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A White Voice Rides A Horse:

an anthology
of new
thing thing
poems

BRITT
KOOPMAN
LOCKE
MAHONEY
MEATS
PONTILLO
SCHEIBLI
SMITH
SUAREZ
WOLVEN

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Edited by Duane Locke

Assisted by Stephen Meats and Patrick Pontillo

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Duane Locke

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ALAN W. BRITT

from MALAISE (#85.)

We fly
and the malaise follows us,
I walk into the woods
and it remains on my heels,
we drive to New York
and the malaise spins inside the tires,
it takes a deep breath and relaxes
in the exhaust,
the malaise has strong arms
and sometimes wanders right into my dreams,
it wears a pair of overalls and rubber boots
and sits on a rock,
from a corner of my eye
I can see an open field
I see a cluster of trees and fallen logs,
I hear the chatter of voices
from men in nylon jackets,
in an instant the puma crawls
inside a rifle barrel
while the hunters
wave their bloody caps,
I cry out in anger,
but the malaise shrugs its bony shoulders
and stares at me from the rock.

from MALAISE (#44.)

Then there was a summer in New York,
near Brooktondale,
when a band of sunlight
fell across a wooden table
in the kitchen on a cold morning—
a raindrop rose inside a plum,
it was that simple,
that was all there was to it,
Joyce was there, she'll tell you,
the images flashed their beaks in the trees,
and a single image meant love,
the wild strawberry danced in the grass,
the barn swallows' ashes rose in the barn,
one thought was enough,
the solitude oppressive,
and my identity scattered among the maple trees.

BEDRIDDEN, AND NOT CARING
ABOUT THE BICENTENNIAL

Outside my window, the black walnut tree's heavy bough transports me to a branch. A thin bird lands next to me. I do not know what kind of bird it is. It is small, light brown, almost gray on its breast. I have a sore throat, so I do not ask. The bird flies away. By now I have even forgotten I am here. Our black cat hops into the windowsill and yawns in the sun. She is also thin and has small feet. She washes her back and stomach, and rubs a paw against her face many times. I stretch in bed while the radio plays its 18th Century music. My feet are very cold underneath these blankets. I need to use the bathroom, but I am also tired, and besides, I haven't finished writing this. Outside, the birds chirp and the thin black branches form a nervous system that would heal my sickness. I rise out of bed into a robe. The cat leaps onto the bed and walks across my numb legs. I float outside into the cold. The sun touches my young atoms and hatches them. Each one sprouts tiny wings!

WOLF EYES

(inspired by Paul Winter)

Your wolf eyes are more beautiful than the ocean
that I can't contain,
that spills from my pockets and shoes
faster than I can breathe.
Your song contains tormented waves, though,
and I listen as they rock the summer moon back and forth,
endlessly.
I listen as the earth twists tightly
against a rusty hinge
inside your ribcage,
and for the rustle of bamboo
as the clouds expose their pale breasts.
I know you bury a secret
inside each moment,
your body drifts, as though a fleet of giant wooden fishing
boats
sways inside your veins,
oily waves slap against your bones.
Your muscles are tense and they are also loose
as your saxophone howl climbs the dark mountain
rock by rock,
as though the darkness had grafted its delicate tissue
to your feet.
After this, your blood puts on a white apron,
now your wolf eyes contain mountains and darkness, both
petrified,
and the moon's two frozen lilies.

HEAVY SNOW

Snow
falls
 again.

Tiny blue wings
twist and glide
 in the darkness.

A streetlight
 builds a chair
upon our wooden floor.

Your fingertips
are moths:
 inside each moth
 a word
full of red seeds,
 full of mustaches,
 garters, and sweat.

INDUSTRIAL DISEASE

So we have entered a new age:
The same black Lincoln Continental
creeps along the rainy streets.
It's the same one
with Blake and Christ in the backseat
locked in a serious game of backgammon.

We come to this new age
prepared with picks and shovels.
Dark flies still stick to our swollen tongues;
the cold well water falls through our bony fingers.
The wind follows us as usual,
its chest cavity filled with tiny spores;
the sky pock marked with spots of blood
begins to cough with asbestos on its lips.

Our mouths twist again,
our tongues roll to one side.
Industry bites at the sensual flanks
of our mountains,
and sucks the moon
into its drooling lips.

The corporations are stacked on top
of each other at the bargaining table.
The bruised hands of tin and nickel

scrape them into a large sack.
The darkness whimpers and gives birth
to a pair of bloody hands and a guitar.

All of our gods
have direct lines to the stock exchange.
Each one takes out a billfold
equipped with neon lights and a calculator
and collects tiny soil samples
from the graveyards of the weeping citizens.

During a short walk this morning
with clouds like ashes in the sky,
I stepped on part of one
of our corporation president's brain;
I had to clean my shoe
with a stick.

MIREYA URQUIDI KOOPMAN

LA PAZ, AGAIN

Silent light
slowly rising
beneath a dark moon
lifts
the breath of dreams
of a sea of rocks

Crystal light
flares on red roofs and
old cathedrals
awakening the bark
of vigilant dogs
Voices and steps
sweep cobble-stone streets
for a new day

La Paz is a babe
in a cradle of light

From my window
"The city in the clouds"
blossoms into a tapestry
of shapes and colors
like an indian aguayo

I am alone
with myself
my fingers know
the rosary of dreams
and hopes
Silver beads roll
over each finger
like forgotten chains

Illimani smiles near me
with silver teeth
Its chilled breath
inebriates my blood

DUENDES / LLAMAS OF THE ANDES

On the mountain top
a llama chisels
the frozen sky

The ancestral god
of the Incas
blesses the earth
with his warm hand

The arrogant neck
stretches to eat a slice
of a new day

Distant . . .
the call of an indian kena
filters the chilled air

Two almond eyes
picture a translucent
landscape of
high mountains and prancing
llamas

like duendes
dancing in an enchanted
land of ghosts

Swiftly
the llama runs in a shaggy
wind-blown hair

At the edge of the crystal pond
duendes / llamas
circle
in a ritual dance
around the sun

ANNIVERSARY OF A VISION

i dare not look into your eyes
for fear of staying inside
from your shoulders
shouts of delight sprout
like moonflowers at midnight

You give me such joy!
stay awhile . . .

i leave my body
in your hungry hands
the time of fall
glistens on honeysuckles

Outside pain lurks with
hungry jaws
Stay awhile
you are the body of my soul:

Let me know if your fingers
touch our dying hour . . .
An old clock is singing a requiem
for a fallen star

Let me know lost vision
Have you only lived in my eyes?

DUANE LOCKE

A BEGINNING, WITH AN INTERRUPTION,
THAT WILL NEVER HAVE AN END

With a language

of pure secularity (the word
as cave, as labyrinth, the word as animal)
to seek
to hold
the holy

:to belong to the skin of my hand—
the palm of the hand that caresses
the bare shoulders of LICHEN.

I decompose the applause
of staring eyes

with each rivet
pulled

from the expected sentence, with
each rivet pulled from the non-
existent building (I go inside visions
roofed with leaves and rub my hands over
the hips of gourds).

I turn away from voices made from artifacts
and speak to butterflies, their thighs
of stripped rain. I listen to
the chants from the silver undersides
of fritillaries.

I fall into the belly
of the caterpillar that crawls
in an ocean of stems and I talk with an
ancient ancestor of the earth. I am

disconnected from my public identification
and unified with a bush that spreads its stars
throughout the sky and in the center of flowers
that grow in the sand on the bottom of the ocean.

It is the hand on the piano in the mind
that plays the false music,

the music
that leaves
smears from
your fingers
on doorknobs
without doors.

Another piano,
the one the lightning left in the avocado
plays itself,

plays a secret concert in the
blood,
and speaks my language. I blindfold
my fences and listen.

(A door with a doorplate
opens and before me a word sanctioned by one
above and many below ((a word without credentials
from trances, joy, and the hands that cupped
rainwater to be lapped by the moon)), this word
a cipher that writes numbers on the closets of
other faces. I see this intruder and the
design of his life speaks my name

and makes my name
meaningless, makes the earth meaningless
((a landscape of wheels, plate glass, swimming pools,
memorandums, and the swollen flesh of the tumescent
castrate who writes a carnal script to be acted
by the echoes around a table in a committee room))

The guillotine and its
dictionary

comes down on the necks of the innocence
who refused the success of being guilty.

All language
 becomes
 a circus animal
 who bleeds
 from the initials
 that the audience
 has cut
 into the landscapes
 of the animals sides.)

The word that is the enemy goes into his
 doorplate, and prepares the plans for his
 whispers. He is joined and praised by the displaced
 bartender

who inks the moon's eclipses
 on the rims of chalk glasses.

I am flowing through the veins of the prickly
 pear whose fruit has the teeth marks of night
 animals.

The shadow of the
 prickly pear
 revives and restores
 the fur of night that gives a language
 to caressing
 hands.

MANKIND AFTER THE EXTINCTION OF BALD EAGLES, COYOTES, PANTHERS, ETC.

1. Man's Relationship to his Family: SIX BOYS

The first boy said, "My father can beat up all your fathers." The second boy said, "My father can beat up all your fathers." The third boy said, "My father can beat up all your fathers." The fourth boy said, "My father can beat up all your fathers." The fifth boy said, "I don't have a father." The sixth boy said, "All your fathers can beat up my father because my father refuses to fight." The first five boys beat up the sixth boy, and then the first four beat up the fifth boy, and then they went home and beat up their fathers.

2. Man's Relationship to History: COLUMBUS DAY

When I was a child, my teacher told me to honor Columbus. I even lived on a street named Columbus Drive. My uncle lived in Columbus, Ohio. My parents were planning to send me to Columbia University.

I thought about all the tortured, raped, robbed, crippled and murdered Indians. I asked my teacher why we do not honor Charles Manson and the man who went up into a Texas Tower and shot people at random. Why are there no days, streets, and universities named after them.

She replied, "Because they did not try to find a shorter route to salt and pepper."

3. Man's Relationship to his Work: THE TIGER TRAINER

With a sharp stick the tiger trainer forced the tiger to sit still on the sawdust. The tiger trainer jumped through a flaming hoop. The tiger trainer bowed before the tiger, but the tiger did not applaud. The tiger trainer jumped again through the hoop, but the tiger did not applaud. The tiger trainer jumped again. No applause from the tiger. The tiger trainer shot the tiger, and now the tiger trainer is unemployed.

4. Man's Relationship to his Self: SELF RELIANCE, BASED ON AN ESSAY BY EMERSON

That night somebody stole my radio, and I had to do my own singing.

5. Man's Relationship to Progress: THE RESTAURANT THAT TURNS IN THE PEACHTREE CENTER AT ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The current went off, and I had to pick up my plate and run around in a circle.

INSCRIPTIONS ON TOMBSTONES WITHOUT GRAVES IN AN UNSEEN CEMETERY

1. The poet belongs to the country of sparrows. Eats the crumbs dropped from the banquet table and its neatly placed chairs of capitulation.
2. The poet will add and subtract in his mind and never on the calculator, and thus there will always be the possibility of finding the correct answer through errors.
3. The poet will have nothing to do with history. The historian carries his own head on his own platter after he has danced for himself, and then he kisses the blood painted on his words.
4. The poet knows that the image and its obscurity saves from the insanity of believing in the measurable, the classifiable, the familiar and the known.
5. The poet knows that there are many layers of nakedness he must divest before he can become a lover.
6. The poet knows it would be easy to convict him for his crimes if those in power were not illiterate.
7. What the public calls life is the sawdust that leaked from the speared side of the blue-eyed doll.
8. The poet has the gift of being able to read only blank pages.

9. The public asks the poet to write as an accomplice to their daily suicide.
10. The poet must step aside. Each institution is a family united by greed and separated by the individuality of that greed.
11. The poet's only desire is for *unico mystica*, to be an ant, a mango, or the white bent grass stem under the stone.
12. The poet must surrender, or else the enemy will supply him with arms and ammunition.
13. The poet should not flatter himself that he has escaped, but must polish his chains until the brightness is unbearable.
14. One must merge with the tear in the eye of the sea turtle to be born as a human being. One must be the egg buried by the sea turtle to be a poet.
15. The most successful actors in the serious business of life never suspect they are on the stage or what they speak was written by the audience.
16. Distrust the ecologist for he had a father. The poet is without parents.
17. If the poet can rationally understand what he has written, he must immediately destroy, for it is as dangerous to humanity as their opinions and tastes.

LIZABETH FAIRCLOUGH MAHONEY

THE WHITE PAGES OF CALENDARS

I keep wanting to adhere to the white pages of calendars
I look at dates in desperation
A bird calls me
summoning me out of this darkness of spirit
a fresh coat of snow sweeps its self across my skin
the gravel is covered;
The wind picks up this loosening skin
and tries to tear the bark from my ancient tree
this wound hurts too much
I pray to the wind to replace my bark
until it is time to speak
for it must not be time for the wound to heal
I feel a sorrow begging to be released from this bark
I beg of the calendars to remain white
but they fight back at me with senseless words occupying space
Their intrusion is the intrusion of my own hate

Old man.
walking in this snow, give me your hand and your cane
Give me your loneliness, who I watch from my window
I too must learn to drop these rotted fruits from my limbs
their clinging was my decay
which is the easiest way that I should break
the simplest, the straightest, the only way —
Is there none, at this shoreline
but the waves waiting, in mockery
to wash over me.
I cry.
Nothing is heard anymore
Silence threatens me
A creak at the window, a water drop
Voices of the past no longer engulf me
we must know that we are dying
why, then,
are we screaming in this place of walls.

Foam has brought me to these tears so many times
 So many times, foam,
 I have felt that sorrow but have been unable to speak of it
 changing faces before me
 My laments will not let me grow into the lining of the clouds at
 dawn
 too many broad unspeakable losses of sorrow
 whose blood will not run out of me or through me
 From the lament may grow the seed
 from the shadow may grow the sun
 from my breakdown, the birch at sunset
 The changing faces before me are the flickering of changes with-
 in me

Their flickering is the shadow of the flame that wants to burn
 We are unable to speak of it
 Trying to speak it only makes us awkward
 We are bound by this knowledge that the old words are now
 useless
 to speak them is to retreat
 Among the shoreline's cemented walls
 the seaweed
 grows out of crevices in the walls
 Our words entangled in that seaweed unable to float
 To be released, to float
 is to join the gulf
 never encased or threatened by the shadows of the sharks.

They have pleaded with me to join their illusions
 they have thrust out their crutches to me
 to entertain or keep me company
 but I hate their games.
 Let them rot in their oasis
 and let their parched lips speak retarded aborted words
 Though they are thirsty let them pretend they wear canteens
 Let this bird of pain no longer fly before them with bleeding
 tongue

Only a spiderthread holds me now
I am on a shoreline so narrow, I will soon be washed away
Who will save me now. The web begins to break
Now I become convinced — to surrender to this despair
but I am afraid of the terror and the fears

So many times, foam, have I waited on this shore.
I must learn to speak the word
not the word that will kill or abort
their questions only suppress their fears
the question marks and exclamation marks
begin to grow the curvature of their spine at dawn
we hide behind the question marks
they try to silence my fears
with the needle that sews
through the canvas of our smiles
but the days no longer grow erasers
for they too are extinct

This is a wild and solitary place to learn to pray
What is my name.
the mouth bleeds words of torment.
a red tear seeps out the corner of my eye.
Oh holy morning, why do the words drain down the sink
what was said in this strange place
desperation grows — the ashes flicker
hope speaks softly, barely smiles
the unborn and the unwritten remain to me
I could not rehearse them.
the mouth asks for white paint
but it still gets a large ribbon for a bow
the lips are becoming fossilized bone

this is a cancerous place
 filled with tumors of others words
 They are anthills in this place, punctured
 more ants scurry around
 carrying food for our fears
 Tell them to put the words in ambulances
 carry them away from me
 with a dead siren.
 I am afraid to sleep — the words cut too deep
 In self pity I watch this blood

The colors flicker
 at times the flame stands still
 but when it is still it can not bear the intensity
 and must again waver and flicker — It is the only way
 flickering lights know no cage

Poet, I believe an angel handed you a laurel twig at birth
 It blossomed and transformed into a pen
 If you drop a pen into my well, you will hear nothing
 At my doorway stands a barking dog
 But poet don't you see a flare signaling
 The snow is dirty now
 It repents of its blizzard and asks to melt
 into some quiet stream
 It wants to confess of its pollution
 to melt with other ponds of the past
 Its dirt could travel far enough
 When it reaches the gulf it may become the blue
 It could have become before its destiny distorted it too
 An arch in this winter tree
 lets some sunlight in
 this bough once stiff with hate begins to bend
 It wants to abandon its hate
 But only the stillest hour of my life knows that secret

That oath becomes betrayed by the multitude of wings
whirring overhead and whose chirping voices destroy my
search

smothering my voice

Now the words trying to be born fall to the forest ground
footsteps in alien places crackle open the brittle tones

I am silenced before I can speak

I stir, in this forest of voice

I wrestle with the wind of death.

When the winds sweep over this barren place

when they come to the dunes and begin to lift up

these wild scattered weeds

blowing them on this oasis

Then I see a sun and the shadow of the weeds on my soul
not the weed

awaken me to these barren dunes

I see my eyes roaming there

These loose twigs are my eyelashes

it is true that our silence sanctions this ancient useless order

but my words are not ripe yet

to break the order and give birth to a new one

I look on but I can not speak so I am misunderstood

Poet who specializes in loving wild things

once I was not afraid of you

but perhaps then it was only in my fears I could speak

Now I am nothing but a disembodied voice.

Poet there is no wind before me and no wind behind me
there is nothing to pick up these dead pieces to other places
even silence I would pray for
only deep sadness fills this creaking room
sorrow for what can not be named
my words betray me

I shatter at the touch of others words
 igniting my buried fears
 But poet who has always loved twisted things
 you are the only one I know I can come to in this sorrow
 because the ice breaking on the rivers beckons me
 the quiet wild flowers shadows beckon me
 Although they have no words they are their own language
 Others seek to hide in the folds of what they think is my
 strength
 I do not tell them otherwise.
 I have been an alien always from my birth
 My fears I tried to confine in atoms of senseless words
 exploding

Poet —
 every word that changes the past order
 is the new order
 We must make that effort
 to change the past order of hate
 to the new order of love.

Poet — there are no waters flowing over this rock
 as in my picture books
 just the boulder.
 I look for the solution, the flowing water.

I am afraid because I have never stood long enough on this
 shore
 to experience the rapture of the foam while it was still bubble
 I waited only for foam to become part of earth
 vanished from me forever.

At the top of this mountain is the snow
but if I descend I acquaint myself with green
at the top I see a jagged edge and point of departure
further down I see soil and a place to grow
descend.

Buchenwald, Dachau
are names for other prisons
shatter the illusions.
Freud said that an illusion
was a belief in — whose motivation was primary wish fulfillment
shatter the illusions.

foam-bubble on the water before me
do not burst
for if you burst and break
and join the waters I have lost you forever

STEPHEN MEATS

A TIME WHEN THE WORLD WAS ALL ONE COLOR

For my Father

How could I forget that last day together!
The light's wings unfolded through the empty eye of darkness
Curbstones blinked wet eyes
The sun leaned against a white stone church then went to sleep
in an empty glass
The wind wrapped its arms around the waists of trees that cried
small orange tears hard as stones
All day we seemed suspended between the straight dark line of
coyote tracks in snow and the dark high note of the wind's
violin played on an empty stage
Then as wildflowers bled into gutters of evening
you stepped inside a bolt of lightning
and for a time the world was all one color
like in a blizzard when white flakes swirl through white air to
white ground
And suddenly I wanted to run at night through fields where
stars spill silver coins among dark rows of corn
to feel corn leaves slash my face and arms like razors to the
bone
and afterwards from a hill to watch distant lights glitter in the
dark

FOSSILS

I hold in my hands
a piece of limestone
Its rough texture
is a secret word
Tiny shells
animals
plants
creep into my hands
Tides in the stone surge in my blood
My touch unlocks
the cool shadow
of a bird in flight
Centuries slash through my hands
like meteors
I die
and leave no mark
but the heat of my fingers
in the stone

MOTHER

Once when I was a child
In the middle of a Kansas blizzard
I looked into my parents' oil stove
Through mica panes in its door
And saw three gray and black birds
With orange eyes
Walking in the midst of the fire
I called my mother to see
She took a mop handle
And smashed them into little piles of ash

Common Loon

I am startled by the rose

that opens

in your eye

Crystal rivulets of light

trickle down

your breast

White windows open

in your wings

a lake

I glide to the bottom

dark water your body un

common loon

IN THE SPACE BETWEEN

I carefully lay down paving stones of light and sound
 then pick my way from one to one
 And yet I cannot span the simple darkness between words
 cannot untangle from spider webs of silence
 At bay I turn toward the things of silence
 the creatures of darkness

Deer tracks in the glaze of mud on a plowed field after rain
 Against the night sky an abandoned windmill
 A black legged spider
 The lustre in the eye of a dead squirrel
 Scorpio's skeleton hand flung against the dark
 A rusty hand pump grown over with sunflowers
 The dark dappling of sunlight on water
 A dark swift bird with no name low over water
 A thousand turtle heads thrust through the silver surface
 of a bay

On a prairie hill
 the crystal shapes of coyotes
 stop the sound
 Hearing leaps the edge of silence
 Inside a burning hole in the sky
 a green flower
 extinguishes the light
 Vision penetrates the darkness

And I am free
 a heartbeat
 to anoint myself with the blue-green oil on a crow's neck
 to listen to the vein of an oak leaf
 to learn that the dark swift shape of a bird low over water
 is its own name
 to find in the hawk's eye the courage of darkness
 to hear in the rough red voice of sandstone the certainty
 of silence

(IN DARK PLACES)

Twilight lightning slaps the gulf
In a gull's throat I hear rusty hinges
Or is it unoiled limping windmill blades
In the bushes rain claps its hands

PATHS

not square mile roads
that grid burned into my land by law
paved with bones of ten million buffalo
over graves of fish and waterlilies in drained lakes

but prairie paths
paths that fall from the feet of animals
paths where the wind wanders
where rain runs and laughs and hides under stones

paths that curl into the bends of creeks and rivers
step gently across where wooden legs of bridges
leave no footprints
run along contours of limestone bluffs like
wrinkles on my father's brow

PATRICK ANTHONY PONTILLO

BLEEDING ON THE EDGES OF AUTUMN

Transparent tones
washed in by the tide
flow into me
Strange trembling currents
increase each pulsating twist
with the glissando of angel fish
and the staccato of seaweed
My veins are filled with the blood of another

Waves crawl into seashells
fanning out into infinity
Incense floats over the ocean
Spreading out over the horizon
I breathe the emerging gestures of another

Woman
Asian mist
Lupine daughter of pulchritude
water beads on your hair
sprout from the darkest branches
touching wings in the sun

Wild sitars bleed from your hands
blooming into the resonance of tiger lilies
Your chorus
sunken sampans and junks
conceal overtures
under water

The cream sunset disappears into your past
An island
surrounded with seahorses
dancing
where all the plants have turned to yellow-green
Only the geometry teacher said the berries were not ripe

Come and climb with me into the east
over
sand dunes redwoods streams and mountains of rocks
Catch me
when their iridescence loosens my grip
For it is hard to grow a poem from our bodies
when wind sweeps the pages all around our minds
Come
It must be your hair to be swirled in
your hips to be suspended in
your heart to be ravished in
to delve into the deeper abysses of majesty

I am the poet who intensifies my love
each moment
with that
which is caressed in communion with the majestic
The ram
locking horns with the wind
The silkworm
weaving half-moons on your breasts
The lake
yearning toward the mountain
Pelleas and Melisande
spinning cocoons
Your name
Dymphna
You
Emissary of The Beloved

Walk past the night
Open wounds reflect the sky
The sky
too
is open
constantly stretching throughout our bodies

A white voice rides a horse
sweeping over a cliff
The horse gathers lightning and wind
into his mane
A puma's squeal fills the horse's silhouette
All our tracks
have turned to ice

Frost creeps over my view
yet it does not hinder me from seeing
the vague shapes of men in checkered jackets
wrapping a price-tag around the dead puma's paw
carrying him away from the mountain
in their licenses
and smashing with their rifle butts
celtic vases in his eyes
Their wives remain at home
committing adultery with the nearest taxidermy

I want to see no more

Reach into their earflaps
pull out the shot gun shells
hatch a war from every one
sing their searchlights to sleep

Dymphna
The virgin's candle has been desecrated
Now
the night has lost our voices
and we
his language

On the other side between us
is a valley
full of flowers
pirouetting
There
we must go
alone
but not until
we find ourselves
in the badger
in the fox
in the moss growing on charcoal bark
in the leaf crumbling on wind-torn roots
in the condor's claw
in the owl's romance

A dragonfly passes through a waterfall
Believing it to be our reflection
we reach toward his wings and find ourselves
stranded
on the uncertain island of words
reaching in a musk desert
filled with broken hourglasses
where
skeletons of stars
search for flesh

Veils from your shoulders fall to the sand
laid out in a trail for me to follow
yet
whenever I step
everything disappears

In the distance
savages wake in embroidered feathers
stripped from the peacock's swell
at the last sunset

Blue feathers rise from whispers
Red feathers loosen the braids on my lips
Brown feathers polish the skin of faceless people

Your slender hands have been penetrated
by the distress of wildfowl
Audiences assemble on stage
rewriting serials into their autograph books
Photographs of the tiger and the leopard
cry to you from under the zookeeper's lapel

Run to the ginseng moments
before the moon pulls night under its mantel
Soar into the sky
before there will be nothing in flight
except birds in watercolor

The tide flows into dateless calendars
Submerge
before we become the misspelled address of ruins
rooted in dry stars

The weather vane points in no direction
its cold black iron pillages us

Falling into silence
I find myself
alone
in the suicide of your eyes
afame
with the torment of words
spoken to doors
Your blood dripping from every hinge

Voices under the earth stir the dust
Here
tarot cards suffice for tombstones

I want to forget myself

I desire to caress clover
with
all the sorrows piercing my flesh

I am followed

In desperation
I call to you
You do not answer
I call to you
My echo answers instead

Violets bloom in the snow
one upon each other
The fragrance of their agony
quivers in my veins
A jack rabbit leaps over the petals
and
fades into cedar
Your sacrifice fills his trail

I could have loved you
If only
you
would not have become
the moonlight of an eclipsed moon
If only
you
would not have become
the poem
I never wanted to write
If only
you
would not have washed yourself away in the rain

Time is over
Pausing only continues to deepen the wounds
They reflect
the sky
no longer
There are no more illusions to believe in
Only
closeness to walls and conversations with mirrors

A door has opened
Language must be exchanged for entrance

I find myself
alone
in the gallop of a stallion
bleeding on the edges of autumn

SILVIA SCHEIBLI

DEATH

Voice of distant surf grass
Ochre star near rockweeds in green surf grass
Gold speckles
illuminated by you

I want to hear you

My senses
layer upon layer
lesson upon lesson
in what I thought
was my honor
accepted and worn
by me for others
are a thick bandage
around my brain
My head
would be better off
under water

My hearing loss is severe
Words do not reach me
Lips move
but their message is stillborn
like reading in a dream

No one wants me to listen

Your words are cursed
Evil
The rage of maniacs
heretics revolutionaries

Promises of burnt cities
Prayers for hurricanes
to sweep away
the homes of the civilized
my home
must be denied

I will not hear you

I deny your words
of sacred sea palms
washed up on our eyelids

I deny the days
when pelicans plunged
into our skin

I deny
the moon snail's holy path
along your soft
tender hand

I am afraid
I am afraid of my emptiness
Afraid the one white desert lily
in my blood
will blossom
and not be touched

CONCEPTION

You who stop the wind
I want to feel
your hands leap in my skin

You say
My deafness does not surprise you

You point to the tracks at our feet
You know they are the sign language
of black oyster catchers and turnstones
Their red beaks build words
in our blood
I listen and feel the first kelp bed
unfold in my brain
Green veils my face

I see my hearing
hang from the sun's rays
stretched like clothes lines
across the tide pools

I tremble

I want you to stop the wind
I want your eyes to form us
on the wet sand
I want you to give us a name
I am afraid of your silence
The struggle you expect of me

THE POET

I am building a new language
from the pink waves
on the inside of red abalone shells
slowly

I do not know many words yet
My new voice is hushed
I am as lost on the shore
as I am on the horizon
Both are the same

I begin by following
the white cries of willets
across the various white on agates

Their words lead me away from concrete
Hold me fast in the wind
My fingers are sand and seaweed
My eyes open like the necklace
under the rim of red abalones
My legs drift as freely
as the blue green fronds of giant sea anemones
in the dark tide pool
circled and struck
momentarily by the sun

You know to stop the wind
You know the white blossom
in my blood
You have heard it uncurl
I want you to hold the petals
in your lips
But you touch me only with your shadow

All my blood
pounds
over the sea rocks
You do not drown

I take a knife
Cut the petals
One by one
Out of my body
Throw them at your feet

Each cut
makes a red scar
in the shape of a flower
on my hands

LETTERS FROM THE MOJAVE DESERT

The moon
still too low
to reach the deeper canyons
in my skin
drags evening's raw tongue
over a few purple clouds

I ride
with your voice
on the coyote's voice
across the desert

The rain in my throat
has grown into a lake
Catclaw bushes
deepen the green in my voice

I draw my fears with a bucket
Hand them in cupfuls
to rock wrens

You might say
Let the water stand

In it the land and we
will soak our cut hands

Mojave sand
Builder of walls
in my skin

A foundation for lilies
For the sun
and rattlesnakes

No sandy shelves for hermit crabs
No moss infested perch for kingfishers
No water dropping off an egret's beak

Only limestone edges
to sharpen my vision
on the bare
and momentary light
of a cliff rose

Alone
I listen
to the dialogue
sung by mesa and sand

I keep my eyes
on the pink hummingbird moth
in the jimson weed flowers
at dusk

Songs come with knives
or bells
attach themselves to my voice
like agaves to rhyolite
sea palms to sandstone

I obey the light
of the desert

I follow it
to a lizard's tongue
It leaps from the back of my hands
to the sand

Like me
the light has no name
only color and heat
gait and speed
and the smell
of my blood

I caress the sand
full of fire
I let it lick the scars
on my hands

JARED SMITH

AN EROSION

Dark rivers which are not there
separate the grains of the earth and roll
out among the particles which form our eastern glacial planes;
waters channeled from rains which do not come from here
quietly collected while no one looks
packaging themselves in cement and metal pipeways
circumventing/going under everything we are;
the great fishes which slide with the speed and stillness of
thought
filling their dimensions.
Under highways and the flat pavement of apartment office
buildings
they are descending devoid of thinking things,
carriers of dying specimens of vegetation,
they roll out in greater speed and volume
until they pass in one black leap upon the oceans.

And there where it comes to the surface . . .
He's sitting there
turning your white belly in his mind
as it tumbles end over hairless end
somewhere where the artesian well brings it all
to the surface
tumbling it through his work worn fingers . . .

. . . He stands there thumbs
knitted through his belt
or he squats there leering into the space before him,
but whatever/whoever/however he stands,
it is through the lean tiredness
he extends from beneath his brows
and reaching out caresses the earth with

so when he laughs
 as he does now
 when first thinking he is seeing
 your limbs flash
 like distant fish . . .
 and then again when he knows that they are not . . .
 But he stands there
 and he stands there.
 The lights come on in factories along the shore
 and in restaurants and he
 watches the one wave disappearing into the next
 and waits the wait of the fisherman . . .
 leaning back, he flips a silver
 med
 al
 li
 on
 high
 into the air above him where
 it turns glittering inscription over inscription
 in tight descending circles beneath the clouds.
 He smiles as it traces through the trees.
 Offshore a white bird rises from the waves
 and dips into the evening.

Suddenly I am different . . .
stripped of my secluded office;
of the cluttered shelves and austere spaces
normally whispered about beneath the cloth of my suit.
Different . . . Hardly myself at all;
or as I was once — as we all were —
 once
walking along the streets like a football player
who won a scholarship for being born
only for as he was;
but even so being frail as the veins
 in my fingers
and walking more rapidly the farther I go
and looking back again again
because I have gotten to be scared
of what I am.

And gradually
the pockets blow open in the wind,
the cement walls are lifted and chase each other
like lambs over the hills.
I draw down before the hardened eyes of my compatriots
and cry out: I hate you! I hate you
 all

My body begins to fill
with the dark feet of winged insects
dashing into the hidden crevices of my life
and dragging those paper-dry translucent bodies
down the feelings of my own.
And this is what touches you!
This dry rustling.
These particles.
This flesh flapping like any old animal
 skin
tied with leather thongs across an empty door.

Even as we lie here
 looking so far into each other's eyes we disappear
 despite temptations both ways,
 there is no reason not to tell in each
 way we can which dark something it is which wraps
 around the flimsy structure of our bone and carries us
 from this room and to the earth.
 And even as we talk we know only that it
 is one of us, reflection or reflector,
 which is already so far off it does not figure
 in the final scheme of things the other knows.

But as if you were here and were not here
 I, either one of us, am different suddenly
 alone in the separation we bring and yet
 apart from the solitude which strings through my bones
 as if every person touched, brushed lightly by my eyes,
 were carried deep within the flesh
 and rolling around as if to take the mind for a touchdown.

There is a rock
 a basalt
 which in its dark solidity
 breaks the flow;
 which stands solid to the years
 until many years even figured in the age of stone
 have passed.
 And the river is divided below this stone,
 and above it and around it where
 mountains whistle by like conch shells
 caught in the desolate emptiness of time

Until as those years settle
and the torn and reshaped vegetation of lives settle
as papers in a dully gray file cabinet
standing forgotten in some bureaucrat's file room
settle one thin disheveled layer upon the next
thin layer settle
the accumulating detritus becomes a parent stone
shielding the solid core from erosion . . .
a seed forming from its leaves and being
earth . . .

The air is filled with earth,
each dark glittering segment
a coin turning in the pockets of old men;
each man a dull grinding of teeth in empty spaces.

The arch falls
 end over white end
against a blue sky;
a white moon about to meet extinction
the fish falls back into its memory.

I too.
I have/have had/friends who were
more than temporary motions of the air;
who were supported on the same hard-bit concrete
as I growing into the television tube of See;
growing as I did in the wooden cocoons of suburbia
and fashioning gasoline soaked bombs of impotence
for the hardluck brothers who —
 though we could not believe it —
had to live even as we would some day soon
have to live . . .

I too,
 but they are gone . . .
 too many;
 so far the gray of city draws our minds a blank.
 And some into secret parcels beneath the earth
 somewhere in distant towns which now have no names:
 it is too important to ship the bodies back . . . or names.
 And too costly to do so for most
 of the scattered remains of what remains.

. . . a silver crescent
 twisting
 around itself
 and circling back and then
 beyond itself toward the sea
 the river a flat and almost alive
 thing
 cuts its way through the earth
 like a scythe over harvest grain,
 shaping its way into the delta of its mouth.
 Each silver winding of its essence
 separating again
 and crowding the roots of grasses
 nourished until their passing by its past.
 The small dance of fish between the leaves
 at some unexpected pressure on the bordering earth;
 the phantom gray of a bird rising into the sky;
 the silent shadow of other fish waiting in the dark.

And the island itself
where the river is cut off,
the tributaries even, by concrete walls
and ditches forcing the water down . . .
a small dark thing
of silver towers,
lost too quickly and too insignificant.
To the right the pine box boxcars
rattling down into the human habitation;
and I too,
lying here even so
listening to the thunder even as you
and watching the rain fill our lungs . . .
watching as from a distance

he stretches one silhouetted hand upward from the earth
standing in one long shadow raising it
toward that flat and faceless disc turning
in the air and then descending downward until it flashes
with the sun upon the waves
descending until it disappears into the darkness of his pocket
and he ambles off, a shape lost in the wind
spreading the folds of his coat as he grows small into the
distance.

NICOMEDES SUAREZ

WHITE HORSE

Between tree shadows
a white horse
descends
to the stream

the trembling flesh of the leaves
shivers with borrowed mourning
only a puerile moonlight
sketches their faces

the stream envelopes the horse
with its gauze
and everything falls into the indolence
of a single plane

horse water and branches
drink of each other

Translated from the Spanish
by the author and Kristine Cummings Suarez

SHOWER

We are riding

and a green shade
fastens to our backs

the first drops
beat on the afternoon's geometry
and dissolve it

behind our looks
the shower grazes
with the long hair of a wild animal.

Translated from the Spanish
by the author and Kristine Cummings Suarez

SOUTH WIND

I

Rending calendars the south wind arrives
one can hear under earth
its stampede of hooves
and on the table the day spreads
tainted by the death
of frozen swallows

the hinges of the day turn to dust
and the dog barks to sand

in the pampa
a dead mouth shapes screams
and the grass flares
with a thickness of gestures

II

With our spectral presences
we keep the corpse
of a shipwrecked sun

grey locusts
devour grass and trees

and we lift up as wicks
against the grey

the roads flap
and lift themselves to the borders
of the horizon
where time wilts

III

The storm steals
steals our shadows
wraps trees streets houses
it closes the eyelids of windows
it remakes prehistorical fossils

we lose our steps
we sink into darkness
into the dense foliage of centuries

Translated from the Spanish
by the author and Kristine Cummings Suarez

TORN FIREFLIES

The croaking of a frog
thorny light of torn fireflies
survives in its pulsing artery

the vague waist of night
looms over us

and the lagoon is a luminous iris.

Translated from the Spanish
by the author and Kristine Cummings Suarez

FRED WOLVEN

A CONFUSED LANDSCAPE

For Chris McLelland

1

the algae-green pond water
covers last year's leaves

2

in a shower of sunlight
you walked on
new steps of crushed stone

3

one tiny sparrow
a dreaming bird
settles in the pine cones
at the edge of the forest

4

solitude in a confused landscape

GOLDFINCHES

For Duane Locke

goldfinches

male & female

in brilliant summer colors

flit nervously between

an immature dying birch

& feeder

to share fresh seed

with blue-oil backed grackles

these finches

float

in slow motion, stop-action sequence

as i move

on rusty railroad ties

in short subject pictures

rear-screen projected behind eyelids

while a muted trumpet

protruding from my ear

rough-soft as lizards

crawling over each tree trunk

in the tampa garden

sounds the silent call of a tongue-

tied squirrel

WALKING ALONE IN THIS WORLD

For Lisa Ritchie

walking alone in a dense forest
thru steam rising from the afternoon's shower
the air is moist, damp
water glistens on the moss
next to tree trunks
leaves still dripping
my steps are deliberate
whether moving on carefully marked trails
or entering those small clearings
that appear with surprising suddenness
&
there's a new delight
in the discovery
of each wild flower
pleasure in the recognition
of every bird's call
& enjoyment in the solace
i find
in this world
now almost all my own

INTERLUDE

For Sharon

raindrops falling in a
soft winter rain

*

a summer snail
small, quiet
moving
Buddha-like

*

first the gleaming
iced plumbtree branches
then the
sun-melted snow

MORNING SOUNDS: GRASS STRETCHING,
WATER SIFTING

the morning's waters
gentle, glass-like
lap the sandy bay shore
a gull, white-headed & grey
rests on the single
dock piling left over
from the slowly disappearing
canning factory

near the pier
two old men
let out their lines
casting for perch

the cool air
moving in from the east
spreads thin clouds
exposing an early sky
now blue overhead

but for the soft sounds
of my shoes on gravel
i could hear the strain
of grass
stretching under dew
& the water sifting
coarse beach sand