POETRY 2000 WINNERS

GRAND PRIZE: MARJORIE MIR
SECOND PRIZE: MELANIE DRANE
THIRD PRIZE: MARK DeFOE

ATLANTA REVIEW

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A Conversation

MARK JARMAN & KATE DANIELS

Kim Addonizio • Tara Bray • Arlene Eager • Rachel Had
William Heyen • Jonathan Holden • Judith Kitchen
Sandra Meek • Dannye Powell • Hilda Raz • Alberto Río
Mary Jo Salter • David Sanders • Louis Simpson • Dave Sm
R. T. Smith • J. C. Todd • Stan Sanvel Rubin • Michael W

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POETRY 2000

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Welcome!

Welcome to the continuing conversations the *Atlanta Review* brings its readers. This issue highlights an intriguing exchange between the poets Mark Jarman and Kate Daniels, as well as excerpts from Judith Kitchen's *The House on Eccles Street*, a work in structural dialogue with Joyce's *Ulysses*. The poems featured in the issue speak both to each other and to the Poetry 2000 contest winners introduced by Editor and judge Dan Veach in the magazine's center section.

The voices of the distinguished writers in this issue are as varied as their subjects. But whether they address other works, past or present, or the world at large, or even the self as attentive other, they speak to be overheard. Our response as readers completes the circle. Such conversation takes us beyond ourselves: like Chaucer's pilgrims, we talk to each other on the way to epiphany. Kitchen's Molly answers Joyce and Dr. Laura, and watching the tornado in Jarman's "Epistle" we hear Elijah and St. Paul, Wordsworth and Blake, and count the lost. Come, listen.

Memye Curtis Tucker
Issue Editor

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Signature

Between tomato stakes the spider swings
from the web whose weave will say
her name to anyone who can
read such things,

and boys will scare themselves giddy
with garden mysteries: if she
writes your Christian initial,
get ready to die.

It's only the wish to be central that claims
the jagged lines from strand to limb
are letters scrawled slow
to match the yellow

hieroglyph wrapping her back and belly.
It's not a riddle. It's not, really.
Spinnerets floss out the lines
to snare crickets and flies.

It's silk, white lightning bolts as fine
as hair, the radiant pattern neat
as the shatter of safety glass.
The spider, a jet-stressed

bead the size of a cherrystone, swings.
It's plain. When the world is torn
we all transform
to spiders. We bring

our private language to the wound
like cobwebs. We mend it with our name.

R. T. Smith

What Happened to Me

A boy rides a horse after school
On a warm day and clear
And on one day he does not hear
The call, one day does not come home.
The day is not less usual,
Not different from any other,
That particular day when now his mother
Cannot coolly bathe him, or comb
Or kiss his face, his hands, cannot
Fool this boy so easily about things.
The day is not different when he brings
Home nothing, though his hands are full.
On a warm day and clear
A boy rides a horse after school.
He is a small boy still
But the horse is big.
The world is there and this
Is its animal, and this,
His stepping off, is the getting on
The horse of the ground that will take him.

Alberto Ríos

Coffee in the Afternoon

It was afternoon tea, with tea foods spread out
Like in the books, except that it was coffee.

She made a tin pot of cowboy coffee, from memory,
That's what we used to call it, she said, *cowboy coffee.*

The grounds she pinched up in her hands, not a spoon,
And the fire on the stove she made from a match.

I sat with her and talked, but the talk was like the tea food,
A little of this and something from the other plate as well,

Always with a napkin and a thank-you. We sat and visited
And I watched her smoke cigarettes

Until the afternoon light was funny in the room,
And then we said our good-byes. The visit was liniment,

The way the tea was coffee, a confusion plain and nice,
A balm for the nerves of two people living in the world,

A balm in the tenor of its language, which spoke through our hands
In the small lifting of our cups and our cakes to our lips.

It was simplicity, and held only what it needed.
It was a gentle visit, and I did not see her again.

Alberto Ríos

The Twins

As Philip Larkin says,
novels are about those
numerous men and women who're not us,

entering whose complicated houses,
following whose miseries and joys,
we can for a while escape ourselves.

Poems, on the other hand, ask why,
scream, whisper, cry,
all (if they choose) wearing the guise of "I."

Spinning connection upon
connection, leaping out along the line,
they tend to lack solutions,

conclusions, plots. The questions
poems pose are less *then what* than *how*
we get from moment to

moment. In obedience to some law
poems manage to reveal
as rapidly or slowly they unreel

not what I only; also others feel.
We go to prose
hoping it will help us lose

track of our lives; in poems we find ourselves.
There what began as alien—
anger, memory, dream—

leaps the chasm. Poems clear the air
so anyone can see from here to there
into another's mystery or desire.

Walls that separate, doors tightly shut,
all barriers that proclaim PRIVATE! KEEP OUT!
poetry breaches, having made us so

porous I can suddenly be you,
explore your mazy brain, as you do mine.
Live and forget, but read and recognize.

Be a guest in the enchanted house
built by twins who are identical
only in being both miraculous.

Rachel Hadas

Discovery

in memory of Amy Clampitt

6:48 A.M., and leaden
little jokes about what heroes
we are for getting up at this hour.
Quiet. The surf and sandpipers running.
T minus ten and counting: the sun
mounting over Canaveral
a swollen coral, a color
as bright as camera lights. But then
a flash goes off elsewhere:

shot from the unseen
launching pad, and so from nowhere,
a flame-tipped arrow–no, an airborne
pen on fire, whose ink's a plume
of smoke which, even while it's zooming
upward, stays as oddly solid
as the braided tail of a tornado
and lingers there as lightning would
if it could steal its own thunder.

–Which, when it arrives, leaves
under or within it a million
firecrackers going off, a thrill
of distant pops and rips in delayed
reaction, hitting the beach in fading
waves as the last glint of shuttle
accepts our hands' eye-shade salute:
the giant point of all the fuss now
smaller than a star.

Only now does a steady, low
sputter above us, a lawn mower
cutting a corner of the sky,
grow audible. Look, it's a biplane!–
some pilot's long-planned, funny tribute
to wonder's always dated orbit
and the itch of afterthought. I swat
my ankle, bitten by a sand-gnat:
what the locals call no-see-'ums.

Mary Jo Salter

River

In my dream my boat was my car,
lowslung Buick out of the olden days,
convertible. I nosed it obliquely into the current,
but then lost power, couldn't even
raise my windows over the lapping water

as evening came on, those poignant stars
that formed themselves into animals
over my dashboard. Now or never
I would change my life. I thought ahead:
as the car drowned, I'd float up—

never mind my keys or books—
& backstroke west to where the shore
seemed broken with bushes & doors.
What country would it be, what year?
What were the chances my father would be there

standing in sawdust at one of his machines?
Release your seatbelt, I told myself,
kick off your shoes. The Buick's forehead
crested for a last time, then
plunged down as I began to swim.

William Heyen

The Wise Ones

In those days, we fed our chickens
the newsprint of our wars,
then tried to read their lettered shells,
but those were no language we knew—
palimpsests of vowels, punctuation
between dipthongs, sometimes a sound
as of the Babel threatening us again.
Priests insisted blue, politicians
purple. Groups of us met in cellars
to try to read by candlelight—
no use—while, in their cages,
the wise ones kept eating & writing
what they in their entrails understood.

William Heyen

Keeping Faith

As a boy, he glimpsed the spirit once,
maybe twice, but never felt the choked-tear,
pew-gripping call the preacher talked about.
Waiting to taxi down a fog-covered runway
he has trouble defining the time he felt
closest to God, considers the instant
his finger first rubbed across the face
of his child, still moist from birth,
or the morning on a Rocky Mountain ledge
when he watched soundless breezes ruffle
patches of gentians, the quiet broken only
by rocks he threw down to the ice below.
These are the moments he recalls as he looks
through icy rain at a man in a bucket truck,
chemicals spewing from the spray gun
held against his hip, stripping away
icy stalactites from the wing of a Boeing 757.
Later, from 30,000 feet, he will watch
fire devour a forest. Black smoke
will rise like a jagged mountain, then
turn gray as it trails to a windblown wisp
at the same spot just off the wing where now,
shrouded beneath a yellow hood,
he looks into a face he wants to trust.

Michael Walls

In the Alpha Cradle

The flesh is sad, alas!
and I have read all the magazines.

My name being called...at last!
I lie beneath the gantry,

looking up at the head
and arm, the catcher's mitt.

The head is peering at me.
Chris or Angie slides a block,

translucent plastic, into the slot.
They go scurrying off

and hide behind the wall.
The gantry makes a beeping sound.

They come scurrying back,
Sneezy, Bashful, and Doc.

The head and arm swing around.
They slide in another block.

*

At the edge of the parking lot
two men are managing to lift

an enormously fat man out of a van
wedging him into a wheelchair.

He is swearing and waving his arms.
To go to so much trouble...

Something or someone
must love him very much.

Louis Simpson

Lake Effect

Look at the childless couple
watch from their window upstairs
as the moon turns the snow

into another source of light.
They point to the tracks they've made
drifted but unfilled

like a string of bells sunk upside down
leading to their door,
and they pretend to wonder

what lumbering, starving beast
has disappeared across the lawn,
down the walk, retreating

into the past, or, more likely,
into the snow falling by now
in the next county. They catch

in the window their own faces
lit by the moon; her husband whispers,
"Tomorrow morning, early,

before the snow melts away,
let's follow the steps of the beast."
His wife squints her eyes and nods.

"Come down, now!" you ought to tell them,
although their rooms are silent with dreams
and already filled with the light of day.

David Sanders

Unruly Angels

Down here, at night, when highs and lows converge
belongers call the storms the Christmas winds
("down here" was once writ as *les Isles des Vierges*
in French mapmakers' scrawl). And what begins

as scraping fronds and riggings' steel drum slaps
soon moans like ghosts down metal masts of boats
the spirit sways among their rented slips.
The off-key choir of airy-throated notes

performs a hymn we strain to recognize
from our ragged sleep but can't. This island's
moved and moving till the high wind dies—
the choir hushed in momentary silence...

Then wave on wave of the ocean's great applause
and—It's dawn!—the relay of the roosters' crows.

David Sanders

A Conversation between Poet-Friends: Mark Jarman and Kate Daniels

Mark Jarman and Kate Daniels conducted this free-ranging literary conversation on June 17, 2000, in the offices of the English Department at Vanderbilt University where they are on the faculty together.

Mark Jarman is the author of seven volumes of poetry, including *Unholy Sonnets* (2000); *Questions for Ecclesiastes* (1997), which was awarded the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize from the Academy of American Poets; *Iris* (1992), a book-length poem; *The Black Riviera* (1990); *Far and Away* (1985); *The Rote Walker* (1981); and *North Sea* (1978). *Epistles* is the title of his collection of prose poems in progress. Jarman was born in Kentucky in 1952, the oldest of three. His father is a minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). When Mark was two, the family moved to southern California, where the Reverend Jarman took up his duties as pastor of the First Christian Church. When he was six, the family moved to Kirkcaldy, Fife, Scotland where his father served three years as the pastor of St. Clair Street Church of Christ. In 1961, the family returned to the United States, settling permanently in Redondo Beach, California. Jarman's experience as the son and grandson of a minister has been a central force in the formation of his character, as well as a subject for his poetry.

After his family's return from Scotand in the early 1960s, Jarman was educated in the public schools in southern California, and then attended the University of California at Santa Cruz from 1970 to 1974. He received a degree in English literature with highest honors. Just before he enrolled at the University of Iowa's Writers Workshop in the fall of 1974, Jarman was awarded the Joseph Henry Jackson Award for poetry from the San Francisco Foundation, and had also published a well-received chapbook of poems, *Tonight is the Night of the Prom* (1974).

Jarman attended the Writers Workshop from 1974 to 1976. He has spoken of this period of his life as particularly important for the formation of lifelong professional relationships, as well as personal friendships that resulted from his time there. While at Iowa, he began to formulate the ideas about narrative poetry that he and poet Robert McDowell advanced—often polemically and always hilariously—in the pages of *The Reaper*, which they edited together during the 1980s. As

the mouthpiece for what some have called the New Narrative or Neo-Narrative movement in recent American poetry, the magazine reiterated the editors' strong beliefs in the ongoing vitality and the enduring cultural importance of narrative poetry. Jarman's interest in narrative poetry, as well as in formal verse, has fueled his efforts in editing, which include (in addition to *The Reaper*), extensive poetry reviewing, and the editing of *Rebel Angels: 25 Poets of the New Formalism* (with David Mason, 1996).

Jarman's teaching career has taken him to several universities. Since 1983, however, he has been a professor of English at Vanderbilt University. His poetry has been widely published, and he has received many awards for his work, including The Poet's Prize, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and three National Endowment for the Arts fellowships in creative writing. He is married to Amy Jarman, a soprano on the faculty of the Blair School of Music at Vanderbilt. They are parents to Claire, a student at Wesleyan University, and Zoe, a senior in high school in Nashville.

Kate Daniels is the author of three volumes of poetry, *The White Wave* (1984), *The Niobe Poems* (1988), and *Four Testimonies* (1998), and the editor of Muriel Rukeyser's selected poems, *Out of Silence* (1992). She has almost completed a new poetry manuscript, *My Poverty*. Several poems from that collection were recently awarded the James Dickey Prize from *Five Points: A Journal of Literature and Art.*

Daniels was born in 1953 in Richmond, Virginia. She was educated at the University of Virginia (B.A. and M.A.) and Columbia University's School of the Arts (1980). While a student at Columbia, she founded *Poetry East*, along with Richard Jones.

Daniels has taught at several institutions throughout the South, and is currently an associate professor of English at Vanderbilt University. In April of this year, she organized the highly successful *Millennial Gathering of the Writers of the New South*, a two day event that convened 55 Southern writers of fiction and poetry at Vanderbilt University. She writes reviews regularly for *The Southern Review*.

Mark Jarman and Kate Daniels have been colleagues and friends for the past several years.

Kate Daniels: Since we've been friends for several years now, and have had lots of conversations about poetry and our lives as poets, I've been trying to think of questions I've never asked you. And one of the things that occurred to me was this: I suspect that a lot of people who are fans of your poetry might describe it as somewhat cerebral, kind of a thinking person's poetry. But I would say that one of the things that I love the most about it is its sense of physicality, a kind of engagement with the life of the body and the ways in which bodily experience can actually shape or initiate or even *direct* spiritual experience.

For instance, I was thinking of a poem like "Ground Swell" (*Questions for Ecclesiastes*), where the memory of a physical experience leads, in retrospect, to an understanding of something else that was actually going on, and that seems to have been brought forth by an experience of intense physicality. So I wonder if you would talk about the life of the body in your poetry.

Mark Jarman: I'm always surprised when this is pointed out to me...

KD: Has it been pointed out a lot?

MJ: Oh, yes. There was a review of *The Black Riviera* by Jim Elledge in which he talked about intelligence being as important as emotion in my poetry. It's just not something that consciously occurs to me since I have always thought of poetry as a way of creating or conveying strong feeling. That, in fact, my interests were cerebral or intellectual only became clear to me when I started working on the poems in *Questions for Ecclesiastes* during the 1990s.

What was always most important to me was making a narrative. When I was writing *Iris* [a book-length narrative poem focusing on the life of a central female character, Iris], it was important to me all the time to remember that she had a body, and that she was living in a physical world. And yet I see that the whole focus of the book is mind: what is she thinking about? How is she making the decisions she's making, and so on.

KD: What we're saying makes me think of how differently we teach poetry writing. I'm always talking about the bodily experience, about how physical it is to write poetry. I tend to use very kinetic, muscular, corporeal metaphors in describing the writing process. But I don't sense that you talk about writing like that.

MJ: No, I don't at all.

KD: But I see it a lot in your poetry.

MJ: It seems to me that when you're writing a narrative you're putting people in the physical world in their bodies doing things, but thinking at the same time. So I mean my question to you is: does this mean, if a poem is cerebral, does that mean that it's not emotional? Or that it's not about feeling? Or it's only about thinking? Is that the sense that you get from my poems?

KD: No, that's not exactly right. My experience reading your poems is that the initial engagement has something to do with the perception of a surface or a veneer that overlays the narrative of the poem. And that this surface is more often in the realm of the intellect. It's more mental than physical. But then moving into the poem, I often find that there is all this other stuff happening that's not cerebral at all. Moments that are physical, and that have to do with physical experience.

And it's interesting because I think the expectation is that it would be sensual experience that would proceed from all the gray matter ruminations (forgive that!) that I often find at the beginning of your poems. And of course sometimes it *is* that, but it is usually something sweatier! It makes me think about something that I know to be true: that you've been an athlete. You surfed as a teenager, and played football and ran track. In middle age, you still run. The life of the body is not something abstract to you, as it is to so many poets and intellectuals. You seem to be saying something perhaps about the essential mystery of the physical life.

MJ: Well, I think that may be true. The most important aspect of my life as a child—though I did not know that at the time—was that I was a very brainy little boy. I was *incredibly* brainy. But I had a weight problem from the age of 5 or 6, and I was constantly reminded of it, and it was oppressive. I felt persecuted. Finally, when I was old enough to sort of seize matters—I was a teenager, 14 or so—I decided I wasn't going to be fat anymore. And so I started doing high school athletics—football and track—and working out with weights and getting in shape. It took me about two years.

When I look back at that time, at that brainy little boy, there are times when I want to say to him, "You just be a brainy little boy. You do not have to change yourself to please these other people." Well, but I did. And I'm *glad* I did. I'm proud of the discipline, of the way I said, I'm going to change myself, and I'm never going to be this other way again. That gave me an intense awareness of myself physically, but also con-

stantly an intellectual awareness that I could change the physical world through intellectual effort and power.

KD: Somehow, that seems to be exactly what I'm talking about, doesn't it? Starting out in a cerebral, cognitive place, but using those powers to fuel the body. Really yoking the mental and physical. It's the extreme beauty of athletic performance at its highest level. That's the sense I get from your poems sometimes. By now, I've heard you read "Ground Swell" five six seven times. I *know* what is coming, what is going to happen. "Is nothing real...?" is the poem's opening question. You don't get much more philosophical than that—what's real, what's not? What is memory? Is that the only worthwhile subject? Am I relentlessly autobiographical? There's a way in which it verges on navel-gazing.

But then the poem turns radically and instantaneously! There's this amazing moment that never fails to totally astonish me—that wild moment of the surfer peeing inside his suit! Where did that come from, I always wonder. How did we get from a meditation on reality to that really gritty, physical moment? From the defenses of the intellect, to the vulnerability of the body. It's quite wonderful.

MJ: Well, thank you. It makes sense; it's just not something I've ever thought about. As we've been talking, however, two things have surfaced that seem to be related. Right now, I'm working on a series of poems for which I've sort of set myself a series of tasks. I'm trying to write five poems, each dealing with some particular aspect of landscape. It strikes me that this approach to writing a poem is what you might call an intellectual task, right? But when I'm writing the poems, I'm mainly trying to create a physical world, a physical place. The second thing that comes up is this book of my essays that Michigan is going to publish. Just at the last minute, I've decided to call it *Body and Soul: Essays on Poetry.* The title comes from one of the essays called, "Body and Soul: Parts of a Life."

KD: I rest my case! Let's back up a little bit. You're a PK, of course. [Preacher's Kid] And a preacher's grandson, as well. Tell me something about how you came to be a poet, instead of a minister. How did that brainy little boy turn out to be the poet you are today?

MJ: Well, by the time I was 8 or 9, I was pretty sure I'd be a preacher like my father, and like his father. So I understood that I would have some kind of public life that would be in the community. I knew that I would have a church as my father had. And I would have this social group that I would be involved with, as he had. I guess I

understood that my life would be a life of books and bookish work, in a way. We had books in the house, but they were middlebrow, Michener and such. My parents were rather typical aspiring members of the middle class with very middlebrow tastes. They were always reading, of course. Because my father was a minister, he had a kind of intellectual life among his books—the books in his study, the books at church.

One of my grandmothers—my mother's mother—was a writer. And, of course, she had actual ideas about literature—what was good, and what was not. Her writing never amounted to much, but she wrote a lot. She wrote stories, poems, at least one novel, and a cookbook. I have most of her manuscripts which I retrieved from her house after she died. She was born in Mississippi, but had moved to the West with her husband. She had written since she was a girl, but she never had any great success. She would enter contests in *Writer's Digest*, that sort of thing, and send pieces to magazines. But she seems to have been easily discouraged and not to have cared much for revision. In spite of all that, she was considered the family writer, and my parents respected her in that role. When the subject of literature arose, they deferred to her.

Even with all of this, however, I can't say that there was what I would today call an intellectual life in the household where I grew up.

KD: But there was no sort of feeling against it? No suspicion of the arts or literature?

MJ: No, no, not at all. In fact, it was encouraged. It was taken for granted that we would all go to college, all three of us. When I was a small child, we lived abroad. My parents were very good about taking us to the great art museums of Europe, and we saw all the things you were supposed to see as an American abroad in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The art monuments, as it were.

KD: Are you just talking about the consumption of culture?

MJ: Yes, of course, but that's exactly what my parents were. As I said, they were aspiring members of the middle class with very middlebrow tastes.

KD: I've heard you mention on several occasions being on the football team in high school. Can you talk about football and poetry?

MJ: Football and poetry actually came into my life right around the same time. I got turned onto writing my freshman year at Redondo

Union High School because of some remarkable English teachers and classmates. There were a number of older kids who were very talented and they were members of the most interesting school club, the Penpointers. It was a creative writing club. One of my older classmates was Maurya Simon, a poet who now teaches at the University of California at Riverside. Another one was the first-string center on the varsity football team. I admired him because I wanted to play that position—eventually I did! And because he wrote poetry.

The first time I got to talk to him about poetry was in the shower after practice, when the two of us argued about whether or not poetry should rhyme. He said yes; I said no. The image of this immense and immensely strong boy looming beside me under his shower head, insisting that rhyme was one of the things that separated poetry from prose, is one I have preserved fondly.

In this environment, I read indiscriminately. Rod McKuen seemed as inspired to me as e.e.cummings. I was sure the lyrics of Jim Morrison and Leonard Cohen were as good as anything by Dylan Thomas. But by the time I was a senior, I was beginning to become more discriminating, to learn one kind of good from another, one kind of bad from another. My senior literature teacher, a man named James Van Wagoner (I dedicated my first book to him), not only loved modern poetry and living poets, like James Dickey, for example, but he thought their lives were fascinating. He would tell us these romantic tales about the lives of Thomas Wolfe and Dylan Thomas. It was great.

Then I discovered Theodore Roethke on my own, and he was my first great poetry love. After the first semester of senior year, Van Wagoner insisted that I use the class hour to write poems, instead of sitting in his class. So I would write, and he would critique my writing. That was my first exposure to the necessity of revision, the dailiness of learning the craft. Van Wagoner was the perfect critic for me: I wrote obscurely, he taught me clarity.

When I went to UC Santa Cruz, I simply lucked onto a group of fellow students who wrote and into teachers who were writers, *good* writers. Raymond Carver was my adviser one year, and I took an independent study with him in poetry writing. The novelists Peter Beagle and Victor Perera were in town, and so was the poet William Everson. George Hitchcock taught there and edited *kayak* magazine and press. There was a regular reading series, and since Hitchcock knew everybody, many interesting people came through, especially poets. The first reading I ever attended—and still one of the best I've ever heard—was by Philip Levine. Kinnell came a couple of times, Merwin, Stafford, Simic, Marge Piercy, Carolyn Kizer, Michael Harper, and on and on.

Still, during this time, writing was going to be my avocation. I still had plans of going to seminary after college, if not to be a minister like my father, then a theologian who would teach in a seminary. I think it was during my sophomore year that I found myself cutting class to finish poems, and many of these were the first poems I published in national magazines, like *Poetry* and *Antaeus*. By the time I began my junior year, I was pretty sure that writing was going to be the first thing I did, and the second was going to be making a living to support my writing, since I knew poetry didn't pay. That looked like a job in the academy, but I really wasn't thinking that far ahead. I simply realized that I was not going to go to seminary. I wasn't headed in that direction anymore.

My senior year, I thought in desultory ways about applying to graduate school for a Ph.D. and went through the process of filling out some applications. I also applied to the M.F.A. programs at Iowa and Columbia. About the time I heard from Iowa that I'd been admitted with a teaching/writing fellowship, I also learned that I had won the Joseph Henry Jackson Award from the San Francisco Foundation for a manuscript of poetry. Together, these things helped me confirm my decision to make some kind of career for myself as a writer.

At Iowa, I continued to be lucky. I studied with Charles Wright, Donald Justice, Marvin Bell, Sandra McPherson, and Stanley Plumly. Each of them taught me valuable things, which I have prized more in retrospect than I did while I was learning them. Maybe that's always the way with students.... And I was lucky again in my classmates: Chase Twichell was my office mate at Iowa and she taught me things about teaching that I use to this day. Mary Swander was there and I remember how a poem that would be in her first book wowed everyone the day that Richard Hugo visited our class. James Galvin was writing the poems that would be in his first book. Rita Dove's office was next to the one I shared with Chase. She was also very advanced as a teacher.

I made some connections with New York, too, through my best friend from college, Robert McDowell, who was in the M.F.A. program at Columbia. I learned about his teachers Richard Eberhart and Mark Strand, and met some of his talented classmates, Jorie Graham and Rika Lesser.

It's remarkable when I think about it. I'm talking about a formative period that was really only ten years in duration, from 1966 to 1976. But they were the years I discovered the world of poetry and poets and decided it was where I wanted to live.

KD: It's very interesting to hear you talk about your poetic life in that way. There is a feeling to that narrative that you've created that I would call consistent and well-constructed. It reminds me of how I experience your poems in a way....

MJ: Consistent? I'm not sure that's how I would describe my poems myself. I've only had the sense of discovering something that might be called *voice* in the last few years. Only recently have I felt, for the first time, *this is mine.* In fact, if I go back and look at my earlier books I sometimes feel, *Who is this person talking?*

KD: To me, your poems, even from the beginning, have had a kind of authority of voice and conviction that I care for very much. I admired that in your poetry before I ever met you. Now that we have become friends, I would say that one of the sources of my admiration for you as a friend, and as a poet friend, is your moral certitude. And I guess that this is understandable in the son and grandson of ministers. But you seem to have a very secure center with regard to your own moral and ethical standards and behavior that few people today have.

Do you remember an evening several years ago now when we were at a dinner party at Diann Blakely's house? There was a book—I won't say what it was or who wrote it other than that it was by a poet we both know—lying out on her coffee table. It was a book that had received an awful lot of press coverage because of its rather sensational and confessionalist content. We began talking about it. Do you remember what you did?

MJ: No, what?

KD: You became *very* exercised. It was on the table between us. You had read passages of the book, and you knew a good deal about it. Finally, you stood up and went into an excruciatingly articulate tirade which concluded with this very oracular statement, "It is an immoral book, and I spit on it!"

MJ: (Loud laughter) I didn't *actually* spit on it, not really.

KD: I don't know if you actually spat or not. But the power of the moment for me was in the public pronouncement of your conviction. I was deeply drawn to the fact that your feelings about this book were

so impassioned. And that you were willing to stand by and *inside* those convictions. I've been very interested in that moment. Not just interested in how colorful it was, but in the identity issues that surround it. From whence does someone get the authority to inhabit such a moment?

MJ: Look, one of the reasons I agreed to start *The Reaper* with McDowell was that we would use the magazine to say certain things. I really believe that society basically doesn't understand itself. At any time, I don't think a society understands what is going on within itself, within its culture. It is basically an inchoate mass. And what that means is that you are completely responsible for—maybe even empowered to say—well, this is what I believe and this is how I see it. I think this way, and I'm going to write this way, and it will be accepted. It will *have* to be accepted. One of the things I used to say to McDowell when we were working on *The Reaper* was, "We're going to say this and people are going to realize we're right! Because they don't know what they think is right!" They just don't know, you know?

KD: (great hilarity) But how do you know that *you* know?

MJ: Well, I just feel as if I do. I mean about certain things, not everything. I don't know why, but I've always felt that where I am and what I'm thinking is right and what it should be. But I also think there's a way in which—and this is going to sound pragmatic or something—but there is a way in which most people really don't know what they want or what they need. And you can say to them, when you realize how much they don't know what they want, "Look, this is what *I* want, and I want it very badly and I'm going to convince you that you want it, too." I don't know where this feeling of mine—you're right, it's a conviction—comes from.

It has just always seemed to me that society doesn't know what it needs or wants. I would never worry about whether or not my poetry is in sync or of a piece with our society— that's almost absurd to me. It's society that's out of sync, not the individual artist who is making something sound and inventive. As long as society remains out of sync itself, the individual who knows himself or herself can never be out of sync. Do you see what I mean? As long as society is unclear about what it is or what it wants, then it can always make a place for art, or it can change the way it operates to accommodate something new once it realizes it wants or needs it. And it will, if the art is good enough, and sure enough about itself.

A point came in my writing life when I finally said, "My God, I have got to engage in my poetry what I am going through in my religious life. I just have to, and I don't care what anyone says or thinks." And then all of a sudden, I started finding out that there are many, many people out there who want and need that kind of poetry. I think I *do* understand this about myself. But I don't understand the mind-body connections we were talking about earlier....

KD: A last question. One of the things that you and McDowell did over and over again in the pages of *The Reaper* was to ruminate on what a successful narrative poem for our time could be. I think you used the term "compelling narrative" a few times. But you know a lot has changed since then—particularly with regard to our experience of time and space—that is bound to affect us imaginatively. We can see in our current American poetry that it has had an effect. I wonder if you would update for the millennium, "How to Write Narrative Poetry: a *Reaper* Checklist."* Does it need updating? Or would you all say, no, that's still right, that's still the way to do it.

MJ: I have to look at it and remind myself. What do I still believe? Actually, I still believe all those things. I would only add one thing—to remember that you're writing a poem. And that out of that poem must come the strong feelings of the individual who wrote it. Let me put it this way. Even though you're writing a narrative poem, you still want some lyric feeling to come through. I didn't believe that when I wrote this checklist, but I do believe it now.

I was recently at a poetry conference in West Chester, Pennsylvania. There was a question-and-answer session in which people were talking about the importance of Chekhov to Louis Simpson's narrative style. I finally said, yes, Chekhov is important to Simpson; he says it in his poems. But the difference is that even though Simpson is employing narrative in a Chekhovian way, he's a poet, and Chekhov isn't. Chekhov wrote fiction, and he wrote dramas. But he always wrote them in a way in which the lyric eye is absent.

But in any poem by Louis Simpson, no matter how Chekhovian we may judge it to be, we are always listening to that self, that poet, speaking in a way that we expect from poetry, and that we would miss if it wasn't there. You know the feeling I'm talking about, the feeling that the invention is coming from the poet, from a particular consciousness, a specific voice. You don't expect that from Chekhov, but you always expect it from poetry. But I wouldn't have said that ten years ago.

KD: Oh, really?

MJ: No, oh absolutely not. We have to get the self out of the poem, is what I would have said. We have to create this narrative in which the self is absent, not there.

KD: I'm glad you don't think that anymore! For me, that's what really makes narrative its marvelous self. Getting that sense of the *self* that is telling the story. And the fact that it's not just the story, itself, that is important but the voice of the person telling it, as well.

MJ: Right, right. One of the things I have always believed (but I don't think it was articulated clearly by *The Reaper* because I don't think Robert shared my feeling) is that narrative is almost like metaphor. What I suspect is that the story line in a poem is a metaphor meant to convey something that is not spoken directly. The story stands for something in a way. I tend to think that fiction writers think of their characters and their situations in a sort of detached kind of way. But I think that a narrative poem isn't like that. In a narrative poem, as central as it seems to the poem, the story is actually standing for something else.

I'm still very interested in narrative. I just wrote a poem in which I play with narrative in a way I haven't in a very long time. As I was writing it, I was aware that part of what I love about narrative is how it shows you that your personal experience is not just personal. There's always that other level to narrative that remains unspoken. I almost think you have to be older to fully understand that, to see how much more than itself the personal is.

KD: But there are plenty of wonderful writers who saw that early on!

MJ: Ah, but they're the geniuses. What can you do, what can you do?

KD & MJ: (Laughter)

* "1. A beginning, a middle, and an end. 2. Observation. 3. Compression of time. 4. Containment. 5. Illumination of private gestures. 6. Understatement. 7. Humor. 8. Location. 9. Memorable characters. 10. A compelling subject." From *The Reaper Essays* (1996).

Ouroboros

The snake surrounded
The world and what I saw.
The Pacific's rippled surface
Was its skin, a thing that changed

Its color every day
Minutely, the largest organ
On the body of all I saw,
Bigger than where I stood,

Moodier, except for
Trembling times when
I woke up, feeling the earth
Think twice.

The snake was blue
And green, and green and gray,
And sometimes like a pig,
Lolling in its odor,

Ready to eat the world
Like a pig's farrow.
But really, it was just a place
Beside me, a distance that was all

A vague potential, more like a mind,
A thought of the two-lobed sky,
Considering how to be
More than a thought.

Mark Jarman

Epistle

Out of the whirlwind's barrel-chested, charcoal body, crossing streets, sparkling with ignited transformers that flashed like cameras: one death. The city half-conscious under its upturned trees, its crushed roofs, knotted powerlines. Oak, hackberry, magnolia, hickory sucked out of their sockets in the earth, by the thousands: one loss. Blue jays, robins, cardinals, grackles confused, crossing among crossed, confused wires.

One death among the deaths. One loss among the losses.

Reek of cracked cedar and pine. Fragrance of freshly sawn wood, green wood, heartwood, damp with life, scattered, chopped and stacked for the fire and the chipper. Tree bases upended like manhole covers to the underworld, root faces like propellers of sunken ships. Leaves, for which there is no formula to produce an accurate count, withering in premature autumn. The urban forest sacked and looted.

And churches knocked down ecumenically. And homes levelled according to the most random plan. And schools. And stores.

One death. One loss.

William Blake said the devil made nature. He scoffed at Wordsworth who loved it. Wordsworth who loved scenery. Blake who loved the body of God. Let Wordsworth praise the action whereby lightning changes polarity and the vacuum between heaven and earth establishes its roving temple of destruction. Design without intent is not evil, even as it flays a mobile home park. Blake was wrong, but right to scoff.

Inside the phenomenon we face—who knows? It is traveling there that makes our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouths. And it seems we have been financially ruined, forced out on the street, given the stark news that our enemies are right to hate us. The approach emulsifies hope. The horizon eats our names.

And what of it? Windows rattle, the car veers off the road and rolls. We're lucky to be awake as the jaws of life shear through metal.

Think of the desire to be loved at age 12 by the class bully. Impossible to win his favor, with bribes or blackmail. It is not like that inside the phenomenon. His ferocious indifference may be like the approach. But inside it is different. Every criminal you can imagine shows more humanity, even as he executes your loved ones before your eyes.

Inside the phenomenon, every roof in the neighborhood explodes like a bad theory. And the ancient red oak falls toward the picnickers under the band shell. Soon one of them will enter the event alone. One will go inside, where it is hard to get a message in or out. We will ask him many questions when he returns, but he will never completely return. In the hospital, the sloping bed where he lies will tilt him slowly back, then tip him over out of reach.

Meanwhile look at him, in there, under the fallen tree, inside the phenomenon. A singularity, a unity, a oneness that is not atonement. No other way to count, outside the event horizon, watching the phenomenon recede. One death among the deaths. One loss among the losses.

We do not live in the same place anymore. That is why I can write this letter. This morning on the way to work I was stuck behind a kind of vehicle I did not recognize. For a mile I studied what looked like a massive beak, painted orange, or one of those folded fortune-telling papers that have four points and cover the hand, but in this case enormous and made of steel. Earth clung to its lips. Or were they seams? When I had decided it was a colossal posthole digger, I was able to pass the truck that pulled it. Then I saw the slender bole and trembling leaves of the Bradford pear tree nested in the huge cradle. And the logo of a tree replacement service. The machine would plunge the living sapling into earth where some older tree had been ripped out. I thought of Blake etching the scene on a copper plate. Of Wordsworth admiring the occupation—ten thousand of these plantings at a glance!

We lived complacently—forgive us—among green hills far away. One death has changed us all. One loss. It is right to count this way.

Mark Jarman

POETRY 2000

International Poetry Competition

Poetry 2000 marks the fifth anniversary of *Atlanta Review*'s **International Poetry Competition**, which began with the Atlanta Summer Olympic Games in 1996. We wanted to revive the spirit of the original Greek Olympics, which included dance, drama and poetry as well as athletics. *Atlanta Review* went on to become one of the world's best-selling poetry magazines that year. And the Competition, attracting over 5,000 entries from 50 countries, remains one of the world's most popular poetry events.

This year the Olympics are in Sydney, and *Atlanta Review*'s spring **Australia Issue** was given a hero's welcome Down Under, beginning with a feature splash in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. You'll find the story of our Australian adventure—with pictures—at our "Home Pond": **www.atlantareview.com**.

We were happy to hear that Anne Hills, a singer-songwriter and one of last year's prize winners, is now reading poetry at her concerts. One of this year's poems was inspired by hearing Anne read!

Poetry 2000 whirls us from the Carolina Low Country to the heights of Machu Picchu. We'll herd sheep in Wales, snorkle in the Red Sea, and drink green tea in Japan. Thanks for joining us, once again, on this voyage of discovery to a rather remarkable planet.

Dan Veach
Editor & Publisher

Afghanistan Argentina Australia Belize Botswana Brazil Bulgaria Cameroon Canada China Colombia Croatia France Germany Greece Hong Kong Hungary Iceland India Iraq Ireland Israel Italy Ivory Coast Jamaica Japan Kenya Kuwait Malaysia Malta Mexico Namibia New Zealand Nigeria

Nicaragua Phillipines Poland Russia South Africa Spain Singapore Syria Sweden Switzerland Taiwan Thailand Trinidad Uganda Ukraine United Kingdom United States

POETRY 2000

International Poetry Competition

GRAND PRIZE WINNERS

Gold $2,000

MARJORIE MIR

Silver $500

MELANIE DRANE

Bronze $250

MARK DeFOE

Afghanistan Argentina Australia Belize Botswana Brazil Bulgaria Cameroon Canada China Colombia Croatia France Germany Greece Hong Kong Hungary Iceland India Iraq Ireland Israel Italy Ivory Coast Jamaica Japan Kenya Kuwait Malaysia Malta Mexico Namibia New Zealand Nigeria Nicaragua Phillipines Poland Russia South Africa Spain Singapore Syria Sweden Switzerland Taiwan Thailand Trinidad Uganda Ukraine United Kingdom United States

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David Tillinghast • Mildred Tremblay
Jeanne Wagner • Deborah Warren
Ellen Wehle • Brenda Yates
Wanita Zumbrunnen

For the Lady in the Black Raincoat Who Slept Through an Entire Poetry Reading

I see you clearly from the dais,
hunched over in row seven, snoozing,
as if to prove the poet's way is
no easy cruising.

The Muse has sent us out to find you:
our words are meant as flare and rocket.
But how are we to spot the mind you
stuff in sleep's pocket?

Would I be right if I supposed
if we were better you'd awaken?
Or is the house we've come to closed
and quite forsaken?

It's just that kind of day, I know:
chill rain outside; inside, dry heat,
some dozen poets speaking low,
a comfy seat.

We've all been there, done as you do;
it may be rude, but not unlawful.
And then, while some are good, it's true
some poems are awful.

Truce, then: you promise not to snore,
I'll whisper to preserve your sleeping.
Let's wish each other nothing more
than dreams worth keeping.

Rhina P. Espaillat

For Sam

How Leda fared with that impressive swan
whose "feathered glory" had its way with her
is quite a different story, like the one
in which the maid who weds the carpenter
encounters a white dove.

I find such suitors easy to resist:
too rough, too strange, impersonal and wild.
But you, green silky fluff shaped like my fist,
threaten no burning towers, no holy child
conceived in thought above

some fated battleground or destined Church.
Infinitesimally beaked, less bird
than rumor of bird, you decorate your perch
with teeny dots and question marks of turd
that make it into print

on your cage floor. You charm me with one eye
and then the other, leap and hop and climb
and punish the brass bell you've let me tie
from a red ring you nip from time to time,
fiercely, as if to hint

that you're no fool lamely surprised by things,
you know the score, you've been there and you know.
I like the way you spread your palm of wings,
groom your soft inch of breast. I like your low
cheep of content, your fuss

over my fingered ministrations. Yes,
love is like that, it follows some disguise,
some feathered suit in which the king may dress
to sport, and to that avatar replies,
Ave. Benedictus.

Rhina P. Espaillat

Advice to Anne Hills on reading poetry aloud

Begin slowly
the sound forming in your mouth first
before the lips part
then breathe, and the words will come
like the seeds of the milkweed
white cotton parachutes released
on their own volition
one by one to the wind.
And where each traveler lands
set each word firm and secure
into the path down which you are taking us
lest we the listeners stumble and fall into
some other thought than this: your story.
At your lead, we follow, trust,
place our feet into your footprints one
after the other, after the other
on this journey to some
exotic place we would otherwise never go—
the Up Train to Darjeeling perhaps—
and you—you the engineer guiding us
through Siliguri Town, Sukna, Kurseong, and Ghum
the indigo, cinnabar, and saffron tones
the velvet incense of each word
we hear
in the soft whir and thump of the wheels
against the tracks the syllables
singing so many lives, so many stories
but we do not stay to visit there today—
we are listening to you
this grand concerto of pictures
and after the last sounds of each phrase
at the place of your breath we rest.
Most of all, at the end

pretend you are not at the end.
Say the last line as if
there were another and another yet to follow.
Leave the line floating in the air
like a balloon let go to the sky;
where it takes us no one can know—
but we will go. That last line
say it as if you believe it is
the voice in the bell of the Tibetan monks
and the most important part of the poem
is what is left
unsaid.

Diana Lingren

Double Strings

I want them back now, all
the character actors of childhood
aunts, uncles, cousins, the whole

crazy bunch who embarrassed me so much
Turkish arms flapping in time
to the *chefti telli*, double strings tune

from "Oud Fantasy":
Come here, little harem girl, come
put down that book and dance with us....

...and what did I learn from books anyway,
that Jane Eyre worshipped her boss
and Emma scorned her husband;

Macbeth took out Macduff's whole clan
all his chicks plus their dam.
I followed Sister Carrie

through Chicago with no coat,
another desperate immigrant with
hope. *Opa! Come here, hanúm,*

forget those tales told by idiots
let us slap another dollar on your sweaty brow,
work the zills and fling the veils

life's but a walking shadow...so
dance to the double strings, reading not allowed,
remember? on a Sunday afternoon.

Brenda Serotte

Hard Words

The volunteer has taken
the sisters to the *supermarket*
shown them how to collect
a *Registered Letter*—
is tugging them through some
of the barriers to *belonging.*

When they left, they tell her,
they were permitted to take
one piece of their jewelry.
Familiar is a hard word,
home, formless, fragmented.

She is young, employed,
has friends, a place to belong,
and is teaching English to an
Iraqi woman who wears
sadness like a cloak
inside the cold of *Refugee.*

Now, in spite of her protests
she must stay for a meal.
"You haven't eaten Arabic people,"
she is told. Next week
they will deal with prepositions.

To her the food is strange,
the flavours *new.* She eats, lays
down her fork and spoon.
"Arabic people," she says,
"taste very nice."

Glenda Fawkes

The Watched Pot

My Bubba is cooking a soup.
Beef bones, onions, and celery.
She sits at the stove on a stool
and watches the pot like TV.
So my Zeida says, *tell me what*
is so terrific in this pot?
She shrugs her narrow shoulders.
A boiling pot is an interesting thing.
She remembers how her mother
boiled goose fat down in a pot,
packed it in a gallon jar
and took it to America.
Her sister Sophie had it when
she moved to St. Nicholas Avenue.
Was the jar still on the kitchen shelf,
or could someone have thrown it out?
She sees the incinerator shaft
of her sister Sophie's building,
the jar of *schmaltz* gone down
the chute, the tinkling pieces of glass,
the splattering, shrieking fat in the fire,
the cousins she played with in Kovno,
who missed the boat to America.
Bubbles rise and dissolve in the soup
and my grandmother watches
with her reading glasses on.

Susan Thomas

Garlic

Fourteen, tongue-tied, with a body of all elbows
I was hired on the spot, too plain to pose any
danger, the only female prep cook at D'Amore's
Fine Italian, the D'Amores whose name meant love

and whose carbon-headed sons manning the kitchen
in their tank tops sprouted hair beneath their
arms from which I could not look away, black tufts
like exclamation marks of lust whenever Nicky

telling a joke would fling his hands up in the air,
whenever Val D'Amore stepping up behind me reached
for the garlic hanging above my sink. Okay so
I admit it, he was the only one worth having, in

his ribbed T-shirt reaching, the sting and slap of
his sweat, and if I was too young it only seasoned
my hunger: Lord the nights at that sink not turning
my head when Val came for the garlic. Hip to hip

his silence behind me, the hand holding me steady,
the pause—his pause—can anything possibly hurt
like being fourteen? And the night I finally left
for good, you know it left with me. Ghostly white

how it glowed in my palm the long, long walk home.

Ellen Wehle

The Pillow

"It was that time," his grandmother said,
"I came down with a nasty cold, the kind
as rattles in the chest and heats the face
until you think you've got pneumonia. Well,
I thought I had and sent for the old doctor.
Those were house-calling days, you know.
He'd come out in his buggy, with his bag,
and knowledge in his head, and he'd take care
whatever ailed you. Only on this night—
did I say it was cold, it was raining?
Still, he'd come out was I ailing.
And he did too, only on this night
he'd a delivery to make—that Vogel woman
would pick a time like this to fill her term
And babies got rights before sick women.
I couldn't sleep for hacking, and he didn't come
and didn't come—not till 3 a.m.
And he was cold and wet. I saw his horse
out there in the weather, head hung down,
the chill rain dripping from his nose.

Hill-country German was he, just like us.
Whatever he said to greet me at the door
I couldn't understand. A pity.
A man devoted to his duty, here he was
still going, the middle of dark night,
cold and worn down, his practice doing.
He'd have to check my lungs, he said.
You don't with pneumonia fool around.
And he opened his bag to make a search.
I heard him mutter a soft *Verdammt!*—
He'd left his stethoscope that other house.
But still, it had to be done—the chest.
"Lie down. Unbutton. Turn your head. Count.
I have to hear what's in your chest."
I knew he meant it, too, and I obeyed.
He bent his head down, you know—to listen.

Those days, if I do say so myself,
it was—what do I say?—an ample bosom
the which he laid his old ear to.
And I began to count, just like he said:
Ein. Zwei. Drei. You know the numbers.

Poor old *dummkopf*. He should have known.
He was not what himself should be—
more like some memory inside him knew.
I kept on counting while he snored.
Before he waked up—you have to be kind—
it was almost a thousand numbers
when he came once more to be alive.

William D. Barney

Beginning Composition

I offer my students this story:
When I was twelve, my neighbor,
a high school senior, wandered drunk
into a hotel room under renovation,
and off a missing balcony, 23rd floor.
Falling, he grabbed a rope left hanging
from the room and held on for 20 stories
as it burned through his palms,
then three more of free fall. When
he hit the cement he didn't break
a bone. I tell them the difference
between fiction and life is that fiction
makes sense: victims confront their accusers,
a gun on the mantle has to be fired,
no one falls 23 stories and lives.
I say, think if you read this: his hands
burned through, then grafted over,
the lines wiped clean as a blackboard,
how he is pushing a mower, four weeks later,
hands bandaged fat as boxing gloves. No one
would believe, not even his wife, years later,
tracing her thumb on the scars in his sleep.
Stick to logic and structure.
Forget he was spared.
Forget that it's true.

Jon Fink

The Sirens Cut Out in Need of Something More

Enchanters of men. Whoever in ignorance comes near them
And hears their song never again returns.
—The Odyssey

We have grown tired of singing,
of emptying our voices like wineskins
over the sea, only to drag out bodies
and bear them to the mound of moldering
bones. You have mistaken us all along.
Left on this rock, we sing, not to draw
you in, but to unburden ourselves
of the touch of the dead, of bodies
heaved from the sea on our backs.

We have had enough.
We have taken these bones, bound
and sealed them with fat and tendon,
and forged a boat, sewn a sail
from flesh dried on the sand. Sick
with desire, we search you out,
so that just as the sun comes clamoring
up, we will ease our ship beside yours,
strip the honey wax from your ears,
and take you open mouthed, our bodies
shivering in the splendor, as they break,
at last together, in song.

Jon Fink

The Elements of Poetry

A rainbow rises from the Arkansas,
mouth open, as if trying to tell me
it has met my father wading upstream,
holding a bamboo rod above his head,
sleeves rolled past his elbows, his arms wet from
the plunge to grasp the rainbow at his feet
then release it from his hands like a bird.
Crossing down-river, I can almost hear
my father cast, balanced between the banks,
suspended within this water and sky
as the river flows below him, through him,
and he spreads his line in duple motion
over the Arkansas, tempting a fish
to rise with rhythm perfect as the sea.

Jon Fink

Daffodils

They are the bright unknowns,
the highlights, the miracles, the hangers-on.
Against the odds, in a muckle of weed and sand,
they spring one night when winter bores
itself with its own rage and drops off to sleep.
They don't make apologies for their flimsy flags
staked amongst ivy. They nod over
the muddy quilt and sleep through danger.
When winter returns, briefly, to stake
a losing claim, they bow their crowns
and slump as if dead in the sleet and wind,
stalks pale enough to read a watch
through. Even a dress of ice or frost won't kill.
They wear it like Cinderella wore her illusions:
just until she got where she was going.
Even now, full tall, confetti faces turned
each to each in the flickering sun, the color of chicks
or ducklings, butter, ivory, lemon, they
defy the worst that can happen with no thorns,
no poison, blurring the line between soldier
and damsel, ready for anything, even rescue.

Jean Monahan

Stone Peace

Along the river the fog is dense.
I sit under two cherry blossom trees,
radiating white against the gloom,
look over to where yesterday
the mountains
seemed like a herd of elephants
lying on their sides, bodies overlapping,
the sun blanketing gray flanks

from the noise of crisp chattering bamboo,
each word a tiny knife slicing another
while above in the sky a kite hung,
its tails like soundless schools of fish
darting to and fro in a stream,
over a garden crows flew,
their cawing ripping the air
and coming up the rise
the mechanical clang of a train.

Today they are gone.
Muted by fog
the mammoths have risen from hibernation
and have crept away, softly, unheard.

I am willing to grant them these brief
excursions
to stretch their limbs,
shake their shaggy heads,
paw the trampled earth,
and sniff the spring air
until they become drowsy again,
lie down into comfortable shapes, familiar

as before. I want to be here then
to welcome them home, to watch
them slowly lower themselves and settle,
each line falling in place,
the final wriggle for ease, the sigh
of contentment and the stone peace.

Wanita Zumbrunnen

Peru

If you want to hear the mountains,
do exactly as I say.
There are rules to things like this.
And I tell you that many
have come this way more than once
and have not heard them yet.

Listen:
You must leave Lima early.
The flight at five will get you there by six,
before the morning fog wraps Cuzco thick.
When that first crest of snowcaps rises
you'll feel the thinness of your breath.
A quiet ache will settle in the chest.
Do not stop for Indian trinkets.
Drink the *coca* tea and then go straight to bed.

At four you rise to start again,
this time by train.
But do not think that you are almost there.
The ride will take six hours:
switchbacks laced with waterfalls
and clustered sheep. Sit on the left
to see the Indians wrapped in layered rainbows,
black bowler hats and braids,
spinning llama yarn outside their homes,
the wisdom of their people lost
except when kings return in dreams
and speak about the stones.

At the base of Machu Picchu
there will be five hundred tourists
bursting from the train
like subway riders.
Step aside. Let them push.
Look up to the right

and see the cavern homes where mothers nursed,
and children scattered ants for play.
Listen to the river rushing madly to you;
listen to the rising of your own breath.
There are no other sounds.
There are no birds. No chatter here.

When you can feel the pulse beneath your feet,
then start the climb, the way you must, on foot.
You are the silent stranger coming to this time.
And all the mountains are waiting.
Through a thousand years of solitude,
they have all been pressing toward this moment
of your coming, of your coming.

Susan Dane

Moon Viewing Point

One Hundred Famous Views of Edo: 82
—Hiroshige (1797-1858)

The August moon floats like a party
lantern the watchman forgot to extinguish.

All the tipsy revelers have gone,
leaving bowls and trays of sweets

scattered on the veranda floor.
A samisen, its delicate strings

silvered by moonlight, lies forgotten
near half-empty sake cups.

Behind the sliding screen, a geisha
yawns as she undresses, sleepy

and tired of pleasing. Her green kimono
is untied and pools around

her ankles like a waterlily
pad. Suddenly, a frog

hops from the river that flows beside
the veranda and squats on a tatami

mat. He grunts and stares at the moon.
"How pleasant," the geisha thinks "to be

a frog, fat as a potato,
to sing off-key and meditate

on water and the moon." Moments
later, she claps her hands to wake

her maid. She notices that the breeze
has caught in hoisted sails. Soon,

fishing skiffs, like flocks of full-breasted
water fowl will crowd the river.

Shulamith Wechter Caine

Edo modern Tokyo

While Reading Chinese Poetry

Lying on the sofa,
my book still open,
I watch frost thickening
on the windows and think
of the red dust of Han Shan,
how it clouds my eyes and
stains the vision of this dream
I call my life. After
you died the whole
world drained of color,
red fell into green and
blue into orange, and I
fell into white, as though
blinded by snow, and
landed, like Alice, in an
upside down world where
mothers outlive their
daughters and time collapses
like flimsy scaffolding to
reveal all eternity
in this moment as
the frost shines back the gold
dust light of the setting sun
and I turn the page of
my book.

Barbara Paparazzo

Swimming Laps

I swim an hour as if to chase the boy
I was, drowning, drowned,

beneath the closing waters
of the past, the boy who splashed

all day down by the beach, who could
hold his breath until his father,

watching, reached the point of panic.
Now, breathless, my father lies

at depths beyond the gasp of fear,
while in the pool, just past a mile

earned lap by lap, I seem to slip
inside another skin in which

the boy I was and the man I am
swim toward each other, breathing

easily now side-by-side, afloat
in memory, our native element.

Richard Broderick

In the Red Sea: Snorkeling Off Basata

All one needs to do is follow the sound of water,
and the things and persons of water, to find one's way
home again, wherever home may be.
—James Wright

I

After a while you stay afloat with ease
by lazily stretching into the way things are.
You slow down to half the surfbeat of your heart.
Your knees and elbows soften and fold,
as though you had inhaled them, leaving
a vague wet lacy sensation of webs
where fingers and toes had been.
Devolving, you no longer stay on top
by kicking and splashing, you dart straight on,
one long muscle parting the realm that opens
to let you in. The strange laws here
won't let you drop. The salinity that holds you
in its arms is constant, the surrounding desert
having neither rivers nor rains
to dilute this meaning of the way things are:

you have drifted to a time before we learned
to breathe on land, before the Creator's long design
opened our faces to air and we gasped to seize it.
You fight off the human instinct to open the mouth
for breath, you bite down on the snorkel's mouthpiece
to keep its seal. You can feel the seas divide
as the long lines of your cells unwind
toward their origin. From down very deep
in your self, words swim up and cleanse that vision
that those King James words just half awakened
when they caught the strangeness of Genesis One:
In the beginning, face of the deep,
and there was light. Now, open your eyes.

II

Here shimmer displaces sound, here even water
loses its lowest whisper. That first white flash
is shot from a school of Angelfish
in the shape of laughter. "As the eye sees,
the body slows," a dancer told me once,
and I am undulation of water flowing,
a world away from the ticking of my watch,
which is wrapped up dry in a towel back on shore.
The closest sense of desert winds are swirls
of sand along the sea-floor, under the hushed
kneeling and rising of blue xenia coral
and the mute wavings of green sea-fans.
My snorkel over my shoulder thrusts a gesture,
a blue middle finger dismissal of the war
piling up obscenely in the sands to my east
as I shoot, unarmed and wingless,
over the valleys and woods of a parallel life.

Every living animal coral down there is a home,
the reefs are towns of piled-up pastel houses
like miniature Valparaisos—but these are towns
we only dream, *civitate*, republics
of the heart, designed not to oppress and devour—
cities that feed themselves to their tenants,
to the nibbling sponges and mollusks, to fish you see
exploding like flung jewels, shooting like rockets
into the holiday night of a possible world.

III

Ignoring the deadly Fire Coral
as something not quite real,
I drifted over a reef that was waving silken
scarves, purple of amethyst lapping the folds
of a woman's throat. And I had forgotten
wrinkles from which death strikes, forgotten

Lionfish, Stonefish, Soldierfish, Triggerfish—
Yahwe's eleventh plague stirring suddenly
in streaks and shadows, scattered bones,
flying fragments of shells, seabottom strewn
with olive drab husks of army trucks
lying stuck the previous night in the Sinai—
and then in heaving oily waters, mouth agape,
choking, I thrashed my fins and regrown arms
and legs like a frightened child, lunging for air,
praying for a dry path across, beating through oil,
polyps purple bruises on bombed white flesh
floating hugely toward me....

IV

How heavy the shore, and inland.
Upright to the earth and its brown breathing,
lugging hard, I lurched off-balance,
squinting dizzy in the blinding sand,
tripping over flippers, lungs afire,
shoved from behind by this demand
that I must walk but wanting only
to lie down, to stretch, to retract,
unwind, to slither back to water
the way a sleeping child, his covers kicked off
by a dream on a winter night, grasps for the quilt—
risking another nightmare, suspended,
eyes closed tight, hoping he's home.

December 27 and 28, 1990

Rod Jellema

Titanic

Not even
a huge poem
such as this one
can carry
enough lifeboats
to save its crew.
So the voice
sinks slowly
into the depths
of silence.
Everything
we might have said
to save ourselves
is lost.

G. J. Schraw

Notes for the Recording Angel, 1999

Matins, hour of the wolf, just off Sunrise Highway,
behind Home Depot and Office Max
the Price Club watchman sees headlights slash
the darkness, eighteen wheelers trundle into beds.
Men in purple overalls bend their knees to lift
the night's haul, a gross of cartons, sarcophagus-size,
from the truck-bed to their appointed place in the Price Club.
Here other hands take over, drag out the inner boxes,
place them accurately, in the dignity of proper display.

Lauds, before first light, when the trees
are the black scribble across a searchlight's glow,
and no trains run. The Paumonek moraine treads lightly,
ghost of the primeval forest that winds along the shore
beading feathers of gulls into its long black hair.
Clandestine ships drop anchor in the island's northern bay.

Prime, the forest primeval is long gone, chopped down
for heat, cabin walls, for rolling stock.
Let us pray for strength. This is the hour
when the Price Club lights open their thousand watt
eyes, the hour of resolve before the work begins.
In the sanctuary between three gallon yellow mustard jars
and twelvepacks of assorted dry cereals,
someone listens to traffic, and finds it good.

Terce, the early birds are trudging down the aisles,
ample women dragging children between towering
displays of salted pretzels the size of concrete blocks.
Their faces are rinsed in kelp-green light, jars full of half-sour pickles.
They are dressed to code, tights and baggy sweater,
Nike, Adidas or Converse, or any of the lesser names
in active footwear. They are looking for necessities,
and maybe some of life's finer things at a discount.

Sext, noon whistles scream that time is leaving us behind.
This is why the women, dragging children behind them,
or carrying them like groceries in the giant carts provided,

step up their pace. They are buying in bulk for the long haul
because it's cheaper that way, and it's comforting
to have a full larder, to know you have four dozen frozen pierogis
and a ten pound carton of Velveeta.

None, the Price Club is built like a hanger;
you could park two jumbo jets, wing tip to wing tip,
and still have a little space to play around with.
You have to be strong to make the pilgrimage;
you have to be single-minded.
        This is a place where you won't find anyone
in a Drop Dead silk suit. These women don't have it all,
don't dress for the office, don't rush home, put a meal in the oven,
take a step class, change into something black and fragrant,
sit down to a candlelit dinner,
        a few camellias floating in a Waterford bowl.

Vespers, formica tables and stools all fastened to the floor,
inviting as any of your institutional spaces
        prepared for a *tête à tête* in the jailhouse.
There is something about being surrounded
by mountains of products that brings on stupefaction,
        and a desperate desire to sit down.
The women and children take nourishment from what is offered:
        hot dogs, pizza, Coke and Pepsi.
The children are little, below school age, restless.
Some of them squirm and run.
The mothers tolerate this for a while, then call them:
"Nicole, come on back." "Ashley, get over here."
"Courtney!" "Tiffany!" "Linley!" "That's enough, Caroline!"

Compline, elegant names like these summon wealth,
estates on the east end, dressage, horses to be ridden
in the mornings, sailboats on the bay.
        These names are aspirations, each one a prayer
that the child may leap out of Massapequa or Yaphank,
supersede the lives of the parents, enter
the class for which their names prepare them.

Naomi Lazard

Between Us

I walk in one ocean
and you walk in another. Somewhere else
the water bodies meet and dissolve into each other.
The land is vast between us.

There are cornfields and truckstops and deserts,
interstate freeways speckled with green exit signs,
red brick schools and white churches
prodding us to look up, pigeons and the occasional puma.

There are marshes with red-winged blackbirds
and snakes underwater which can only be imagined.
There are factories and smokestacks
and vile liquids poured into rivers.

Between us there are airports with people
who think they know everything about distances.
There is Macy's, three hundred times over,
and Walmarts afloat in concrete, apple trees
dating back to Johnny Appleseed.

There are lilac bushes where small children squat
and clutch handfuls of heart-shaped leaves.
Lost in the dirt are arrowheads,
some of which will be discovered.

Legions of nurses in white shoes tread
hospital hallways, and mechanics slide under
for a look at another transmission. There are dairy farmers
who can never go on vacation, milking the cows,
milking the cows.

Between us lies the Grand Canyon,
a chasm we are not in condition to cross,
splendid in the fact that it exists and we can see across it.

There are people dreaming
of being somewhere else,
or with someone else, or of being alone.
There are people with bedsores in nursing homes
who don't know what day it is
or who it is that comes to wipe their chin.

Millions of women are filling teapots and coffeepots
and waiting for the water to boil. There is bread
in chrome toasters, popping, pinging,
the roasted grain aroma rising in the air.
There is fruit in kitchen baskets, going soft and dark.

We continue to walk
this continent apart
while all of life unfurls between us.

Connie Hershey