

## INTERVIEW WITH STANLEY KUNITZ

*Columbia Interviewers:*

*Cleopatra Mathis  
Anne Cherner  
Elmas Abinader*

*Columbia: We're interested in your thoughts about young poets today. You seem so involved in what young poets are doing.*

Kunitz: Why not? I feel more compatible with them than with the generation I was born into. The imagination lives by its changes and is always looking for a home. Perhaps the writers I feel closest to are those who remind me of the vulnerability of my own youth. I like to think of Yeats, with his characteristic mix of poignance and arrogance, saying towards the end of his life that when he was young his Muse was old: but now that he was old, his Muse was young. That's a paradox worth testing, if you have the right collection of genes.

*Columbia: How do you feel the women's movement is affecting the poetry establishment today?*

Kunitz: It's about the only social dynamite we have. The civil rights movement and the anti-war movement are still with us, but they're no longer explosive forces, as they were in the sixties, when they instigated a semi-insurrection on the part of a whole generation against the old guard.

*Columbia: What else is happening now?*

Kunitz: After Vietnam and Watergate it's a rather ambiguous period, one of disenchantment and cynicism, distrust of the elders, distrust of the social order, but no flag to wave, and very little idealism.

*Is this a general condition or specific to poetry?*

There's always a connection between history and the arts. Except for the women, the poetry of protest and rebellion seems to have exhausted its vitality.

*Do you think that the best poetry now is being written by young women?*

It's foolhardy to generalize, but I don't suppose it's a coincidence that my first five Yale Series choices were men and my last three have been women. Furthermore, in these past few years most of the top contenders have been women. The explanation seems to me simple enough. Women are writing their emancipation proclamation. They don't have to look for a theme—they've found it inside their skins.

*Do you think this infusion of energy into women's poetry is going to be permanent?*

No revolution keeps its militance and euphoria forever, but I don't doubt that from now on women are going to play a much more central role in all the arts.

*Should literary magazines have a quota for women and blacks, as demanded in the recent manifesto to the American Poetry Review?*

That concept of proportional representation seems to me an aesthetic nightmare. Literature has to defend its values even from the best of causes, and certainly from the statisticians. I've always feared the tyranny of the righteous.

*Was Louise Bogan a victim of the male establishment in poetry, or were there other reasons she did not get the recognition she deserved?*

She herself—especially in her later years—felt neglected and thought that being a woman had much to do with it. The evidence is confusing. Other women poets of her generation were extravagantly praised—Edna St. Vincent Millay, for example. But Millay was easier to accept, for she played a bohemian part that was attractive sexually. Elinor Wylie, now all but forgotten, also had a great reputation, coinciding with her role as an ornament of society. Maybe it's time for reappraisal. As for Bogan, though she never became a popular poet, she was always respected by her peers. The trouble may have been that she was too fine.

*Fine in what way?*

In her sensibility, her mind, her control. If her art had been coarser, she would have had more readers. And that would be true whether she was male or female.

*Does the future of poetry lie with the small presses?*

Probably so. The major publishers are tripping over themselves in their haste to abandon poetry. The old private firms, with their individual taste and literary aura, have practically vanished from the

scene. They've been swallowed up by vast conglomerates, interested only in profits and geared exclusively for the mass market. The consolation is that when all, or nearly all, poetry is relegated to the small presses, poets can be freed from the delusion that they are producing articles of commerce. That may be good for their souls.

*Isn't it true that small press poetry is usually read only by poets?*

The same has been said about poetry published by the big houses. Actually, a few of the small presses are showing the way by reaching a new market for poetry. With the infusion of federal money, through the National Endowment for the Arts, they are gradually improving their system of distribution. The irony of this growing dependence on subsidy is that poetry is essentially a subversive activity, and must remain so. We need to guard against its becoming a polite art, or a hopelessly eccentric one.

*Do you think the loosening of form in twentieth century poetry has had anything to do with making poetry more accessible to a wider audience?*

I'm not so sure of that. The flight from meter and rhyme has made poetry easier to write but harder to remember. If poetry is more accessible, it must be because it has become a more conversable medium, less lofty and grandiloquent. Intimacy is our touchstone. We feel more compatible with sand than with marble.

*How does this relate to the conduct of your workshops?*

In a classroom I follow Goethe's dictum that "art exists in limits," but with this qualification: that the limits are a changing phenomenon. My premise is that we are liberated into poetry, not imprisoned by it. The young need to be instructed about limits, but prodded to keep testing them. I stress that the imagination itself is infinite and inexhaustible and that its supreme faculty, realized in the forms of art, is to achieve transcendence.

*Do you feel that we are moving into a new concept of form?*

The "new" concept is more than 150 years old. Coleridge led the way, in one of his lectures on Shakespeare, when he drew a careful distinction between mechanic form, which is arbitrary and imposed, and organic form, which he defined as innate, inseparable from the properties of the material, shaping itself from within. As our society becomes more and more mechanized and computerized, the modern arts insist more and more on vaunting their organic nature. To be an artist is to defend the life principle against dehumanization, against becoming a statistic. It is to be free and whole, the freedom being inseparable from the wholeness.

*Free and whole, how?*

Free to assert one's conscience; free to be ruthless with oneself and compassionate with others; free to change. A whole person is one who pivots on the center of his being, who dares to be human.

*Almost all young poets today are connected in some way to university programs, particularly workshops. Do you think this is beneficial?*

Sometimes, when I'm in a bad mood, I feel we've reached the saturation point with poets and that it's time to apply some sort of Malthusian doctrine to eliminate the excess. I don't suppose that any civilization before us has ever cultivated so bountiful a crop—we must have at least ten thousand persons living in America today who think of themselves and describe themselves as poets. About 1500 of them are listed in the official catalog of Poets & Writers, Inc. It has to be remembered that any earlier generation that delved as many as five or ten poets to posterity is celebrated as a great one. One has to conclude that we're in the midst of a cultural revolution, the literary consequence of the democratic process. We may be entering into a new quantitative era of the creative arts. As for schools of writing, they are an inevitable part of the process. No one can deny their potentiality for abuses, their tendency to confuse self-indulgence with imagination, to encourage non-existent talents, to put the stamp of academic approval on a machine-made product. If I thought I were involved in any such enterprise, I'd give up teaching tomorrow. Obviously, I am convinced that, through my years of trial and error, I have acquired a few grains of knowledge about "my craft or sullen art" that I can share with others. Does that sound arrogant? In my seventies now I still haven't forgotten the lonely apprenticeship of my youth. I want my students to enjoy with me the sense of belonging to a noble and visionary company. What are the disciplines for? A language separated from human awareness and aspiration leaves me cold.

*What's your appraisal of the quality of poets produced by the various writing programs?*

As I've indicated, their level of accomplishment is high.

*You mean technically proficient, not good?*

You're putting words into my mouth, but I won't argue with you. There's less of the idiosyncratic power that comes from working alone.

*You say, in A Kind of Order, A Kind of Folly, that though you*

*teach order to your students, you realize that only "the troubled spirits" in your classes have a chance of becoming poets. Why?*

Order is teachable, and there's no denying that reasonably good poems, the kind that editors prefer to publish, can be built on reasonable foundations. But I was referring to the rare and true genius who immerses himself in "the destructive element"—Conrad's phrase—and brings us news of his wilderness. I like to quote Paul Tillich's precept, that "the self-affirmation of a being is the stronger the more non-being it can take into itself."

*You've spoken of the poet's "finding his center." Can you explain what you mean by that?*

I'll try. You have at the center of your being a conglomeration of feelings, emotions, memories, traumas that are uniquely yours, that nobody else on earth can duplicate. They are the clue to your identity. If you don't track them down, lay claim to them, bring them out into the light, they'll eventually possess you, they'll fester, or erupt into compulsive behavior. The farther you stray from your center, the more you will be lost. That's one of the teachings of Lao-tzu. When you're there, at the existential core, you'll know it. Hopkins said in one of his letters that he could taste himself, and the taste was more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, or the smell of walnutleaf or camphor. You can tell the poets who are working at their center by the distinctiveness of their voice, their constellation of key images, their instantly recognizable beat.

*What of your own education as a poet?*

At Harvard there were no courses in modern poetry and no elders to turn to for criticism or advice. In the curriculum, English poetry stopped at Rudyard Kipling and American poetry at Amy Lowell. The Widener Library was my singing school. At no time was it conceivable for me to show my poems to masters like Frost or Robinson or Stevens or Eliot—they were out of reach and had no contact with the young. During that period and long after I was graduated, poetry readings just didn't happen. In fact, until my middle years I was never once asked to read my poems in public. Ted Roethke, my first literary friend, and I used to get together in the country and read to each other. I remember his saying, "Some day the bastards will be sorry they didn't ask us." Perhaps I should explain that after college and a short period of newspaper and editorial work, I fled from the cities and lived in isolation as a countryman, free-lancing and learning about plants and animals and drafty

old farmhouses. Twenty years passed—along with World War II—before I was invited, by an odd set of circumstances, to teach my first class. That was at Bennington. When I look back on it, I wonder how I survived or why I didn't come to a silent and morose end. My joy in the natural world had a lot to do with saving me. And now, in retrospect, I'm grateful that I was thrown back upon myself and forced to shape a life, out of small resources, but on my own terms. I'm always sorry for young poets who go through college and then through a graduate writing program and then back to the university as teacher, without any experience outside the academic order. How much they've missed! They'll die of hothouse anemia. I want to tell them: "Do something else, develop any other skill, turn to any other special branch of knowledge. Learn how to use your hands. Try wood-working, bird-watching, gardening, sailing, weaving, pottery, archeology, oceanography, spelunking, animal husbandry—take your pick. Whatever activity you engage in, as trade or hobby or field study, will tone up your body and clear your head. At the very least it will help you with your metaphors!"

*Have you ever felt yourself "blocked" as a writer?*

Indeed I have. All of us reach a dead end at times. First you think you've exhausted your material, written yourself out. Then you begin to wonder about your style. Perhaps it's too restrictive, perhaps it prevents you from coping with a broad enough range of experience, so that a good portion of yourself, your variety of interests and feelings, is excluded from your writing. It may be time for you to risk a change of style, to crack it open and make it new again. Even more drastically, you may have to question the kind of life you lead. We are always so busy, so preoccupied. The writers of another age had fewer distractions and were, as a rule, more productive. How many poems have been lost to the telephone! It's difficult to be with yourself, to be lonely enough. The world of Becoming threatens to annihilate the world of Being. And yet the solution isn't to reject the turmoil of modern life. We need to be in it and out of it, the same secret of alternation that the great mystics discovered, shuttling between the Many and the One.

*You've been teaching for a long time. Do you still enjoy it?*

After thirty years I still walk into a classroom with a buoyant sense of anticipation and excitement. I know some poets who tell me they are intimidated by a workshop, with its cast of sensitive

psyches, its tensions, its interplay of pent-up feelings—rivalries, fears, desires, aggressions, etc. They see it as a threat to their own psyche. To me it's a place of drama and possibility. I suppose the moral is that you need to care, and you need to feel fairly sure of yourself, but not too sure. Of course, you give a lot, but you take something too, from all that youth and energy and hope. Maybe it helps keep you vulnerable and alive.

*You seem to be functioning on a spiritual level, something that goes beyond form and order. In the workshop, when you read a poem, one you're particularly close to, it's almost as though you were being seduced by it. There's a tone. . . .*

Well, there's something about the music of a poem I love.

**DEER DANCE/FOR YOUR  
RETURN**

(February, 1977)

*Leslie Marmon Silko*

If this  
will hasten your return  
then I will hold myself above you all night  
blowing softly  
down-feathered clouds  
that drift above the spruce  
and hide your eyes  
as you are born back  
to the mountain.

Years ago  
through the yellow oak leaves  
antlers polished like stones  
in the canyon stream-crossing  
Morning turned in the sky  
when I saw you  
and I wanted the gift  
you carry on moon-color shoulders  
so big  
the size of you  
holds the long winter.

You have come home with me before  
a long way down the mountain  
The people welcome you.  
I took  
the best red blanket for you  
the turquoise the silver rings  
were very old  
                  something familiar for you  
                  blue corn meal saved special.

While others are sleeping  
I tie feathers on antlers  
whisper close to you  
                  we have missed you  
                  I have longed for you.

Losses are certain  
in the pattern of this dance  
Over the terrain a hunter travels  
blind curves in the trail  
seize the breathe  
until it leaps away  
loose again  
to run the hills.  
                  Go quickly.

How beautiful  
this last time  
I touch you  
                  to believe  
                  and hasten the return  
                  of lava-slope hills and  
                  your next-year heart  
Mine still beats  
in the tall grass  
where you stopped.  
                  Go quickly.

Year by year  
after the first snow-fall  
I will walk these hills and  
                  pray you will come again  
I will go with a heart full for you  
                  to wait your return.

The neck pulse slacks,  
then smooths.  
It has been a long time  
Sundown forms change  
Faces are unfamiliar  
                  As the last warmth goes  
                  from under my hand  
                  Hooves scatter rocks  
                  down the hillside  
                  and I turn to you  
The run  
for the length of the mountain  
is only beginning.

#### Note on the Deer Dance:

In the fall, the Laguna hunters go to the hills and mountains around Laguna Pueblo to bring back the deer. The people think of the deer as coming to give themselves to the hunters so that the people will have meat through the winter. Late in the winter the Deer Dance is performed to honor and pay thanks to the deer spirits who've come home with the hunters that year. Only when this has been properly done will the spirits be able to return to the mountain and be reborn into more deer who will, remembering the reverence and appreciation of the people, once more come home with the hunters.

## WEATHER

*Laura Jensen*

Early primrose, early crocus  
bite like the dog-teeth of the neighbor beast  
as a caress. Like his great gray body  
pausing in the yard the country stops  
and sighs of weather—here in the northwest  
of a token of spring. The ground is mixed.

The neighbor dog has a little girl  
I can imagine combing out his shedding hair  
when he reaches the thirsty summer.  
It is the thought of drought  
that makes the moments of these tepid winter  
nights fall mild shock upon mild shock  
through our open windows; or it is the fact  
that in the east the storms are terrible.

Days, over chimneys, between branches  
swings the restful portion of the hill.  
The branches cross like arms settling  
in the instinct of swimming or sleep.  
Spared, the old walk alone or sit together.  
My father gathers plum sticks that might flower.  
Our only tale of this disastrous season  
in our country will be the hoarfrost—  
already come and gone.

## THE EXCHANGE

*Alicia Ostriker*

I am watching a woman swim below the surface  
Of the canal, her powerful figure shimmering,  
Opalescent, her black hair wavering  
Like weeds. She does not need to breathe. She faces

Upward, keeping abreast of our rented canoe.  
Sweet, thick, white, the blossoms of the locust trees  
Cast their fragrance. A red-wing blackbird flies  
Across the sluggish water. My children paddle.

If I dive down, if she climbs into the boat,  
Wet, wordless, she will strangle my children  
And throw their limp bodies into the stream.  
Skin dripping, she will take my car, drive home.

When my husband answers the doorbell and sees  
This magnificent naked woman, bits of sunlight  
Glittering on her legs, her muscular arm  
Will go around his neck, once for each insult

Endured. He will see the blackbird in her eye,  
Her drying mouth incapable of speech,  
And I, having exchanged with her, will swim  
Away, in the cool water, out of reach.

## ORANGE SONNET

*Gilbert Sorrentino*

The white rockers on the porch  
were drowned in the white light  
their definition lost.

Old elms silent in the calm  
and the birds too, silent. A woman  
in orange slacks.

Ripped seats of the old Ford.  
Cold water of the locks  
of the old canal.

Click of years. White smoke  
of a cigarette. New waters.  
The sun drenches everything.

Click. High blue sky. All  
one chain of brilliant links.

## SORROW TO SORROW

for Quinton Duval

*Andrew Grossbardt*

To be my friend  
you must convince me you hide  
no long knife in your handshake,  
no gloom tugging at the corners  
of your smile.

I have something to tell only you.  
I know all the letters,  
each burning vowel  
on my lips like a hot coal  
and when I say them together  
they contain your life.  
When I speak of your life  
the words roll from my tongue,  
oil on water.  
Do not repeat this.  
It will stick in your throat  
like a bone.

Oh my friend, where there were fish,  
ashes. Where there was water,  
a seepage of blood under the left eye.

Yes, I am building you bridges  
from sorrow to sorrow,  
leaving behind whatever I think  
can stay out there in its own cold.  
Because this is the one truth.  
In small towns everywhere  
starlings are exploding.  
Tiny feathers choke us  
and when we laugh it hurts  
suddenly, for no reason.

You will dream or tremble  
when you watch my amazing hands  
swift as wings.

## THE DEATH OF POETRY

*Andrew Crossbardt*

I wake up. It is not yet quite dawn. The darkest parts of the night are beginning their long drift westward. On my night table there is a piece of paper I don't remember. I fumble for the light switch, then my glasses and suddenly it's all clear. There is a poem in handwriting I've never seen. Then I notice the drops of fresh blood leading from the crumpled edges of the paper to the door. I get up and follow them outside. A trail like rust, stains the snow towards the woodpile. I, follow, thankful the snow is not too deep, the cold not too cold. It is almost light enough to see, but it's mostly the sound that stops me. Someone is being hurt. I can hear mumbled phrases, the rustle of violence. Whoever it is hears me and hurries off. I know I can never catch it with my slippers on. I stumble forward and stop. There are dead poems everywhere in the snow. I stare helplessly at the long wounds stretching from stanza to stanza, the crippled titles, severed lines. Some have already been gutted and their spilled letters steam in the snow. I try hard not to get sick but there is this awful taste rising in my throat. Whoever did this must have been crazy. A few are not yet gone, but they are so close to death I am afraid to move them, and it is too far to go for help. I close their sad eyes. I cradle them in my arms and slowly begin to sing Bach's "Magnificat in D" in a low voice.

## A PERSIAN LOVER

*Karen Swenson*

Amongst the roses of Kerman  
soft with desert dust  
politely he presents  
his calling card for bed  
as though there is a butler  
at some door I do not know my house owns.

And I am glad to hear  
that he believes women  
should have equal pleasure with men  
as the pool thorned by roses  
spills over with moonlight.

However I have been courted enough  
in bazars and hotel lobbies  
across the safe syrup of Pepsi Colas  
to know I am asked  
first  
if I wish tea  
second  
if I am married  
third  
if I desire a carpet.

So from my western corner  
where I was raised by a woman  
who always inspected dress seams  
I wonder if there's a carpet in this deal  
while the Persian cats  
pick their way through the thorns.

After all pleasure is only  
the dye of the shorn sheep  
and there is a great difference between  
a bed and a carpet—  
a nest of springs and a web of knotted colors.

Despite the roses of Kerman  
where wind shuffles the moon between trees  
I want something firmly woven beneath me  
even if it flies.  
I want to know the knots of the pattern are sound.  
So as a Persian Tom without a carpet  
calls to his love nuzzled tail to nose  
in the moonlit arm of a tree  
I trudge on two western feet  
through this Arabian Night alone.

## SÈTE (to C D., 1948-1974)

*Bennett Weinberg*

I still remember you in that small southern town,  
That town in France, Sète.  
We were standing on a porch outside the bar  
Adjacent to the railway station.  
You had just amazed some idlers  
And idle workers, all French, in the baggage  
Check area of the station; they had never heard  
Blues guitar before, never seen  
A young man with black hair play  
On those six strings that way.  
Then we had had a drink, still waiting  
For the train to take us north,  
And on the juke box you found  
Bill Haley and the Comets, "Rock Around the Clock,"  
And explained it was the start of rock and roll.  
And we listened in that bar  
On the Mediterranean afternoon.

And out on the porch you said to me,  
Just think how much of my life is passed,  
I'm twenty-three.  
I still remember listening to you,  
Standing in the bright day  
And envying how you had impressed  
The Frenchmen in the station with your bottleneck,  
And loving you because we had been friends at home,  
And because we stood together on that foreign coast,  
In the summer afternoon, waiting for a train.

## SANDING THE CHAIRS

*Madeline DeFrees*

All the way down to clean wood where the grain  
shows hickory and a chair  
is what stands  
after heavy lives settle in, and the housewives,  
restless, sigh the spring  
green, drying pale blue: dream Hollywood  
in red enamel.

Every layer of paint, a country of wishes: the days  
of townships lying in harbor  
riding at anchor  
follow the stars. And now, the women  
lifted on domes of silence by musical chairs  
glide over carpets to double duty  
in the far bedroom.

The wrong feet on the rungs leave scars: they will  
be gone when the fine dust settles.  
Stripped down, legs tilted back in a bid  
not to be tied to linoleum. Under the final coat,  
bruise of buckle and clasp, the original  
stain of the owner. For days  
the curve of wood stays firm in the muscles.

## THE CHOW, A DOG OF ANCIENT ORIGIN, HAS A BLUE-BLACK TONGUE

*Madeline DeFrees*

Yet we accept her kisses, affectionate as air.  
Unlike the famed baboon  
who ran a railroad in Zaire, you will not find her  
taking care of house and garden,  
missing legs or drawing water. She's  
not in the almanac, not  
a working bitch.

Man's friend, the purple carp, swims up the ladder,  
goes down slow—  
running weedy rivers to a muddy bottom.  
The dog who helped the baboon help  
his master's dead. A suicide.  
The red-eyed vireo with perfect pitch repeats  
his note all day.

Zaire, come here. Let me pat your muzzle. Plate 45,  
your map's a purple chow,  
puts out a skinny leg to the Atlantic. A 20-mile coast  
where blue whales dive at 20 knots  
and come up spouting chow. Your name rebounds  
along the track of pidgin. Hurray for the almanac!  
The railroad takes care of its own.

My tongue, blue-black, licks the seams of syllables  
like dead shells on a firing range.  
The shell repeated bluer than the almanac, a lead charge  
carried home under the heart's  
old sandbag. I read that weather. The cartridge light  
glances off the black-  
lined mouth, the dogtooth violet.

## THE LAKE

*Allison Funk*

Around the lake, the rhododendron bloomed.  
Each bud unclenched, revealing a baby's palm.  
As I awoke mornings in my cousin's room  
I heard the water licking its live fur calm  
Beside the creaking house. It was the summer  
The hair began like webs beneath our arms  
And we saw in mirrors, not ourselves, but strangers  
Remote and older, ones with foreign charms.  
Later that year, we discovered the waterfall  
With its silver neck broken on the rocks. They found  
My cousin down among the fish, so small,  
Looking up through the lake's dark layers, drowned.  
It was then the lake became as still as one  
Asleep, translucent palms upturned, and stunned.

# MOXIE

*Lewis Gardner*

1

It wasn't a drink for kids, no,  
I would drink root beer or orange Nehi—  
orange tonic in the local dialect.  
With you in the variety store,  
which was dark and cool when the summer air  
was hot, and yellow from the factories,  
while you joked with the owners and passersby,  
charming them with stories,

the cool drinks with sugar pacified  
my precocious nervousness;  
sometimes you gave me a sip of Moxie—  
a relic, a tonic of strange herbs  
like tobacco or weeds, making me burp  
and think I had to throw up—  
proving I wouldn't like the grown-up drink  
that I begged to taste.

2

No one answers my questions,  
why you courted a child and married her finally;  
why she married someone she never respected  
and kept you a child; why your talents,  
as you worked for the father you hated,  
turned to mad schemes that no one trusted;  
why you swallowed  
the hatred spat at you;

who would confess changing you,  
handsome young man at the drugstore corner,  
turning ugly and sick and friendless?  
When I finally hit you, at 17,  
I saw how easily I could kill you.  
I thought that life is shame and defeat,  
as bitter as taunting by bullies in the street,  
bitter as Moxie.

3

Now my own son cries because  
I am not there. "Daddy, hold me.  
Daddy, I don't want to die,  
because no one will play with me then."  
Hold me, the night is filled with your  
brutality. Hold me, my legs are not enough  
to stand. Hold me, it is cold  
these nights. Hold me. Hold me.

They couldn't keep it alive,  
though they tried a new formula,  
sweet and lighter, like other soft drinks.  
*Mad Magazine* took up the word.  
They tried to revive the drink; it didn't work,  
it's gone like Dreamsicles, the Shmoo,  
Sergeant Preston of the Yukon,  
and all the undervalued wreckage of the past.

# THE GUNSLINGER IN WINTER

*Rod Tulloss*

After the first snow I lock the door.  
I lose the key,  
starve if I hafta.  
Leave one track in that stuff, and  
they've got your blue ass!

Last night I dreamt I flew.  
So  
after I beat the old bitch and kicked the kids blue,  
I could just float up the chimney and  
move out over the blue trees like  
feathery white death and  
I could cut a big goddam ring—  
a million carats!—  
out of that sparklin' white forest;  
and I could give it to her and say,  
"Take care of yerself, now," and  
apologize; and  
she'd take it.  
I could do that anytime I beat that bitch . . .  
if it'd snowed.

You know,  
this mornin' I wanted to be good to her.  
I wanted t'kiss the kids and the old girl.

On the telephone, the Old Man says,  
"You got to learn compassion."  
Yeah.  
I gotta learn cold and white.  
I gotta learn potassium nitrate.  
In the attic I got this box of corpses—  
good intentions gone  
all blue  
and stiff.

And I sat down by a window  
just lookin' out at the white sun springin' in at me from those icy  
trees;  
and I looked down and saw my hands cradled in my lap  
like always  
like steel blue children.

## FRIGGINS DIVISION

*Laurel Blossom*

Did you dare glass  
to see if it shatters the way air shatters?  
did you stare noon blind or stand  
on the shoulders of cliffs to find out who, you  
or the wind was taller?

Which day did the family decide?  
on the day you tried if it wouldn't be just as easy  
breathing through skin? or did they infer  
from the red, just the red risk of your hair  
you must be mad.

When you noticed the sky  
congeal in their faces like so much fat, was it that  
you laughed at, or the small white cell  
or the good good sense of the personnel  
plucking at bobby-pins?

All that night, not  
hank by hank, but hair by individual  
hair, did you yank it all out  
at the root, to see if it made  
any difference?

(Friggins Division is the name of the mental ward of a hospital in  
New Orleans)

## A PAIR OF OLD BATHING TRUNKS

*William Cliff*

*translated from the French by Maxine Kumin and Judith  
Bingen-Kumin*

And so it's over now we won't go out of doors  
to tremble by the compost pile any more  
where the sinful trunks lay buried in leaves! It was  
a cute bikini with imitation leopard spots  
designed to lend the wearer a Tarzanesque allure,  
I had seen it lying abandoned in a bedroom somewhere,  
forgotten by a boy who must have been narcissist enough  
to like his alert member pressed under the rubbery cloth.  
I stole it, I washed it (for fear of God knows what germs!)  
and imagined myself partaking of the fragrant  
and muscled sensuality of a beautiful stranger.  
I hid it in my bed, caressing myself gently  
with it, while reading Alfred Musset's *Premières Poésies*.  
Soon the remorse for all the sins it made me commit  
drove me to bury it in the garden. But it was  
my total sexuality that I interred that way.  
Three days later I dug it up from its resting place  
and washed it again and put it on again for the sake  
of seeing myself in the mirror imagining what it would be  
with another showing me his desirable anatomy  
and I seduced myself standing there in my simple brief  
moving my trembling fingers to the beautiful foreign  
trunks where forms swelled and allowed themselves to take in  
my caresses and finally emptied out like my imagination  
so avid for sunny films of summers where beaches  
of scalding sand drink the sticky overflow of guilty boys  
knocked down by layers of immense waves rolling in

bearing tons of forbidden desires that arrogantly outline  
themselves in elasticized briefs of leopard skin  
that someone finally throws in the fire as if you could  
reduce to ashes what's been engraved by a whole childhood  
in obsessive images . . . all that my poorly suppressed  
puberty never tires of bringing back to life.  
I'm sorry I threw the trunks in the kitchen furnace,  
I would have been better off to burn my false  
scruples about Christian chastity with a hint  
perhaps of the immortal soul and the Old Testament.

## RIDE

*Caroline Finkehtein*

Suppose you dreamt a racehorse  
sinewed like the workings of a watch,  
pouring off salt after its run.  
Think of the shame in the image:  
an animal as property,  
the word: *breeding*,  
of anything trained to run in circles.  
And the other dream, where entirely alone,  
you graze the plains afraid,  
always thirsty in the scrub and dust  
and so move east to smoother grasses,  
one fence post after another articulating  
position, and here fed oats and water  
from the spring, now the dreams superimpose—  
whereas in the dream of fire,  
when the stable boy, careless in hatred  
or just exhausted, drops the historical match,  
you feel as one righteous,  
an angel, in arms come to flare  
the barn

and the swelling flesh sears  
the neighborhood, all your fetters loosen;  
blistered, lame, you wander now,  
worthless bone and hair,  
to hear the robin's assonance,  
the dumb grace notes at dawn  
coming with your coffee;  
his throat, speckled, filling with song,  
one solo  
as a pierce of air in this world.

# SAN FRANCISCO

(For Frank MacShane)

*Fanny Howe*

"So it *was* me, after all, and not the world."

St. Francis, intelligent, lived  
in his natural climate,—  
Assisi's animals no sissy  
would dare approach, he hand-fed,  
including a wolf's roar

I, stupidly, took a wild leap  
to San Francisco's ocean nights,  
a sumptuous feast of errors, feverish  
palm leaf, rosy cumquat,  
the shift of eucalyptus quite suspicious  
now that I have ideas

At the time I had few ideas  
but motorcycles, me, nobody, inclined  
to the shadow in the nape  
of a driver's neck, bent  
tapering in an engine's angel roar

The Cliff at the city,  
Pacific green, orange groves south  
—halfway to Nepenthe—  
slack, wide-open journeys  
with a husband at the wheel

It was still a girl  
who flung herself against the door,  
to spill, only her spirituals  
down over the rakish Cliff,  
Westward, but always East returning

Failures of nerve, car trouble,  
in the breakdown lane  
nothing collapsed so well with a car  
before! Rain,  
a windshield of extravagant dots

Night sped by. The semicircular  
bridge was pinned to the Void,  
gold pendant  
wounding darkness above the Bay

For the elm, the oak and Merrimack,  
that craven soul  
limped Eastward,  
whose eyes' orbs were luggage,  
and that's all.

## THE HOUSE BY THE TRACKS

*Cynthia Huntington*

I have come home. She is dead.  
The bed in the back room is smooth  
and white, the spread pulled over  
the pillows. I walk from room to room.  
I pretend I am not looking for her.  
For three years she lay in her bed;  
she forgot our names but she was  
so beautiful that we forgave her.

My aunt goes to the dresser for her cards,  
lays them on the kitchen table,  
one on another. She is waiting for me  
to speak, but then the train comes,  
the engine churning closer and louder  
than ever before. The house shakes  
as the train slides its one eye across  
the outside walls, glares  
into every window, then vanishes  
like a black snake sliding into a hole.

"You should not have come," she says  
The train, now, is far off, its wail  
like the owl's cry in the back of my mind.

## JANUARY CLASS: IT HASN'T RAINED FOR SEVEN MONTHS

*Diana Ó Hehir*

We dip into books as if they were  
Wells of pity, cups of  
Futures, lendings of light from the genuine owners of light,  
Shining for miles into the awful garden  
Where, deep enclosed, is the Rajah's frightening jewel.

In California almost everyone is divorced.  
The eyes of my class stare at the pine tree that scrapes the building.  
The clearing has in it your face, my face, the eyes  
Of students bruised by the blue air of this  
Driest January ever.

The sun comes through the window in knife patterns,  
And none of us can say how it happens,  
That loving turns to shapes so fierce,  
Aiming for the lids, the corners of lips,

Wedging the voice. The edges of heat are square. They stop the  
throat.

But the jewel in the garden pulls like rain. Can it open  
Our hard blue sky, can it  
Make us speak.

# THE SWEETNESS OF LIFE

Fiction

*Gerald Stern*

After the heavy rain we were able to tell about the mushrooms,  
which ones made us sick, which ones had the dry bitterness,  
which ones caused stomach pains and dizziness and hallucinations.

It was the beginning of religion again—on the river—  
all the battles and ecstasies and persecutions  
taking place beside the hackberries and the fallen locust.

I sat there like a lunatic,  
weeping, raving, standing on my head, living  
in three and four and five places at once.

I sat there letting the wild and domestic combine,  
finally accepting the sweetness of life,  
on my own mushy log,  
in the white and spotted moonlight.

# ANNA

*Fred Chappell*

Sometimes there will reach us from a dream the scent of a woman or the remembrance of a certain shine of light about her body. And we will groan softly in sleep and our hands will open and close unknowingly, attempting to grasp phantoms which would destroy us if they existed in the world. But nothing can be grasped, not even a clear memory of what has so disordered our sleeping.

It happened once that three of four men who were isolated in a hunting cabin began to dream of the same woman. The second day they were there, high in the mountains of east Tennessee, it began to snow in late afternoon little bitter papery flakes that came down in nervous spirals. Seemed as if it wouldn't amount to much, but when they woke early on the third morning there was well over a foot of the fluffy stuff, driven up in wavelets by a bluff wind. And so they settled until conditions should prove better for taking deer.

But it kept on snowing.

They amused themselves with poker and pinochle and with whiskey and eating. They were not much concerned, although by the evening of the third day restlessness began to overtake them and they looked at one another distrustfully, each thinking that these close quarters might prove troublesome if the weather did not let up; each thinking that he must watch his manners more carefully now.

That night they kept awake until late, swapping stories and half-truths about hunting, about cars, about sports. They pulled at the whiskey until a cozy lassitude began to fall over their speech and there were long passages of silence.

The youngest of them, a blond man of nineteen with naive brown eyes, did not join in the story-telling. He was not sure that it

would be regarded as seemly if he talked, since he was new among them; and he was uncertain whether they would call his veracity into question. It occurred to him that none had yet talked of women, but he supposed that it was the custom of these men, their gallantry perhaps, not to broach the subject. He noted the fact as a curiosity and did not pursue the thought. And he went light on the whiskey.

A little after midnight the pauses in conversation lengthened and the comfortable drowsiness deepened, with the fire sinking to orange-red embers. They decided to retire. Only the young man was still fully alert, and he did not demur, but kicked off his unlaced boots and stripped off his shirt and trousers and climbed into a top bunk. There he lay on his back, with his hands open beneath his head, staring at the ceiling in which he could darkly make out broad edges and pine knots by the dimming glow of the fire. He heard the wind shuffling the papery snow above him.

One by one the other three men dropped asleep while he still lay awake. Their breathing steadied and the sound of it went from their nostrils toward the backs of their throats. Now and then one of them would shift in his bunk like a log shifting in a campfire. The young man lay thinking of many things, and in his mind was no winter scene, but the light of summer instead and the smell of grass and sweat and dusty ground. He began to muse upon the circumstances that brought him here, who had no desire to kill wild animals.

This train of thought was interrupted when one of the men in a lower bunk spoke in his sleep. The first time the young man could not make out the word. He spoke again, thickly but comprehensibly in the reddened darkness: "Anna." Then he said nothing for a long time, but now there was true silence in the cabin, no one turning or half-snoring, and the young man discovered that he was holding his breath. He let it out silently. And then the man asleep in the top bunk on his right-hand side spoke the same word: "An-na."

The timbre of his voice indicated that he slept, and the young man at first supposed that the tendency of his dreaming had been changed by his hearing the utterance of the first man. But the young man couldn't be certain, for surely the name would have been changed in the sleeper's mind, and yet he had repeated it exactly, even reproducing the intonation. So maybe it was someone both of them knew, someone they happened to be dreaming

about at the same time. This explanation was farfetched indeed, but it amused the young man to have thought of it, and he spent some minutes fabricating melodramatic stories to account for it.

Now his bunk quivered as the man below him rolled over in his sleep and muttered a word. The thin cotton mattress he lay upon smothered the word so that the only sound the young man actually heard was a drawn-out nasal: "nnn . . ." In his fanciful state of mind he took for granted that the sound was the mid-part of that familiar name, *Anna*. Now he tried the more difficult task of imagining chains of events by which this unknown woman was powerful in the lives of all three of these men.

He had supposed he had known his companions fairly well, as well at least as anyone needs to know men with whom he will commerce only during the hunting season. He did not know them at all. His father knew them and spoke of them highly. They were married and owned property; they were responsible citizens in their thirties and forties. If they had been like himself, young and single, he could have thought of a woman common to their lives without much trouble. But these were men of substance, and fathers. So that when he tried to piece them together with a woman, his imagination turned dour and sordid and ran shameful. He was unhappy about this, and resolved to think of something else.

The room was charged with waiting; he could not even hear them breathing. The fire had gone down so far as to be only a pinkish gleam furred over with gray ash. Suddenly—all at the same time—each of the three stirred in his bed. He could see none of them, but recognized from the sound of the movement that the three men now sat bolt upright in their bunks, their hands flat on the mattresses. They were not still awake, but each of them stared open-eyed and sightlessly into the large space of the room before the fireplace. As one man they gasped, like divers coming up out of a pool. They remained sitting like this, all three, breathing hoarsely and staring without seeing.

The young man could not see them, could not see anything, but his knowledge of what they were doing was certain and, just as they, he stared forward into the room, straining to see . . . what? He had no belief that he could see into the dreams of others, he had no wish to; but the tensed waiting attitudes of the men engendered such suspense that he was perforce engaged by it, and so he lay, trying to sculpt in the darkness some shape he could recognize.

Little by little—yet all in a single instant—it seemed to him that he did see something. Framed by dark glossy red hair a face appeared there, a face indescribable of feature and yet familiar to him, he thought, if he could remember something long ago and in a distant place. Then there was no face. If something had actually appeared, it had lasted no longer than an after-image upon the retina. Even so, he knew that if he had seen anything at all, it was her, *Anna*, he had glimpsed.

One by one the others lay back again. Gradually their breathing began to slow and quieten. Now they would dream no more of *Anna*; each of them would follow his own secret travels in the forests of dream, and their sleepings would no longer touch.

He was disturbed. Not finally convinced that he had seen anything at all, he was troubled by the unplaceable familiarity of what he might have seen. Who was this girl with the thick glossy hair and the hazel eyes? His mind stammered to admit something it had never admitted before, but with no success. He grew irritated and tired of himself, until finally the room began to go gray with pre-dawn light reflecting from the snow and he fell asleep and dreamed of summer and a bright yellow field of oats.

He woke to the sound of sausage sizzling and of water pouring into a tin basin. They were all up and about but he, and he scrambled down quickly and got dressed. In the kitchen, the only other room of the cabin, the three older men went about their tasks, each a little dull from the after-effects of whiskey. They greeted him in normal fashion as he took a seat at the oilcloth-covered table and began to watch them sharply.

Nothing indicated that a few hours before these men were complicit in a conspiracy of dream. No secret seemed to obtain among them. They were as open and careless in manner as they had been before. Even so, the young man felt himself at a distance from them, left out, and also he began to feel a small gray sense of shame, almost as if he had been reading their private mail. Still, nothing passed among them that his closest scrutiny could detect.

During the meal, however, they informed him that while he was still abed they had decided that even though the snow had stopped, the weather was bad for hunting and that they were returning home. He nodded dumbly.

They packed up and he packed hurriedly and went back to the

cast iron range to wash the dishes. The others made up the bunks and swept out the cabin. When he had finished washing up and had damped down the fire in the cookstove he sat at the table to have a cigarette while the others loaded the gear into the jeep. They finished and waited in the jeep and still he sat there, smoking calmly and looking about the cabin, pondering.

In a few minutes he heard the sound of boots on the rough porch planking. The door opened and the oldest of the three men, Gordon, with his blue-black moustache, stood solidly in the frame of it. There was full sunlight now and it made a harshly burning glare on the snow. Against the harsh light Gordon's square figure loomed black as velvet, blackly burning, and his voice sounded heavy and loud as he asked:

"Well, John, are you one of us or not?"

## THE RESCUE

*Sandra Schor*

All the way to the pier, Florencio checked to see that Isabela unerringly followed. And follow she did, clutching the hem of her wedding gown, her body bent and troubled by the brown dust she was raising. Celebrating the very sight of her, Florencio hurried forward. He had insisted she travel with him to the church, within arm's reach, for even at the final moment her mother might be up to some craziness and swindle him out of his wedding. Now as his glance passed again to Isabela, he winked in happiness, but her eyes were slippery and would not hold.

Further behind, sleek as fish in their sunlit robes, walked the two altar boys. For thirty years Florencio dreamed of the tender bride he would lead to the altar of marriage. And if she *was* more than twenty-eight, and *had* a certain shuffle about her, his triumph was not to be diminished, for he regarded her as unfailing and sweet as a ripened melon. He himself, despite his riches, was no longer a prize. He had had to elicit his women as though they were glasses of rare wine, and in the last few years he had become a sampler, getting an expensive taste of each and no more. Fathers hastened to marry off their daughters even to the boisterous cane cutters of the island, for it was rumored that Florencio impregnated every virgin he visited; indeed, how to say *no* on Florencio's island? In the years since independence, the illegitimate births of the island had climbed steeply, and Florencio, in spite of being blamed for gaunt horses and stony land, was also held responsible for the surging human fertility. It was further said that under a sky spread with stars, he did not care which fragile beauty he plundered at his side. As for Florencio, how he wished it were so. Near fifty, he had grown a bit stooped and the oldest islanders had begun to whisper remembrances of his gnomish father's sexual vigor. Now both land and

legend were Florencio's, and how could a lonely middle-aged bachelor cope with such a lusty inheritance?

At the dock, Florencio assisted his bride into the motorboat. The two boys placed themselves side by side in the prow and Florencio climbed aboard. In forty minutes the wedding would begin. As his fist pulled at the cord, he could still feel the pain of Isabela's teeth on his knuckles where, the night before last at the edge of his private beach exactly as he was on the verge of winning her, her teeth abruptly clenched his soliciting hand: her eyes flashed in terror, her limbs stiffened, she stammered incoherently, and he had to put aside his passion to offer comfort, all the while piecing together bits of a strange confession, that she was illegitimate, and therefore cursed. Her father had been a nationalist taxi-driver from Luzon and, from her infancy, a self-righteous anti-nationalist grandmother had warned that illegitimate children grew up insane. Florencio had withstood this revelation as fresh disappointment shrivelled his heart; still, Isabela's eyes went as clear as the sea next to them, and in the end, even though she reached over to button the shirt over his belly, he had never felt more certain about his bride. The assurance, however, did not endure, for on the following day, Isabela's mother had telephoned to say she needed 30,000 pesos to pay the hotel bill on Mindanao, and threatened, if he didn't pay, that she would have her daughter's head examined, for wasn't that evidence of a girl's not being right, to want to marry an old dwarf like him?

At last, with a final pull on the cord, Florencio revved the motor. It sputtered briefly, then thundered. The small boat eased into the canal. Across the strait, skies gleamed in emptiness. Ramon and Sergio waved their black altar hats to the workers, Florencio criss-crossed both arms in farewell. Only Isabela sat in brimming control, watching the others out of the wet corner of an eye. When Florencio patted her thigh she released a faint-hearted smile, then touched her forehead in so swift a motion that Florencio withdrew his hand.

"What? A headache?" he asked.

"Ever since yesterday," she said, her eyes thrust downward.

"In forty minutes, the wedding ceremony will take place, and after that we shall feast, and then your doubts will spill away like coconut milk."

"You have none?" she asked quietly. "You are absolutely sure?"

Florencio swung the tiller sharply. Water sprang up on either side as the little craft sped into the blue narrows. "I am sure," he answered, "I am sure."

The boat cruised pleasantly. Sergio began to sing "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring," and Ramon hummed along. Their delicate voices brought a smile to Isabela's lips, but as her thoughts traveled to the church in the harbor and the ceremony to be performed, she grew heavy-hearted. She ought not to have seen the groom until the service. Hadn't her grandmother told her it would bring bad luck? It was her mother who, slyly, had advised her to do Florencio's bidding and go with him even though it blemished Isabela's passion for a traditional wedding. So when Florencio began to hum, she insulted him. "Your voice is unbearable," she said, looking away, and he stopped.

Wind flew in their faces and against their mouths. Isabela's veil clung flat to the sequined band on her head. She had to turn to allow it to stream behind her. Florencio, whose eyes pursued her intently, told her she was beautiful. Still cross, she scoffed, but secretly her heart warmed for she too felt she had never been more beautiful. Hadn't she worked on her wedding gown for three months, fitting and sewing late into the night after a full day at the embroidery factory? He was so rich that, despite her cool and sensible view of this marriage, she sought to please him and make him proud. She would be a wealthy woman and she must begin by looking her best. Yet there were times when she wished it might have been otherwise, that somewhere she had taken another turn, thrown other glances, spoken other words and found herself a young and handsome husband. Even her mother still went in for tall, powerful men. But Isabela's fate had somehow bested her and now, outwitted by her flirtatious mother, oppressed by lonely nights, she accepted Florencio who, she had to admit, had never looked quite so acceptable. His satin lapels glittered in the sun and the wings of his white collar set off his round bronze face perfectly. Oh, she had such trouble waiting, to be in charge of a man's laundry, to keep a man's bedlinen, to lie in a man's bed, but the time was very close. She would not be like her mother. She would prove herself and wait.

As Isabela swayed in the stern of the speeding boat, she raised her arms high to grab hold of her billowing veil. To Florencio, the swell of her bosom was so compelling that in a pretense of grasping

Isabela's veil for her, he brushed her breasts with his palms and fondled their roundness. She slapped wildly at his hands and from the front of the boat the boys tittered. When she finally adjusted her veil, her breast was heaving. Florencio laughed appreciatively, and pressed his palms in joy. He might be a young man of twenty-two with a bride as spirited as this one. He leaned over and whispered to her, "Tonight my lovely work of art, I shall unveil you." Blood rushed to her face, she clung to her veil in the breeze.

Florencio cut the motor down slightly and squinted into the rushing air. The sea sped backwards. The moment was radiant. He felt that he and Isabela and the two boys must be alone on the whirling sea, that the awareness of every other man and woman in the universe had suddenly been interrupted so that he alone might feel this exquisite interval of his life. His eyes had fastened to a dizzying far off whiteness as to his own happiness. His long search was ending. He leaned against the side of the boat in unguarded bliss, allowing his gaze to move to the two altar boys who sat together in the prow, the one pale-cheeked and thin, the other dark with glowing teeth. They ought to be his, he thought, and he wished he were already fifteen years married to Isabela and this was their family and he would not have to struggle through another awkward span of years with her before reaching this moment, which he had netted now, unforgettably, as his own. He looked fondly on their small childish faces and shouted suddenly, "Do you boys have bicycles?"

The dark Ramon was the first to speak up: "I have to share my brother's, and Sergio rides a girl's bike, his cousin Maria's." Ah, thought Florencio, that Ramon is a cut above the other, he already knows what I have in my mind. Florencio's squinting eyes sparkled and they all laughed. Even Isabela called out, "You can bring us the Manila papers on your new bicycles." She had to shout to be heard. At her exuberance, Florencio immediately became impatient for her. He sharply increased the speed of the boat. At this the motor sputtered briefly and then fell silent. Isabela and the boys leaned toward Florencio and waited.

"There are two cans wired under the seat," offered Ramon.

"Can't you be quiet?" shouted Florencio, who tried again and again to stir the motor. The others watched.

At last he nodded to Ramon. "All right," he said, "undo them."

The boys knelt and unwired the cans. With the oil from one can

he lubricated the engine; the gas from the other he began to pour into the tank, but instantly it was flooded, spilling a small iridescent pool on his spotless black trousers. "Saintly mother," Florencio muttered at the boys, "it is not the gas."

The boys sank back. They were frightened and small.

Under his breath Sergio moaned, "My mother, she said this wedding will never happen. She said it will never."

"/ said shut up!" Florencio shouted and he raised his hand as if to strike the child.

Isabela's cheeks flared. Sergio began to cry but Florencio, in a gruff remorse, only touched his small robed shoulder. "Must you panic? It will be only a few minutes," he told the child, "wait and see."

Hot-eyed now, his hair scattered, Florencio fiddled with wires, pulled, tugged at the cord, opened and closed the fuel tank, cranked the engine, swung the tiller. His round chest wheezed as he tried five, six times but the only other sound was the sterile rasp of an unwilling motor. He kicked it with his toe, then dropped his sweating head into his hands. "Maybe she is flooded. Maybe we'll try later," he whispered.

Isabela gripped the sides of the boat. Now the wind was calm and her veil hung quietly. The boat drifted in a velvet mist, the boys' robes perfectly still as they moved. Gradually, the current began to carry them in the opposite direction and the grey shore of Mindanao receded in the distance. The boat faced the open sea.

They drifted for hours, scarcely talking. Florencio came to Isabela and put his arm around her. Weakly, she rested against his arm; when it tightened suddenly and she felt his warm lips brushing her ear, she flung all sorts of accusations at him, that he had not checked the boat, that he had deliberately planned to kidnap her so that he could impregnate her. Nodding toward the boys, he cautioned her that he could hear very well in the deathly stillness of the boat and there was no need to shout. A private solitude enveloped each as they moved in the feathery water. Isabela thought of her soft quilt and the safety of her iron bed. Then the sun sank.

In the twilight Ramon said, "I'm so hungry. I never eat before I go to mass."

Florencio thought of the feast he was paying for, the chickens and pineapples, the roasted lambs and the melons even now arrayed

on the tables in the hotel courtyard. He could hear his own stomach thundering. The boys leaned solemnly against each other.

Florencio produced a roll of Lifesavers from his pocket and the two boys each sucked one. Later Isabela accepted one from the roll and halfway through the night Florencio placed one on his tongue and sucked at it with a tragic weariness. By then, Sergio was thrashing about in his sleep and Isabela, herself quaking, inched over and wrapped her arms about him until both their bodies calmed. Ramon, glassy-eyed, knelt in the bottom of the boat and prayed aloud.

Meanwhile, alone in the darkness, Florencio sat with the wide-awake look of a man condemned. He occasionally struck a match and held it aloft but when Isabela kept scolding at him for wasting matches, he stretched angrily across and tore off a piece of her wedding skirt, scratching her knee.

"What are you *doing*?" she screamed.

"What do you think all that camouflage is *for*?" he replied, and dousing an end of the remnant in oil he struck a match to it. Then he waved his flare high and shouted curses across the sea.

She began to sob, deeply shaken by his unforeseen violence. She nestled the little boy and they trembled like birds. Eventually her shuddering and sobbing put him to sleep. "You are a crazy man," she said through shut teeth, forcing herself against the sloping edge of the craft. And she offered a prayer of thanksgiving that her marriage had miraculously been obliterated. When the piece of skirt was consumed, they had only a blind moonlight between them. Soon Florencio fell asleep. The wind, the night, the sea dragged silently on and her heart clamored in her body so loudly that she could not sleep. She thought of pushing him into the deep black waters, but the slump of his unfamiliar body terrified her; she was too chilled to move. From his place in the darkness emanated a dreadful noise. To think of spending a lifetime in a bed rocking with that noise: you had to be insane! and she shuddered with a fear not unmixed by the thrill of escape. How her implacable grandmother had cautioned her.

The next day her vision blurred. She heard a shrillness in her ears and she thought in truth her insanity was blooming like an eggplant in a garden of orchids. The boys lay in the bottom of the boat. Florencio rigged up a wire probe and penetrated the motor. When at last he got it to sputter once they all leaned sharply to that side

almost capsizing the little boat, until the noise fell away, death came to the motor, and their eyes fell shut in grief. In his despair, Ramon's hand struck a bottle of water concealed under his seat; in confused elation, they each took a sweet and sparing draft.

Refreshed, Florencio said, "The boats must be on their way. Tonight they will see our flares." That night he waited for Isabela to offer a piece of her skirt; still she clung to it, again he reached over and tore it, more evenly this time, as if it had become part of a ceremony. Again she cringed and prayed mildly that this grasping little man would not be her husband. Through the night, as the flare bloomed, she prayed that they be found, or that they all drown in the fury of a sudden storm. At one point she called sharply to Florencio that she saw the lights of a magnificent ship approaching them, that she heard the sounds of bells in the distance. He comforted her and he pressed her head to his shoulder.

By the third night, in their exhaustion, Florencio sat in an icy dreaminess, waiting. At last, cursing the darkness, he tore off another piece of her skirt so that she sat now chiefly in her wedding sleeves and in, her satin slip. From opposite ends of the boat they watched the makeshift torch gleam in the night. Before dawn he came close. "Please forgive me," he said, touching her face with a single finger, "I am sorry." She said nothing. They sat and listened to the boys' moans. When she could no longer bear their sound, she shrieked and fell in great gulping noises to comfort the pitiful children. Florencio raised her and held her in his arms. He pressed her to him and soothed her body and soothed her veiled head and her beautiful white gowned arms, and he listened as she cried, "I must be losing my mind. She said not to go with you today. My grandmother said, 'Bad luck, Isa, bad luck.' And now the worst is happening, the worst. There is no hope for me. Please," and at this she plunged seaward, tearing the corner of her veil in Florencio's clutching fingers, "let me die!" Her body jerked uncontrollably as he struggled with her.

Florencio brought her down on the bench, removed his jacket and swore at his luck, covering her as she screamed, "Get away and don't touch me. Should I let you scratch at me the way you scratch at my skirts?" wailing over and over, "Don't touch me. Don't touch me."

Eventually she quieted, Florencio never left her side; through the darkness, he fingered and fingered the veil.

At dawn when she opened her eyes, they were bewildered. Was she alive? Had there been a wedding? And where was *he*? Dry, and warm as earth, she touched the jacket that covered her. It solaced her and brought back the evening's events with a shameful clarity. Had he held her and protected her through the long night? like a husband, risked his life to save her? With great care she folded the jacket. The sun was already merciless. Florencio was moistening the boys' lips with water, imploring that they must try to sit up, they must try to assist him. Then he raised the edge of torn veiling before Isabela's eyes.

All around, the sea foamed and the boat moved coarsely on. Isabela had difficulty focusing on the moment. The only point of interest was Florencio who had redeemed her from madness. If she had been insane last night, she was sane now, and warm and dry as earth. A hand reached for hers and placed in it the piece of veiling.

"It is our only hope," Florencio said.

She sat erect and composed. In fatigued movements he undid her veil which still descended from the sequined band on her head. He brought it around to her knees, exposed and sore under the slashes of her skirt. She smoothed the veil and then handed it to Florencio who waited at her side with the two wires. She held one wire, Ramon the other, as Florencio threaded the veiling on each end to form a net. Although Sergio had again lost consciousness, the other three kneeled and lowered the veil into the sea. The boat slipped along in the current. Side by side they grimaced as they bent their faces into the spray. Hours later, in the deepening afternoon, the veil leapt once in their hands, quivered, and leapt again. They clung to it, their hands cold and reddened. The veil vaulted against the emptiness of their bodies but Isabela's strength quickened. Before their eyes the calm sea rippled and flashed. The fish were everywhere. Like the sea, she too teemed with a life that had been hidden. With all her strength she pulled. At her side, Florencio encouraged her, shouting praise. Together in the growing dark they pulled the veil aboard and exposed within it the glittering, leaping fish.

"A carp," Ramon cried. "Sergio, we have a carp!"

Immediately, with a strip of her wedding slip Isabela lit a flare to illuminate Florencio's preparations of the raw fish. They sat together as he worked, their thighs tremulous. With his bare hands he tore the shining flesh and slipped it into her mouth and into her

fingers. Quickly she pressed some on the boys saving the head and the largest, pinkest chunks for Florencio. With her fingers she fed these neatly into his lips, then tossed the bones and the eyes overboard. At dusk there were four of them trolling the wedding veil in the dark southeastern waters. After they had again feasted on carp, the two altar boys slipped into a soundless sleep, and the bride led the groom into the back of the boat.

## EARLY MASS

Mary O'Connor

The hall door closed behind them with such force that the knocker went *ANG-ga*, and the children found themselves alone on the street. Francie looked back at the door, its maroon paint peeling in familiar spots, as if it could tell her something she wished to know. After a while, she turned to her younger brother.

"Come on, Ant'ny. We'll be late."

Ant'ny reached out a small hand to be caught, but his sister was already four steps ahead of him down the street. He trotted along to catch up, jarring his knee-socks quickly down to ankle-high wedges inside the rubber Wellingtons. The early morning wind blew a piece of paper against his leg and it stuck there for a moment, till he did a little dance, laughing and turning in the swirl of litter, to release it.

"You stop your antics and come on." Francie grabbed his arm with an impatient jerk, and walked even faster to catch up to where she had been. A younger brother, even only a year younger, was a terrible responsibility, and this was his first year going to Mass on Sundays. He'd have to be taught right.

They walked together up the narrow street in the damp morning air. The sky between the grey slate roofs was dark and featureless, giving no hint of how the day would turn out. It was very quiet. Only the screeching and wheeling of crows among the slack wires that cobwebbed the chimneys, and the distant clink of a milkman putting bottles by the doors, accompanied the children's footsteps.

Francie had never been to such an early Mass, but the chapel was in the same place anyway, wasn't it? and she proceeded independently and purposefully along the familiar row of houses in the direction of the church. Her brown plastic shoulder bag bounced off her hip on the side where she wasn't holding on to Ant'ny, a

rosary and prayerbook rattling off each other inside of it. The bag and her white wooly tarn were Sunday dress, and made her feel satisfactorily important even in her mustard winter coat, which she wore every day, and which felt too small under the arms. Her brother looked as he always did: rumped grey serge, short pants and tee shirt, brightened on top by his thatch of fair hair. This morning he looked very small and thin. She shivered a bit for him.

"Maybe you better run around. You'll get cold. Go on!"

She pushed him ahead of her to kick stones and to chase crows, and broke the stillness that she felt without him by shouting out the names of the streets they turned into.

"This is Pierce Road!" The distance between the facing rows of houses was wider, but the houses themselves were the same: grey stone terraces, their upper and lower rows of windows stretching down the road in slightly crooked lines; only the paint on their doors making any difference between the individual homes. Francie could make out the brighter colors in the faint pearl light that was beginning to dim the street lamps. In a house near her, a hand twitched a sleepy bedroom window to life. Why hadn't Mam given them their breakfast before they went out this morning?

"Marshall Hill!" She leaned into it, leading with her head up the steep slope. Ant'ny, fifty yards in front, ran backwards with short pigeon-toed steps, his hands outstretched to keep his balance. He grinned down at her in triumph before he stumbled and faced forward again to his usual meander. A man on a bike with one squeaky wheel came riding down against them, his big black mongrel loping along behind. The bike squeaked into the distance, a regular and comforting sound; there were very few people out: perhaps they were late after all.

"Ant'ny!" He had stopped to look down a grating. On Blackhail Lane they were knocking down the houses and turning one side into a parking lot for the church. The end wall of the last house caught Francie's eye, as it always did. It doubled as the end wall of a row of newer houses, but nobody had got around to plastering over the four squares of different wallpaper hanging in flitters, the tiny, grate in the bedroom, the yellow weathered oblongs where pictures had hung and closets stood against the wall. The small boy came scrambling over the rubble to the footpath to join his sister, and they walked through the churchyard gates.

The narrow path that wound between the gravestones to the

main door of the church was lavishly paved with gravel, and the children's *feet* crunched and wallowed through the thick bed of tiny stones. They stood at the foot of the steps, uncertain small creatures in front of the great wooden doors that opened up the dark, jagged limestone mass of the building. Only one stood ajar. There was nobody in sight, not even the pipe-smoking men that graced the porch at the later Masses, but behind the door, Francie knew, was old fat Jamesy Hartigan with the collection plate.

Her breathing suddenly had to be a conscious activity. She imagined his pale blue glassy eyes regarding her from their deep nest of veined flesh, the way they did every Sunday when she ducked and pulled Ant'ny past him behind cover of the shuffling, clinking Sunday crowd. This morning there would be nobody to duck behind, and they'd have to *slinge* over to the holy water font in full view of him, slouched over the table behind the stacks of pennies and three-pences he had begun to count. In her mind, she leaned all her weight on the brass panel of the heavy inner door, pushing it open to the dim, high interior and its peculiar musty smell of damp coats and beeswax. A sea of large backs loomed to the left and right of the middle aisle. The priest was reading a psalm at the lectern, and there was a low grumble of response from the anonymous backs. Ant'ny! He hadn't a clue: he trotted up the chasm to the children's rows, to sit with Phil and Joe. Francie got very hot and her legs sweated and felt weak. NO! everything in her screamed out at him, don't have us showing ourselves off that we're late. But the usher caught sight of her and beckoned her to follow her brother. All the people in the middle looked round to see who she was, and the priest stopped reading and stared at her down the tunnel of eyes. She shut her own eyes tight, and everything in her went tight and refused to move or think.

"Francie?"

A small cold hand scabbled at her clenched fist, getting it to open, resting inside. They were still standing in front of the church steps. Francie breathed again and looked at her brother's face; he didn't know what was going on, nor could she have told him.

"It's late, Ant'ny. We're late. Everyone's gone in."

She looked up at the big doors again and wondered if she had enough courage in her stomach. Ant'ny waited quietly, his alert face turned to her.

"We'll go home," she said.

Going down Marshall Hill, the tears came, and she forced them back with her teeth and concentrated on the road ahead, which seemed longer this time. But the tears were as stubborn as she, and they squeezed out and ran down her chin and dripped with hot splashes on her mustard coat.

"What are you crying for, Francie?"

"Nothing."

She hoisted up the skirt of her coat and wiped her nose on the lining. But a fresh wave of grief destroyed her repaired composure.

"The nun said it's a sin not to go to Mass on Sunday."

"Well, Mommy and Daddy don't go."

She turned on him.

"They do so, they go to Mass at a different time, that's all." She was as vehement as she was unsure.

"Then we can go too. Ay, Francie? We can go to a different Mass too. Ay?"

"Ah, what do you know?" *See, we're not supposed to be going home at all yet, you little eejit.* The realization had come to her suddenly, though it had been in the back of her mind all morning, since they had been dressed hurriedly and pushed out the door almost as soon as they got their noses inside the kitchen. They weren't supposed to be going home at all, and that was what was drawing her home, with the fascination of quicksand: the fear of what they would find there, a terrible curiosity to see what it would be.

Francie jumped to lift the doorknocker and let it fall. Twice. Then she stood behind Ant'ny and put her arms round him, over his shoulders, protecting him and holding up her own weak knees.

After a long wait, her father pulled open the door cautiously. He was as wild and bristly looking as when they had left him, and his braces still hung about his hips. His face took on a look of disgust and impatience when he saw them. There was trouble ahead, sure enough.

"We were late," Francie said. "There was no one there."

Her father turned his back, and they followed him into the kitchen, but he was speaking loudly all the time as if he hadn't heard Francie.

"What are you doing home from the chapel? You didn't go at all, I'd swear. Bringing up a couple of bloody atheists, I am."

"*You* are?" Francie heard her mother whisper angrily. She came around the kitchen door, still holding Ant'ny in front of her. Her

mother was sitting beside the little electric fire with Martin on her lap, feeding him his breakfast. The spoon in her thin hand shook against the side of the bowl. Their father had gone over to the stove and was noisily scraping the remains of last night's supper off the frying pan. For a while the two children stood by the door and watched their parents. Then Ant'ny went over to his mother and stroked her cheek with his small red hand. The woman put down the bowl of mash and started to cry, painfully, not wanting to let go. Francie knew the feeling, though she couldn't afford to cry herself, now. She had to observe.

"Oh, my poor children," her mother said, holding Ant'ny's hand against her flushed cheek. "Your poor hands are cold."

## FOOTFALLS

*Kawabata Yasunari*  
*Translated by H. Francis Frantère*

The paulownias were blooming around the hospital.  
He was leaving.

The door that led to the second-floor balcony of the coffee shop was thrown open. The busboy's uniform was new and snow-white.

The marble top of the table felt agreeably cool to the man's left hand. He cradled his cheek in his right hand and leaned his elbow on the railing. He peered down intently, devouring each passer-by with his gaze. People were strolling on the pavement, whistling in the light of the new street lights. The balcony was so low he felt he could tap passers-by on the head merely by extending his cane.

"Hmmm. Even the way city folks react to the seasons is backwards. Don't you think so? People in the country don't feel the early Summer in the light of a street lamp and suchlike. In the country, it's Nature—the grass and the trees—that changes its attire according to the season. In the city, though, it's the reverse: what people wear indicates the changing seasons. All these people are creating the beginning of Summer by walking the streets like this, I guess. Don't you think it's the beginning of Summer for these people on the street?"

"Oh, yes, it's Summer for these people."

As he answered his wife, he recalled the fragrance of the paulownia blossoms outside the window of his room in the hospital. About that time, whenever he closed his eyes, his mind would be drowned in a sea of various leg-shaped phantasms. His brain cells would all become leg-shaped insects that swarmed over his world.

. . . . legs that smile shyly when a woman steps over something;

legs that give a start and harden into rigor mortis; legs that sometimes strain with a fearsome power as they swell up like the blubber of a whale that has been cast aside with a flop; legs astride the flanks of a spavined horse; the legs of the crippled beggar who stretches them in the dead of night and springs up; the bowlegs of the infant born between the legs of its mother; legs that are tired of bringing wages home from work; legs that revel, from ankle to abdomen, in the sensations of crystal-clear water as they wade in the shallows; legs seeking romance that walks in acute angles like the creases in snug trousers; the feet of a girl who wonders why the tips of her toes, which until yesterday had looked the other way, should not today begin to demurely meet her gaze; legs that walk in great strides, pockets bulging with money; the legs of a sophisticated woman who smiles with her face and mocks with her thighs.

And feet that exude a pleasant dampness through the socks after a walk; the beautiful legs that deplore last night's sin as they take the place of the dancer's conscience on stage; the heels of a man's feet that sing of kicking a woman out; the legs that think sadness is heavy and joy light; the legs of the athlete, the poet, the usurer, the countess, the lady swimmer, the grade-schooler; legs, legs, legs . . . and also, the legs of his wife.

Then, his right leg . . . it had been amputated because of the pain in the knee joint that had wracked him all Winter long. While he suffered from visions of legs in his hospital bed, he came to love the balcony which was almost made to order for him, like a pair of glasses, the better to watch the goings-on of the gaudy, lively street. More than anything, he coveted the sight of two healthy legs treading the earth, one after the other, and he listened spellbound to the sound.

"I never realized how good Summer is until I lost my leg. I want to leave the hospital and go to that coffee-shop by the beginning of Summer," he had said to his wife as he studied a white magnolia blossom.

"When you stop to think about it, you see that a man's legs are most beautiful in early Summer. The best time to take a refreshing, healthy walk in the city is early Summer. I must leave the hospital before the magnolias fall."

And so he looked down intently, as if each passer-by might be his lover.

"Even the breeze feels different, doesn't it?"

"Well, after all, the seasons are changing now. Don't you feel that even since yesterday, your hair, even your underclothes, are just full of dust?"

"I don't care about things like that. I'm concerned with legs. I mean a man's legs in early Summer."

"Well, shall I walk by below for you?"

"That wasn't our agreement. Aren't you the one that said the two of us would become one three-legged person, just before my leg was amputated?"

"Doesn't this beautiful weather, this new season, give you any satisfaction?"

"Will you be still? Now I can't hear the sound of people's feet on the road."

At night he would strain his ears to the breaking point trying to pick out the noble sound of footsteps from the bustle of the city. Before long he would shut his eyes. Then the footfalls would fill his soul like the sound of rain pelting the surface of a lake. His face would flush and his cheeks would burn with a delicate ardor.

However, the flush of joy would gradually fade away; and as his color waned, he would open moribund eyes.

"Don't you understand? All men are crippled. I haven't heard one pair of legs here that sounds healthy."

"Oh, come now, . . . even the human heart is located on one side."

"Furthermore, I cannot believe that men's legs are solely responsible for the confusion in the sound of feet. If you listen and concentrate, you'll find it's the sound of the sickness of the soul. It's the sound of sadness as the flesh returns to earth; it's the death-knell of the spirit."

"That may very well be. But that doesn't hold true for footsteps only. It can be anything. It depends on the person and how he thinks. Anyway, in your case it's just a case of nerves."

"But just try to listen. City feet sound sick. They're all crippled like me, aren't they? Since I lost a leg, I was expecting to enjoy the sound of two healthy legs; but I didn't expect to discover one of man's diseases. I didn't think a new source of worry could be found. I must be rid of this anxiety. We could try the country. Maybe since mind and body are healthier there than in the city, I

could hear the sound of a well-matched, healthy pair of legs."

"No, no! I think it would be better to go to a zoo. That way you could hear the sounds of four-legged beasts."

"A zoo!?! Well, perhaps . . . Since the animals' legs are sturdy and the birds' wings intact, maybe those sounds are quite harmonious."

"What are you saying? I only meant it as a joke."

"Perhaps it is only proper that the sound of man's feet is discordant, since the sickness of spirit began when he began to walk on two legs."

The man was helped into the car by his wife, looking as if he had lost a leg of his spirit. The tires squealed as the car limped away; the noise informed him of the sickness of his wife's spirit.

The street lights splashed the blossoms of the new season.

1925

## THE HEIR

*Jack Myers*

I was reading a poem about longing to be no one, picturing the heavy steel wheels of the train in the poem passing by at eye-level, when the thought of slashing down the plant in the parlor occurred to me again, as it had at various times in the past. The train continued out of sight and I was left with the image of a dark green stalk gasping out its sap.

The plant, as old as I am, stands about nine feet tall. Because its leaves are of the alternating "whorling" variety, budding in a spiral path, I had fantasized that the plant revolved in the sun much the same as a person taking a shower. It had imperceptibly spiralled over me throughout my childhood, higher and higher into my middle age, unscrewing itself towards its potentially infinite growth.

While my family and I were preparing to move across country, I drove a dowel deep into the soil to steady the plant. Then I watered it, let down a plastic garment bag over the plant, and packed it into a U-HAUL-IT truck. Driving away, I thought the words on the truck were a bit heavy-handed in their redundancy. Whenever we stopped to eat, I would park the truck against the sun, open the back doors, and let the plant stuff itself on my thoughtfulness. When we reached our destination, I dusted the leaves, polished them with milk, and stood warning my wife, as much as myself, to be careful of its top when we unloaded.

Before I tied its bowed head against the window frame so that it would not look so hopeless, I brought over a step-ladder, and though I earned my living as a skilled housepainter, in the confusion of moving in, I neglected to open it up. I landed with the top step of the ladder against the plant, snapping off the top three feet. I gaped in disbelief at the decapitated section, at the wet black loam

spilled over the floor, and the plant that lay with its green arms quivering in the air. Setting it upright, I noticed that now it only reached eye-level. I knew I had meant to do this.

Within a few weeks the growing tip of the plant had dried out, making the fibers separate like the straws of the old broom we swept the house out with. But eventually the leaves recovered from shock and lifted themselves into their characteristically floppy position.

I know nothing about plants. But I have spent much time worrying over this one, whose name and type I have never bothered to find out. It is one of two family heirlooms I was given from my grandmother's impoverished estate after she died. The other is a soft metal sculpture, maybe lead, of two Romanesque she-angels poised on the brink of discovering a hidden truth. When the viewer approaches the statuettes, he enters their field of vision, and is, I suppose, illuminated by the brown torch one of the angels holds over her head. The other angel seems about to touch, and thereby reveal, what lies before her. The plate at the base of the statue says in French: "Le Progrès", and the clay tablet the torch-bearer holds to her thigh says:

Le génie a pour  
Son Domaine  
L'immortalité

something about genius outwitting death, I think. The delicate stylus which was welded to her fingers is missing and one wing was torn out of her back when the statue rolled over during one of our frequent hurry-up relocations. It left a ragged black hole edged by the metal's silverish insides. It smelled as old as wisdom in there. I am guilt-ridden by both these mutilations of sacred hand-me-downs.

Though I fiddled around with the new glues that could lift freight cars, I could do nothing with the statue's broken wing. It was simply too long and heavy to stay implanted in the angel's back. Thinking that someday I would be able to repair the damage, I have kept the wing in a drawer of miscellaneous screws and nails. Whenever I pass the statue, which to my shame is highly praised by guests, I think of the hole in her back while my wife thinks of the wing in the drawer.

About a month after the subliminally attempted murder, I spotted a thin green tip, bright as a torch, growing two inches below

the dead tip. Within a few years the plant had again reached the ceiling with its new trunk and looked cramped in its original pot. I decided to re-pot it into a larger, more comfortable earthen vase, and shaking off the loose outer soil from its roots, I was astonished to see a thick white root, like a woman's finger, jutting out perpendicular from the tap root. So happy was I at the plant's powers of regeneration and ashamed at my underestimation of it, that I began talking to the plant. My autologue was very self-conscious and contrived at first, but at least it was an attempt at reconciliation. Terrified, I'd say: "Here's some nice water. I'm going to pick up the children now, but I'll be back soon." If the plant was intelligent enough to grow new trunks all over itself at will, then I thought it certainly must be aware of my presence in the house; maybe even of my emotions and thoughts.

Now you begin to see that over the years the plant, the statue and I have slowly exchanged roles. I have become their victim, serving the plant respectfully, dutifully polishing the angels' bodies; taking care to jam the pathways of thought between us by sending out a flood of good intentions. I do not know if the plant perceives my real malevolence towards it, nor if it even cares what I think. I, who am much more complex in structure, don't even know what my own true thoughts are. I shouldn't be afraid of being revealed by the plant, but I am. In fact, I am beginning to see the plant as myself. Watering it, I feel better. I respect its quiet power; it calms me. And when I admire its bushy, ragged beauty, I am ready for the day.

It doesn't matter to me which one of us is taking care of the other. For my part, I keep the house dust-free and immaculate. I'm even thinking of installing more windows in the livingroom to give it that greenhouse effect. Anything worth preserving is worth caring for, my grandmother would say. I'd like my kids to learn that, but how in the world could you hand down that kind of wisdom?

## Notes on Contributors

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### Poetry

Judith Bingen-Kumin is studying for an M.A. at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts.

Laurel Blossom is director of *The Writers Community* in New York City.

Madeline DeFrees, whose poems have appeared widely, is on sabbatical leave from the University of Montana, where she teaches in the M.F.A. program.

Caroline Finkelstein is completing an M.F.A. at Goddard in Vermont.

Allison Funk is doing graduate work at Columbia University.

Lewis Gardner is a playwright and poet who lives in New Jersey.

Andrew Grossbardt is the new editor of *Quarterly West*.

Fanny Howe's most recent work of fiction is *Bronte Wilde* and of poetry, *The Amerindian Coastline Poem*.

Cynthia Huntington is a poet living in New York City.

Laura Jenson's new book will appear soon from Ecco Press.

Maxine Kumin has translated much of the work of William Cliff. Cliff is the pseudonym of a young Belgian poet who teaches in a lycee in Brussels.

Diana Ó Hehir won the 1976 Devins Award for her first book, *Summoned*.

Alicia Ostriker, the recipient of a 1976 National Endowment for the Arts grant, has published in many small magazines.

Leslie Silko grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation where she now lives with her husband and two children. *Ceremony* is her new novel.

Gilbert Sorrentino's fifth collection of poems, *White Sail*, is now available from Black Sparrow Press.

Gerald Stern's book of poems, *Lucky Life*, will be published this fall.

Karen Swenson taught at 1977 summer writers' conferences in Colorado, Kentucky, and Cape Cod.

Rod Tulloss was co-founder of the *Berkeley Poets Co-op* and *U.S. 1 Poets Co-op*.

Bennett Weinberg is pursuing an M.F.A. at Columbia University.

### **Fiction**

Fred Chappell teaches writing and other subjects at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Among his books are *The Gaudy Place* (fiction) and *River* (poetry). Next year *Bloodfire*, a volume of verse, is due from Louisiana State University Press.

Yasunari Kawabata was a Japanese novelist, short story writer and playwright who died in 1972. The story here published is from *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories*. It is translated by H. Francis Freniere, Jr. Mr. Freniere translated the first volume of "The Hitler Trial," published in 1976 by University Publications of America.

Jack Myers had his second book of poems, *The Family War*, recently published by L'epervier Press. Confluence Press plans in early 1978 to publish *A Trout In The Milk*, an anthology of poems, commentaries, and essays on the poet Richard Hugo, which Jack compiled and edited. Jack earned his M.F.A. from the Iowa Writers Workshop and has been teaching creative writing at Southern Methodist University since 1975. He lives in Dallas with his wife and two sons.

Mary O'Connor is a Sister of Mercy who received her M.F.A. in fiction from Columbia University. She teaches composition at the College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California.

Sandra Schor teaches English at Queens College. Her fiction and poetry appear in *Carleton Miscellany*, *Northwest Review*, *Redbook*, *Shenandoah*, *Poetry Review*, *Journal of Popular Film*, and others.