johnson spends a lot of time translating the signals from what is no longer here, and what can't be seen. Sometimes I feel that the poet uses too much space. I would like to hear more answers to the lonely cries in these poems.

*I am driven from thoughts
It is enough to stand where the river
Turns west
My brain sailing along like a wasp on a sill,
Tiny, a twitch between the panes,*

Ready for the long, black flying home.

(From "Dusk, Buffalo River")

In my own favorite poems, Johnson allows himself to take control. Then there is no escape for writer or reader.

NIGHT DRIVING THE APPALACHIANS

*Suddenly, like in the texts
I am beside myself,
Of two minds, several hands.*

*One of us has already taken
The next few miles of curve,
Plotting the ease in
And out again,
Sure, homeward.*

*The other sings betrayal
At the turns,
Riding a cold beam out
Over the drop*

*Loving what there is of me
That cannot bend.*

— WW



EDGING THROUGH by James Bertolino, Stone-Marrow Press.
(\$1.50)

James Bertolino writes comprehensive presentations that quietly sting in the dark; the poems are nighttimes of particular perceptions. I mean to suggest something sinister in the aesthetics, in the apprehension of reality here. It is here in "At The High Outback", one of the tenderest and most exquisite of these nineteen carefully executed poems.

Across the leaf-strewn water
a young skunk shocks white
from autumn color

toes delicately down
the mud hoof-run
to the brink

Breath caught
you clutch my hand
tighter
tight

as the skunk's soft eyes
harden
to our shape

hold

then drinks

(excerpt)

We are of course reminded of Frost's "Two Look At Two", but this is not deer, but a skunk, a "young skunk" (how odd that detail is, and how unnoticeable at first), and this is not a philosophical narrative, but an immediate presentation of the real and the eerie as beauty. It is a comprehensive moment. The reaction of the human couple is at once fear, pure thrill, exhilaration, while the skunk holds them still with his stare and drinks. The primary element in the effect is shock, a sting where bright object and dark subject meet unexpectedly.

In "From The New Window", the effect gathers force in the last three of five stanzas.

a cloud moves across
its grey form racing
through the dry swamp grass
still tall &
brown with winter

blanketing the field
the thorn-apple trees
grown wild
& black

till cloud collides
with a stand of green pine
near the edge of vision.

To make a further generalization on Bertolino's work: the leap from simile to metaphor is a leap in comprehensiveness, from a relatively obvious connection to a more internal, less "understandable" one. I believe the bold presentation of an object, in the objectivist's anti-ego sense, to be a further leap in comprehensiveness, that is, no stated connection, but pure, inherent resonances. It is somewhat frightening to assert this, but I believe what Bertolino does in these and in all his best poems may amount to an edging through into an even greater comprehensiveness -- presentations of objective situation -- systems of animal, mineral, and vegetable elements in tension with human consciousness that are cool to the touch and unique to the mind. The ingenious and the ordinary, the human and the elemental, wrap into one another to form an impenetrable, somewhat forbidding transparency, or translucency, like glassy stone, showing things, showing things; and a high sense informs it, a craft sense.

Edging Through is a carefully written book. It is to be carefully read. It is more than enough to affect the re-reader.

-- Gary French



Country Western Breakdown by Kathleen Wiegner, Crossing Press, 1974, \$2.50 (paper.)

Reading "The Way Back," the best poem in the collection, I sensed a primitive world, that portrayed explicitly by Elaine Morgan in *Descent of Woman*. Kathleen Wiegner's dream poem is about a more contemporary life, that among the historic Eskimo, but the reader can see what it would be like for a modern woman to be placed in this existence. We understand the hard and cold edges, the original pain and loss.

There is no other poem here quite like "The Way Back," but there are other successful ones, such as "Hard Mornings(3)". Here is the entire poem.

You wake up hard
and slow

like we were
back at it

you can love me
that way
anytime

but when you
hold me
to hurt me
hard and slow

I can't ask you
anything just

see me bleed.

And you say
good
and you say
good morning
every morning

pushing my
back to the wall.

Your hands are bright
as razors
slitting the morning open
for one last look
as if you were
the only one
who had died.

I like this for the intensity of emotion lying beneath the surface, and for the direct experience of the poem. But I admire the poem most because of its mysterious quality, the implication of the original relationship between woman and her lover. That primitive natural tension is never too far off. She dies as she has so often in the past.

I think it's unfortunate that quite a few other poems have only a tautness in the language. Or a number of poems set in truckstops are merely bitter representations. Ms. Wiegner sometimes seems unwilling to let the imagery carry an idea, interjecting herself in the middle or at the end of a poem. One example should be enough:

Father said a man won't
buy the cow
when he can get milk
through the fence,

but anyhow.

Black sun light
it shines
in the window
on the floor

can't remember when
I last opened the
door to anyone.

I don't like the sudden change of tone after this first stanza, after which she immediately returns to the blues. But anyhow.

I think Kathleen Wiegner is at her best when she portrays the actual. But I'm disappointed when she falls back on the depressing formulations, as if she can't let the real thing alone. In this sense, the collection is uneven.

— Jim Stephens

Their Story Could Be Yours:

Mr. M. W., Quebec, Canada: Placed an ad in his local TV guide and received orders for over 500 Antennas in the first 2 weeks.

Mr. A. V., New Jersey: Orders 480 units on his very first order.

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Miss M. J., Michigan: Places several ads in the TV section of her local newspapers and sells over 700 Antennas.

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DREAM OF SNOW

I feel the ---- gathering their ----.
At twilight the ---- race through my ----.
Winter is coming. Across the fields
echoes of ---- enter the ----.
Already it is too late.

Fill in the blanks. Choose: blood, bones, stones,
wind, fires, knives, dark.

-- WW



Mrs. Wise won
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the next winner?

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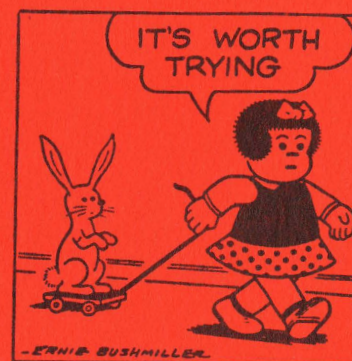
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