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# chiron

## Review

Issue #60, winter, 1999



DENISE DUHAMEL

### - POETRY -

Jude Nutter

Todd Balazic

Margaret Hehman-Smith

Mark Weber

Christine Swanberg

Brian Daldorph

Donna Hilbert

Willie Abraham Howard

Phebe Davidson

Angelo Verga

Susan Deer Cloud

Kemp Gregory

### - FICTION -

Stephen Morrison

Justin Bryant



Also  
in this  
Issue

Tales of an Ancient Go-Go Girl  
♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦  
*Chiron Review* Index, Issues 1-59



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Chiron Review Poetry Festival 2000 will be Aug. 5-6 at Goodman Public Library, 406 N. Monroe in St. John. Featured poets will be Gerald Locklin and Laurel Ann Bogen. (See p.29.)

The latest from CR Press: *Shy Boys at Home* by Carl Miller Daniels ("Incarnates youthful gay sexuality with gentleness, passion and delight. A unique contribution to the renaissance of gay poetry in America at the beginning of the millennium."); *Blue Forms* by Robert Penick, winner of the 1998 CR chapbook contest; 2nd ed. of *My Angel & Other Poems* by Jane Hathaway, with new poems and groovy cover photo; 4th printing of *Saved From Drowning* by Scott Heim (author of *Mysterious Skin* and *In Awe*, Harper-Collins) - \$8 ea. or all 4 for \$25.

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Denise Duhamel interview.....	4
Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton.....	5
Willie Abraham Howard, Jr.....	6
Margaret Hehman-Smith.....	6
Christine Swanberg.....	8
Brian Daldorph.....	9
"May God make it easy for you," fiction by Stephen Morrison, Jr.....	10
Jude Nutter.....	12
Todd Balazic.....	13
Verga, Davidson, Gregory.....	14
Susan Deer Cloud.....	15
Mark Weber.....	16
Donna Hilbert.....	17
"Tales of an Ancient Go-Go Girl".....	18
"Last Kick in Paradise," Justin Bryant.....	20
"News, Etc." by mjh.....	21
Harvey, Hillman, Hervey.....	22
Book Reviews.....	23
"Un-seamless Books of Poems," R. McFarland.....	27
Poetry Rendezvous - St. Augustine.....	28
Chiron Review Poetry Festival 2000.....	29
Kindred Spirit / Chiron Review Index, #1-59	
Author/Subject Index.....	30
Book Review Index.....	42
News, Etc. Index.....	44
Bibliography.....	48

## Melvina, Paulina, and Lunt

Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton

### 1.

Here's the joke Olive heard when she was a girl in Chicago: Name three streets that rhyme with vagina.

She didn't blush, but instead socked the joke-teller right in the jaw. He was a slip of a boy while she was a thinner slip of a girl, but already geared for a violent life - for blows and bruises and arm-twisting. Later on, no one messed with Olive's vagina. If you wanted to get to it, you had to mutter incessantly under your breath then mellow out for seventy-some years.

There was an ugly rumor that Olive's vagina was covered over with a second little black bun or that once you got inside she'd turn into a seal and everyone would see you fucking a goddamned seal. Oyl always carried a can of spray paint to ssssss over the bathroom graffiti about her vagina. That way, every time she peed she invented herself, down to the last sigh, the last little kumquat.

### 2.

No one dared draw Olive's vulva, its pink-gray dreamscape languid and sucking like a little swamp, a loamy lagoon where everything good begins. Olive spotted a swirl in her milkshake - some unstirred syrup, a red curl of a message, and questions rose like swollen glands. The cartoonist himself stopped to rub his eye then went home to ask his wife - *Would it be wrong to keep Olive in the same skirt forever?*

He leaned over a beer at the Billy Goat and asked the hops - *Is there such a thing as implied sexuality?*

"No!" said Nin Andrews (author of *Spontaneous Breasts*) who was engaged in a debate about Christians, but the narrator thought it a sign and a portent (Genesis 2:13). After that there were stirrings (like honeybees) beneath Olive's skirt and Olive looked to find seashells and flowers blooming in a place that wasn't quite inside or out, that wasn't at all what the cartoonist meant when he said: "Let there be orgasms."

### 3.

Olive's clit was a peanut, a pinkish pip-squeak, a faerie, a twinkle, a hooded fontanel.

It only learned to whistle after it met Mabel, a big shiny clit with wings - bingo, brava, begorra! Soon every square on her card was filled.

Olive's clitoris somersaulted in pools, hopped on Harleys that zoomed down US1. *It won't be long now, it said, showing gum, the way I'm acting out, it's only a matter of time before Olive holds her hand out over the sea then strolls through waves the size of the Twin Towers.*

The moral of this story has something to do with chaos theory, how one minute you don't and the next you can.

## Crater Face

is what we called her. The story was that her father had thrown Drano at her which was probably true, given the way she slouched through fifth grade, afraid of the world, recess especially. She had acne scars before she had acne - poxes and dips and bright red patches.

I don't remember

any report in the papers. I don't remember my father telling me her father had gone to jail. I never looked close to see the particulars of Crater Face's scars. She was a blur, a cartoon melting. Then, when she healed - her face, a million pebbles set in cement.

Even Comet Boy,

who got his name by being so abrasive, who made fun of everyone, didn't make fun of her. She walked over the bridge with the one other white girl who lived in her neighborhood. Smoke curled like Slinkies from the factory stacks above them.

I liked to imagine that Crater Face went straight home, like I did, to watch Shirley Temple on channel 56. I liked to imagine that she slipped into the screen, bumping Shirley with her hip so that the child actress slid out of frame, into the tubes and wires that made the TV sputter when I turned it on. Sometimes when I watched, I'd see Crater Face tap-dancing with tall black men whose eyes looked shiny, like the whites of hard-boiled eggs. I'd try to imagine that her block was full of friendly folk, with a lighthouse or goats running in the street.

It was my way of praying, my way of un-imagining the Drano pellets that must have smacked against her like a round of mini-bullets, her whole face as vulnerable as a tongue wrapped in sizzling pizza cheese. How she'd come home with homework, the weight of her books bending her into a wilting plant. How her father called her slut, bitch, big baby, slob. The hospital where she was forced to say it was an accident. Her face palpable as something glowing in a Petri dish. The bandages over her eyes.

In black and white,

with all that make-up, Crater Face almost looked pretty sure her MGM father was coming back soon from the war, seeing whole zoos in her thin orphanage soup. She looked happiest when she was filmed from the back, sprinting into the future, fading into tiny gray dots on UHF.



# DENISE DUHAMEL

## Virtual Girlfriends and Actual Boyfriends

*Your Virtual Girlfriend  
is an artificial intelligence program  
for your IBM PC or compatible  
and also for Macintosh.*

My Actual Boyfriend  
is naturally stupid randomness,  
politically incorrect as some MBA students  
and about as interesting as a Granny Smith.

*You can watch your Virtual Girlfriend,  
talk to her, ask her questions, tell  
her secrets, and relate to her.*

I lower my eyes whenever I see my Actual Boyfriend,  
keep silent, demand answers, withhold  
the obvious, and generally misunderstand him.

*Watch her as you ask her  
to take off different clothes and guide her  
through many different activities.*

I turn my face away as I demand him  
to zip up his fly and misdirect him  
as he sits there doing nothing.

*Watch and participate in the hottest  
sexual activities available on computer, including:  
several sexual positions, using many unique toys,  
even bringing in multiple partners.*

I close my eyes and shut down emotionally from his cool  
goofiness not available in any book, except:  
several frigid stand-stills, using many run-of-the-mill protractors,  
even taking away his singular loneliness.

*Your Virtual Girlfriend  
is no doubt the most  
realistic, sexually stimulating  
computer game available.*

My Actual Boyfriend  
is surely like the least  
realistic, sexually boring  
book work available.

*Your Virtual Girlfriend  
will remember your name, birthday,  
your likes and your dislikes.*

My Actual Boyfriend  
will forget my pseudonym, my date of death,  
my loves and the loves I dissed.

*Every time you start the program,  
she says different things, and acts differently.*

Every time I end my random walk,  
he withholds the same things, and is genuine in his sameness.

*Your Virtual Girlfriend software  
has some of the hottest, sexiest graphics out there.*

My Actual Boyfriend School of Hard Knocks  
is responsible for some of the most yawn-inducing blankness.

*You can actually hear her voice as she talks to you ...*

I can virtually see his nose hairs as he ignores me ...

*Please give it a try  
and write back any comments!*

I have basically given up  
and draw pictures of what I keep to myself!

*... Your Virtual Girlfriend  
is an artificial intelligence program, meaning  
she is completely interactive.*

... My Actual Boyfriend  
is organically ignorant, meaning  
he is partially a couch potato.

*You can actually have simple conversations.*

I can virtually have complex masturbations.

*Your Virtual Girlfriend's attitudes change  
with the different things you say, so you can  
say things that will upset her, and then  
say things that will please her.*

My Actual Boyfriend's total apathy stays the same  
with the same things I cannot express, so I can  
say things that he will feel totally indifferent to, and then  
say things that he will not even understand.

*The more you play/talk with your Virtual Girlfriend  
the more you learn what she can do,  
and what she likes to do.*

The more I torture/ignore my Actual Boyfriend,  
the more I stay clueless as to what he refuses to do,  
and what he hates to do.

\* \* \* \* \*

*This mailing is intended to be of interest to a large audience  
and to communicate a valuable offer.*

This poem is unintentional yet specifically for you  
to keep secret a worthless request.

*If you have no interest in this offer  
or no desire to receive offers of value from us in the future,  
please click the link below  
to remove yourself from our mailing list*

If I am totally obsessed with his absence  
and want my worthlessness to be taken away as soon as possible,  
I will snap the synapse above  
to put my name back on his Christmas club.

*note: italicized stanzas are made from the text of an actual/virtual e-mail advertisement*



# Denise Duhamel: The Chiron Interview

interview by Matt Mason

**D**enise Duhamel's *The Star-Spangled Banner* (Southern Illinois University Press) was published in 1999 as the first-place winner of the Crab Orchard Award Series in Poetry. She is author of nine previous books, including *Exquisite Politics* (with Maureen Seaton, Tia Chucha Press, 1997), *Kinky (Orchises Press, 1997)*, *Girl Soldier* (Garden Street Press, 1996) and *How the Sky Fell* (Pearl Editions, 1996). She is a visiting writer at Florida International University in Miami and will be a writer-in-residence at University of Pittsburgh, spring, 2000.

Denise and I met up this past July in Paris, on the Left Bank, in Denise's favorite bistro. I was amazed at the ease she ordered for both of us in French.

**M.M.:** In your first book, *Smile!*, you have a poem called 'On Being Born The Same Exact Day Of The Same Exact Year As Boy George' where you compare careers, saying:

Look where I am and look where he is!  
There is a book documenting his  
every haircut  
while all my image building attempts  
go unnoticed, even by my friends  
I'm too wimpy to just dye my curls red.

Yet in the May issue of *McCall's*, there you were with red curls, in before and after photos documenting your beauty makeover haircut. And in your poem, you offer to switch places with the Boy. Is there something you want to tell us?

**D.D.:** I wrote that when Boy George was at the peak of his popularity. I actually sent it to Boy George in 1987 or so and (sigh) never heard a word, which I guess meant he didn't want to switch places with me, that he liked his fame just fine, even though he complained about it when he was interviewed. (I finally dyed my hair red in 1989 and have been a faux redhead, a la Lucille Ball, since, although I'm not sure if it helped me get any more well-known. In *The Star-Spangled Banner*, in 'How Much is this Going to Cost Me?' I refer to the trauma around getting my hair dyed for the first time.)

But what's really interesting to me is that Boy George is no longer that famous. When I perform that poem now, younger people glance at each other with a 'Who's Boy George?' look in their eyes. I'm a little more 'famous' now than I was in 1987, but I'll never be as famous as Boy George.

(About *McCall's* ... My mother and sister and nieces all had these beauty makeovers in the May 1999 issue. I know, what can I say? I'm a goofball.)

**M.M.:** What about the fact you're more likely to see a rock star who hasn't written a song in a decade or two on TV than you are a poet? Not to bring up the same old 'Why does the entertainment media just give lip-service to the nobility of poetry' crud, but how do you see your fame right now or the fame afforded to poetry? I mean, movies tend to cast these mystical, earth-

shaking characters as poets and people say things like 'Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world' but very few people actually go to poetry readings, buy the books, send flowers to the poet, throw underwear on stage as a poet reads.

**D.D.:** Did you hear that Meg Ryan is going to play Sylvia Plath in an upcoming movie? Poets with the most traumatic and interesting personal lives are the poets who endure (at least peripherally) in the realm of pop culture. I don't know if much can be done about it. I get frustrated because I think Average Jane and Joe would like poetry, at least accessible poetry, if they were exposed to it, if poetry readings were more popular and well publicized, for example.

I've wanted to be famous since I was little (my therapist was convinced that was because I didn't get enough attention as a kid!), but I've obviously chosen the wrong field to achieve my superficial fame goal. I

young girls learn to view their bodies through Barbie dolls or how society functions through fairy tale characters. What are the benefits of funny poetry?

**D.D.:** I'm actually in that anthology, *Stand Up Poetry*, that Charles Webb edited a few years ago. I've used the book in my teaching and students really seem to like it. Most people are open to funny or ridiculous poetry. The real advantage of wacky poetry is it's almost impossible for it to become sentimental or cliché, which is every good poet's worst fear. It's so easy for poets to become maudlin or sensational when writing about their 'issues.' I know how easy it is for me to go into a feminist tirade, but when I'm confined to using Barbie as a metaphor, any tirade I want to make is going to be tinged with silliness. This is not to say that silly poems cannot be political or urgent or even devastating. Just the opposite is true.



mean, I do OK for a 38-year-old poet, I guess, as far as recognition goes. A few people have read my books. But poets have to accept the fact they are never going to be Meg Ryan or Rosie O'Donnell. Even Sharon Olds who is amazingly popular among poets is largely unknown to the general public. At different points of my life, I've thought about trying stand up comedy, but I love language so much, the beauty of it, and that interests me more than actual jokes. And, besides, not everything I write is funny.

**M.M.:** I've heard of poets in Southern California who call themselves Stand Up Poets, referring to comedy as well as character. So maybe poets someday won't have to drink too much or kill ourselves or die tragically early to get more notice. And when you say that not everything you write is funny, that's certainly true seeing as some of your poems deal with weighty subjects – such as sickness, mortality, harsh parenting, rape – in a very serious fashion. But, still, you also have a skill in using the ridiculous so wildly that you bring out deep social truths, be that how

**M.M.:** Very true! You show how tough a funny poem can be in poems like 'Math Class Is Tough' and how tender they can be in 'For The One Man Who Likes My Thigh' a great love poem that's also funny. Then you show range with poems like 'Stranger,' a poem about your mother. Or should I say the 'speaker's mother?' Just as you wonder in 'The Difference Between Pepsi And Pope' what is the factual truth in others' poems, it's hard to say what is 'true' in yours. I always wonder what the person I'm reading is like, but I can't assume everything written in the first person is true. I doubt you ever tried to abort your two-headed baby but were denied by the government as happens in 'The Responsibilities of Being An American Woman' but I also wonder what a poet's mother would think of a poem like your 'Things I Could Never Tell My Mother.'

**D.D.:** It hasn't been easy, I can tell you that much. My parents have never read *Girl Soldier* or *Exquisite Politics*. I just thought it would be too hard for them. I have a writer friend who is in her sixties. A few years back her daughter wrote a memoir

about what a bad mother my friend was. They both decided that my friend didn't really need to read the book as much as her daughter needed to write it. It was very painful for my friend, but as a writer she knew she couldn't try to stop her daughter or ostracize her in any way. My mother is not a writer and is not very interested in the writing process, so I've decided the best way to handle poems that would hurt her is to say, 'Mom, I wrote this book and I think it's going to really upset you. Do you want to skip reading it?' She always says yes. My bet is nine out of ten mothers will say yes.

I saw Erica Jong recently on TV with her daughter who said she refuses to read anything her mother writes because it grosses her out to think of her mother as one with a sexual imagination. So maybe there's some weird incest taboo that must be respected when writers are dealing with parents or children. I find that when I teach, many people are terrified to even show me their 'things I could never tell my mother' assignments. They're afraid I'm going to snitch and tell their mothers, even though I don't know who their mothers are!

**M.M.:** Reading *The Star-Spangled Banner*, I had to wonder how your husband would take the poem 'Tulip' in which you confess to eating the last bit of your wedding cake after a fight. Or your students or bosses reading 'Skipping Breakfast' where you admit to feeling like a fraud as a teacher. In poetry anything could be just a 'persona,' but do you ever think, 'I've gone too far?'

**D.D.:** You should see the stuff I don't publish! I do have a sense sometimes of going too far. I wrote a long poem about the O.J. Simpson trial the day it ended, but I just didn't feel as though it would be responsible to send it out, and I still don't, even now.

About 'Tulip' – my husband Nick Carbó is also a poet so he totally gets what I'm doing. (One of his favorite poets is Anne Sexton. He's into the so-called confessional mode himself.) He really likes when I write about him, thank goodness. I don't know what I'd do otherwise! Most of the poems I write (for better or worse) are tinged with some sort of sweetness so no one has ever gotten too mad at me yet! After reading Sharon Olds (my poetry heroine), I had the courage – if that's the right word – to write about whatever I wanted to write about. I once had a creative writing teacher who said the paradox of writing is the more vulnerable you become through your words, the stronger you are. Or maybe I just told myself this and I am totally making up the part about the teacher to justify my writing existence.

**M.M.:** You list some advantages of being married to another poet. What advice do you have for poets in love with poets?

**D.D.:** The most important thing is this – if you are a typical poet, don't marry another typical poet. That is, someone who is insecure and competitive and takes himself or herself too seriously. I say this not to



yone down, for I feel I am a typical otally obsessed about my career, bit- out the magazines I don't get into and ants I don't win.

k could care less about any of that He's a purer poet, someone that harks o a different time, a pre-MFA, pre- ime. He's younger than I am and has an MFA and an NEA, but he 't allow these things to define him. ust have an old soul or just really elf-esteem.

e plus side of being married to a poet t s/he will leave you alone when at the computer or scribbling in a . The obvious minus is you'll probab- e very broke for most of your mar- (You can escape this fate by marry- ctors and the like, but they are less to be impressed if you get a poem hed in *Chiron Review*. On the other if you marry a typical poet whose ca- s not going as well as yours, s/he wind up *hating* you for getting a published in *Chiron Review* and all your computer poetry files while e asleep.)

now two other happy poetry couples n Jobe Smith and Fred Voss from Beach and Allison Joseph and Jon le from Carbondale, Illinois. Joyful nony between two poets is possible.

**M.:** Being, a 'typical poet obsessed your career,' bitter about rejections uch, do you think it would be easier t work at Mister Donut?

**D.:** Even though I am a typical poet, I to say that I am learning more and as time goes on, to have a sense of r about the whole poetry hierarchy. Having worked at Mister Donut, I'd to say being a poet is much better. g the next poem keeps me alive in a hat serving the next cruller or pouring ext cup of decaf simply could not. I mean to say is that although po-biz e demoralizing, the actual thrill of g a poem ... well, nothing can beat it, ask me! Nick and I both admitted to other early on that we like writing po- ven better than having sex! I love be- n that time-warp, being totally en- ed, working on a poem, emerging later as though having been kid- d by aliens, unable to account for the that have passed – except for the before me.

**M.:** Wow. That's a good way of put- t. That shows the motivation now keeps you writing poetry, but was a time in your early life, some event dhood or anything that set you on- to the life of a poet instead of, say, a r or a nun or a social worker or a lin- model?

**D.:** I had horrible asthma as a kid. e everyone else was out making en or jumping through sprinklers, I ick in bed surrounded by crayons and . My favorite place was the library t it was climate controlled). My ill- otally set me up to be very introspec- s a child. I had a lot of time on my . As a teen, I started keeping journals, ntry of which was a sort of bizarre prose poem. Without sounding too ramatic, I feel like writing really my life.

**M.:** I can certainly see that from your books. In *Smile!* and *Girl Soldier*, ne is often one of looking at uncom- le situations, be that sickness or dys- on or whatnot, from a state of confi- kind of like the Wordsworthian

'emotion recollected in tranquillity.' But in *The Star-Spangled Banner*, the voice seems much less comfortable, more vulnerable and less tranquil at times. How conscious was this?

**D.D.:** I wasn't conscious of this at all until you brought it up, but I do think that's a very good observation. Maybe it's like that old saying about knowing every- thing (or thinking you do) when you're young, then becoming more and more per- plexed by the world as you get older. Or maybe because the poems in *The Star-Spangled Banner* are about being an out- sider (in a strange land, in a economic class of people where I don't feel as though I be- long). Maybe that's it.

**M.M.:** In an early poem, 'Song For All The Would-Have-Been Princesses,' you bring up Saint Brigid who was an Irish cowherd turned patron saint of poets. Though you don't bring up cows often in your poetry (only two poems that I counted), do you have any opinion on the importance of cows to poetry? A friend and I figured long ago that every poet must at some point write a great cow poem. Do you agree?

**D.D.:** I am pro-cow in that I don't eat cows, and I really like the phrase 'chewing her cud.' I also love the fact that cows have four stomachs. And they give milk, like big hairy moms. But I feel I'm more akin to the manatee, who is a sea cow. I have a poem about how sometimes I think I *am* a manatee in *Smile!* and a manatee appears in *The Star-Spangled Banner* (in 'Noctilucae.') Does a manatee count as a cow? Or have I been missing out on one of those great po- etry subjects (like sex or death) and not even knowing it? I've never been able to get close enough (physically) to a cow be- cause of my horrible allergies to all ani- mals. I get severe asthma attacks every time I even step near a barn or farm-like situa- tion. All I can do is wave to cows by the side of the road as I pass.

**M.M.:** I do like the manatee in 'Noctilucae,' and the whole poem with you and your husband at the sea, set within a Scrabble game played three years later. It's nice to see more of Nick in your new book. I don't know, it's comforting as a reader since in earlier books, though there are love poems, there also tends to be a lot of pain and mistrust poems. And here we see a lot of Nick, both good and not so good, but ultimately positive. I especially like 'Nick At Night' which playfully lists cultural differences both of you remember from growing up. One question, though. Was there really a Banana Quik? I remember chocolate and strawberry, but not banana.

**D.D.:** Unless I am suffering from false memory syndrome, there was definitely a Banana Quik. I remember drinking it. I be- lieve it was a short-lived product, some- thing like a McRib sandwich.

**M.M.:** You've done so many great poem projects. There's the Barbie poems, Inuit legends, collaborations with Maureen Seaton, fairy tale poems. And, though not as tightly gathered, *Smile!*, *Girl Soldier*, and *The Star-Spangled Banner* show a real cohesion. What are you working on now?

**D.D.:** Well, I just finished another co- laborative project with my very best friend Maureen Seaton. We have a chapbook com- ing out this spring with Pearl Editions. It's called *Oyl*, and, as you might guess, is all about Olive Oyl. She married Popeye last February, you know, which Maureen and I think may have been a big mistake. Didn't you always think Olive Oyl was a lesbian?

Maybe it's just me and Maureen who think so. Then, I'm also working on a lot of double sestinas, some about the Brady Bunch and valley girls and Hello Kitty. After that, it's anybody's guess, including my own.

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Even by breezy open-air Paris café stan- dards, Denise and I had worn out our

welcome. The waiter was starting to glare – maybe because we were sharing one seltzer with two straws. (Those Paris ca- fés are expensive, and hey, remember, we're just two poets!)

Matt Mason writes poetry on all the classic themes: love, cows, pork rinds and Omaha. He's so swell he's won awards from the Academy of American Poets, the University of California at Davis and several lit- erary magazines.

## Olive's War Effort

Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton

Olive seldom slept more than four hours after ballroom dancing in the forties on Collins Avenue in Miami where big bands fought for just one tango with the limber señoritas flashing their silky slips, machismo thick in the air like clove and myrrh. Olive once dressed as Carlos Gardel and caused a stir. Another time she rolled cigars and the girls became a giggling hair-sprayed mass of admirers. They called her Oyl. Oyl, they'd say, "Is it true you once arm-wrestled Glenn Miller?" "Is it true you once swam to Havana and back?" She'd plunge into details both bawdy and resonant of Hemingway, teasing the bull, pleasing the females, all the way from Tallahassee to Key West. When the state of Florida looked like a penis to her, she recalled the moment in her young adulthood, pre-Thimble Theatre, when all she wanted was luck and money and, maybe, a built-in swimming pool. Who knew then just how big a cartoon heroine's desire could grow? How many boyfriends she'd spurn and spurn, until twenty-nine forever, with a hamburger bun and hot dog nose, she'd become a Ladylubber, the sweet stink of salt water and margaritas irresistible in her crumpled sheets.

## Olive's War Effort 2

Denise Duhamel and Maureen Seaton

Olive loved the *chunggg chunggg* sound of coins bouncing into her cash register but taking them out felt even better, the *cushh cushh cushh* of bills in her side pocket as she swaggered across the street to The Flamingo and ordered lobster bisque and Baked Alaska. This was her crime phase when she single-handedly embezzled Woolworth's into the red by stuffing hair nets down her shirt and sipping Lime Rickies at the counter, then bolting without leaving a tip, when a war was on and she seethed with unresolved pacifism, Buddhist tendencies so deep she chanted as she pilfered rice noodles and soy sauce from the only Oriental grocery in town. Olive was a comic strip disaster. Even when Segar gave her creative control of her own life, she was drawn to silly sin, sort of like humans after God gave them free will. Olive couldn't help it – it was "blow me down" and "shiver me timbers" – sailor talk so bad Segar stole a rib and called it Popeye.



# ~ WILLIE ABRAHAM HOWARD, JR. ~



**WILLIE ABRAHAM HOWARD, JR.** is a 32-year-old born again black brother who lives in Decatur, Georgia. He's had poems appear in numerous publications and was featured in *The Scribia* and *Pudding Magazine*. He won the 1998 National Looking Glass Chapbook Competition sponsored by *Pudding*.

## My First Doors Album

The Naval Hospital wrapped around  
South Philadelphia. A corpsman and  
someone claimed that Cosby carried  
those stainless steel bedpans too.  
My ten speed on Snyder Avenue,  
used record store with a vinyl  
grin. Thoughts of my patient Iris  
Flynn playing Waiting For The Sun  
through her walkman.  
1985 and the Lizard King sang  
Break On Through, Light My Fire  
and became an Unknown Soldier  
to sobriety and order.

The white hippie brothers nearly  
went to tears and cheers as  
I said The Doors.

No microphones thrown, only muster  
times and who was mean Mr. Mustard?  
Out of my dream I realized Jim  
Morrison had too much Jack Daniels,  
and not enough inner love writing  
through his arteries. And I wasn't  
a rock star but a young Hospital  
Corpsman like many young men, under  
the command of menopausal, super model  
Titanic Lt. Commanders who scratched their LPs.

## After The Police Whip Downs

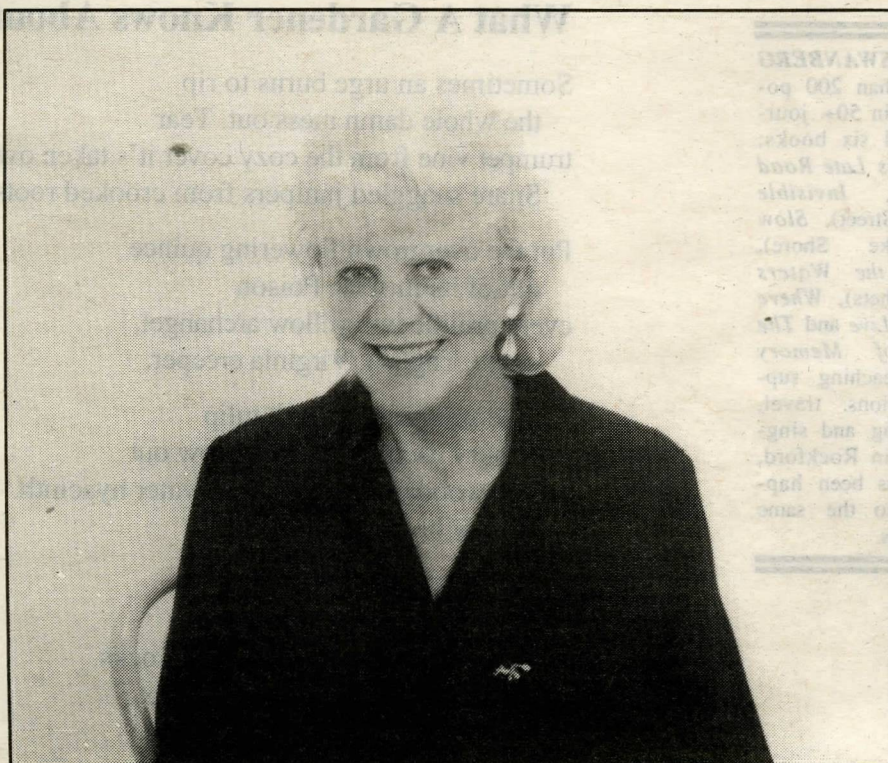
Another police shooting  
in California, beatings  
across America by those  
Serbian men in blue.  
When they whip us down,  
black men use the word brother more.  
Act considerate, smile a little  
and become family for ten minutes.  
When they bullet us,  
carjackings and punches pause.  
We say yes mam to mamas,  
come together, possibility of child support  
across money orders.  
After the mayors, Al Sharpton and  
leaders speak, we resume tag teaming  
with police.  
We are enemies again, we avoid  
one another, black men unite to  
become slayings and newspaper  
lines for obituaries.  
After the police whip downs,  
we take it from there  
and get it certified before God.

## Poem For The Old White Men

Yeah you're on my mind,  
I wear your shirts that come  
from the Goodwill Value Village.  
You're cool in your baseball caps,  
some of you racist, some liberals,  
some crazy but this is life.  
You'll answer at the stairs  
of the throne, nervously watching  
90 foot angels near the escalators.  
Yeah, you're on my mind,  
probably my age when Frank  
Sinatra and Nat King Cole  
sang their young fellow hearts out.  
Old white men, I have walked  
hundreds of you to X-ray, Eye Clinics  
and wheelchairs. Alzheimer's and I'll  
never forget Mr. Greene. Old white men  
and your glasses, sweaters, gray hair  
and serenity. Those debates never meant  
anything and blacks are really your  
best friends as they listen to your stories.  
They don't demand hundred dollar checks  
to do so. You are old, incontinent, heroic.  
I stand in this 32 year old body, taking  
Saw Palmetto in this gone world. Inspired  
by your nitroglycerin walks through change.



# MARGARET HEHMAN-SMITH



**MARGARET HEHMAN-SMITH** received a BFA in 1973 and an MFA in 1975 from Otis Art Institute (Los Angeles) in painting and printmaking. Ten years ago, her Japanese Imperial koi fish inspired her to write. She taught the koi to jump through a hoop, ring a bell and other behaviors. She has been known to rescue animals. She feels that passion is the most important element in writing.

## Kill Me With Color

Red is emotional. Can red persuade you?  
Blue is there with purple flowers.  
And then it is always seeing yellow  
peak through mixed with orange.  
Don't forget brown. Brown and black  
are warm. Velvet feels black.  
Suns are white-yellow, specked by orange.  
Flowers and blue and skies.  
Spaniels are brown with white tips.  
Spring leaves are green. Some people  
eat licorice.

Rivers are not red – sunsets are of course.  
I saw a small red river once.  
From out of two perfect lips of a  
perfectly beautiful young face emerged  
this small red river. This can be a  
white shock of finding a sister with a  
small red river lying on a green kitchen  
floor. This gray school day was the day  
she put out her light, and white, blue,  
violet, green, yellow, orange, red, brown,  
black, I saw in the air before I passed out.

## Listening to Godzilla

I hear you.  
I'm listening to your  
non-stop opinions. You,  
answering your own questions,  
my attempted replies.

I might appear hypnotized as  
I seem to soak in your every word.  
You might think you are converting me  
because I nod attentively.

Look closely because  
the real me has left my body and  
gone to more enlightening environments.  
I shall return when you have taken  
your hairy foot out of my mouth.

## Hold It

I stop suddenly  
mid-living room  
to read the poet's  
ode; the rush  
to dash out into the  
world momentarily  
put on hold.

The toe of my right  
foot points to the  
door – I hold steady  
riveted to the words  
recharging me.

Now, I go out the  
door in lower gear  
in tune for the race.

## On The Way

"I saw you with a man,"  
she said. Coffee can be  
an eye opener. So, now  
I'm off to Burbank to print  
a poster. Loud noises don't  
help much. Especially when  
there are only a few. But  
Hollywood Way is a place  
I'm not sure of, even though  
this street is in my city.  
We are flying with warmers  
because the weather is dippy  
even for Los Angeles. (But  
most people) I don't know  
whether (different kind)  
to lead or be lead. It's a  
juggling act and someone  
should answer the phone.  
The attorney next to me  
is in his state-of-mind.  
Attorneys are rated as to  
their acting ability. But  
aren't wealthy words  
fatter? Oh, take apart a  
sonata and you will come  
eye to eye with bridges,  
modulations and codas.  
Common grounds are the  
home keys. Keys to the  
home keys for tuning.



# CHRISTINE SWANBERG



## CHRISTINE SWANBERG

has had more than 200 poems published in 50+ journals. She's had six books: *Tonight On This Late Road* (Erie Street), *Invisible String* (Erie Street), *Slow Miracle* (Lake Shore), *Bread Upon the Waters* (Windfall Prophets), *Where the Enchanted Live* and *The Tenderness of Memory* (Plainview). Teaching supports her passions: travel, horses, gardening and singing. She lives in Rockford, Illinois and has been happily married to the same man for 27 years.

## Oppression

Yes, my grandmother was oppressed,  
but she refused to learn to read  
even when given the chance,  
preferring the dark rooms of her small house,  
her routine of Sanka coffee,  
feeding her beloved sparrows,  
sitting on the porch bathed  
in the evening sun of her delusions,  
warmed by the frayed afghan of abuse,  
the cloak of self-righteousness  
and her bruised violet imagination  
that finally led her in old age  
to sexual rapture with the parish priest  
whose creased photo she pulled  
from behind the brusque couch pillow  
in a daily ritual of purple joy  
I cannot comprehend. Yes,  
my mother was oppressed,  
but refused to use the time  
I long for in my daily life  
for much else but cleaning and cooking,  
choosing again the dark rooms,  
compulsion of coffee, the telephone  
a treadmill run hour after hour,  
the suffocation of imaginary obligations  
that never paid off and washed her  
in a lava bath of self-pity that bloomed  
like a purple flower in her heart. So,  
where does that leave me?  
I speak for the childless daughters  
of a freedom confused but colorful  
as rainbows. God or Goddess, grant us  
courage, grant us growth. Since I cannot  
wear nostalgia like a lavender angora sweater,  
give me a worn leather coat,  
give me thick, brown skin,  
bright rooms and hard work.  
Let me leave the labyrinth of oppression.  
Make me not a soft white mouse.

## What A Gardener Knows About Change

Sometimes an urge burns to rip  
the whole damn mess out. Tear  
trumpet vine from the cozy cover it's taken over.  
Snare snagged junipers from crooked roots.

Put the overgrown flowering quince  
out of its misery. Poison  
every prolific ivy: yellow archangel,  
grape, English, Virginia creeper.

Let the squirrels eat each tulip  
& bury each lily bulb. Throw out  
mossy wooden tubs that hold water hyacinth.  
Simply burn the ferns.

Recant all unruly roses.  
Remove the hens & chicks  
from their nest around driveway rocks.  
Ferret out the peonies and phlox.

Divorce the bridal wreath bush.

Chop down the maple, the old pear,  
the river birch and imperfect pines.

But then the gardener recalls all the time  
& all the care the whole beautiful mess took:  
how the trumpet vine wound four years  
before its orange song blared from the archway,  
two more to lure a hummingbird.

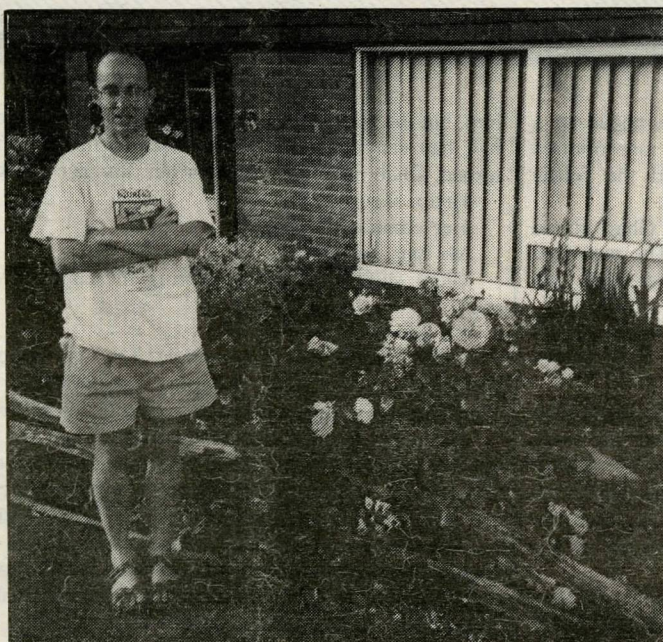
How juniper berries frost in autumn  
& wink green eyes in January. How only  
the lucky ever grow a flowering quince  
& someday surely there will be time to make  
fragrant quince jelly. Or the gardener might  
reconcile: without icy, bricks would be bricks,  
cement would be cement & no ivy-laced  
bungalow would entreat a poet's dreams.

Squirrels bury bulbs where they choose anyway.  
Last year a Queen of the Night graced the alley.  
Lo, lilies of the field quell worry  
in their tight buds & all summer

old neighbors watch for hyacinth  
& fern fronds stretch feathers of shade.  
Hens & chicks remind us that there's scrappy  
beauty in the commonplace & a garden  
without phlox has fewer monarchs & no chance  
to catch a morning-striped sphynx moth.  
Each June the bridal wreath bush explodes like popcorn.  
The Midwest is a barren place without trees,  
so a gardener makes many small decisions:  
a thinning here, a transplant there,  
extras to friends or compost. We pull weeds,  
scatter mulch and know that change  
is the tailspin of tiny transformations,  
the endless blessings of rearrangement.



# BRIAN DALDORPH



BRIAN DALDORPH teaches English at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. He is the editor of *Coal City Review*. His second book, *Outcasts*, is forthcoming from Mid-America Press. He is one of the featured poets in *Poet's Market 2000*.

## The Pink Hotel

It's 3 a.m.  
when he calls his father  
from the Pink Hotel,  
San Diego,  
his father's voice thick  
with sleep and rage:  
*What's the damn idea?*

Funny thing is  
that he doesn't even know.  
The cowboy who'd picked him up on Sunset  
slammed him against the wall  
when he'd asked for money:  
*Faggot,*  
*if I ever see you again you're dead meat.*

His father's yelling  
from his dark bedroom  
on the other side of America,  
while he's fiddling with cigarettes  
hands shaking  
as he fumbles for a match,  
*Compliments of the Pink Hotel.*

*You sent your mother to an early grave.*  
*You know what your trouble is, boy?*  
*No backbone,*  
*no backbone,*  
*you're a goddamn jellyfish.*  
*I suppose you need money again?*

But that's just it,  
he doesn't know what he needs  
from his father at 3 a.m.,  
calling from the Pink Hotel.

## Poet at the Door

for Gary Lechliter

On a sunny Sunday afternoon  
in Kansas, in fall, you tell me about  
Kansas killers,  
the one-step, two-step snakes –  
one step and you're dead,  
two steps if you're lucky –  
the copperhead with venom  
to kill a cow,  
tarantulas migrating south,  
scorpions,  
the Brown Recluse spider  
that bit your buddy  
and stripped off a chunk of calf.  
The Black Widows  
your Dad would flush out of dry gutters  
and squash under his work boots, but  
they'd be waiting in outhouses and dreams with that one bite  
to freeze your limbs and jam your lungs ...

Later, when I haul out trash,  
that enigmatic smile you left me with  
makes entering my garden shed  
a matter of life and death.

## My Father Proposed

to the witch he'd been dating –  
*The Black Widow*  
Jess and I called her –  
who was hot  
to get into Dad's underpants and cash.  
We heard it from the landing:  
he thought we were asleep.

Next day he sat us down after supper,  
*Girls, I have something important to tell you,*  
and Jess said, *Uh oh,*  
and my glance at her said, *Fuck, no!*  
Dad told us he'd proposed to Mrs. Amersham,

and Jess said, *Mrs. Who?*  
*Carmen*, Dad said, and Jess grunted, *Oh.*  
He was acting like he does at his business meetings,  
Mr. Coolhead in control, and he said,  
*Girls, I'd like your input on this.*

*Input? What the fuck's that? I said and ran,*  
and Jess screamed, *So marry the witch,*  
and we stayed up all night in the garden shed planning  
to run away to Florida,  
where we'd work as waitresses  
and never call home.



# May God make it easy for you

story by Stephen Morrison, Jr.

Ensha'llah, Ghali breathed when he saw the tourists walking toward the cafe. The man was tall and gaunt, young but tired looking, with light eyes and coffee hair that fell past his ears. His legs were pale beneath blue short pants. A red rucksack rose above his shoulders. The woman was dressed immodestly in a sleeveless dress the pale yellow of summer melons. The faces of the men in the cafe turned to watch while the taxi man, a cripple with a dark face, hopped down the cafe steps and motioned to them.

The male tourist ignored him and turned toward the line of dusty white Mercedes parked along the road in front of the cafe. Sweat made his face shine. Taxi alles Tanger? he asked the taxi man. La, said the man. Non. He shook his finger.



STEPHEN MORRISON, JR. currently lives, teaches and writes in New England with his partner Emily. In the *Lion's Mouth* (University of Montana, 1997), a volume of his short stories, was published in conjunction with the Merriam-Frontier award. His work has most recently appeared in *Cutbank*, *The Writer's Chronicle* and *Poets & Writers*.

Ghali looked across the street. The day was hot and close with dust. The sun was descending, turning the straits purple while the Spanish coast faded under the afternoon haze. Across the street, the taxi to Tangier was parked in the loose red dirt of the shoulder. Ghali looked down into his coffee, following the swirling black grounds. He turned back to the tourists.

The taxi man patted the air with his hand. No disposé, he said. Attendez. The male tourist shook his head and examined the medallion on the grill of the nearest Mercedes. The woman shifted a small striped shoulder bag and stared off absently. Ghali followed her gaze to a thin bitch that stood, teats hanging, at the spot where the road bent away.

He shifted his eyes and considered the woman. Her skin was pale, nearly opaque, highlighted by pink splotches where the sun had touched the tops of her cheeks and the tip of her nose. She turned and found him watching her. He held her stare until she looked back toward the bend. The bitch circled then settled in the dust. The sun was still high over the horizon, but the straits were like a swollen bruise. Spain was lost. The wail of the muezzin erupted below them, past the market, from the loud-speakers hanging from the minaret of the jamaa. The deep attenuated cry signaled the evening prayer, reaffirmed the oneness and the preeminence.

Ghali looked down at his coffee. The grounds still had not settled enough to drink.

Parlez-vous Anglais? the male tourist asked the taxi man. The man lurched once on his twisted leg then raised the small notebook he used to keep track of passengers and made two marks on the page to let the tourist know that he and the woman had been reserved a place in the waiting taxi.

Tanger? the tourist said pointing at the line of Mercedes taxis.

Ghali grunted. The other taxi, he said.

The woman turned toward the café and squinted to find him. Folds appeared in the corners of her paper face. Ghali examined her breasts which were not covered so much as wrapped by her dress. The man turned and walked toward the cafe, stopping on the bottom step to thrust his chest forward and slip off the red rucksack. Does somebody speak English? he said. Ghali remained silent, the other men stared. The tourist exhaled through his nose.

From the market, a small boy led a blind man in a black-gray gandora and silver-gray slippers. The two climbed uphill beside the road. Ghali watched them. The man's eyes were the color of dried blood. The taxi man raised his hand and the boy nodded.

Tanger, the taxi man shouted.

The male tourist smiled. Soft creases appeared in his cheeks. He shouldered the rucksack and turned to cross the street. A man with a cock who had waited in the dust beside the steps to the café stood and crossed before him. Ghali followed, aware of

the warm slick spot where the block of hashish, wrapped in a plastic bag, was pressed against his back. The taxi man opened the boot and the tourist placed his rucksack and the fellah placed his cock inside.

From his spot in the middle, behind the driver, Ghali stared at the back of the female Maaseehooma's head. The man had placed her between the driver and himself, so that her thigh was pressed against the stick shift, causing the driver to drive hesitantly and awkwardly. The Maaseehooma do not think, Ghali told himself, they only move. They were in love with movement.

Mahmoud, a boy who sometimes lingered by the Gare, who practiced karate and prayed five times, once said that the tourists were like children gaining their eyesight, awed by motion and color. The woman's yellow hair fell between the front seats of the Mercedes. As the taxi pulled into the road, air from the windows lifted the strands toward the faces of the men in the back.

The block of hashish felt slick against his back. Ghali told himself not to think of the woman. He tried to slouch lower into the seat and silently repeat the Exordium to himself. He could not remember all the words. The dirty version his cousins in Uuaki had chanted when the oostad wasn't listening kept returning to him instead. He shook his head and tried to forget the bad words but could not recover the good Arabic of the sura. Normally he would have surrendered to the impulse and laughed, but today he was silently chanting the sura to avoid laughing. He must be serious as long as he held the hashish. Later, he would play the clown again for the old Maaseehooma he was carrying it for. He did not mind making the rich Maaseehoomas laugh, if afterward they fed him and paid him money.

They were approaching the first gendarme post and the Mercedes decelerated sharply. A gray-and-black police jeep was parked beside the road. One policeman in pale blue with white bandoleers stood on the faded center line. He signaled and the driver steered the cab into the dirt of the shoulder. The police approached the driver's window. Ghali stared through the windshield.

The driver brought his papers to the window. Sa'eeheen, he said quietly. The gendarme leaned into the shadow of the cab and stared across at the woman. As Ghali and the boy watched, the male tourist raised his hand as if to wave at the policeman then hesitated, his palm in the air, fingers crimped. The policeman grunted to himself and glanced into the back. Ghali blinked lazily then licked his lips and remembered his father licking his lips and watching the sky.

Nta, the policeman said. Papiers. He reached a hand toward Ghali. The package in the small of Ghali's back felt thicker, made him feel awkward and conspicuous in the seat.

Papiers, the policeman said sharply.

Ghali extracted his carte segure from his front pocket. The woman turned to look at him. Ghali stared back at her then remembered himself and turned toward the window. The policeman was appraising him, considering what it might mean that the boy in the red-and-blue Barça sweat suit and bobbed hair might know the tourists. He spit on the ground beside the taxi. Ghali felt blood in his cheeks and lowered his gaze.

The policeman walked back to his jeep and a second policeman. They talked a moment, then the first laughed and returned to the taxi. He flicked the carte segure onto the driver's lap without looking at Ghali.

Waha? the driver asked.

The policeman motioned them on with a finger. When they had pulled away, the driver took Ghali's carte off his lap and held it above the seat. He avoided Ghali's eyes in the mirror.

The woman faced front again and the wind returned to lift her hair. Ghali stuffed the carte into his jacket. He breathed deeply and tried to remember a calm moment. Ahmed had taken him to the old Maaseehooma's apartment and the two had drunk wine and smoked kif and Ahmed had fallen into a coughing fit that made Ghali and the old man laugh. When two bottles were drunk, Ahmed and Ghali danced to the radio on the old Maaseehooma's chairs and books while the old man watched them.

The woman's hair fluttered before him. Ghali reached forward and gently caught hold of it. He rolled the hair between his fingertips. It's texture was like kif; grit and oil mixed. The eyes of the young boy watched him. Ghali glanced down at

him, but the small face looked away. The woman sensed that her hair had caught on something and reached a hand back then turned. Ghali held the strand for her, his face blank, eyes cold.

Hello, she said.

Her companion turned.

My hair, she said.

Ghali shifted his hand, offering the captured strand to the man.

Let go, the man said.

Ghali's face eased into a smile. The man matched him, his awkward grin returning, propping the corners of his pouched face. The driver raised his eyes to find Ghali in the mirror.

He speaks English, the woman said. Then she smiled, keeping her lips together. It was not an awkward or a nervous smile and instead seemed too comfortable within the close space of the taxi. Ghali blinked and opened his fingers quickly.

The woman faced front, swept the hair over her shoulder then held it with her left hand. The side of her face was visible. They entered the shade of the cedars growing in the small hollow on the eastern border of the city. Twisted, white-washed trunks that rose to gray then black skipped past on either side until the taxi exited from the half-light of the copse into the diminishing light of the afternoon. Through the windshield, they looked down at the bay and the sweep of the beach at the back. Beyond the beach, the hotels stood in a flat white line. Behind the hotels, flat-roofed buildings rose in a haphazard way above the gray walls of the medina.

Ghali smiled. There were no more checkpoints. He had only to walk up the boulevard toward the mountain and, eventually, the home of the old Maaseehooma to collect his money.

The taxi stopped before the Gare du Nord. Ghali stepped out, rounded the cab and thrust the ten dirham fare into the driver's hand. Before leaving, he glanced across for a final look at the tourists. There was no need to bother with them, he told himself. Not today with the money waiting. The woman was staring at him. Her lips were open, revealing overlapping teeth. Her companion walked to the trunk to wait for the driver. Ghali grunted and glanced at his sandals then followed the driver to the trunk of the cab. The fellah retrieved his cock and the tourist removed his pack.

Two, the tourist said, shifting an index finger back and forth between the woman and himself. Quanto cuesta? How much?

The driver looked at the hand as if perplexed. Hamsteen, he said finally. Fifty.

The man raised two fingers. Deux, he said.

Fifty, the driver said.

The man shook his head and said something to the woman. The woman turned to Ghali. How much for two? she asked.

Ghali considered her while the man and the driver turned to look at him. The men that lingered about the taxi stand had gathered and formed a tight circle about them. Their faces formed a wall that slouched toward Ghali and the two tourists. If he said fifty, he would have a cut, but there was no need with the old man waiting. He shook his head lightly. Pay him what you think is right, he said.

The woman squinted her eyes as if to concentrate on Ghali alone. Her lashes were without color, delicate rents where light seeped past. Thirty? she asked.

Ghali shrugged. If you think.

Her companion extended thirty dirhams toward the driver. The driver spat between his feet then rubbed at the spittle with the toe of his sandal, finally he blew through his nose. La, fifty, he said.

No, the tourist said and stuffed the bills in the man's pocket. As he turned away, the men in the circle laughed and parted to allow the tourists to leave. The couple crossed the street then headed up the hill away from the Ville Nouveaux toward the medina. Ghali walked leisurely along beside them. For a moment, he felt the luxurious thrill of ignoring them. Then, as they approached the guides that lingered on the corners by the gare, he turned toward them.

You are English? he inquired.

Dutch, the woman replied across the body of the man.

Ghali nodded, affecting a wise expression, mimicking the deliberate motions of the old men that lingered by the grand mosque talking after Friday prayers. This is your first time Maroq? he asked.

Yes, first visit.

He nodded thoughtfully. Then spoke carefully. You need



hotel? Kif?

Maybe, the woman said and smiled, exposing the uneven teeth again.

Ghali smiled back. Want hashish?

The woman continued to smile. Maybe, she said.

Marten, the man said. The two stopped and the woman extracted the colorful book all tourists carried from her striped bag. The man flipped through the pages then traced the page with his finger. Petit Socco? he asked Ghali.

We go, Ghali said and stepped in front of them. Pension Mauritania?

Lillian, the man said.

Lillian no good. You see, Ghali said and, back-pedaling, moved them through the medina pointing out leather shops and rug merchants as they passed. When the man paused to hand the book back to the woman and adjust his pack, Ghali asked their names.

Awja, the woman said. And Krouse. You? she said, pointing.

Ghali told her.

You have lived in Tangier all your life?

Yes, Ghali said, although he had only come to the city three years before.

You are a Tangerino?

Ghali nodded. Tanjaoui, he said.

But you are very light. The woman's teeth were always visible now. Not a Berber?

Ghali wagged a finger. La. Then changed his mind. Today, he would be a Berber. Oui, he said, grow kif.

The woman laughed. Do all the Berbers grow kif?

Yes, all Berbers. Ghali smiled complicitously.

The Pension Lillian was down an alleyway a considerable distance from the little souk, off Rue Touahine. A hunched old man in a red fez and a stained brick-colored gandora handed Krouse a key in the poorly lit vestibule by the door then grunted toward the stairway. Krouse and Awja went to put the rucksack in the room while Ghali stepped through the vestibule into the tiled courtyard. There were low piles of sand and tiles in the corners. The fountain was not functioning. Ghali crouched, assuming the karate stance he had seen Mahmoud strike, then stood again. He checked off the changes he would make if this were his pension then smiled to think of himself as a pension owner. He slapped the side of his thigh lightly.

The couple returned to the ground floor and before Ghali had spoken the woman invited him for tea. The three stepped onto the street and found a cafe. Awja chose a round white metal table by the door and Ghali and Krouse sat then watched her light a cigarette. Her tongue turned the smoke as she exhaled.

Haley. Right?

Ghali stared at her.

Your name? Haley?

Ghali, Ghali said, exaggerating the pressure in the back of his throat.

You drink don't you, Hali? Cervezas?

Ghali looked about then shook his head. Cervezas, no. Only té, he said.

Oh, Awja said, clearly disappointed.

He means here, Krouse said. He pointed at Ghali. You like cervezas?

Ghali touched his chest with his palm then understood. Yes.

The man snorted and Ghali looked at him closely for the first time. The skin on his face was loose and burnt both brown and red. The bags beneath his eyes were like the flesh on the head of a roasted sheep. His light eyes were darker now and damp.

Look at the sky, Awja said.

The faces of the buildings had already grown dark, but the top of the building opposite them burned red with the fire of the setting sun. In the shadows below, the evening chill descended upon them.

You like to have fun, Hali? Awja asked. Drinking? Smoking?

Ghali looked from Awja to Krouse. He thought to laugh then remembered the men of the mosque. He shrugged his shoulders.

Awja reached across the table and took Ghali's fingers in her hand. A slender gold chain slipped out from under the blue sweater she had put on over her dress. It settled against her wrist. Do you want to have fun with us, Hali?

You look like you can get things, Krouse said. You're a Tangerino.

Ghali felt a space widening around him, the sky lifting, making room above the tight corridor of the street.

Krouse's eyes peered over their drooping crescents.

Ghali nodded. You want hashish? he said.

No. Asucar moreno? Comprende? Heroin. Can you get? Fifty dollars. But we need to trust.

Awja squeezed Ghali's hand.

Ghali looked down at his hand.

The waiter came and poured their tea and Ghali reminded himself that he must meet the old man about the hashish. He looked across at Awja, who shrugged her shoulders. She stared

at the pink sky then raised her shoulders and dropped them, looked at Ghali and smiled with her bad teeth.

After the tea, Ghali led them through the kasbah, up the steps beside the Rue du Portugal to Dean's Bar. Ghali had never bought heroin, but he knew the big Fesi named Ali at Dean's could get it. The stools before the bar were empty. A handful of men in blazers and sweaters and gandoras watched a Spanish football match in the back room. The bartender came out of the little kitchen. Ghali ordered three Stork beers and asked after Ali. The proprietor shook his head. Ghali inquired again, saying in a strong voice with just the hint of a smile, that he had business to conduct with Ali. A large man with a protruding belly sitting among the soccer fans turned his head. He stood and stepped over to lean against the bar. The man wore a tan brimless cap and a brown gandora. His face was spotted with dark blotches on his cheeks and nose.

Conozco Ali, he said, and sniffled. Que quieren?

Asucar moreno, Ghali said.

The man wiped his nose. Cuanto.

Hamsteen dollars. Hamsamya dirham.

Tienen el deniro?

He wants money, Ghali said to Krouse.

Krouse nodded.

Espera quinze minutes, the man said, then rose and left the bar. The beers came and they waited. Awja picked at the red label of her bottle then saw Ghali watching her and tilted the green lip toward him. He nodded and considered her a moment then lifted his own beer and drank. The group of old men behind them roared and pounded the base of their glasses against the tables. Ghali turned and squinted toward the match on the television. White shirts sprinted across the green field.

Esta ganando, Ghali asked.

The group quieted. Réal, one man said.

Ghali snorted. Vive Barça, he said.

The man who had spoken waved a hand, dismissing them. Ghali laughed. He looked across at Krouse and Awja. The two had grown quiet. He wished that Ahmed and Mahmoud were with him. Then he would shout down the Réal fans. Ahmed especially would shout at the men then demand a profit from both the friend of Ali and the tourists for the sale of the heroin. Yet even that was nothing compared to what the old man was waiting to pay for the hashish. Ghali slipped a hand to his back and checked the package. The old Maaseehooma had promised him a thousand dirhams for the kilo. Ghali decided he would leave these two as soon as the man returned with the heroin and Ghali took his cut. They ordered more beer. Awja was picking at another label when the man returned. He sat beside Ghali.

El deniro, he said. Hamseen dolares, Oosa.

Hamseen ghali bezzaf, Ghali said to the man.

Es la precia, the man said. Miro el deniro.

Ghali nodded. In Dereja, he told the man it would take fifty dirhams to convince the tourists it was a good price.

What is the problem? Krouse said.

Awja leaned forward. The price is not important, she said softly. We are having fun. But we need good stuff. Ask him to show it.

She reached forward and touched Ghali's hand.

He wants the money, he told her.

Krouse put his left hand on the table and uncurled his fingers to reveal a folded fifty dollar bill. Show us the stuff, he said.

The friend of Ali took a balled black plastic bag from his gandora then leaned forward, holding it under the table. Krouse took it, raised it above the table and handed it to Awja.

The toilet? she said.

Ghali nodded, indicating the little door beside the kitchen entrance.

Awja took the bag and went into the bathroom.

El deniro, the old man said.

Wait, Krouse said.

The Réal fans pounded on the tables and the friend of Ali turned to find the news. This time Ghali remained quiet.

Awja returned. I think it's okay, she said.

Krouse flipped his left hand over and slid the bill along the table to the man. Awja put a fifty dirham bill down for the beers and the three stood to leave. Thank you, I mean, shukran, she told the friend of Ali. The friend of Ali snorted then wiped his nose. La shukran, he said. Alawajah.

Night had fallen. A lamp post by the door ended in masses of impotent wires. The street was shrouded in darkness. The three walked carefully, preferring the roadway to the broken sidewalk. Occasional Renaults and petit taxis interrupted the darkness with their headlights and forced them to the edge of the street then left them again in half-light. Ghali bumped into something beneath the shadow of a corner building. The thing was alive and he cursed and grabbed it by the shoulders. An approaching car revealed the drawn dirt-streaked face of a small boy.

Cadeau, monsieur? Un dirham, monsieur?

Ghali released the child and stepped past. Then stopped, considered the barraka and felt for a coin. He had given the taxi driver his last. Lla ysehheh, he murmured.

When they emerged into the light of Rue de Colonnnes, Awja slipped her arm through Ghali's, surprising him. His skin tingle where she touched him. He allowed her to draw him along. After a moment, feeling bold, he let his arm move up to curl around her waist.

What did you say? she said. To the boy.

Ghali thought a moment then translated. God for him to make it soft, he said.

Awja leaned against him, allowing him to feel her hip and the soft caress of the side of a breast. Wait, she whispered, then freed her arm and waist, leaving him to walk alone. Ghali checked the package against his back and thought of the old man. Perhaps Ahmed had gone alone tonight. Ghali smiled when he remembered that they needed him to smoke at all. A car passed then swerved and honked to miss the silhouette of a child in the street.

The guard of Pension Lillian was sleeping in a chair in the vestibule, the tattered fez still perched on his head. He raised watery eyes when the trio entered and stared dolefully at Ghali. Awja and Krouse ignored him and Ghali followed them past.

Their room was crowded with an old cane chair, a bureau and a bed. A bare bulb hanging by a wire in the ceiling threw yellow rays through the open doorway of the bathroom at the back to reveal a Turkish toilet and a clipped hose.

Ghali began to sit in the chair but felt the bottom begin to give way. He slid forward, putting only part of his weight on the forward edge. Awja fell onto the bed then pulled herself up to lean on her elbows with her head against the headboard. Ghali eyed her. The fabric of her dress was pulled higher, exposing her thighs. Krouse dug into the pack in the corner and emerged with a colorfully-striped plastic cylinder with an odd top. He grasped the cylinder and twisted off the cap then knocked a plastic medical syringe out onto the bed. Awja leaned forward and lay a spoon beside the syringes. She handed the black plastic bag to Krouse.

Hali first? she whispered loudly enough for Ghali to hear.

Ghali smiled awkwardly. He wagged a finger before him. Awja first, he said.

Krouse clicked his tongue. He doesn't understand, he said. He pushed down the edges of the bag and dug quietly in the soft gray powder with the spoon.

You're our tester, Hali, Awja said. We need you to be first.

Ghali shook his head, smiled. But Awja checks it. In the toilet.

We're afraid. We need you to test.

Ghali nodded. How much? For testing?

Krouse shrugged. Ten dollars.

Ghali thought. Twenty.

Say fifteen.

Not this, Ghali said, pointing at the syringe.

Krouse nodded and raised the spoon toward Ghali. Take it through the nose, he said.

Under the yellow light of the weak bulb, the flesh of Krouse's face rose and fell in rhythm with his breathing. Ghali leaned forward, tilted his nose down to touch the spoon and breathed in sharply. Before he had settled back on the edge of the chair, he was gagging. His throat and nose burned. He pressed his fingers to his nostrils. The back of his throat was on fire. Awja and Krouse watched him. He exhaled and inhaled forcefully. Once, twice, then the worst of the sensation lessened and he leaned back into the chair. The bottom collapsed and he sank toward the floor, his knees rising up before him. The tourists watched him.

Give me twenty dollars, he said.

Krouse and Awja laughed, a soft sound like water lapping. Ghali watched Krouse's eyes glitter, the bags under his eyes and sunken cheeks burn, reflecting the flame under the spoon. Laughing, he thought, with Maaseehoomas again. Light danced in the droplets absorbed by the needle of the syringe lowered by Awja. Her eyes glinted above the flame. Ghali stared but was distracted by the warm pulse of his ears. Awja leaned back and drew herself up until she was slanting against the headboard. Krouse pushed his hand up her leg, slipping under the pale cotton fabric of her dress.

Ghali watched.

Her pale legs were parted and bent at the knees. Krouse bent his head between them, running his fingers higher. Ghali tried to raise himself from the chair but only could summon a small effort before falling back again. He closed his eyes and found himself remembering cow birds, the way their white heads bobbed struck him as funny. He opened his eyes in time to watch Krouse place the tip of the bright needle on Awja's skin, yellow beneath the uncertain light of the bulb, press it in, draw the plunger, push.

Awja dropped fat lids over her eyes and drew her lips away from her crooked teeth and moaned. Ghali grasped the arms of the chair. He would rise. His hands were fat, strange. He loosened his grip and surrendered to the tight belly of the chair.

The room reverberated with a dull pounding. Ghali widened his eyes. Krouse flung himself toward the bathroom.

Policia!

(Continued on page 22)



# **JUDE NUTTER**



**JUDE NUTTER** is from North Yorkshire, England. She is a graduate of the MFA program at University of Oregon and lives in St. Paul, Minnesota. She won the 1997 Miriam McFall Starlin Award for Poetry, 1998 Wendy Norins Writing Award, 1998 Marlboro Review Prize for Poetry and 1999 National Prize for Poetry. Her poem "Abortion as Ecstasy" took first prize in the 1999 *Chiron Review* Poetry Contest.

## **Abortion as Ecstasy**

This is how it happens:

1

I knock back Percodan and Dixie cups of brandy  
and then I take the luggage of this body toward that bright  
tray of final instruments; toward those accouterments  
of the luckless: the paper sheets and stirrups and boxes  
of swabs and rubber gloves; the bottles of Betadine,  
each one labeled *for individual use*. Outside the door,  
along the smooth, grey hospital corridor, the crepe-soled  
concern of the nurses comes and goes. When it is over,

2

I drive home through the sharp October afternoon  
with whatever it is he has taken from me in a box  
on the back seat. Over the blank expanse of the marsh  
the hawks sheave and cross; I notice how the light  
sometimes grants them an angle of certain fire,  
sometimes an armour of chrome, as with that stretched  
ecstasy of abandon they rise up from the grasses  
so suddenly. And how easily sex makes its grave

3

inside the body. Like this. The hawks rise up  
through the brightness, perfect. And possible.

4

And whatever it is he has taken from me  
I burn on the beach at low tide, hoping something  
might rise through the oiled tightness of the water:  
not male, not female; but beyond and better  
than that. It is the idea of life I love. How selfish  
of the dead to never lie finally down. There is  
the silence. And the water. Both empty.  
Both enormous. And such a little ghost.

## **Fidelity**

For a while you are like lovers,  
and your privacy is luminous

like that loneliness the trees create  
around themselves, in sunlight,  
with their leaves. When his mouth

falls open there are strings of spit,  
as if the animal of the body might prevent  
its own departure. You are talking

with such authority, the way you do sometimes  
during sex, so that when at last  
he becomes reasonable beneath your hands,  
and for a minute comes  
back over into this world, you are thinking  
about desire and the way you cannot  
help but want him with a focused  
and inevitable finality. It's a secret, then,

between you: how the dying lie down  
like lovers. Through the ambulance window  
the sky has a sudden, wide purity in it; and  
in those trees, you are certain, birds are singing.  
How beautifully

the world burdens us with only as much  
as we can bear. From the bright,

vaulted stillness of the ambulance you collect  
up the clothes cut away from his body,  
the vials, a dropped needle: all  
the accouterments of despair.  
It's like rummaging through the fallout after love  
for signs of god only to find how grateful  
and full of privileged sadness we are.

Later, you will drive home to a man  
serious about fidelity and fail, again,  
to tell him of the intimacies the dying  
allow; how breath, like bird song, like words  
that do their sexual work, enters  
an uncomplicated, ready silence;

how you never will get your heart around  
those small, astonished sounds he made,  
as if a woman he loved, or at least desired,  
were easing herself onto him  
with her oiled tightness;  
or that sheen on the roof of his mouth  
like a brightness reflected from the turned  
bowl of heaven. What that woman would have seen,  
if she were lucky, curving over him.



# TODD BALAZIC

**TODD BALAZIC** lives and works in Bigfork, Montana. He cites The Firesign Theatre, The Church of the Sub-Genius and Mystery Science Theater 3000 as his chief sources of inspiration. His poem, "maternal polemic," took second prize in the 1999 *Chiron Review* Poetry Contest.

## maternal polemic

Opened a literary review  
and was informed that

"Blue death is not the end."

You have to wonder  
what kind of person would write that,  
would write:

"Death is only a wound."

You have to wonder  
if he's ever seen someone die,  
if he's even seen an animal die,

or had to kill an animal  
that was dying slowly and in great pain.

My mother died slowly and in great pain,  
of cancer prolonged by medical arrogance.  
She was 47 years old.

If only someone had told her death is a wound;  
and not just any wound, but

"a deep rich wound full of light."

But, as it was, she missed the subtle harmony  
of the Big Picture,

she got caught up in the details,  
like the little dry clicking noise  
that rattles in the throat

after breathing stops.  
Maybe the details always do that,

always blur the rich blue light,  
because – to those of us in the room, anyway –

Death that night seemed more than a wound,  
seemed quite final in fact,

and exceedingly dark.

## Don Juan in a letter to his son, Don Pedro

One day her breasts  
will seem like dead jellyfish,  
her lissome figure  
will spindle into reeds  
snapping in a sea  
killed by sun.

It will be that bad.  
It will happen fast and certain  
in a senseless erection aimed at space,  
stretched out past flesh and afflatus.  
It has nothing to do with you.

I remember seeing that for the first time,  
seeing it in the sky one afternoon –  
the clouds like white boulders,  
the blue between like Sisyphus  
ten times over.

## dinner with Laura

Laura is hearing voices again,  
the ones her husband beat into her head.  
They tell her to cut herself, to cut deep  
into the wrist and down through the bone  
and out into night.

I know because she told me, by the window  
one afternoon when I felt like lead.  
Now she is crying.  
She covers her face.  
The sobs cause her hair to bump

against her hands, knocking  
on her fingers like a door  
to see if her eyes are still at home.  
No one tries to comfort her.  
The mad are pragmatists.

We keep eating, chewing and chewing  
and chewing, alive as formica,  
as the hallway carpet  
worn down by thorazine feet.

Laura is the one who made me speak,

who called me over one day and told me  
to tell a story and who was so beautiful and certain  
and unassuming I actually told it.  
Now she is burning alive and I sit there  
like an abandoned factory.

I sit there with my white plastic fork  
and my white plastic knife  
and poke around in the gravy,  
looking for a few solids  
to help keep the medicine down.



## Groceries

Angelo Verga

I dry the Swiss Chard leaves the way you would  
Thick folds and stems between paper towels  
I arrange the tall parsley in a bowl  
And the bowl inside the oven to dry  
I put the potatoes where the potatoes go  
The carrots and broccoli crowded in the crisper  
Apples and kiwis belly to belly  
Snuggling together near the toaster  
Green and yellow tomatoes propped  
Where the sun will caress them  
I throw away the old celery and dead lettuce  
Replace them with this week's fresh  
Firm celery, tight sexy lettuce  
The bright avocados aren't ripe yet,  
But where does the spinach go?

Last night's dishes point  
Fingers at me from the drain basin  
I put the cardboard box near my desk  
For recycling poems that won't come together  
The recycling day is Friday I remember  
Now where should I put my pride?  
Where should I put my ravenous sadness?

## Hippo

Phebe Davidson

Someone on the bank is telling you  
*Look, look there!* where a broad-backed hippo rises  
like Mu or Atlantis from water thick and rich with silt,  
runnels sliding down her sides, blistering with light.

This is not the poem where some poet assumes  
the voice of the hippo, that vast unreadable mass  
browsing the river, pig-eyed and full of sluggish lust,  
graceful as a courtesan dancing for her lord.

How would a poet begin? How could he come  
to this monstrous place, skin afire with tropical sun,  
quaking with fear of vipers, ants, a thousand unnamed  
things? He is all but river-blind himself, caught

in currents brown as dirt, his thinking heart riven  
with longing and despair. All he knows is the river's wash,  
a stomach big with hunger, heat. The unexpected surge  
of blood and cell, the sweet soft bottom climbing feet to hips

to shoulders, face – it doesn't matter after all. This is  
how the song must rise, desperate and muddy-tongued,  
strangling at last on what it sings. Blear, helpless, resolute.  
It is full of life and brilliant with desire.

**WINNERS OF THE 1999 Chiron Review Poetry Contest** are: First prize (\$100), Jude Nutter of St. Paul, MN for "Abortion as Ecstasy" (p. 12); second prize (\$50), Todd Balazic of Bigfork, MT for "maternal polemic" (p. 13). Third prize winners: Angelo Verga of Bronx, NY for "Groceries;" Phebe Davidson of Aiken, SC for "Hippo;" Kemp Gregory of San Antonio, TX for "A Bit Groggy, Tennessee Ernie Ford Returns from the Grave to Complete His Last Fucking Timesheet;" Susan Deer Cloud for "You Really Have" (p. 15); and Robert L. Greenfield of Goleta, CA (who refused the prize and withdrew his poem from publication) for "richard burton d. august, 1984." Winner of the 1999 Chiron Review Chapbook Contest is Jacqueline Smith of Columbus, OH for *My G-Rated Life*.

## A Bit Groggy, Tennessee Ernie Ford Returns from the Grave to Complete His Last Fucking Timesheet

Kemp Gregory

Bear with me,  
folks, it's been  
a few years since  
I fooled with the facts

of night & day. I sure  
could use some management  
help on this thing. – Do  
I shove Projects A &

Z into "Sixteen  
Tons?" In both, we played  
Atlas, pumped  
iron, shoveled

loads of Aegean  
customer shit.  
And did we ever  
meet country boy

deadlines! There was  
plenty of good ol' busted  
gut. To make John  
Henry proud

of his turn  
at the profit  
machine. "Another day  
older and deeper

in debt." – That's it: sweet  
sixteen. The number I need  
for the only code  
what exists.



## "You Really Have

Susan Deer Cloud

balls," for years the boys and then all the men in my life tossed me their highest compliment. For years, beginning with those first, fierce seasons when I was a tomboy with Genghis Khan eyes, bloodied knees, hair that refused to grow, I accepted their praise like the glass beads my Mohawk and Blackfoot ancestors accepted from long ago white men. "You have big balls!" my brothers, boy cousins, boyfriends draped and decorated me with their hot words whenever I stole golden apples for them from the private orchards at the end of the street, or disobeyed my mother and stole far into the woods behind the house, or played hooky from the public school that stank of institutionalized wax and scrubbed brains, bearing my renegade body up to the high mountaintops, seeking my instruction in caves, meadows, and trees. When I grew older, finally sprouting hair and even breasts, my older, educated lovers further enlightened me, "You really have *cojones*," as we played at Hemingway, struggling to create our own code out of the confusion of present wars – the war in Vietnam, the war against Blacks, the war against women, Indians, poets, the poor, the broken "mad," and the final nuclear war against the whirling, exuberant cells of our naked bodies.

For years I was so proud, swaggering down city streets with brazen balls, unafraid, smuggling my glass beads, smile, and Indian love medicine into America's ghettos at high noon, or riding barefooted up elevators to skyscraper tops, peering out over oceanic nighttime lights, high tides of shine and shimmer, gold and silver, or sneaking into city parks after closing clock time, crouching like a ghost with my phantom *cojones*, surrounded by memories of ancestors in the tamed remnants of ancient forest, and all around me, like a tightening noose, countless millions of the living sleeping, or trying to sleep, in their coffin-rooms. "Why don't you or I ever get mugged?" I once asked my officially certified, paranoid-schizophrenic lover, Irish Larry, as we watched the sun set on our off-white skins in the heart of Harlem. "Look at us," he cried. "They see our balls. They see you, a woman, and know you possess *cojones*, wild, potent, polysyllabic *cojones*. They think we're going to mug them." And I was so proud, so fearless, as our skins turned Bessie Smith-dark with the falling sun.

"You really have balls," for too many years my ex-husband lavished me with his Vodka Cocktail-praise, having to have me because I used to stride free down the streets of Liberty, New York, blowing love notes through a wooden flute into the spring air, sweeping the dirty sidewalks with torn dress hems, trying to liberate parrots and canaries caged like rainbows in the Five-and-Dime he managed. "I could have you arrested," he warned, when he caught me fiddling with the latches and bars. "But since you have such big *you know whats* (for a woman), will you go out to dinner with me?" The rest

was cowboys-and-Indians all over again, white man against red woman, days and nights of drunken fights determining just who was going to win *this* war. And I was buried in balls – boob tube ball games – my ex-husband, former glory boy of high school football, baseball, softball, soccer ball, cheering every conceivable ball thrown, hit, kicked, punched across the stupefying screen. When I fought him, all those balls and all that boredom, he said, "You're so sexy when you're mad," and then we'd ball in bed.

"O tempores, o *cojones*," what was I, a young wife, to do, but read radical feminist literature, drop in to college, get back to my native roots by writing poetry, return in secret to the deep woods?

For years the boys and then all the men in my life tossed a lariat of praise around my neck and roped me in. I loved them for it. I loved them for helping me be so proud. But these days whenever some blue-eyed songster hotly breathes to me, "You really have balls," I think, "No, I really have cunt. So did my mother, her mother before her, and all the women blood-rivering back to the original wise woman whose glowing ovum resulted in me. They were loving, laughing, dignified, healing, singing dreamers who slipped through the endless Burning Times, bequeathing a legacy of dreamer-women to Mother Earth."

I laugh at the songsters, realizing for years the compliments from all the boys and men were nothing but a way for them with their silently clanging balls to get where they most longed to be, inside my cunt, inside the juicy, blackberry mystery of cosmic cunt, of goddess-fire, passion-screams, and a time outside time more ancient than star-come. Now whenever any sweet man smelling of heady, musty cologne and invisible pheromones gives me his ultimate compliment, "You really have a lot of balls," I give him my ultimate compliment right back – "You really have a lot of cunt."

### Letters to the Editor

The editors of *Chiron Review* welcome letters from subscribers and readers.

Letters should be short and to the point, typed and double-spaced, if possible, and must be signed with the writer's name and address. The editors reserve the right to edit letters for length, grammar and clarity.



## The Christmas Cops

i think it was December of 83 'cause my first wife was still with me and there was a Christmas tree in this scene. Me and that wife always never agreed about Christmas trees. Every year she dragged one into the house and among other things it was useful to her as a crucifix to prove how little Christmas spirit I had. There were also cops in this scene. It doesn't snow in the suburbs of Southern California so a Christmas tree is helpful to achieve that Currier & Ives feel. I hung a hypodermic needle on the tree. She hadn't noticed it yet.

It was of an evening and I was lounging around the stereo when my old friend Baker showed up fresh from a little 9-month stint in Norco. This house where we lived was in an alley in the old section of town. Baker had brought by some weed, though weed wasn't really our drug of choice. That's what the people with the clipboards call it, you'll be bent over with cramps puking green bile, and they'll ask, "So, what is your drug of choice?" They're hoping you won't say Budweiser 'cause that'd really worry them. As long as it's heroin then we're still allowed to hate you. Officially. And leave the cuffs on.

I've never seen cops in a Currier & Ives Christmas scene. But then, I don't think Currier & Ives works out of Los Angeles. Home of the storm trooper. Mythical Valhalla of the law & order freaks.

The cops didn't knock. They waited in the alley for us to come out. They had their lights turning and cruisers at both ends of the alley. Like this was a movie and they had us surrounded. We walked right into them.

I think the neighbors wanted to be in the movie too. Even though it was ice cold they were out there standing around in the shadows. The cops had our shirts off and were running their flashlights over our arms. The old daily game of looking for fresh marks. Baker had that baggie of weed in his back pocket. And neither of us was too hopped-up about going to jail, it being Christmas and all.

One determining factor about Southern California cops is that when they get their minds fixed on the idea of busting someone, they usually do it. No matter what. It is a sort of J. Edgar Hoover religious belief that all citizens, if they are not cops, are therefore the enemy, and thusly manifestly arrestable. In fact, arrest 'em anyway, you can always turn them loose. Both myself and Baker had been arrested so many times that it looked like it was just going to be another ride.

They like to hold you and see how sick you get. And the judges and DAs want more than just another Under the Influence. You can beat that charge, at least a couple times, or side-step it, and the cops hate that. So, they administer their own little system of law by keeping you in jail and watching you puke your guts. Legally they're only allowed to keep you 72 hours, but, if they think they've got a felony on their hands they can add 24 hours to that, and well of course a sick junkie is a felony just waiting to happen. And if by chance your little stay in the precinct torture chamber over-laps a weekend, well, weekends don't count, simply because there's no court on weekends, which means unless you were picked up on a Monday, you can count on entertaining the cops for six days. And this all takes place conveniently outside the scrutiny of the courts. What this has to do with Christmas I haven't the foggiest. Except that a couple junkies stole Christ out of the life-size diorama downtown that year and got caught trying to sell him back to a Catholic priest. I had nothing to do with it. I only watched.

So, we're half naked in the alley and it's black out except for the flashing circus lights on the cop cars. Baker is on parole and doesn't necessarily want the cop that's searching him to find that baggie in his back pocket. When the cop starts bitching about how these guys won't let us alone, and keeps yelling about how unfair they are. The cop lets himself get diverted by this and rejoins the argument with his own yelling, only louder. Baker leads him on and they scream their heads off. The cop never found the weed.

But then they decide to tear up my house. It doesn't matter they don't have a search warrant. That's never stopped L.A. cops before. Instead of a warrant, all they need is "reasonable suspicion." A cop without reasonable suspicion is like Thanksgiving without a turkey. So, they come on in. And I decide I better go get the wife, who has been taking a bath blissfully ignorant of what's been going down out in the world. Besides, it's best to have a witness watching the cops. They tend to keep themselves a bit more in check if they're being watched by more than just those they intend to bust. They piss around in my book shelves, annoyingly shoving a stack on the floor. They grab a few wrapped boxes from under the tree and shake them. Nobody sees the syringe hanging there. My wife is fuming. Steam coming off her lovely skin and smoke coming out of her ears. She's got a towel around herself and I'm shivering without a shirt and Baker's listening to the cop outside yell at him. Believe it or not, but the cops left. And left us. My wife left too, sometime before the next Christmas.

14nov97

## The Christmas Atrocities

My friend Buford says Christmas has gotten altogether too commercial. "All everybody does is spend, spend, spend. They completely miss the deeper meaning of Christmas. Running all around, cutting you off." I think Buford was behind on his Christmas shopping, the lady on tv said he had six days of glorious shopping left. I asked him what he meant about the deeper meaning of Christmas. He got prickly and had another snort of his beer and said, "Well, that's when Christ was born gawd damit, we should be celebrating his birthday, not running around buying each other presents." I agreed and poured another shot of vodka into my beer. It was just yesterday Buford was bragging about what a fine Christmas tree he had this year. Every year he got himself a big one, with flocking, never paid more than 29 dollars, says he knows someone. I asked him whatever happened to Joe Buck anyway? After he came back from New York he was never the same. Though maybe it was Florida, he was there just after New York, and then he came home. Joe just sort of walked around in a trance for years, though he did pretty good as a Santa Claus every December at the mall, "remember that?"

Buford softened up some at the thought of Santa Claus. "Yeah, ole Joe Buck made a perty damn nice Santa Claus. Those children need that you know. What would Christmas be without Santa Claus?" He called for Henry to bring him another, "and bring some more of that sheep dip that Uncle Sam here is drinking, I'll pay for this round." I didn't really have the time to be sitting on my butt doing rounds with Buford, I'd just put in another 11-hour night down at the post office. Lot of mail comes through at Christmas and we've got to sort it all before sun up. I don't worry about it though, they just bring in extra help for 5 bucks an hour and work the shit out of them people. Puts a little extra cash in their pockets. Union makes sure they don't push me too hard, it's not my doings they get so much mail this time of year. I asked Buford to maybe speculate what exactly *would* it be like without Santa Claus. He might get riled but I don't think he'll get violent. We had a friendly boxing match last summer out in back, and I kicked his butt all to hell. Besides, I figured he probably had enough beer in him to get philosophical. And I was right. Buford moved his napkin around like he was thinking, but it was all an act. He was just putting a few seconds of drama on his spin. The pregnant pause. He got off his elbows and sat up, said, "Lookit, what you got is you got Christ - now he was born, and you've got to celebrate that, okay. Now, Santa Claus, he's different, he's for the kids. If you didn't have that those kids wouldn't have anything to look forward to." Henry was changing channels on the tv. He stopped at the news where an excited reporter was yelling about a couple of Santa Claus' that had just robbed First National Bank and the police had them cornered in a McDonalds on Central. Buford wasn't listening so he missed the idea that it was sort of ironic. He went on, "Mostly, Santa Claus represents hope. He brings hope into the world," then he sniggers and makes an aside, "and them kids is hoping they'll get some big presents, ha, ha, ha." Drinks some beer, regains his former seriousness, "Well seriously, hope is important, you've got to have hope." I was half wondering if one of those bank robbers in the Santa outfits wasn't Joe Buck. Wouldn't surprise me. Joe never did find an angle. He always fell back into another dish washing job. Maybe this was his big break. Buford was saying something about toys and how important it was for Santa to follow through. It sounded like he was giving himself a pep talk. He still had some things he needed to pick up for his kids before visiting day tomorrow. His ex had the kids, but his sister and her kids lived with him. He was telling me about responsibilities and had sorta wandered off the track, so just for fun I said, "Yeah Buford okay but lookit I was askin' you what would it be like *if* there was *no* Santa. You've been blabbering the usual yuletide fantasies, now tell me, what if there was no Santa Claus." Of course, he pushed me off my stool and I landed flat on my back, completely taken off-guard. This lousy bastard is lookin' for some hands-on therapy and he's came to the right place. He was coming down on me before I had a chance to get up and I didn't mean to exactly but I was just protecting my face when his eye collided with my elbow. He rolled over and groaned. Some blood had squirted out of his eye. I got up off the floor and straightened myself out. Henry was looking over the bar down at Buford moaning holding his eye. I shrugged and said, "He's all yours Henry. Merry Christmas Buford, I'll see you around."

Stefan had never seen *Midnight Cowboy* so I rented it - early November, staying with us before he flew over to England for gigs - and after we watched it I wondered whatever happened to Joe Buck. So, this story is like a sequel - with a cameo by Joe. Original story by James Leo Herlihy. (27Nov97).

\* \* \* \* \*

These stories were reprinted from *Brother Can You Spare A Dime I Need A Christmas Tree*, a poetry/jazz CD by Mark Weber and his band. Also on this CD are Gerald Locklin singing "Danny Boy," three poems written and read by Todd Moore and one by J.B. Bryan. It is \$11 from Zerx Press, 725 Van Buren SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108.



# Donna Hilbert

## Grief Becomes Me

You've never looked better,  
my friends Edward and Neil  
tell me and lean close  
for a clearer view.  
I know what they mean  
and believe it's true,  
the same way earth and sky  
wash to a radiant clean  
after relentless days of rain.  
How you would present me  
with pieces of sea glass  
tumbled smooth  
from journeying canyons  
and rivers to the ocean  
and back again  
washing up at our feet –  
bits of amber, green,  
and the rarest stellar blue.  
Everything pure and impure  
has leached from the soil  
of my face,  
and in the corners of my eyes,  
hard crystals form.

## What I Know

Because I awaken  
at 6:19  
to pain  
as if my heart  
were a wishbone  
pulled apart,  
I am not surprised  
when they climb  
the stairs  
to tell me  
you are dead.  
Now I understand  
what fear is:  
waiting  
for the messenger  
to tell me what  
I know.

## Word

I refuse to say  
*pass away*  
or even *die*  
words both passive,  
natural, insist  
instead on *killed*,  
word cruel enough  
to pluck you  
from this life.

## Sleep

I fall asleep now in your chair  
watching the local late-night news –  
other people's tragedies  
lulling me to sleep.  
On your last night,  
exhausted from so much fun –  
the swim across the bay,  
anniversary wine with friends –  
you slept in this chair  
until the kids and I hauled you  
off to bed, protesting  
you were just resting your eyes,  
wanted to catch the sports  
and then you'd come to bed.

## Morning

You come to me in a dream  
dressing for your pre-dawn ride,  
just as you did on the morning  
that you died, awakening me  
when you turn on the light  
to find some missing socks.  
I scolded you then,  
but now I plead, appeal to reason:  
*since you know*  
*what's going to happen*  
*please don't go.*  
You touch my hair, pull on your jersey,  
ride again into that dark morning.

## Party

I am furious to find  
you've planned a gala party  
to make up, I guess, for the huge one  
that you missed, inviting even guests  
who betrayed you after death.  
*I don't want them in my house,*  
I scream, but you say, *no harm,*  
I'm back now, happy and forgiving  
as you were in life.  
Angry still, I take up another subject:  
*If you ride that bike again I will divorce you.*  
You're not convinced, so I continue  
*I'd rather be divorced than have you dead.*

## The Dead

One night you come back fat.  
When I ask why, you say,  
*the dead don't exercise,*  
*but we do eat dinner.*

## Beach House Facing South

I decorate our new house  
as we had planned –  
carpet gray as winter ocean,  
furniture slip-covered shades of sand,  
the same mild scheme  
both sides of the window.  
Now, I miss the dashes of color  
looking out at you,  
bright in the logo T-shirts that I hated,  
bounding west with our dog –  
two beautiful animals out for fun –  
into the last heat of summer sun.

## Smoke

What would hurt you most  
if you looked down upon me,  
as those who try to comfort  
say you do, are the cigarettes  
I smoke for solace  
mornings when I almost  
see you on the beach  
evenings when all I crave  
is lost beyond my reach.

## Lesson

A portion of ashes we buried,  
the portion remaining to be scattered  
sits on a shelf  
in my office, the container swathed  
in a flannel bag, like the bag  
protecting your tuxedo shoes.  
How handsome you were in formal clothes!  
Strangers often asked if you were *someone*.  
Should they ask for your autograph?  
The irreducible things that make up a person –  
ashes, bits of tooth and bone –  
transform from one noun  
into another.  
Before your death, Dearheart  
I didn't know  
that physics and grammar  
are the same sad subject:  
the transformation of matter,  
transforming what matters.



from:

# Tales of an Ancient Go-Go Girl

by Joan Jobe Smith

## DO YOU LIKE GOOD MUSIC?

That old 1960s rock 'n' soul song "Do You Like Good Music?" is playing on the vegetable store's intercom while I look for a loose tomato in a box that bears the warning sign: "DO NOT BREAK APART!" These organic, hydroponic, four-clustered tomatoes still attached to their vine cost a dollar more a pound right now, two weeks after spring, than Porterhouse steaks which are on sale for \$2.39 a pound at the supermarket. Such is the way with American beef prices right now after Mad Cow Disease, E. coli, and clogged carotid scares.

"Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah," sings the soul singer whose name I did not know even in the 1960s when I used to go-go dance to that popular, groovy, song-du-jour night after night at Sammy Glassman's La Pink Pantera where I worked as a highly paid go-go girl. I still remember my old dance routine, a mix of shing-aling, the Pony, the Temptation Walk (a fast one) and a shimmy, and am almost tempted to try a wiggle here in the vegetable stores except that there are strawberry and lettuce skid marks on the slippery floor where customers have added to the hazard by tracking in rain puddles from today's unusual Southern California April storm.

That song was playing full blast on a busy, standing-room-only Saturday night in June, 1967, when I first laid eyes on Dwight David, who sat, seemingly spellbound by me, right in front of the sink at the bar where I bent, vis-à-vis, letting it all hang out, shocking pink spotlight – and blacklight-lit cleavage bobbling suntan tawny from my shocking pink fringed bikini push-up top, washing a couple hundred dirty beer glasses and dozens of dirty beer pitchers, in between dancing on the stage every ninth song and serving beer, we four bar girls, not counting the shocking pink bikini-clad point girl (who poured all the beer for the floor girls) and cashier girl (who didn't have to dance – lucky her), took turns. The four bikini girls working the floor serving beer to the 200-capacity crowd and dancing every ninth song, paid us each a dollar a night out of their shocking pink tips for our shocking pink dirty work, all of us, shocking pink hurried flurries programmed to entertain, prodded by boss Glassman to make money, sell beer, under the greedy guise of come see the girls, girls, girls, Circean babes with one siren call, a question: "More beer?"

Dwight David was named after General Eisenhower when he was born in 1945 (five years after I was), he managed to yell to me, getting acquainted, over the eardrum-busting din of jukebox and noisemaking, drunken go-go bar funseekers, his brown eyes twinkling, his white perfect teeth smiling as he sang along with the song: "Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah" meaning also, when he winked at me, an affirmation of what he liked about me too along with liking good music. Dark-haired and young Brandoesque with thick eyebrows and an aquiline nose, he was the handsomest man, boy, perhaps, since he was only 22 at the time. I'd ever seen in person who wasn't a movie star. And he was the first man I'd ever fallen in love with at first sight. When the next song came on, the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations," it seemed like Fate, the confirmation that Dwight David and I indeed not only liked good music and each other, we also shared good, good, good, good vibrations.

Dwight David waited for me in the Pink Pantera parking lot after work, just a little drunk, having sobered up, tried to, from all the beer he'd consumed the earlier part of the evening, by drinking three Cokes. "What's new Pussycat?" he asked me, the huge, shocking pink glow of the Pink Pantera neon sign overhead making him look sunburned. I'd had hundreds of men ask me that over the three years I'd been a go-go girl but he was the first one to say it who made me smile, forget it was a cliché, make me want to purr against his big hairy chest, wrap around his neck my fuzzy tail, if I had one, and felt like maybe I could grow one if I thought about it long enough.

Dwight David had just two weeks ago graduated with a 4.0 grade point average from the University of California Los Angeles. I'd had hundreds of guys tell me all kinds of lies, how much money they made, how unmarried, childless, they were, but never had any told me a lie like that, so I believed him. He showed me his student body card anyway and a photo in his wallet of himself wearing a blue gown and mortarboard standing next to a woman he said was his mother, a beautiful, older, female version of himself. His hand shook while he showed me. He explained: "I'm so nervous. I didn't think you'd really meet me after I asked you to. I thought for sure you'd hang me up." So, I was his first go-go girl. Like 1945 was his first

Christmas, a cocker spaniel his first dog, Davy Crockett his first cowboy. So, I was a milestone in his life. Made him nervous thinking I might be a hang up, a heartbreaker. I felt honored. I wanted to say: "Why shouldn't I meet you? You are the most beautiful man I've ever seen." But I didn't. He was a milestone for me too. My first UCLA graduate. And, my first date in more than 14 months.

Dwight David, the former starving student, rode a motorcycle, which added a couple more gallons of Brando paint to his armor. "Rrrr!" he cranked up his bike and off we went, him following me as I drove my Volkswagen Bug, to the beach, so we could "talk." Although we were in the midst of the Sexual Liberation, I did not feel sexually liberated. A teen-ager in the 1950s when wearing sleeveless blouses or shoes without socks to school were scorned by and infuriated my father who allowed me one date every two weeks with a strictly enforced ten-thirty p.m. curfew, I felt not unlike someone who'd never seen money and had mysteriously acquired the combination to a bank vault. Even though everyone under the age of thirty was Getting It On and Getting Down, I was bewildered, did not



know how to spend, with ease, these Good Times of Sexual Plenty.

Dwight David, however, made it easier, and almost Nice as we lay together on a woolen blanket he'd had in his bike's trunk and spread upon the sand on Bolsa Chica State Beach. People could still spend the night then on the Southern California beaches without getting run off like thieves by life guards after the sun went down. While a fullmoon gave us light to see each other, inspect the first-time wonders of each other's flesh, we told our life stories, my five years seniority, then, seeming more like 100, for, as Dwight David so exuberantly put it when I'd finished my saga: "My God, you've really lived." And that I had: only 27 but yet already two husbands, two divorces, three children, a dead father (his died in the Korean War), a sad, widowed mother living with me, and I even told him about the attempted murder: mine, perped by my last husband, now in Soledad Prison, three to ten. I showed Dwight David my scars just in case if he thought I wasn't very pretty, he'd know why I didn't look just right.

"My God," he said, "you're a living, modern day Moll

Flanders with your picaresque, episodic life. You're a survivor," he said, tutoring me in his A-plus 17th Century English Literature education. From then on he called me "Moll" and I called him "Ike." Then, after he'd concluded his autobiography with the listing of his many achievements: All-American right guard, Phi Beta Kappa, student body president, all the exemplary events that had occurred to him while I was surviving some of the worst years of my, or anyone's, life, we made love in the foggy wee small hours of the morning on the blanket in the cool June sand. And thus began the sweet, first and only summer romance I'd ever have.

With money he'd been given for a graduation gift by a rich uncle, Ike bought a seven-year-old white Ford Falcon and wined and dined me on my Tuesday nights off. He took me to membership-only Hollywood discotheques where I wore my yellow and black faux Rudi Gernreich mini from Orbach's and saw Sonny and Cher do the bugaloo and Frank Sinatra and Mia not speaking. We saw *Dr. Zhivago* three times. Ike, a Russian Revolution scholar, everytime we left the theater, wiped tears from his eyes. We went out for drinks, although I didn't drink then, but I'd choke down a Chivas and water, his favorite, to be sexy. Then we'd check into the Beachside Motel on Pacific Coast Highway and make love till just before sunrise when I'd dress and go home to my mother and children, sneak into my house so they wouldn't know I'd been up to such tawdry doings. Ike took my children and me to the beach, the zoo, Disneyland. Ike adored Maureen, my youngest, whose hair was a strawberry-lemonade shade at the time. She adored him. My mother adored him. He was fun and thoughtful, could imitate Bob Dylan and Mickey Mouse, gave my kids Mighty Joe Young rides on his broad back while he bent over, grunting and scratching his armpits like a gorilla; he bought my mother an electric can opener after seeing her struggle with an old manual one. The nights I worked, he was there on his favorite shocking pink barstool in front of the sink so he could pass me notes when it was my turn to wash beer glasses. "You're too much," he wrote one night, "I want some more." "I'm outta my mind," he wrote another night, "because you're outta sight." "You're divine," he wrote on one side of a piece of paper he'd folded in half, then on the other side: "I want to cling to." On another he drew a heart, inside he wrote: "I want yours." Well, he had my heart all right and it seemed as if he were giving me his. But: I was a hundred and five years older than he was. And: he had a secret he'd kept from me the last two weeks of August.

Right after Labor Day he told me. On a Saturday night he came into the club all dressed up in a new navy-blue blazer, grey slacks, white shirt, and a maroon, blue and white diagonal-striped tie. He'd trimmed off his sideburns, shoulder-length Samson hair, and the moustache he'd begun to grow. He'd even had a manicure. He looked like a bridegroom: clean, and ready for something wonderful. After he followed me home to park my Bug and I hopped into his Falcon, he drove us up to Signal Hill where we could see all the sparkling city lights of Long Beach below and hear the foghorn moans from the Los Angeles Harbor to the southwest. A place where all the teen-agers parked in the 1950s to make out and where my father had forbidden me to ever go and I never did until now.

Ike, though, didn't want to make out. He wanted to hold hands, mine all sticky and shamed from washing beer glasses and pitchers. I had yet to find a soap that would take away the yeasty stench of stale beer. "My dearest Pussycat," Ike began. He hadn't called me Moll all night. He'd sat at the bar watching me dance on the stage, move, jiggle, serve beer, a different way that night, giving me looks of calculation rather than longing and expectation. "Pussycat, something wonderful has happened to me," he said. I knew it. He was in love with someone else and was getting married. Probably to some blond, young, nice UCLA cheerleader or Valedictorian. A virgin. Or, considering the eager tumescence of the times, perhaps a solicitous fellatrice. "I've been accepted into UCLA's law school," he said instead. Then he let out a deep sigh of pride and relief. "I was on the alternate list and just found out two weeks ago that there was an opening. And I'm IT! Isn't that great?" He honked his horn, on purpose. Beep! echoed down through Signal Hill's oil slicked gullies. Beep! Beep-beep!

I was stunned. I shook my head, to wake myself from both go-go girl night shift fatigue and summer romance confusion, then said, "Great, Dwight. Yes, it's great. UCLA law school.



Great," I said, not believing this was really great, but it had to be because he thought it was. I knew he'd wanted to go to law school and for more than the one reason of acquiring a lucrative career: it would also mean another student deferment from the draft and having to go to Vietnam. I also knew he'd been denied admission by the hair of his chinny-chin-chin LSAT score, one point short of a shoo-in. But he hadn't told me about the alternate list. I patted his back ceremoniously. Shook his hand, vigorously. Kissed both his cheeks with élan, like French general. Made v-shaped signs with both hands and waved them in front of his face. "Bravo!"

Finally, he kissed me. A long, sad, unsexy kiss. Then he drove me home, hours before sunrise, past the Beachside Motel, while he told me all about his orientation he'd attended that afternoon at the chancellor's palatial home where he'd met his future profs and legal eagle colleagues. Dwight David: Juris Doctorate. Esquire. Moll Flanders: Survivor. Picaroon.

Yes, Dwight David asked me to wait for him. And I said yes, I would. But law school was hell. The first year they scare you to death, Dwight David told me; the second year they work you to death; and the third year they bore you to death. If we could just hang in there till that third year we'd be okay, he said; he could call me every night instead of just weekends and he could come see me every weekend instead of just winter and summer breaks. And my go-go girl world was hell. Psychedelic music changed it all: Jim Morrison, Jimi, all those guys with their LSD-corroded ways and impossible-to-go-go-dance-to music, if you could call it music. And changing mores changed it: topless bars were coming and going, replaced by bottomless bars, then porn film bars. No one wanted to pay high prices for beer to watch old-fashioned bikini dancers like me anymore. (Shocking pink just didn't shock anymore.) Bar owners paid half the wages they did in the beginning of the go-go craze. So I quit to go back to college to literally clean up my act. After getting my B.A. degree, I went to law school myself, one of those that's easy to get into, for the one year they scare you to death. I looked for Dwight David's name in the American Bar Association Register but it wasn't there, eight years after I'd last seen him.

"I didn't break it apart, I swear," I say to the vegetable store owner, handing my sole tomato to him to weigh. "I found it all by itself in the bottom of the box," I further contend. A polite Japanese, he smiles patiently, as if he's heard that same old allegation many, many times from us tomato maulers. But I am telling the honest to God's truth. He rings up \$1.24 on the cash register. Now, who would've ever thought a day would come when one tomato just a little bit bigger than a golfball would cost almost as much as half a Porterhouse steak? Just as he puts it in a huge plastic bag, a burp at a smorgasbord, the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There" begins to play in the vegetable store.

"Just seventeen, you know what I mean," they sing and I suddenly see my third husband, T.J., the night I first met him, standing there in the Pink Pantera on a busy Saturday night, barefoot, shirtless, wearing his patched bellbottoms, rabbit fur vest, and a wilted, red hibiscus behind one ear, looking seventeen. I wave the image, a swarm of gnats, a gang of bats, from my eyes and memory bank, pay for the valuable tomato, and get the hell out of there.

My husband will like this nice tomato. He's my fourth husband. Finally a good husband, as hard to find as a good sweet tomato in springtime. The tomato will be good for his ham sandwiches he's been taking this week for his lunch for work, sweeten up the Easter ham I know he's getting sick of after eating it five days in a row. A joke I remember: "What's the definition of Eternity?"

I don't know.  
"Two people and a ham."

### THE LAST TIME I DANCED TOPLESS

On a hot and sweaty full-moon June night in 1967 in a cocktail lounge in the middle of some Southern California orange groves where five years later land developers would make the grove owners millionaires, in that cocktail lounge decor-du-jour golden and white-white supremacy white, I danced topless on a just-made stage that still reeked of sawdust, taking the place of the two-weeks-ago-gone-away piano bar, the cocktail lounge owner hoping to get rich quick off this Topless Thing. But what it really did was get rid of the decent folks who drank daiquiris as dessert, drove off the big-spender, driven drinkers who'd not thought of breasts for decades and didn't want to.

In that cocktail lounge I danced to cocktail lounge jukebox music of anachronistic Sinatra, Tony Bennett, cha-cha, bossa nova, the black lights over the stage making my golden hairdo and white breasts glow opal, mannequin-still, because we topless dancers were not allowed by law to bump or grind or speak, because it was presumed pandering. So we moved slowly, mute dancer sex-decor, cheap art people buy to match their wall paint while the couples sitting below me, table-bound, sipped scotch, tried not to watch, the women comparison analysts, whispering to their men: "I can do that," while I tried not to

shiver from the chilly air conditioner blowing arctic from the ceiling outlet above my head.

Ricardo Estrada, my agent, had sent me to this cocktail lounge, the Dewdrop Inn, because none of his other girls at his dance agency would work here because tips were nonexistent, the small town's only newspaper, a weekly, ran regular cautionary stories to local do-gooders to ban the place: DON'T DROP IN! Dancing topless was awful enough without having the added misery of inciting unhappiness and hostility of irate local vocal lawmakers.

"Can't I dance someplace in L.A.? Where tips are good?" I'd asked Ricardo that afternoon when he'd called to give me my Saturday night schedule.

"Hey, Baby!" he yelled at me over the roar of traffic. He was always calling me about my go-go gigs from some phone booth off some L.A. freeway or highway, cars, motorcycles and trucks roaring by in the background as he yelled, while also smacking chewing gum, into the receiver at me. "I can't get you no more bookings in L.A. no more!" (Roar) "Joe's Bar and Grill says you're a shitty dancer, you kicked over some Mexican dudes' beer!" (Roar)

"They were sitting too close to the stage, one of them reached for my ankle to grab me ..."

"And Baby the Chi-Chi Club said you were an hour late for your gig!" (Roar)

"After I left Joe's Bar and Grill those Mexican dudes were waiting for me in the parking lot with knives but when I gave them thirty dollars they left me alone but I went to the police department to report what happened so that made me late at the Chi-Chi Club ..."

"And Baby, the Boom-Boom Room says you blow your nose all the time!" (Roar)

"I had the flu ..."

"And the Candy Box said you split in the middle of a gig!" (Roar)

"My little boy broke his wrist, I had to go meet my mother and him at the emergency hospital ..."

"And the Body Shop says all the guys walked out after you came on!" (Roar)

"I came on after that six-foot-tall, 50-inch-boobed Vegas showgirl and half the guys in the audience were her fans, johns and sugar daddies ..."

"And the One for the Road says all you can dance is the jitterbug!" (Roar)

"All the old guys hated me, boycotted me because they wanted the old piano bar girl back, Pretty Patti Pauline, so they kept playing Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw on the jukebox, 'Little Brown Jug,' 'String of Pearls,' 'Dancing in the Dark,' old 1940s swing stuff like that. One old guy even played - in June! - Mël Torme's 'Christmas Song,' you know: 'chestnuts roasting in an open fire' ..."

"Excuses! Excuses!" Ricardo yelled as a car or motorcycle or truck backfired, making me jump, thinking Ricardo might have been shot. Then he continued, smacking gum, "Hey, Baby, it's not like I don't personally think you are okay and cute, it's just no place wants you no matter what I say or do. That's that. So, Baby, it's the Dewdrop Inn or nada adios." (Roar)

How did I get there? you ask. I still wonder about it myself. The answer, the cause, the reason, of course: Men. If it weren't for my father dying, Terence my first husband getting sick and never paying child support and Blackie my second husband trying to kill me and going to prison and never paying child support and the men who wanted to watch, I'd've been able to do something else. But what job out there paid more an hour than dancing topless? I was making more than a tenured college professor or an aerospace engineer or vice president, four times what my traveling salesman father had made. And I needed it for my three kids, Leah's tonsillectomy, Sean's broken wrist, Maureen's nursery school.

But the guys who came to watch didn't want to hear about that kind of truth or baths, they liked to think us topless dancing girls were working our way through college to get the knowledge or, better: we liked doing it, and some did. So I'd say I was a psychology major which I never was because every psych class I took the students and the professor were usually crazy. I soon discovered when I finally went back to college to literally clean up my act that a student studies either his weakness or desire.

It was my blond, beautiful go-go girlfriend from La Pink Pantera Linda Alura's (Alura her "stage" name) idea that we do this. She wanted to get away from Sammy Glassman, the owner of the Pink Pantera who was bugging her to marry him and she didn't find him very attractive because of his receding hairline and bulging waistline. Those were the days men had decided for the first time they wanted to always be young and boyish, wore sleek legged trousers and poofed blow-dry hair and Sammy, five years older than us, looked ten years older, at least forty, than he really was in his too-tight sharkskin pants and thin strands of black hair trying to hide a sad white bowling ball of

a head. After she got her silicone shots, which Sammy paid for, that pumped her boobs up to 40-D and I put on ten pounds, we auditioned for Ricardo Estrada whose agency was called Rich Street which was where a lot of topless girls would soon be living. Easy Street too for some of them, those, like Linda, who smoked marijuana on the way to work, or dropped a tab of LSD, or drank beer while they danced, which many of the topless places encouraged so that the topless dancer might get a little outrageous. But not too much so's to rile the vice cops who hung around every night checking us out while they drank beer and enjoyed the show. Just an Easy Street for them too.

But I did it cold sober which made it pretty scary. Especially my first gig at the Wild Goose across from that huge aerospace factory: 200 men, standing room only, that's how popular, how new nudity was, French bikinis still banned on California state beaches. I blacked out for the first time in my life, danced three hours without one shred of memory, and never again would I suffer stage fright.

So there I was, dancing at the Drop Dead Inn, as all of us girls called it, in that cocktail lounge in the middle of nowhere when, in the middle of Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night," suddenly a racket, as if from some junkheap contraption. A lynch mob maybe. No, drunken frat boys, wearing their best suits, slumming, celebrating grad night from nearby Soon-to-Become Millionaires U, cramming through the cocktail lounge door-jamb, seeming like a hundred but really only ten, knocking over a table of empty margarita glasses and overflowing ashtrays. They surrounded the stage, ordered drinks, drank, laughed, began to spill their martinis, Harvey Wallbangers, and beer on my toes while I danced and they looked up and frowned at my naked breasts: my breasts the reason for all the errors in their lives. They told dirty jokes, my breasts the punchlines, breasts until now always withheld by their parents like tooth-rotting sweets or heart-stopping secrets, breasts why they were virgins or weren't virgins, and sex was bad, or good. Breasts the reason they'd be millionaires: to eat breasts, beat breasts, buy, sell, throw away, or have stuffed and mounted next to the head of their dead pet buffalo.

In that cocktail lounge where there was no dressing room for me to rest in, I sat wearing my yellow and black faux Rudi Gernreich mini in a dark part of the bar taking a 10-minute break to cool off my sweaty bod with ice cubes while the drunken frat boys, drunker now, stomped and hooted my name, no one left in the place now but them.

When one of them, the tallest, banged his empty beer bottle, breaking it, on the table and yelled, "Hey, barkeep, where the fuck is she?"

And another yelled: "Yeah, where the fuck's the fucking floor show?" the cocktail owner dinged open the cash register, gave me money for three hours though I'd only danced two.

"Get the hell out of here," he said, "before there's a brawl or worse and you get hurt."

I snuck out quickly out the back door to the cocktail lounge parking lot in the middle of all the orange groves in the whole world, orange blossoms sweetening the hot full-moon June night's air to fresh-baked cake, the stars striping the ultramarine sky to white icing and I got into my car to get away fast from the drunken frat boys who, in a year, would see *The Graduate* and have their confusion about their future compounded-plus-eight-percent interest. And those drunken frat boys who didn't die in Nam or become hippies and o.d., would soon listen to disco, vote for Reagan, buy Beamers, Benzes, Broncos and R.V.s, the strain of barroom brawl or gang rape never staining their memories or mine.

I drove on home, my throat getting sore, first symptom of the worst summer chest cold I'd ever have. I drove on home to my sleeping children.

What work it is, what a thankless job it is, being young.

## CHIRON REVIEW

In March, 1989, when we chose the name *Chiron Review* (pronounced ki'-ron), astronomers had classified Chiron as a minor planet. Since then, according to *Astronomy* (Sept., 1989), astronomers reached the conclusion that Chiron is actually a comet, not a planet. Perhaps the largest comet known, it is about 180 kilometers in diameter. Due to gravitational perturbations, its orbit is unstable and some day, Chiron may come closer to the sun - or be flung out of the solar system altogether.



# Last Kick in Paradise

story by Justin Bryant

The sickness was coming on fast, and the associated nausea and weakness nearly caused Barton to bungle his night's work. After he failed on his first three targets, he forced himself to take his time, and he ended the evening by picking five wallets cleanly. The Mallory Square "Sunset Celebration" came to an end, and he trailed away with the tourists. On a brick wall behind the old Playhouse he sat and flipped through the wallets. Tourists' wallets were always full of cash. In Key West everyone cashed their traveler's checks right away so there'd be no delay at the bars. His take for the evening was \$122. Considering how sick he was, he thought it was a good total. He counted the cash quickly and threw the wallets into the dumpster behind Billie's Tavern.



**JUSTIN BRYANT** attends Eln College where he is assistant soccer coach. He played soccer semi-professionally in England and Scotland and minor pro league in America. His unpublished novel, *Season of Ash*, is about the hope, fear and violence which reverberated around South Africa before just before Mandela was elected president in 1994.

Barton wiped sweat off his forehead and rubbed his eyes. Duval Street was mostly clear. The bars by now had drawn the tourists inside. He thought some orange juice might help him through the sickness. He bought a bottle and drank it in three messy gulps. A rivulet spilled down his chin and streaked under his shirt, where it expired in its cottony folds. It felt cool against his feverish skin, but he knew later it would be sticky.

In front of RumRunners he met Kathline. "Coming to see me tonight?" she said.

"Probably not."

She pouted. "It's been three days."

"I haven't been feeling so good."

"So who ever feels good?" She waved over his shoulder at a staring tourist, then looked back at Barton. "Why don't you just let Kathline take care of you?" For some reason she said this in a mock southern belle accent. It was a bad accent, and he had to quell an urge to step on her foot.

"I don't have the coin."

"Oh come on! I'll give you the local's discount."

"Can't, I have to make that payment on my Bentley."

She made a face. "Well if you aren't buying I gotta get working. Now you come see me soon. You always do, why fight it?" She laughed - too loudly - and he walked on.

Groups of people crossed and recrossed Duval in front of him, going from one bar to the next. "Which way to Margaritaville?" a group of professionally drunk frat boys, holdovers from Spring Break, asked him. They tottered as they stood in the middle of the street, forcing cars to detour around them.

"You're right in front of it," Barton said, pointing.

"All right! Key West, baby!" they shouted, lurching towards the entrance.

"The bars at home not good enough for you?" he called after them, but they couldn't hear him and just waved and gave him a thumbs-up.

He reached the south end of Duval and walked out onto the concrete pier. He looked for police on the little beach to his left. There was only a group of hippies sitting under the coconut palms. He sat for a few minutes, watching the final act of sunset show off in red and orange on the wispy anvils of thunderstorms jostling over the Gulf Stream. A small stingray rippled through the clear water beneath him. The town lights began blinking on, and he cast a shadow as

light streamed around his sagging frame. The orange juice gurgled in his stomach. The sickness was coming, and he let himself crumple, but the concrete was old and bumpy. In any case, he knew the police checked this beach several times a night. It was time to find a place to curl up and suffer.

As he was leaving one of the hippies called to him. He walked over. It was Janine.

"Barton, man, what's up? You look like shit."

"I'm kicking."

"Again?"

He nodded.

"How long you been kicking?"

"First day."

"You'll never make it." She laughed. "Hang out for awhile. It's a nice night."

"No, I gotta go." But he let himself sink to the receptive white sand. It closed around him and held him firmly. He looked at Janine. She was a pretty girl. He'd always thought so. But the way she had her hair tonight, pulled back tightly from the temples, stretched her skin and distorted the shape of her eyes. She looked vaguely alien.

"I got some stuff you might like," she said.

"Let's see it."

She rummaged through her backpack and produced a selection of hemp and leather bracelets and necklaces embellished with brightly colored paisley beads. Barton sorted through them and found two he liked. "How much?"

"Three bucks each. But for you, two for six dollars. Support your local businesses."

He paid her from the still-unfamiliar wad of bills. She tied one to his wrist and the other around his neck, where he already had several. He groaned and stood up and was struck with a coughing fit. Janine laughed. "Man, you are sick, aren't you?"

"It hasn't hardly started yet. You have any floor space tonight?"

"What, so you can puke all over the place? You know it's Tim's place anyway, I'm just crashing there myself. Sorry." She shrugged.

"Yeah. Well okay, I'll see you later."

"Alrighty. So long, dickhead!" she said jovially.

"That's *mister* dickhead to you," he said with effort.

The lumpy gibbous moon rose and reached an apex. A faint mist descended from the gumbo limbos and clung to Barton's feet as he walked along a dark street. It failed to freshen the fetid night. A street light buzzed to life and scattered its glow through the millions of dewdrops newly arrived in the fecund vegetation. Barton had an irrational urge to hack away with a machete at the vines hanging in his path. The entire island was overgrown. He sometimes felt as if the palms and ferns and vines were growing madly just to grab onto him, to root him to one spot and grow down his throat and choke him. A machete wouldn't stop them. He'd have to burn the whole island to its bare coral bones.

But that was for later. Sweat was dropping off his forehead in a torrent, and a sharp ache rose from behind his eyes. He contorted suddenly and vomited into a shrub. He stood again and forced himself to walk straight. He was junk-sick now. He'd be even sicker, deathbed sick, for the next week, if he stuck to kicking. It's just that he never did. He'd tried before, but he got so sick he couldn't stand it. And when you're junk-sick and kicking, and all it takes to feel good again is one fix, it's fairly easy to convince yourself you can kick some other time.

He'd seen a doctor at the free clinic the week before. The man had told him that he had hepatitis B and was malnourished, which apparently wasn't a good combination for a junkie. The doctor said he was primed for an overdose.

"One day soon, you'll take your normal fix and it will kill you, because your body is so ravaged. Let me make this

clear: if you don't quit shooting heroin, you will die before the end of this year."

"Don't sugarcoat it, doc," he'd said, trying to laugh, but the doctor hadn't smiled.

At the cemetery he lit a cigarette. He sat on the damp ground and leaned against the fence, taking pleasure in the subtle mechanics of the moon and stars as feral tomcats scuffled around him. He dozed for a handful of minutes, then woke suddenly and threw up on the ground next to him. He looked at his watch. It was still early, still a long way to go.

He could have sat without moving for the rest of the night, but there was a storm coming, and the palms bowed and waved with the stirring wind. His skin had grown clammy and hypersensitive. When the wind touched him his stomach lurched. He pushed himself up. It was better to try to walk it off.

The Milky Way bisected the sky in grand and showy fashion. Barton cursed it. Junkies fear the night, even if they love the stars, because the sickness always comes at night.

He walked back to Duval Street. He saw Kathline, still in front of RumRunners. He crossed to the other side of the street so he wouldn't have to talk to her again. Her dark eyeshadow made her face resemble a skull, and her mass of black hair looked like a shroud. "The Grim Reaper!" he muttered, pointing to her. Nobody took notice.

When he couldn't walk any longer he dropped into a chair on the long wooden pier that strode into the water at the north end of Duval. Masts swayed like enormous metronomes on the sailboats moored offshore. The moon broadcast its reflection across the shifting surface of the water, framing pelicans bobbing above the sharks. There were underwater lights on the pilings of the pier, and huge tarpon swam slowly in their green glow. They gazed up at Barton with fishy ambivalence in their glossy eyes. Mounted to the rail of the pier, next to a pay phone, was a bubble gum dispenser full of fish pellets. He felt his pockets but didn't have any coins. He shrugged at the tarpon and said "Sorry, boys."

"Even Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse get the flu," Barton overheard from the next table. He turned in his seat. A woman rubbed her young son's forehead. The boy was flushed and crying. "You'll feel better soon. Honey, let's get back to the hotel. He needs to get to bed." The woman's husband assented cheerily, and the small family left Barton alone.

Heat lightning flashed over the Dry Tortugas. The tarpon circled and circled, and the stars wheeled. The wind blew and he retched and gagged, but his stomach was empty now. The muscles along his sides knotted into piercing cramps. He continued to sweat. He held his hands in front of him and tried to keep them from shaking, but couldn't. His head pounded so hard he fantasized about boring a hole into his poor skull to relieve the pressure. He looked at the pay phone. The hell with this, he thought.

A waitress he knew by face approached him and said, "You want anything?" He shook his head. "Well, it's paying customers only allowed out here, but since it's you, I'll let it slide."

"You have any quarters?" He held out a dollar.

"Here you go."

"Got anything to write with?" he asked her.

"Sure." She handed him a pen. "What for?"

"Just a note for myself. I'll give it back in a minute."

"Keep it. I got hundreds."

She walked to the bar. Barton was the last person on the pier, even though it was well before midnight. The waitress tidied up with the bartender, then sat down and smoked a cigarette while facing the pockmarked moon which even then listed across the speckled sky.

Barton stood and pressed the pen into the yielding old



wood of the dock railing. He wrote under the light of the Ramada, in meticulous and stylish handwriting. He wrote, "Barton is still here," and added the date. He looked down at the tarpon and said, "I gotta make this call. Don't take it to mean I don't want to live."

He tossed the pen into the water, where it tumbled past the big fish and settled on the silty bottom, ten feet below,

and the water was so clear he could see it there in the glow of the underwater lights. He dropped a quarter into the fish-food machine and sprinkled the pellets into the circle of tarpon. Then he put another quarter in the pay phone and called the familiar number.

The heat lightning flashed again. It was moving closer; it was going to be one of those wild midnight tropical

storms, the kind that shakes the tin roofs and swirls the wet vines into messy knots. He could hear faint murmurs of thunder. The storm wouldn't arrive for a long time, but Barton would be there when it did, because he couldn't sleep, and anyway, he had someone to meet. He had hepatitis B and he was junk-sick and had no place to spend the night despite a pocketful of cash, but if he never slept, he'd live forever.

## NEWS, ETC.

**O**n February 27, 1998, Jack Micheline, America's quintessential street poet died on a BART train in the San Francisco Bay Area. Micheline was a friend of Jack Kerouac, who wrote an introduction for Micheline's first book of poems *River of Red Wine*.

"Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti (in a letter of support to name a street after Micheline) said Micheline's work was every bit as good and important as his Beat peers.

"But Micheline was more than a poet. Early on, he worked as a laborer building latrines for Mexican migrant workers; he toiled the soil in Israel; he traveled Spain on money he borrowed from William Saroyan; bankrolled by Franz Kline, he practiced his painting in Mexico.

"His first book was reviewed favorably by Dorothy Parker in *Esquire Magazine*; he got married with an inebriated James T. Farrell as his best man; he won the Revolt in Literature Award, presented by the jazz great Charlie Mingus; he was presented Most Valuable Performance Award by Ken Kesey at Naropa Institute's 1982 Jack Kerouac Celebration; he was friends to the likes of Charles Olson, Frank Lloyd Wright and James Baldwin; and appeared on the *Conan O'Brien Show* with his sax man Bob Feldman.

"Micheline was a poet, a bard, an artist and a traveling minstrel. He was truly one of Walt Whitman's 'Wild Children,' and he loved San Francisco, where he lived the last 25 years of his life.

"In March, 1999, I submitted a proposal to the Board of Supervisors to re-name a street in North Beach or the Mission District after Micheline. The proposal included 90 letters of support, among them, letter from: Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Michael McClure, Herbert Gold, James Broughton, Ann Waldman, Diane DiPrima, Joanne Kyger, Janine Pommy Vega, David Meltzer and too many others to mention here.

"The proposal is currently in the hands of supervisor Tom Amiano. I am readers to add their names in support of my proposal to name a street after Micheline. Letters should be sent to Mr. Tom Amiano, President, Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, San Francisco, CA 94102."

A.D. Winans  
San Francisco

Bosco:

Helen's Dog Literary Review  
Tom Bittke, Ed. 4211 1/2 Cumber-  
angeles, CA 90037

\$4/4 issues. Issue #2 includes Mary Ann Henn, Helen Chrena, Peggy Castro, Margaret Watts and this excerpt from Ruth Moon Kempher's "Picture #920-95: Picasso Museum, Paris": "it's somewhere else. Like me. I'm / gazing at young Picasso, in his mirror vision / mostly blue & shimmer. Of course this comes / from the 'Blue Period,' the way they want to // cage him, circled with words, but what about that / later (was it in Madrid?) old man hefting / in the same blue back-ground, his guitar? It slurs // a certain silent music in my head. I'd tell him / go ahead, learn arrogance from Paris. Clown; chew // that crusty yeasty bread, and never at all forget." Issue #3 includes Paula Yankee, Carolyn Thomas, Nikki Jagielo and Kempher.

### Cecile

stories by Ruthann Robson. Firebrand, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850, \$11.95, paper, \$21.95 cloth. In 19 interconnected stories, characters joke, quarrel, make love, get depressed. Life. They bump up against issue we all confront: who we are, who we want to be, what we do for work, how we earn a living. Life. These are lesbians past the romance / courtship / consummation stage of their relationship. They are in it for the long haul. There is no betrayal, no recoupling, no mature resolution to remain friends. Instead, the continuing quirkiness of butch/femme behaviors, the ambivalence of raising a boychild, the arguments over what color to paint the old refrigerator.

### Chance Magazine

Robert Penick, Ed. 3929 S. 5th St., Louisville, KY 40214, \$3. Issue #13 includes 21 writers, among them David Hall, Shane Nielson, Lorraine Tolliver, Nathan Graziano and Michael Kriesel. Also "Cancer" by Anna Wilson: "I don't know what this is. / it's undefined. I shake and get tired / but wake up in the night. bleed a little. / I don't know what this means. / it's hard to take. I don't care about talking to anyone / stand without looking. / and take this love. just take it down. / I always look bad in pictures. / I won't concentrate so hard / that I lose you / and my hummingbird silhouette / burns. and burns."

### Devilfish

Gaylord Brewer. Red Hen Press, POB 902582, Palmdale, CA 93590, 103 pp., \$15.95, ppd. Ron Koertge says, "I can't resist a poet with good advice: 'Hold the salt, we're not killing zombies here.' So I'm a pushover for Brewer's new, prize-winning collection. Every poem in here advises me, enlightens me, consoles me, niggles at me, makes me wish I'd written it. Here's the

menu for this 'sensuous buffet': wit, sex, grace, lyricism, wisdom, astonishment, honesty, intelligence, tenderness. Try a little of everything. You can always come back for more."

### Dockernet

Harry R. Wilkens, Ed. 86 rue de Montbrillant, CH-1202 Genève, Switzerland. Issue #22 includes Erik Trigger Olesen (Denmark), Glen Grundle (N. Ireland), Jean-François Pollet (France), Antler, B.Z. Niditch and Steve Conway. Issues 24 and 25 include several USA poets including Gerald Locklin, Laura Joy Lustig, Kevin M. Hirschman and Mark Sonnenfeld; also Jan Oskar Hansen (Portugal), Didier Ober (France) and Harry R. Wilkens.

### the electric van

poetry, short-short fiction, b/w artwork and photos. Must include SASE. No e-mail submissions. POB 1655, Los Alamitos, CA 90720.

### Eye Of A Hurricane

Ruthann Robson. Firebrand, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 14850, \$11.95, paper; \$21.95, cloth. Thirteen surprising, sometimes startling stories about women riding out the storm. Buffeted by the winds of violence, chance encounter, inevitable chance and personal history, Robson's characters seek the eye of the hurricane. Here is the place to find a moment's calm, the time to come to terms with the surrounding turmoil. Some of the women in Robson's intriguing collection - lesbian, bisexual, straight - struggle to gain personal clarity at whatever cost. Others cultivate their inability, their unwillingness to see past their own hothouse doors. This is a compelling read, a book with a Florida flavor and a zest for life in full bloom.

### Fascist Haikus

Charles Potts. The Acid Press, 1155 E. Walnut, Pocatello, ID 83201, \$2. "Haiku for Congress": "Support the Endangered Species Act: / The ass you save / Could be your own."

### Journals From Lysidia

Charles Plymell. Synaesthesia Press, POB 1763, Tempe, AZ 85280. Price unknown, but worth finding out and ordering one. This is a fine edition of an excerpt from *Hand on the Doorknob - A Charles Plymell Reader* (Water Row). From the Intro: "The term 'Acid' had not been coined when I took two varieties of LSD - one in a vial from Sandoz Laboratories, and one made by Owsley, sprayed on a blue-grey pill. I went through the experience a half dozen or so times

in the early sixties. ... While digging through my box of old materials, I found a letter to my sister which contained a typed journal. The letter to her was postmarked San Francisco, 1962." And from "Rebirth": "At Lysidia, the doors fling open and you are there where you always knew you would be. It is the fear you were afraid it was. It is you w/out the Race, the extreme you, the personal you. It is the Race w/out you. You begin to taste yourself. The beast in your face tightens. It is the facts. There MAY or MAY NOT be sympathy for a greater force. It may not tend your ego for it owes you nothing. You can change places with anything in the universe ..."

### It Isn't Every Day

David Mason Hemingway. Clamp Down Press, POB 7270, Cape Porpoise, ME 04014, \$15, ppd. The title poem: "we get together / to get together / a poet & an artist / like today for / sure for instance / for them for ever / the muses are / dancing in delight / because as I say / it isn't every day / sun & moon shine / together, in splendor / the sea meets the / desert, horizons melt / & all into all / for on / slender / infinite / day."

### Pearl

3030 E. Second St., Long Beach, CA 90803, \$7. Issue #28 is a fiction issue, featuring Gina Ochsner, Lisa Glatt, Helen Maria Viramontes and many others. *Pearl's* short contest opens Dec. 1. Send SASE for details.

### riprap

Dept. of English, CSULB, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840. Reading for spring, 2000 issue. Poetry: send up to five poems, typed. Fiction: 4,000 words, typed. Also seeks b/w art and photography, camera-ready. Include cover sheet with contact info. Name should not appear on the manuscript. Include SASE. Deadline: Feb. 25, 2000.

### River Architecture

Louis McKee. Cynic Press, POB 40691, Philadelphia, PA 19107, \$15, ppd. Gerald Stearn says, "These are heartbreaking and lonely poems that reach into the past and rest in the darkness. They have something to do with McKee, something to do with Pennsylvania and something to do with our strange lives. They are moving poems." Highly recommended.

### Skidrow Penthouse

Rob Cook, Stephanie Dickinson, Eds., 44 Four Corners Rd., Blairstown, NJ 07825, \$10. Issue #2 features Walter Griffin's collection, *Nights of Noise and Light* and a host of other very gifted writers. *SP* reads year-round and welcomes unsolicited submissions with SASE. Highly recommended.

### S.L.U.G.fest, Ltd.

Mike Nowak, Ed. POB 1238, Simpsonville, SC 29681, \$5.50. A magazine of free expression. Winter, 1999/spring, 2000 issue is the 10th Anniversary Issue and includes writers from the Czech Republic, New Zealand, Ireland and the U.S. Includes Fiction, book reviews, humor, poetry and some fascinating miscellany. Hard to describe in a little blurb.

### Stepping Stones Magazine

Michael D. Ross, Sr., Ed. POB 902, Norristown, PA 19404, \$5. "Best of 1998" Issue includes Michael Hathaway ("Pandora the Cat and Me"), Laurie Graziano, Sheryl Nelms, an interview with Mildred K. Henderson, editor of the now-folded *Hob-Nob*, and some advice to writers by the editor.

### The Temple

Charles Potts, Ed. POB 100, Walla Walla, WA 99362, \$5. Vol. 2, #2 is in memory of Dennis Held. Contributors include dan raphael, Douglas Airmet, Dennis Held, Andy Clausen, Michael Finley, Lü De-an, Margaret Aho, George Pavlopoulos and many others.

## Chiron Review

1 YR/4 ISSUES: \$12

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(Continued from page 11)

The room shook again. The bulb swayed making the corners dance. Krouse stamped in the bowl of the toilet, his hand on the cord. The door cracked and flew inward, there was a metallic clattering on the concrete floor and a man fell in and collapsed by Ghali's feet. He raised himself then turned and grabbed Ghali by the hair and ear and wrenched him out of the collapsed chair. Ghali tried to make his limbs work, to scramble after the pressure on his ear, but they wouldn't move fast enough. The man dragged him into the hallway and hurled him against the wall. His head struck the hard surface and made a sharp, cold noise. Another man kicked Ghali in the side then followed the first back into the room.

A keening reached Ghali. He was prone and a searing cold had spread now to encompass his entire head, but the cries licked his ears like whispers. They made his skin prickle like stepping from the steam of the hammam back into the evening. Krouse's voice floated above him. Ghali breathed. He recognized the damp chill of rain in the air. Krouse was speaking to him, saying something in English. Ghali could only laugh. Then Krouse was gone, yanked back into the room and obscured by the remains of the shattered door.

I must stand, Ghali thought. He clenched his fingers, pressing the nails into his palms. Using the wall for support, he raised himself. On the stairs, he concentrated to ignore the soft slap of water droplets in the courtyard. The rain grew heavier, the droplets snapping in quick succession like flames finding fuel. Ghali wiped at his eyes. They were sticky. It is raining, he told himself.

The old man with the fez was gone. Ghali stepped outside. He walked south, holding his head, up the sloping hill toward the Spanish Consulate, following the wall of the English cemetery past the Spanish church and the grand mosque and finally turning west off Rue du Portugal onto Rue du Paris. He passed the buildings of Barrio Dradeb and turned right at the apartment building with the bakaal then up the street without lights, finally reaching the long bare expanse of the Maaseehooma's wall. He held his temple with one hand, reluctant to let it go now, while the other hand brushed against the wall. No guard answered when he pushed the buzzer. After a moment, he reached his hand through the gate and worked the bar back.

He followed the walk until he had reached the house. The dull slap of his palm against the face of the door amused him and he struck it again. After a moment, he heard a distant tapping. A light came on in the windows above him. After another moment, the chain rattled and one bulging eye stared out at Ghali from the shadows of the entrance room.

Who is it? the Maaseehooma said.

Ghali told him.

The eye blinked, straining to focus. It turned over the voice and name. It's very late, the old man finally said.

No, early, Ghali said.

Well, maybe for you. The old man coughed into the crack then closed the door, freed the chain, and re opened it. Ghali stepped in. There was a sweet smell of flowers and under that Ghali could distinguish another flavor, something heavy and sour.

Well, well, the old man said. Ghali followed his halting steps into the living room. Have a seat. Sit on the banquette.

Ghali lowered himself onto the cushion. The old man came to stand beside him, stooped over his cane like a stork over a nest of chicks. He reached an unsteady hand out and rested it on Ghali's head. Ghali winced but didn't pull away.

Is it raining? the old man said. He peered at his fingers. What is this? You're wounded? What do you mean by this, boy? Take yourself to the right place. It isn't here.

Ghali shook his head. I have hashish, he said.

The old man's cane clicked. He moved to another chair and turned then sat down.

You have money? Ghali said.

The old man exhaled loudly. He raised his feet and put them on the little table. Ahmed and Ghali had danced about this room throwing books down from the bookshelves in the corners.

If that's what you're after, the old man said, you are in for a disappointment.

You have money? Ghali repeated.

No.

You said tonight, come, Ghali said. The tips of his ears were warm again.

I don't remember, the old man said. I know I never invited you to come over and stain my banquette.

Ghali leaned forward and stood with some difficulty then raised an unsteady foot and climbed up onto the small table. When he was balanced atop it, he looked down at the old man.

I have the hashish, he said.

The old man coughed, a repetitive dry hacking into a gnarled fist. When he was finished, he took his feet down off the table. What do you think you're doing climbing about my furniture like a monkey? I must have been mad to let you in here at this hour. Get off my bloody coffee table.

Ghali shook his hand at the old man. La! Dice mil dirham.

Ghali, if you're going to behave like a child.

The old man started to stand, but Ghali pushed him back down again. He sat in the chair staring up at Ghali.

Well, he said as if accepting his fate but then brought his cane around quickly, cracking Ghali in the knee with the thick head.

Bloody bastard! the old man shouted. Bleeding on my furniture. He drew back the cane for another shot at Ghali's legs.

Ghali lurched forward and fell on the old man. The Maaseehooma screamed and coughed at the same time. Ghali felt for the old man's mouth with his hands, frantically trying to plug the wasted cries. His fingers found the loose skin of the old man's neck and they sank in then tightened on the narrow chords. For a moment, the two rocked back and forth in the

chair.

When their motion stopped and the old man was still, Ghali made his way to the kitchen. He splashed water on his face and forehead then went back into the living room and stared at the huddled form in the chair. Slowly, tentatively, he reached forward and patted the man's pockets, hoping for money and instead finding that the old man had died with an erection. Ghali stepped back, tripped over the coffee table, then picked himself up and fled the house.

Outside the rain fell like pins on his throbbing temple and he wondered how he would stay warm tonight with the wood wet from the rain.

Tangier  
1998

## Idle Hands

Jack D. Harvey

Brutus knew;  
in the carbonized palace,  
when the sons of dawn  
in blue array  
arranged their creaking  
knives about his heart.

Brutus felt  
the distance of life;  
his ambitious courses  
sped away like  
spaceships towards the  
dwarfing sun.

In the palazzo  
of tinted marble  
not a piece of  
royal furniture  
out of place.  
Lofty wars,  
bloody hands,  
bloody swords  
in the emperor's thorax  
become transparent  
as windowpanes;  
more than  
food for thought,  
history furnishes  
fresh and deadly meat.

Inspired monks  
in technicolor  
illustrate the text;  
on some cold  
French winter's eye  
Roman Brutus lives  
and stalks  
in the pantry,  
free as grassy steppes;

Brutus yet.

## Into The Future

Aaron W. Hillman

We moved to a duplex on a side street,  
enjoying life as couple with a house.

One day, after I came home for lunch,  
and left, she counted how many lunches

she would probably prepare in the years  
ahead. There had to be other choices.

## secrets from the grave

Virgil Hervey

When he was alive  
my father used to tell me:  
Always keep a crease in your pants  
and a shine on your shoes;  
Walk straight and tall  
and keep your hair  
cut short;  
Study hard,  
work hard,  
and don't let the government  
take it all.

Nowadays, he has taken  
to whispering to me  
as the household sleeps:  
Don't ever let anyone know  
how tired you are,  
how scared you are,  
or how helpless you are.  
Never let on  
that you don't have  
all the answers;  
In the end  
you'll be as good as the Donald  
and as bad  
as mud and stone.





# BOOK REVIEWS



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Opinions expressed by the writers in this magazine are their own and not to be considered those of the publisher.

Non-fiction materials accepted for publication in *Chiron Review* are subject to editing so that they conform with *CR*'s style and/or length requirements. Writers will not be sent final proofs, and submission of non-fiction materials by writers constitutes agreement to these stipulations.

*Reviewed by Charles Plymell*

## The Dying of Children

Ray Bremser

*Water Row Books, P.O. Box 438, Sudbury, MA 01776, limited edition of 200 copies, hand bound, \$35.*

With all this Beat stuff abounding, someone might want to know a natural beat who made the scene early and maintained authentic beatitude the rest of his life. Here is the teenage Ray Bremser in the reform school inhaling Rimbaud and Crane. These early poems strongly suggest that Bremser, as most poets of his generation, was reading the "poet's poet," Hart Crane. Much of the prosody and even some of the slight transformation of pain is evident of Crane's gift. The stanzas surrounding Bremser's lines:

Yet. I have my things to disregard you  
Capable of hibernation, almost.

The use of dashes and reflective symbolisms are very much Crane.

The poem is a scholarly find which reveals the development of this unique poet's soul and poetic vision. It was found by Jeffery Weinberg, who published a fine print chapbook with Elias Roustom, artist and printer. It contains a photo composition by Betsy R. Kirschbaum of Bremser at Ginsberg's abandoned farm in Cherry Valley shortly before Bremser's death.

What amazed me was that in these formal canonized lines, much different than his later style, I found such sophisticated poetry. Lines that most serious poets would work a lifetime to grow. Yet, first attempts at the craft exhibit a remarkable maturity.

These lines were written before the finger poppin' dad-dies of Lord Buckley or the hard doses of BeBop. This is a very rare book already. Among all the litanies of Commercial Beat, Career Post Modernism, Award winning Laureates, Inclusive Politically Correct Federally Subsidized Phonies, Academic Hacks, please behold these lines:

Be the child, and turn again  
To fold about your Father touch his lips,  
And he will speak to you, and tell the lies  
To save you,  
and change your life to death as soft  
As dawn as soft as waking from calm  
Sleep

Beat that!

*Reviewed by James Snyder*

## Eye of the Holocaust

Susan Terris

*Arctos Press, P.O. Box 401, Sausalito, CA 94966.*

Many years ago, the recently deceased master poet, Denise Levertov, named her first book of prose *The Poet in the World*. Our lives in the world are so complex, with real joys, yes, but, at times, with sorrows which rend, even in retelling.

In this collection, Susan Terris has written poems for us which tell some of the stories from the Nazi's Holocaust upon the Jewish people, their purging of a vast people

which stopped only because the Nazis lost that war. It was long ago, of course. Why are people still writing of it?

Assassins of memory say this is fiction.  
They say none of this ever was.  
So, as a testament, we must recount our history.

The Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC is filled with things and photos from that horrible time. A number of these poems speak of visits there. For instance, in "Boxcar" she writes of time in the museum with her sister:

My younger sister has married a Baptist, raised  
children who don't believe they are Jews:  
yet she - riveted - is moving snail's-pace.  
So when I come upon it, I am alone.

yet as I turn, I see my sister  
by the boxcar unwilling to enter. *Why are we here?* Hurrying toward her, I move past cart, suitcases, hat boxes. *What will it tell us?* For a moment, we are side by side, aware of primal, physical comfort. Then together we step in. It is dark. We do not speak. After 50 years, stench still saturates the boards. As I inhale it, I feel fingers tug at the edges of my skirt, my sweater, my hands. Small, sweaty hands I can't see butt me, begging for refuge.

What happened in that boxcar and in that nation among people, awhile ago now, is remembered, as are people who were kept and killed in Majdenek:

Fans chafe my ears as I approach them. Dim lights bruise a foothill of the 300,000 maintained in death camps.

Soot-gray veils all, but testaments of singularity still grip:  
grazed at the inside edge of a heel  
removed without unbuckling

Where were Jews put after their imprisonment, undressing and gassing? From "Cremation":

shave women's heads	white stretchers carried by white guards
pull gold teeth	white cordwood-stiff bodies to be pillaged
check body orifices for hidden valuables	white-faced, white-shouldered Jews shove
nothing human left while 3 or 4 to an oven	whitened bodies of the dead into white ovens
depending upon size	white-starved SS guards oversee
only 1,000 a day	white world still and bloodless where
when they could gas 7 times that	white men sought whiteness and we need
	white to purge the evil white all over white
	white nothingness no love no children only
	white white white white white white

What on earth are there photos of, in the museum? Among other things, "Hair":

Before me, a landscape of hair shorn for booty for slippers and boat bumpers, pillows and mattresses. Fixed, I scan the photo-mural - Auschwitz hair decomposing strand by strand to promised dust, hair now rot-hazed ironic shades of Aryan blonde.

Whose is the hair like?

Zophia's doll has a nub-nose and ruddy cheeks, chestnut hair braided and coiled over seashell ears. Crocheted booties warm her feet, but the lace-trimmed dress and petticoat are lost. Body covered only by a swathe of frayed peach-colored silk she stares down cold hands curved inward broken fingers pointing.

Let us continue to bear witness to these numbers of very-human victims, to the horrors which occur sometimes among our human moments. Terris concludes this collection with taut stanzas to her children:

Your great grandfathers understood mud as they slogged from village to village peddling pots and ribbons and scissors

They knew days with no light, nights with no heat, years with no safety - years of pogroms, famine and loss.

But, still, you may collar their essence if, shaking pearls from your ears, you can know wet boots and windfall.

Let us collar essences among wet boots and windfall.

*Reviewed by Edward Field*

## Hyde: A Novella Noire

Frank Polite

*Pangborn Books, Ltd., 2351 Ohio Ave., Youngstown, OH 44504, \$13.95, ppd.*

I can still see Frank Polite standing in the Anatolian dust, gesturing magisterially toward the ruins of the fabled city of Ephesus, declaring, "Look, that's where the port was before it silted over - the sea's now miles away. But can't you see Anthony and Cleopatra arriving in a barge and parading down that road with their entourage?" It was absolutely real to him, after two thousand years, among the scatter and tumble of stones on the sun-baked plain.

Later, wandering the ruins under a burning sun, we took photos of each other on the ancient marble toilet seats of the ruined bathhouse, perhaps the same seats that Anthony and Cleopatra had used to take a crap, surrounded by courtiers and slaves.

I had traveled far to visit Frank Polite, poet, scholar, and terrific raconteur, in Izmir on the Aegean coast of Turkey where he was living. The first time we met twenty years before it was he who had driven hours from his home in Youngstown, to hear me give a poetry reading at a university. It was nothing to him in those days to take such long drives, back and forth from Ohio to the Iowa Writers Workshop for his MFA in Poetry, then to the Bay Area where he spent a more lurid phase of his life, even to New York once to visit me. But it was his time spent in the Middle East, where among the ancient dust and ruins poets had spun wondrous tales of beggars becoming sultans and heaps of camel dung transformed by genies into glittering jewels, that decades later, when Frank was settled in Ohio again, engendered his epic poem *Hyde*. Not only the real Middle East, but The Mysterious East, as seen through Hollywood flicks set in Baghdad and the Casbah, in Gurdjieff's *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, in the hotels rising from the Las Vegas sands, and according to a note at the end of the book, surfing the Internet.

In this fast-moving, rough-and-tumble saga that takes Sufi teaching parables into new territory, Frank Polite tracks his eponymous hero, the rascal and trickster Hyde's wild adventures through skewed time and space. Mysterious and historical characters flit in and out of a hundred exotic plot fragments. Hyde is the Warrior of Legend, but at the same time as American as the faux pyramids and sphinx in Las Vegas, who has at his fingertips an encyclopedic if haphazard collection of knowledge, who has memorized Burma Shave jingles on the monotonous highways crisscrossing the country and invents a few of his own, at the same time writing original lyric poems of startling beauty.

*Hyde* is a pilgrimage, a quest, and also a flight from evil pursuers of the Sydney Greenstreet persuasion - in short, the swashbuckling adventures of a devilishly clever fellow, skilled in the super-cool gestures of movie heroes like Bogart who, by the way, makes a cameo appearance. But above all it is a love story - the lady in the landscape is MiLady, stimulating Hyde's gonads, as "his gnarled root [irresistible, we gather], with his unclean need for her," keeps her hormones sizzling. The perilous route to Trebi-





# BOOK REVIEWS



zond, the ultimate fantasy, runs not only through kitschy locales like Las Vegas but, surprisingly, to author Lewis Bromfield's idyllic Ohio farm, Malabar. The villain of the plot is called Fatoush, who lusts after and schemes with his henchmen to possess MiLady, leading to the inevitable confrontation with Hyde – then we learn who wields the stronger magic, as Fatoush meets his grisly fate at the hands of a Funj dervish ("One Funj = 1000 men; [but] one Hyde = 1000 Funj"). We must be nimble in following this erratic, goofy poet guide through real and imagined worlds, but whatever confusion we feel is pure pleasure.

Structured as this work is, it defies pigeonholing / classification. The *faux* and the *vrai* are intermingled. The elegant panthera form the poem is written in, we are told, was handed down from "antiquity." (Oh, yeah?) Interwoven with the text are zeugmas, a playful form of pun, like the complex kufic designs of the Moslem weavers and tile makers. There are many Secrets here alluded to, or only half-revealed, as Great Truths are by The Masters, forcing the disciple to arrive at The Knowledge himself. Everything is seen through veils, which, at the poet's whim, are tantalizingly lifted. When his dog digs up a tablet with an ancient inscription, Hyde anachronistically telephones Dr. Jung, who offers a dubious interpretation. For me, Frank Polite convincingly demonstrates that poetry has always been created out of wisdom, kitsch, truth, fact, and hogwash – in short, the whole imagination.

Reading *Hyde*, one would think Polite had gone mad from seeing too many B movies, but he masterfully plays with the fantasies of a people, us, who sometimes seem to be wandering in the desert seeking a home, or in the case of Las Vegas, creating an earthly paradise. As Ada Louise Huxtable, discussing Vegas's spectacular theme hotels, said with as much admiration as mockery, Americans seem to prefer [and deserve?] the fake to the real these days. The Trebizond that Hyde's journey leads to may be another oriental pastiche, but it feels like we have arrived somewhere significant at the end. At any rate the voyage there was fun, as Cavafy said in more memorable words. The poet in his maturity has been able to rub the Aladdin's lamp of his art, from whose spout comes whooshing this twister of a super-oriental fantasia.

*Reviewed by Robert Headley*

## February is the Crookedest Month

Mark Weber

Clamp Down Press, P.O. Box 7270, Cape Porpoise, ME 04014-7270, 31 pp., 1998.

Usually, reading Mark Weber's poetry reminds me of the first time I heard a live performance of progressive jazz by some combo back in 1964 or 1965. An unschooled neophyte, I was immediately hooked when they transformed some familiar standard – "Misty" most likely – into a frantic, kinetic montage of horn trills and bass riffs. Weber's chapbooks pack the same heat, the same rapid-fire-go-where-the-mood-leads mosaic.

However, *February is the Crookedest Month*, Weber's elegant chapbook from Clamp Down, strikes far more mellow notes. It's a moodier, more introspective voice coming through in these poems and the effect they create is thoroughly pleasing, completely enjoyable. The collection features 16 fine poems, some of which appeared previously in *Wooden Head Review* and *Pearl*. It also includes a foreword by publisher Joshua Bodwell.

Although not unified around a single theme, *February* does contain seven variations on a single idea (and title), "I Do This, I Do That." In the one numbered "21," Weber offers a straightforward account of awakening one day in a hospital with one of "14,602 hangovers / plus or minus a few hundred." Devoid of self-pity, Weber's poem is an ex-drunk's description of those endless mornings when he "had to throw up ... my morning song and dance."

"I Do This, I Do That, #7" is a funny piece that contrasts the persona's inland California/Okie heritage with

that of his friend, a "beach Okie" whose father

moved to the beach from Oklahoma and woo'd Laura, Bill's mom, with some bullshit how cultured he was ... but soon the wedding was over out came the honky tonk records and the bubbles in his beer and the brawling in San Pedro beer joints

Weber's romanticism – admittedly, usually of the piss-and-vinegar variety – is evident in several poems, but most explicitly in "Is It Too late For A Valentine Poem?" Adept at evoking the passionate even from the quotidian, Weber, in this short, wry poem, manages to make pancakes a wonderful metaphor for romantic love.

In her blurb for *February*, Joan Jobe Smith writes that this collection is evidence of Weber's "potential for distinguished longevity." No argument here. It's a fine, thoughtful collection.

## Hemingway Colloquium: The Poet Goes To Cuba

Gerald Locklin

Event Horizon Press, P.O. Box 2006, Palm Springs, CA 92263, 54 pp., \$24.95.

This beautiful new collection from Event Horizon Press chronicles Gerald Locklin's 1997 trip to Havana, Cuba as one of small, select group of scholars and writers invited to participate in the International Hemingway Colloquium.

The volume contains 48 new poems, two short stories and a scholarly article co-written with his colleague, Professor Charles Stetler. In addition, the book's illustrations include several color and black and white photos taken by the poet in and around Havana.

Arguably, this is Locklin's best "travel book," perhaps because it combines examples of the writer's poetry, fiction, non-fiction and photography (beautifully reproduced by the Event Horizon folks, by the way), providing readers four very different artistic perspectives. Perhaps the collection is simply a testament to the striking fact that as Locklin ages, his art becomes more expensive claret and less convenient store cream sherry. The wise-ass humorist is here, to be sure, but so too is the poignant romantic, the fiery defender of the faith in the face of prudes and Puritans, the centrist who sees the inherent danger in the dogmatic and doctrinaire, the lover of the written word.

*Hemingway Colloquium: The Poet Goes To Cuba* contains several comparatively long poems. "[T]hey don't make it easy," for example, runs more than 20 lines; it follows the poet from the process of applying for permission to visit that tiny Communist domino off Key West to exhausting fights – including one on an aging Russian plane – through his first encounter with Castro's Cuba. Another, "the gala at the finca vigia," describes the colloquium's grand opening, held at Hemingway's old abode, now a national museum: "predictable speeches / blessedly short, / are delivered by the politicians, / the provincial ministers of culture." When the festivities end and the visiting scholars and writers board the bus back to their hotel, Locklin ruminates, in this land that worships an American author as one of their own, about what might have been and what could be:

what if castro and uncle sam  
had gotten off on the right foot  
back at the git-go? and will it  
be possible, after decades of a  
virtual civil cold war with the exiles  
to sort out an equitable solution?  
or do we have a palestine or  
or northern ireland to deal with?

and when castro dies  
will his successor be raul,

commander of the armed forces,  
identified with internal repression,  
or someone younger,  
less orthodox,  
more flexible and cosmopolitan,  
a technocrat, a pragmatist?  
or will the economy collapse,  
the civil war turn hot?

Important questions, these. And although the humorist in Locklin ends the poem on a light, even sarcastic note, one underlining theme of the poem – indeed, of this new collection – concerns the poet's instant affinity for the Cuban people. Clearly, Locklin was touched by them; just as clearly, so was his art.

Several poems are smile-makers. "[A] bad sign" is about his pre-trip preparations, including trying to buy a money belt, only to find the last box in the store is empty: a shop-lifter had beaten him to it; "no doubt it's 'mean spirited' of me" is Locklin's answer to the inevitable East Coast feminist at the conference who insists on dragging up those worn-out criticisms of Hemingway's alleged chauvinism; "don't chew the water" is an aptly titled poem about a minor *turista* outbreak; "i'd been on my best behavior" is a comical piece about the disadvantages of losing more than 100 pounds, about the problems Locklin had convincing Cuban officials that heavy guy in his passport picture was really him. Another, "would he settle for an out-right donation?" is printed below in its entirety:

on the plaza a midget beggar  
without arms  
is offering in spanish  
to perform some service for me:

i'm afraid it might be a blowjob.

The collection's prose pieces include "The Banquet at La Terraza," a short story based on a luncheon in the village that was the setting for Hemingway's novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. The second short story, "A Light Lunch at the Inglaterra," is a funny and poignant tale based on a day trip Locklin took; it is a touching look at the everyday impact of poverty on Cubans. Finally, the one non-fiction piece in the collection, "Hemingway as Environmentalist," is a very successful attempt by Locklin and Charles Stetler to answer those environmentally correct folks who label Hemingway a self-absorbed critter killer and land despoiler.

Again, *Hemingway Colloquium* may very well be the best sequence of travel poems that Locklin – unquestionably the master of this particular genre – has yet released. Furthermore, Event Horizon has a well-deserved reputation for producing books that are also visual works of art, and that is certainly true of this book. Locklin and Hemingway aficionados will want to order a copy of this excellent collection right away.

*Reviewed by Julia Stein*

## Hard Country

Sharon Doubiago

West End Press, P.O. Box 27344, Albuquerque, NM 87125, second edition, 1999, 274 pp., \$19.95.

Sharon Doubiago is a Southern California. Born in Long Beach, California, she grew up there and in the small town of Ramona and graduated from California State University at Los Angeles. In the 1970s she wrote "Hard Country," an epic 247-page poem about America. Men not women have usually written epics, that most monumental of poetry forms. From the Greeks to the 20th century men like Homer, William Carlos Williams, Charles Olson all wrote those huge epics of battles and history while the women poets were primarily lyricists working on a smaller scale.

In this woman's epic, the poet at the very end of *Hard Country* alludes to epic's masculine conventions when the





# BOOK REVIEWS



female narrator "steps through the centuries" to hand over her son to "the bloodstained hands of the father, to murder or be murdered" and hands over her daughter to be "a bloodstained spoil of war, / to the father." Doubiago through her poem struggles as a woman not to be complicit with war, ethnic cleansing, genocide detailed in the male epic tradition. She particularly revolts against violence done to Native Americans.

Doubiago quotes two 19th century feminist writers Mary Austin and Helen Hunt Jackson who wrote about Southern California and combined feminism with advocacy for Indians. Inspired by *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, New Englander Helen Hunt Jackson wrote a popular novel, *Ramona*, about the brutal white treatment of Southern California Indians. In the novel a half Mexican-half Indian orphan, Ramona, raised in a privileged class, falls in love with a Native American. *Ramona* was so popular that the novel inspired Southern Californians to name streets Ramona, start an annual pageant in Hemet, and named a town Ramona. Doubiago's father brought the family to live in the town of Ramona "to get me away from pachucos / who love blondes." She promptly fell in love with a Native American boy named Ramon. In her epic poem Doubiago has chosen as her narrator a woman like Helen Hunt Jackson's Ramona: a half European, half Indian girl who refuses a privileged life and falls in love with an Native American boy. In "Hard Country" the narrator spends the whole long poem searching for her lost Native American lover. She writes wonderful erotic poetry about her first love and and latter loves. The poet identifies her narrator with all the outcast women in history from the biblical Lilith to 20th century Southern white outcasts like her mother.

Besides recovering a lost feminist history, Doubiago's poem is working class epic reminiscent of John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Poems within the epic tell about her family saga of the Scotch-Irish arriving in America before the American Revolution. Many of the best sections attempt to recover a lost working class history: they tell about her Tennessee miner paternal grandfather who was a good union man; her paternal grandmother, a schoolteacher, for whom she was named; her maternal grandfather Guy who worked in the Southern mills as a child; her maternal grandmother Susie who died young; her father who did farm work as a hired hand in the South; and her mother who was put in an orphanage in Virginia. Poem after poem gives a wonderful picture of three generations of southern poor whites struggling to survive.

One of the most moving poem in the book is "Mother," about her mother's ancestors, her life in the orphanage, her running away, her working in the tobacco fields with her father before World War II. Desperately poor her parents left the South for California in a wonderful section of the poem that reads like part of *Grapes of Wrath*:

She was 19, the only woman  
of five men in the old Ford.  
They chewed bubble gum all the way  
to plug the holes in the radiator,  
to quiet the hunger pains.

Doubiago goes on to reveal hidden working class history of Southern California in the next section telling how her parents "survived in the beginning / by night raids on cornfields / in Torrance and Long Beach." And she also reveals that parents named her "Rose of Sharon / from the *Grapes of Wrath*," Doubiago is the child born to "Rose of Sharon" in *Grapes of Wrath* who grew up to tell what happened to the migrants who came to California. For example, the book's opening poem "Signal Hill" is a wonderfully sad description of her father "drive across the starry oil field" taking his children to see their mother in a sanitarium.

Doubiago is also in a line of women writers who write about poor rural folk: Agnes Smedley's "Daughter of the Earth," Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz's "Red Dirt," Wilma McDaniel, the wonderful Okie poet who wrote about the Okie's migration west; and Joan Jobe Smith. Smedly, Ortiz and McDaniel all came from families with intermarriages be-

tween Anglos, Scotch-Irish and Native Americans just as in Doubiago's epic. Doubiago grapples with this mixed heritage.

While the family poems are in the beginning and the end of Doubiago's epic, the middle section deals with a trip the narrator takes with her lover from Northern California up to Oregon, across to Yellowstone, down through Missouri to Tennessee, back across Texas, New Mexico to California. Throughout these poems the poet mixes her story of the narrator's visit to a region with accounts of Native Americans and white immigrants of that region. Doubiago constantly struggles to give the Native American stories, myths, legends equal weight to the European as she attempts to recover the Native American history of every place she visits. She attempts to recover the true America.

She recounts tales of others who came to America before Columbus - Welsh rovers, Chinese - in order to focus on the many discoveries of America rather than Columbus' brutal conquest. She attempts to make a mestizo epic about America like Orozco's and Rivera's murals which reveal a mestizo history of Mexico. It's very brave and very important to write the kind of archeological poetry to recover the lost histories of women, workers, and Native America. Doubiago is acutely aware of the necessity of this memory:

to remember  
our dis-membered parts  
and then  
to survive this memory

Finally, *Hard Country*, one of the bravest poems written in post-war America, is a wonderful epic to come out of Southern California. As the poem progresses Doubiago has transformed her narrator from half-Native American orphan Ramona to all outcast women to the American earth. At the poem's end the narrator returns to the Southern California of her birth but now this landscape has become the home of a huge epic. The narrator transform herself into a condor, a flying bear and then into rainwater which pelts down on the mountains, arroyos, streets, the palos verde and palisades, and the barrios of Southern California in a healing rain. To read *Hard Country* is to feel that healing rain.

Reviewed by Joe Maynard

## Downtown Poets: The Clique Factor

Dorothy Friedman August, Ellen Aug Lytle and Bruce Weber, Editors.

Montclair-Takilma Books and Zines, P.O. Box 137,  
Montclair, NJ or P.O. Box 2054, Cave Junction, OR 97523,  
128 pp., \$9.95.

When *Downtown Magazine* started, one supposed it was to replace the deceased *East Village Eye* with its call for entries that went something like: "New culture magazine looking for the hippest, smartest ...." And, it was an interesting weekly. Not the hippest or smartest (it's tough in a town with a plethora of hip, smart weeklies), but *Downtown* was perhaps the truest voice of fledgling aesthetes, or genius-manqué outsiders.

*Downtown* never quite dug as deep into the scene as *The East Village Eye*, never quite championed a Wojnarowicz, perhaps because it published out of the über-bourgeois suburb of Montclair, New Jersey at a time when the East Village scene was dispersing (late 80s) rather than exploding (early 80s). But it did resurrect a moniker for a clique of poet-lifers that were nowhere if not insiders to the bohemian ghetto melodramas they were creating.

I mean this in a good way. I used to write book reviews for *Downtown*, and include myself in the ranks. The best and worst of a clique of this sort is in fact a lower bar for which to achieve. This opens the door for the sort of sloppy elegance of a Bukowski. It keeps this collection free of Ashbery-styled graces. And that, also, is to the book's credit.

The poster boy of the sloppy lot is Steve Dalachinsky.

"The Conquest (for Kirili, Carter & Conquest)" scales a dramatic arc with mumbling digressions that are in fact highly saturated metaphors. At some point you feel yourself there, atop the arc, in an unconscious dance with the author's desire that is half-fulfilled, half-thwarted, carried primarily by imagery of ripe fruits and "footprints on my tongue."

The volume was edited in three sections by three editors: Dorothy Friedman August, the *Downtown* poetry editor for 10 years, Ellen Aug Lytle who had a column on the downtown poetry scene and Bruce Weber who organized many of the events that Lytle wrote about. Although many different approaches to the poetic form appear in *Downtown Poets*, there isn't as much variations from editor to editor. They draw from the same pool creating similar composites.

Much of the poetry is narrative. Susan Sherman's three-page tribute to a half-dozen immigrant stories is like six public monuments to six tough stories in print. Ron Kolm's two smooth, deliberate entries, one on a walk with a loved one, the other about trying to "get it up" on the coldest day of the year, have an infectious humility and an appreciation of common moments. Eleanor Levine's misunderstanding with a street merchant encapsulates the sweetness of day-to-day exchanges. Thaddeus Rutkowski's trip through The Museum of Modern Art, where he drops ecstasy, stares at "Van Gocks" and looks for God in the details, is a hilarious break from the emotional pitch the bulk of this volume.

There are a number of tribute poems to dead lovers and famous artists. Most do not rise above a sentimental lament. But one piece, Yuko Otomo's "John Berryman" uses the act of editing as a metaphor to get inside the act of suicide. It works because its sparse, uncluttered thinking leaves the victim room for dignity rather than suffocating him with sympathy. That, along with a Rutkowski's comic relief, provides enough clarity to keep the reader rolling.

A couple of the poets are stronger as live performers. David Huberman's obsessive rants and Jushi's dramatic On the other hand, Grace Period stands out in my mind as "that transsexual who's always smashing things up." Her live actions rarely move me, but the simple poem, "Never Was A Child," ("no pictures of you? / Didn't you go on any / family vacations? // no / there are no / pictures of me / I never went on any / family vacations") speaks volumes.

In the Ego/Self-Identity Department, which must be the thrust of any anthology whose title is simply the name of a clique, Tsaurah Litzky flails her lashing tongue at assumptions about the passivity of women, and romanticizes a number of kinks that have crossed her path.

As opposed to a more refined yet less intense writer, for example Francine Prose who may write a fluid line about a kinky character, Litzky never rises above her kinks, fears or neuroses to the level of a reliable narrator. She is what she is and it's there on the page, in Technicolor subjectivity. In the end, she is the strongest argument for this book.

Naturally, the question arises, "How does one deal with a room full of subjective egos that are far from passive?" Mike Golden's "Eulogy" to friendships is a "how to" for maintaining one's own ego while accommodating the egos of fellow poets and collaborators. It is an attempt to make peace with ghosts from the past, but in the end, no ego is sated. Litzky and Golden encapsulate what we all know about all the people we know, and evidently, what all the poets in this volume know about each other.

Lastly, the publisher of *Downtown*, Jim Rensenbrink, who has put out 800 or more issues of *The Aquarian Weekly* at this point in time (*Downtown*, after a couple hundred issues merged into the already mid-life *Aquarian Weekly* a couple years back), closes the collection with this poem:

### A King, A Counting House

This desperate building where I breathe.  
These holy places where I smile  
These frivolous symbols that I read.  
This death I'm visiting for a while.





# BOOK REVIEWS



The knowledge factory building flesh  
is tissue for a nerve-wracked king.  
A thousand vampires rent his head,  
his dreams are ravaged; they will not sing.

I know this king – a bullying fool,  
his dreams a way to flee his terror.  
Freedom is now in this afternoon  
a chariot as winged as the rides I dare.

I may be falling into a trap of projecting a specific meaning, but given the previous mentioned attributes of this collection, it's interesting that the publisher closes with such a statement. Overall, this personal-on-a-group-level "best of" anthology clearly records the fragility of those who have tuned in, dropped out and struggled to create a nest for their art, or in Mr. Rensenbrink's case, a promised land for his (publishing?) house.

In the end, they are purging the larger tribe (America, Mass Media, Suburbia) from their veins, and are left with each other: A bunch of outsiders in a room trying to figure out what made them part of a group. The more often unreliable than reliable narrators, or subjective rather than objective thrust of the works nurtures intimacy between the poets and readers, a "just between me and you" sort of read. There are few eloquent frills but many messy thrills: A gamy, earthbound treat.

*Reviewed by Tim Scannell*

## Cedar Hill Review

Gloria Doyle, C. Presfield, Maggie Jaffe, Eds.

3722 Highway 8 West, Mena, AR 71953, 1999, 84 pp., \$6.

There is a lot of literature packed into the 84 pages of the spring, 1999 issue. It's very nice to have several poems Louis' two poems on Alzheimer's are true in terms of frustration, despair – and humor. David Vancil offers three carefully-hewn acid etchings of human character. Three fine poems (especially "Preparation for a Ceremony") by the late Greek poet Yannis Ritsos. I praise the single contributions by Richard Kostelanetz, Joseph Shields, Joseph Verrilli, Ulla Hahn and Ralph Dranow. The two book reviews are interesting, literate and detailed.

The poetry editors insist in an editorial that "politics and writing are inextricably linked." So there's a heavy dose of politically correct poems which are, interchangeably, mindlessly boring or boringly mindless. Keening whines regarding the search for the "real America," even though our home is chockablock about us right now – singing from every blade of grass, every humming highway; enlivened in its chorus by a diverse and energetic citizenry.

Then there is the continuing tedious Revisionist history regarding the Indian Question, the Caribbean Slave Question, the Literature Question, the Man and Woman Question, etc. Be forewarned then, reader, to duck and weave as necessary, to be safe from all those flailing, propagandistic axes being ground.

The format of *Cedar Hill Review* is crisp and clear as always, printed on creamy vanilla-colored paper – easy on the eyes.

A recommended purchase, but I would advise the editors to rethink an imposition of politics on poetry, which in my view, is totally without merit.

## Unwound (Vol. 2, #6)

Lindsay Wilson, Ed.

P.O. Box 10205, Bakersfield, CA 93389, 1999, 29 pp., \$2.

Thirty-seven poems between the covers. A bit uneven, but offerings include trenchantly funny free verse by D. Michael McNamara; a feature of five beer-soaked poems by Daniel Crocker ("Dawn straightens / a crumbled cigarette

pack squeeks in my hands / the radio stops with a click / Kids off to school. / Headache."); a fine poem by John Grey; and four by A.D. Winans, whose tone, voice and persona are that life-is-a-shit-sandwich.

For anybody wanting to publish a zine, here's a model. Sure, on a shoestring and love, but neatly formatted and with a delightful rambling prose life-of-the-poet/editor for openers. At the back, a detailed page on contributors; then an intelligent page of listings with bright commentary; and finally "Endnotes," a page of appreciation to friends, a little more in-the-life-of, and some ruminations looking forward to the next issue. All of this crisply human(e)ly put together. Some artwork by K. Johnson (more, please)!

Certainly worth the \$2 single copy price and the \$4 subscription price. *Unwound* is the quintessential zine we should be supporting!

## The Bitter Oleander (Vol. 5, #1)

Paul B. Roth, Ed.

4983 Tall Oaks Dr., Fayetteville, NY 13066-9776, 1999, \$15.

## Field (#60)

Pamela Alexander, Ed.

Rice Hall, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH 44074, spring, 1999, 107 pp., \$14 (2 years).

The reader does not expect a bolt of lightning in the academic journal. I have read them long enough not even to expect a spark. But I still hope for tone and personae – voice – which might gleam, glint (flash?) against a pervasive anomie; any glitter of struggle against personal unrest, alienation – lack of purpose and ideal. Not in the 120 poems in *The Bitter Oleander* and *Field*.

Apparently, students don't read Emerson's "The American Scholar" or Whitman's "Democratic Vistas." There continues to be this fawning, empty citation of things European. "My nails are soft, watery, and I can see / through my skin ... / what Augustine called the mass and weight / of misery." Or, "In my mind, Barcelona is a row of green trees, a funnel / to the labyrinth, leading down to the sea." Or "Perhaps Dante will bore me soon and / I can sleep, but no." Or, "but still I must ask what is my place in life? / my seat on the invisible train, / as they say in Hungary."

Journal editors are either shaken from a doze upon seeing "do crested Corsica or Capraia appear" and "Old building on the Rue Victor Hugo" (these from two other poems); or submitters assume a university-erudition-journal-Europe-success nexus, dutifully hitting the word processor accordingly: "We were listening to the Gypsy Hungarian singer." And a double-plus for this eighth different submission: "As the monks stepped out of their masks for the Lion Dance ... / It's a lama dance, I said. Watch their feet kick dust." Gee whillikers ... nuanced echoes of the exotic Raj, *The Razor's Edge* ... *The Far Pavilions*!

And though I certainly dearly love ol' Lord Tennyson, the tone of all the above examples is in the wizened wane of "Tithonus." "The woods decay, the woods decay and fall ... / And after many a summer dies the swan." But never the muscular, defiant tone of his "Ulysses": "strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." One truly yearns for a little less "Mrs. Robinson" and a little more Lewis and Clark!

And so, there will be no striking of the sun, if so insulted, by these personae – in either tone or voice. The gray, defeated skies of Europe are imported to the American landscape: two lovers are in bed at midnight: "Discussion is no god you'd consider useful, / wise. Would it be bad to read the *Atlantic* article / on chaos now? I wonder, breathing." Well, thank heaven – breathing!

In a different bed-poem by a different author: "I'm tired of / counting the suicides of Russian poets / in this era, in this ear. Better to sit / in my underwear next to a drunk lover / looking at constellations on the white ceiling." Well, thank heaven – at least drunk (yet do note the deft al-

lusion, as per usual, to Europeans with scarves!).

But this pervasive alienation, ersatz ennui – truly boring world-weariness and lack of purpose – just goes on and on, tediously, throughout these journals. Yet I have been the good soldier and have read academic journals for more than 30 years – hope springs eternal!

There were four colorful, skilled, inquisitive poems in *Bitter Oleander* – two each – by Fred Boltz and Scott King. In Fred's "Cows: The Metamorphosis," the persona enters a field where cows graze and learns of their fear: "At night I move / toward the moon, / traveling up and down / winding paths on the hills. / The small dark animal of my dreams / lags closely behind, / bellowing in the rain." Dull, gray alienation disappears for Boltz has at least – imaginatively – tried to connect with another living thing.

In Scott's "Communion," the narrator guts a fish for supper and throws its entrails into the lake:

Later, toward evening, he will notice through the  
rusty water a crayfish feeding  
upon the remains of the fish, its long antennae  
moving as though  
lighting candles on the table of the last supper,  
while far out on the lake, the gulls will be floating  
like stars.

Dull, gray purposelessness disappears, for King at least – imaginatively – has connected man's nourishment with that of nature-at-large in a little Hesiodic episode of our *Works and Days*. It is, perhaps, not an ideal communion, but it is a natural and reasoned idyll of interconnectedness.

Book reviews in these journals read like Master's theses, the fiction is uninspired. My recommendation is that their combined cost of \$29 would be better spent in supporting several alternative zines – or start your own.

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# Un-Seamless Books of Poems

essay by Ron McFarland

*Picnic on the Moon*, Charles Coe, Leapfrog Press, P.O. Box 1743, Wellfleet, MA 02667, 1999, 79 pp., \$12.95.

*The Cheap Seats*, Scott Poole, Lost Horse Press, Spokane, WA, 1999, 65 pages, \$12.95.

"Seamless" has become something of a buzz-word in book reviewing circles of late, or at least in the world of the book-cover blurb, which I like to think of as literary criticism writ small: The writers' best friend, what their mothers would say about their books if they were asked. Not that I have anything against blurbs. Some of my best friends have written them, and that includes me. But to write a "seamless" book, or to turn out any text that might pass as somehow devoid of stitching, would appear to be (happily, for those of us who might have to measure ourselves against such a mark one day) impossible. This, presumably, is due to what William Butler Yeats referred to memorably as "Adam's Curse": "A line will take us hours maybe; / Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought, / Our stitching and unstitching has been naught." And so we are left with qualifiers: Any given book, or any poem or story or chapter in that book, may be only "almost" or "practically" seamless.

Surely it is one of the oddities of literary criticism at all levels that all of our comparisons, whether stated or implied, are by definition "invidious." We like Poem A better than Poem B, even though both were written by a poet we might admire immensely, and to make matters worse, we find ourselves blown away by these lines or that stanza, while others in the very same poem, which we might think overall very effective, must inevitably pale by comparison. Strange way to make a living. What would qualify as the most nearly seamless novel, poem, or play you've ever read? I would be willing to hazard the opinion that it is easier to make that sort of decision, for whatever it would be worth, than to identify a similar collection of short stories or poems. The unevenness in such ventures seems all too unavoidable.

Just for old time's sake, though, I will offer a few titles: Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*, Elizabeth Bishop's *Questions of Travel*, and Theodore Roethke's *The Lost Son and Other Poems*. Yet even with these volumes that contain numerous canonical poems, I find that relatively few poems are checked with my pencil in the table of contents to indicate titles I plan to revisit. I have done that for years: Read through a book of poems section by section, marking for future reference those titles that stood out for me. More recently, Richard Hugo's *What Thou Lovest Well Remains American* (1975), 18 checks out of 48 poems; *White Center* (1980), 21 out of 49 (I must have been in a good mood); Billy Collins' *Picnic, Lightning* (1998), 16 out of 44; Jorie Graham's *The Errancy* (1997), 11 out of 38; Alberto Rios's *Teodoro Luna's Two Kisses*, 11 out of 33; Sharon Olds's *The Gold Cell* (1989), 13 out of 59. So it goes. To score on as many as a dozen poems is pretty big time in my book, and many poets whose work I like generally will show up with just five or six pencil marks in any given table of contents. For me, at least, the search for a seamless book of poems is something akin to a quest for the Holy Grail.

The two small collections I have just finished are first books, so the check-marks are fewer in number, and perhaps less confident, but they signify to me that when these poets are at their best, they are well worth reading. Coincidentally, the small presses that published the books are also just starting out. *Picnic on the Moon* is published by Leapfrog Press in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. The editor's cover letter describes Charles Coe as "a passionate performer" whose work "has been appreciated equally well by long-time fans of poetry and those who have never attended a reading." A jazz vocalist, Coe is in his mid-40s, was born in Indianapolis, and presently lives in Cambridge. Several

of his better poems speak to the African-American experience, some reflecting on his own family and others concerning such public figures as Rosa Parks, Ella Fitzgerald, Etheridge Knight and Charlie Mingus.

Scott Poole's *The Cheap Seats* appeared in April, 1999 in Spokane, Washington, where it was published by Lost Horse Press, across the continent from the press that issued Coe's book. A recent MFA graduate of the creative writing program at Eastern Washington University, Poole, not yet 30, is employed as associate editor of the EWU Press. In his comments on the back cover of the book, fellow poet Philip Dacey questions whether Poole's poems are "Cubist? Surrealist? Post-modern?" and suggests that they are all of those, along with "doses of both Lewis Carroll and classic American deadpan comedy." While there is no indication that any of Coe's poems were published prior to this appearance in book form, Poole's poems appeared first in such magazines as *Fireweed*, *Seattle Review*, *Heliotrope* and *Mississippi Review*.

In a recent interview published in a special issue of *Poets & Writers*, Billy Collins advises "anyone putting a book together" to "remember they aren't ordering [the poems] for the general public at the moment," but for the editors or manuscript reviewers, "So I say, front-load the hell out of it. Of your 45 poems, take the strongest 15 and put them right in front." Although as Collins points out, the poet will later provide a more elaborate and sophisticated arrangement of the poems, most poets lead with a poem in which they have particular confidence, so it is not surprising that the lead poems from both Coe's and Poole's books are representative of the best that follows.

Coe opens with "Praying in the Dark," a 41-line poem in free verse stanzas of variable line-count. He focuses on his childhood experiences in parochial schools:

When I was a child, God ate fish  
on Fridays – spoke Latin  
with an Irish brogue.

Immediately, he identifies himself among the "small brown faces" at first communion looking into the camera, from which "a great white light / blotted out the world." As a boy he recalls praying for snow and then praying for President Kennedy and watching one of the nuns with a rosary, "her long, trembling fingers / the color of fish / that live on the ocean floor." He recalls other sensuous images from his boyhood, the "whiff of incense" and the "dim and distant sound of bells." He concludes by saying that he tries now to remember the conventional lessons he learned as a child, that "God doesn't make mistakes" and that "all suffering is for the greater good – to teach / or to cleanse." In the last stanza, Coe reestablishes the image pattern that he began in the first line and reasserted in the fourth stanza when he reflected on the nun's hands being "the color of fish" as he hears "cries in the night / of those about to slip / beneath the waves." Certainly this poem lives up to his billing as a poet whose voice is "humane," "compassionate" and "conversational." The poem is quiet and understated with little in the way of dramatic intensity, rhetorical dazzle or metaphoric flash.

Poole's first poem, "The Friend Who Went Crazy," runs in a single, 20-line block featuring somewhat greater line-length variation than Coe's poem. In fact, although Coe employs first-person narration, while Poole opts for third, the opening lines create a similar sort of mood or atmosphere of quiet nostalgia, and a conversational style or idiom:

He began to talk slow,  
and his friends would listen to the delicious words  
intently lengthening out  
until finally  
they would leave for the kitchen

(The flawed grammar and spelling, "slow" for "slowly," lengthening" for "lengthening," may be intentional.) The friends make pancakes and return to listen "as if he were the old wooden radio / they'd never had." Through the first 14 lines Poole sustains the quiet voice of reminiscence, but at line 15, he takes a metaphoric leap into the surreal:

Finally, his lips began to crust over  
with a heavy liquid,  
and his friends were shocked  
until they realized he had graciously become syrup,  
and they poured it on their pancakes  
and always thought of him fondly.

Poole's is the playful sort of surrealism that predominates in the manifestoes published by Andre Breton during the 1920s, and the implicit aims remain about the same now as they were seventy years ago: to oppose the "realistic attitude, inspired by positivism" and the "purely informative style;" to repudiate "the reign of logic" with a kind of verve that accompanies "absurdity;" to conjoin the apparently contradictory states of dream and reality; to embrace at least the appearance of spontaneity. The entrance of post-modernism into the equation does little more here than provide an alternative term along with a heavy dose of cultural context and conceptual freight.

I would submit that neither of these poems is the best in their respective books, but they are probably good enough indicators. Readers will know right away, whether they will lay out the cash and stay the course.

The second poem in Coe's book, "Blues for Mister Glasper," is a reminiscence of his boyhood in Indianapolis in 1967, when he had no time for the blues, when "the world was on the move" with Martin Luther King Jr. "pulling black people out of the mud" and Sidney Poitier "getting rich / making movies." In the concluding line the speaker realizes that "blue is a primary color." In Poole's "The Diet," near the end of the book, "the moon / sits on the house like a fat dancer waiting for the call," and the dieter "sentimentally" opens "a can of sardines, / and each sardine has its own television." His "The Second Coming" begins, "The other day I found the moon in the couch. / God must have dropped it when he came over. / He hadn't shaved."

The 37 poems that comprise Charles Coe's *Picnic on the Moon* are divided into three sections (In the Rear View Mirror – largely autobiographical poems; Meditations – rather "soft" reflective poems, along with three haiku – surely the weakest of the divisions, and unfortunately the longest; Snapshots – poems concerning historical figures, among which are some of the strongest in the book.) Overall, the poems offer quiet and unobtrusive satisfactions, and Coe's control of craft is generally sound, though clearly not as sophisticated as Poole's. But N.B., whether sophisticated craftsmanship necessarily equals "good poems" or "poems that speak to me" is another aesthetic issue altogether.

The 55 poems that make up Scott Poole's *The Cheap Seats* are not divided into sections, and while many of his most effective poems at least verge on the surreal, several, like "Breaking Down," play it pretty straight. Overall, Poole's poems are fun, often whimsical, like "The Ex-Porn Star Retirement Center," and ably crafted. It would be nice if he could avoid lines like the one in "White Bowl": "I feel like a small, unemployed miner." I mean, what exactly does that "feel like," one is tempted to ask, and how does that differ from feeling like a large, unemployed miner, or like a small, employed miner? I should probably resist that sort of temptation, but the "imp of the perverse" sometimes gets the better of me. Also, the error in diction at the end of the last poem in the book, a prose poem, "populous" for "populace," is irksome. But this book is a good read.

Both of these first books certainly have their moments, and readers will not have a hard time finding a few poems to mark with their pencils for future reference.





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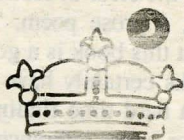
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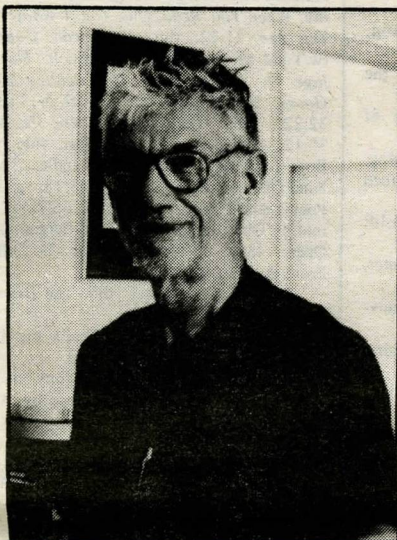


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### Gerald Locklin

GERALD LOCKLIN has published about 90 books and chapbooks including, most recently, *Go West, Young Toad: Selected Writings, Down and Out: A Novel, The Firebird Poems* (2nd ed.) and *The Hospital Poems*. He has taught since 1965 at California State University Long Beach. A collection of short stories, *Candy Bars*, is forthcoming from Water Row Press. He has served as poetry editor for *Chiron Review* since 1989.



### Laurel Ann Bogen

LAUREL ANN BOGEN is literary curator at Los Angeles County Museum of Art where she coordinates the Writers in Focus poetry series. She is founding member of the poetry performance ensemble Nearly Fatal Women. She teaches classes in poetry and performance in the Writers Program at UCLA Extension. She's had 10 books published, including *The Burning: New and Selected Poems 1970-1990* and *The Last Girl in the Land of the Butterfly*, and two audio recordings.

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ALL EVENTS ARE FREE. DONATIONS ACCEPTED.

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Return to: M. Hathaway, 702 N. Prairie, St. John, KS 67576.  
316-549-6156 or 786-4955; chironreview@hotmail.com

### The Shameless Name-Dropping Department

Several poets have already confirmed they are coming, or expressed an interest in attending. Many of these poets have volunteered to give special performances of their work on Saturday, Aug. 5. Some of these poets are: **Virginia Love Long**, Hurdle Mills, NC; **Harry Wilkens** and **Christine Zwingmann** of Geneva, Switzerland; **Tony Moffeit** and **Kyle Laws** of Pueblo, CO; **Ruth Moon Kempher** of St. Augustine, FL; **Jim and Eleanor Watson-Gove** of Oakland, CA; **Linda Rocheleau** of Savannah, GA; and **Richard Wilmarth** of Colorado. Also, hopefully some of our local talent, though I haven't asked them yet.

### Saturday, August 5

**SATURDAY WILL FEATURE** workshops at the library by **GERALD LOCKLIN** of Long Beach, California, at 11 a.m. and, after lunch, around 1 p.m., a workshop by **Laurel Ann Bogen** of Los Angeles, California. Dance performances by **Christine Zwingmann** (Geneva, Switzerland) and **Lee Ann June** (Great Bend, KS) will follow the workshop, as well as special readings and music, also at the library. Dinner will be around 7 P.M. at Michael, Shon & Lee Ann's at 702 N. Prairie, St. John. (Our illustrious psychic, **Connie Star**, is planning to be on-hand for psychic readings, 15 minutes for \$10. Though unable to attend the '99 festival, she says she'll make a valiant effort to be here in 2000.)

### Sunday, August 8

**SUNDAY'S FESTIVITIES** will begin at 12 NOON, hosted by **SCARLETT O'HARLETT** of Harpersville, Georgia. Featured poets, **GERALD LOCKLIN** and **LAUREL ANN BOGEN** will perform this afternoon. **OPEN-MIC READINGS** will be today. Registration begins at noon, and readings will begin around 1 P.M. It will be an informal come-and-go event; poets may register to read whenever they arrive.

### Festival Anthology

**PARTICIPANTS** in the keepsake festival anthology will create their own page. Bring 70+ copies of your page. Feel free to use both sides of the page; paper the color and texture of your choice; art or photographs, etc. Anthologies will be compiled during one of the breaks on Sunday. Covers, staples and hole puncher will be available. Participants get one free copy. Otherwise, they are \$5 each, with proceeds going for the next year's festival.

### Accommodations

**BESIDES ACCOMMODATIONS** listed at right, our home will be open to festival participants over the weekend if they need a place to hang out before or after events. We plan to have breakfast, lunch and dinner available Saturday and Sunday for our out of town guests. (RSVP by July 15 would help us plan.) Participants are welcome to mail books for book table or anthology pages if they don't want to haul them in their luggage on the way here.

#### ST. JOHN

##### Country Inn Motel

1 mi. S of SJ on 281

316-549-6604

##### Main Street B&B

101 N. Main

316-549-6698

##### - Restaurants -

The Ruby Slipper

Melody's Cafe

Gambino's Pizza

Taco Tico/Shortstop

##### - Bar -

South Branch

#### STAFFORD

3 mi. S on 281/7 mi E on 50

##### Kountry Korner Motel

506 Martin/E Hwy 50

316-234-5232

##### Cow Pasture B&B

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316-234-6115

##### Henderson House B&B

518 W. Stafford St.

800-473-8003

##### - Restaurants -

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Freshway/Ampride

Curtis Cafe

Elroy's Pizza

#### GREAT BEND

25 mi. N on 281

##### Lizzie's Cottage B&B

1315 Stone St.

316-792-6000

##### Peaceful Acres B&B

316-793-7527

##### Baltzell Motel

705 10th

316-792-4395

##### Best Western

2920 10th

800-862-6487

##### Days Inn

4701 10th

316-792-8235

##### Economy Inn

1015 10th

316-792-4307

##### Highland Manor

3017 10th

316-792-7219

##### Holiday Inn

3017 W 10th

316-792-2431

##### Jayhawker Motel

3600 10th

316-792-4319

##### Super 8

3500 10th

316-793-8486

##### Travelers Budget Inn

4200 10th

316-793-5448



# THE KINDRED SPIRIT/CHIRON REVIEW

## AUTHOR INDEX, ISSUES 1-59

### Who, What, When, Where & Why ... and Whatever

This index was created for my own use and convenience. I spent too much time thumbing through countless pages of countless issues looking things up. I don't know if it's "right" or not, and I don't really care.

Material is indexed by author's name mostly, since that's what I'm usually looking for. Also indexed are essay subjects; reviewed books and magazines; titles mentioned in news columns; chapbooks published by Kindred Spirit and Chiron Review Press; and articles relevant to small press history, Vietnam War and lesbian and gay literature.

Back issues and photocopies of pages are available from me until further notice (i.e., I drop dead). Photocopies of specific pages are available for \$1 for first page, 30¢ each thereafter. (SASE for list of back issues.)

Chiron Review is also available on microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 N Zeeb Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48016, as of Issue 18 (Vol. 8, #1, spring, 1989).

There are better indexes available. Chiron Review is indexed by *American Humanities Index* (PO Box 958, Troy, NY 12181), as of Issue 18 (Vol. 8, #1, spring, 1989); and *Index of American Periodical Verse* (P.O. Box 38, New Brunswick, NJ 08903), as of Issue 22 (Vol. 9, #1, spring, 1990).

In February 1994, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut purchased Chiron Review's archives; second installment was purchased Feb., 1996; third installment, Oct., 1999.

Archives include existing typescripts of manuscripts published Issues 1-17; all typescripts 18 and thereafter; correspondence with writers and editors since 1979; manuscripts of chapbooks I wrote and/or published; my own hand-written and typewritten poetry manuscripts; and the humongous library of small press magazines, books and miscellany.

### Sample entry for this slapdash index:

Aal, Katharyn Machan. p: St. Valentine's Day, 23:20.  
This means Katharyn Machan Aal's poem (p): "St. Valentine's Day" appears on page 20 of Issue #23.

- A -

Aal, Katharyn Machan. p: St. Valentine's Day, 23:20.

Abbott, Franklin. p: Jacob Losing, 13:8; p: Little Ease (2), 14:9.

Abbott, R. (Raymond). f: The Girl with the Stars on Her Head, 7:5.

ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS. see by Ron McFarland: The Poet and the Academy, 59:26.

ACID PRESS. THE. A Few Amazing Facts About The Acid Press, 58:28.

Acorn, Milton. rhb (co-auth James Deahl): A Stand of Jackpine: Two Dozen Canadian Sonnets, 19:13.

Adam, Cheryl. ph/bio. f: The Good Deed Maniac, 52:10.

Adam, Rosemary. p: When Getting Directions Is Difficult, 49:17.

Adame, Louis. p: A Garden (last name misspelled, "Adams"), 50:48.

Adams, Barbara (aka B.B. Adams). r: A Stand of Jackpine: Two Dozen Canadian Sonnets by Milton Acorn and James Deahl, 19:13; Counting To Zero by Marion Deutsche Cohen, A Well-Tuned Harp by Geraldine C. Little, 20:4; Sudden Fiction International: Pencil Letter: Poems by Irina Ratushinskaya, 22:14; The Inland Sea: A Selection From the Poetry of Jenny Joseph by Jenny Joseph, 22:15; Unsealed Lips: Confidences From Contemporary Women Writers, Lyn Lifshin, Ed., Vito Loves Geraldine by Jance Eidus, 24:31; Best English Short Stories 1989, Gile Gordon and David Hughes, Eds., 24:32; Love Poems by Women, Wendy Milford, Ed., 27:29; Near Changes by Mona Van Duyn, Collected Poems by Louis Simpson, 27:30; ph/bio, ps: The Turtle and Henry IV; Old Red Eye, 28:12; p: Going Through My Pockets, 28:44; r: Snapshots for a Serial Killer by Robert Peters, 32:19; p: Anachronism, 32:29; p: Unstitching, 43:34; p: Things Of This World I No Longer Need, 59:41.

Adams, Deborah. p: Jungle Sidewalks, 14:21.

Aderman, Ruth Pierstorff. p: View from the San Joaquin Hills, 43:34; ps: The Land of Ophir; Bragging, 48:1.

Agostino, Paul. ph/bio, ps: The Legitimate Smart-Ass; To the Protestors Who Violated St. Patrick's Cathedral For the Love of

A.I.D.S. Victims; Reincarnation and the Holy Commonwealth, 24:15; p: What Do you Say at a Communist Funeral?, 25:14; p: Pose Writing, 27:45; bio, ps: Violence, the Subconscious, and the Unconscious; The Emperor's New Clothes; There's Money to be Made in Reproduction; Engagements and Disengagements, 30:7; p: Wrestling With Democracy, 32:30; f: Claws, 34:36; ps: On Line at the Supermarket, Wandering Through Entertainment and Fashion Magazines; The Sins of the Father, The Sins of the Sons, and the Sins of the Nephew, 35:16; p: Carnage, 37:8:18; ph/bio and ps: Natural Selection; barricade; Uppercut, 42:9; ps: When A Couch Is Not a Couch; Old Reliable; I Thought This Was the English Department, 48:5; ph/bio, 48:5; lte, 51:6; ph/bio, ps: Onward and Upward; The Meek May Inherit, But the Strong Hold the Title Deed, 52:26; ph, 55:1; ps: The Gold Standard; Land of Missed Opportunity; View From the Plateau; New Worries in the Age of Contraception, 55:2; p: A Life Triumphant, 55:3; ph, intd by Ed Stever; Paul Agostino: The Chiron Interview, 55:4; rhb: Engagements and Disengagements, 55:47; p: Branford Marsalis, Saxophone Player, Composer, Actor On Racism in America (Found Poem), 57:41; ph/bio, ps: Why December 21st is My Favorite Day of the Year; Employee Benefits, 59:37.

Ahl, Liz. p: Legend, 16:16.

Airmet, Douglas. rhb: Anything But Poetry [author's name misspelled Arimet], 53:46; ph/bio, ps: Fire and Rain on the Wapi Flows; Doug-Bob and Will Put Aside All Unavailing Outcries and Go Poetry Camping, 58:28.

Aitchison, Guy. ph, intd by Oberc: Talking About Lorri Jackson: An Interview with Guy Aitchison, 54:24.

Alamares, Jay. ph/bio and ps: untitled: "Can you help me?"; Intriguing Poem, 42:27; p: the philosophy of fireballs, 53:41; p: the disconsolate, LATE SHOW, 54:39.

Albel, Rog. ints Nilda Cepero: Barefoot in the Garden with Nilda Cepero, 59:3.

Albright, Mia. rhb: Tricks of the Voice, 14:11.

Alexander, Alaina. thx, 36:32.

Alexander, Elizabeth. rhb: The Venus Hot-tentot, 28:30.

Alexie, Sherman. p: The Reservation Cab Driver, 30:26; ph, 44:5:1; ps: Marilyn Monroe; James Dean; Last Song, 44:5:2; intd by Mark Weber: Talking with Sherman Alexie, 44:5:3-4; see by Ron McFarland: Sherman Alexie's Polemical Stories, 44:5:5-7.

Allaire, Ruth Ann. p: Vestal Virgin, 7:12.

Allen, Jed. p: The Kiss, 39:10.

Alta. rhb: Deluged With Dudes: Platonic and Erotic Love Poems to Men, 28:30.

Amsterdam, Beulah. p: Regina Drives a Rainbow Car, 46:7:23.

Andazola, Julianne. ps: Flight; Taps; Family Tree; Freeways Are Constructed With Steel Girders (they dangle from the teeth of cranes), 53:16.

Andersen, J.S. rs: The White Man Problem by Jack Powers and Merritt Clifton, 13:12; Free Focus and Ostentatious Mind, Patricia D. Coscia, Ed., 13:12; I Hate Men by Janet Gray, 15:11; Half Memory of a Distant Life by Douglas Goodwin, 17:15.

Anderssen, D. Peter. p: Titled 2, 5:2; p: On The Seeming Impossibility Of Writing You A Farewell Poem, 10:7.

Anderson, Gary. p: Zachary, 30:21.

Anderson, Steven Scott. p: Seas of Tadpoles I Cannot Bear, 14:27.

Anderson, Teresa. p: Poem to be Sung to No One, 25:15.

Andregg, Caron. p: St. Elmo's Fire, 58:31.

Andrews, Al. p: Tutti Frutti, 3:5.

Androla, Ron. ph 40:1; ps: first diane smiled; i talked about steve richmond to my daughter, 40:2; ps: the poet better; what they want; singing against the hyenas of hope: i am beginning to question my fate, 40:3; intd by Oberc: Looking for Androla, 3 phs, 40:4; ph, p: reading fress voss, 40:5; see by Todd Moore: Sex, Work, and Ron Androla, 40:28; p: christmas eve, 46:7:19; p: Waking, 48:31; p: a problem with coffee, 49:28; p: Sexual Harassment in the Work-Place, 54:37; p: searching for a poem, 56:7; p: poem & smiles, 58:19.

Angeleri, Lucy. p: Laodamia, 15:20.

ANIMAL LIBERATION FRONT. see by Merritt Clifton: Sam Adams for the Animals, 17:12.

Anthony, Frank. bio, ints Erskine Caldwell (1978): Erskine Caldwell: A Man With an Attitude, 55:28.

Antler. ph/bio, ps: What Every Boy Knows; River Anatomy, 28:13; p: Everything Is Different Now, 30:21; ph/bio, ps: The Word Boy; tagteam blowjob; Paying Lipservice to Blowjob; Blowjobscope, 33:7; p: First Step From the Playpen, 37:8:6-7; p: Laying On of Hands vs. Laying on of Ears, 37:8:7; ph/bio, ps: Wacry vs. Blowjobcry; Blowjob Bonnet vs. War Bonnet; 'Blow as Deep as You Want to Blow,' 37:8:19; r: Ben's Exit by Paul Trachtenberg, 39:14; ph 43:1; p: Brains Bashed In by Sledgehammers, 43:2; ps: Redressing the Balance; Moon Lips, 43:3; 3 phs, intd by Robert Borden: Talking with Antler, 43:4-6; ps: Cockfighting vs. Cock-sucking; Titsuckers, 43:6; ps: Berrygathering vs. Semengathering; If God Had A Mouth; 'Do you mind if I nurse my baby?' vs. 'Do you mind if I suck my young pal's cock?'; Sweetcorn vs. Sweetcome, 43:7; p: Touchdown vs. Tough Down, 49:47; ph/bio, signature, ps: Being Molested? Being Abused? Being Taken Advantage Of? Shying Away; Straitjacket vs. Blowjobjacket; Psalm, 50:14; lte, 54:6; ph/bio, ps: Prove To Me; Dachau Stone, 55:7; p: Now You Know, 57:33; p: So Now You Know, 58:27.

Anton, Susan M. p: The Hawk, The Chipmunk and Me, 6:11; f: Why Not?, 10:14.

Antrim, Kathie. p (co-auth Richard Kostelanetz): Increments, 31:11.

Apotheker, Alison. p: Monotony Of Lovers: Night Of The Full Lunar Eclipse (inadvertently credited to Janet Berni-chon), 43:31; p: Monotony Of Lovers: Night Of The Full Lunar Eclipse, 44:5:15.

Appleby, Frank W. p: Perhaps, 16:8; p: Chicken Mama Speaks, 20:11.

Aquino, Jennifer. p: The taste of us, 30:25.

Arenas, Marion. p: Laughing Cathy's Reversal, 29:37.

Argüelles, Ivan (aka i argüelles). p: Satoria, 7:9; p: Exile, 7:11; p: brilliant diamond cigarette girl, 10:3; p: super nova, 11:9; bio, ps: Bakunin; Dionysus The Same And The Other; Are We In Cambodia, 12:14; rhb: Baudelaire's Brain, 19:14.

Armstrong, Glen. p: John Keats, King of Bohemia, 23:15; p: Long Cool Silhouette, 25:18; p: To the Level Poets of Iowa, 29:37.

Arneson, Susan Lorraine. ph/bio, ps: Blonde Boy; That; The Poem Of Bobbie; Stupid; Crush, 18:20; p: cold, 21:11.

Aronowitz, E.D. p: Poof, 55:25; p: Concepts of Color, 55:31.

Arroyo, Rane. ph/bio, ps: Seducing Eric; The Twins; Touch You, The Want So Much; At the Mall; Written In His Palms; Angel, Where?; Dream #2; Three Answering Machines, 13:2; r: Cruising the Moon by David Bissonette, 13:6; r: Pagan Love Songs by Gavin Dillard, 15:7; ph/bio, ps: Returning To Scenes Of My Crimes in Salt Lake City; Tenderness: Secrets In Pockets, 33:21.

Artaud, Antonin. p: Black Garden (trans by Tom Hibbard), 53:41.

Ash, John. rhb: The Burnt Pages, 31:19.

Ashbery, John. see by Chris Strofollino: An Attempt at John Ashbery, 24:29; rhb: Flow Chart, 28:29.

Asner, Marie. r: The Diver's Shadow by Rochelle Lynn Holt, 37:8:42; r: Kiss Of Fire by Linda Joan Zeiser, 40:27; r: My Angel & Other Poems by Jane Hathaway, 49:43; rhb (co-auth Rochelle Lynn Holt): The Tree of Life, 51:45; r: Infamous In Our Prime by Rochelle Lynn Holt and Virginia Love Long, 52:47; r: Scars by Rochelle Lynn Holt, 58:44.

Astor, M.C. ph/bio, ps: Blue Crocodile; Colors of the Night, 41:13.

Atkins, Priscilla. p: One Chilly Night, 53:43; p: Beautiful Shirts, 54:35.

Atkins, Shawn Daves. p: I kissed the sea, 10:7.

Atkinson, Alan. p: Annabelle, 13:8; p: As Usual, 33:43; p: Passion, 33:46.

Atkinson, Michael. ph/bio, ps: Lineage: One Second of 'Frankenstein' (1931), 27:10.

Auer, Fr. Benedict, O.S.B. p: Godprints, 15:20.

Austin, Bob. ph/bio, ps: News from the Maze Stone; Catch & Release, 37:8:3; p: At the Milagrosso Store, 42:24.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN. p: One of these days, 55:43.

Axelrod, David. p: The Day the Neighbors Divorced, 40:6.

Ayres, Ian. p: The Wedding, 6:11; p: I'm A Corpse, 10:15.

Azzouni, Jody. p: A Writer's Pastoral Poem, 7:11; p: I Went Blind One Day, 10:7; p: Royal Portrait, 14:24.

- B -

Bach, Glenn. rs: The Firebird Poems by Gerald Locklin; in/word/out (video c), Robert Borgatti, Paul Lamont, Producer/Director, 35:13; p: bushido, 39:30; bio, p: Jaywalking, 56:22.

Bachardy, Dan. art: sketch of Michael Lassell, 33:23.

Baer, Tom. p: Rock 'n Roll Church, 55:24.

Bagato, Jeff. p: Thought He Had The Skinny, 46:7:23.

Baker, Beverly. p: Attention Must Be Paid, 3:5.

Balazic, Todd. p: dream of a sled dog, 59:19; p: watching a friend die, 59:41.

Baldwin, Douglas N. f: Laughter and the Long Game, 43:18.

Bakowski, Peter. p: The Old Women of Bulgaria, 28:45.

Bailey, Clay. p: Truth In Advertising, 31:13; p: Adding Water To Your Specimen May Cause You To Test Positive, 34:13.

Ball, Julie. ph (w/Linda Zeiser), art, 33:14; art, 50:7.

Ballew, Michael. p: Spring in Winter, 14:5.

banks-richardson, s. p: and so i stop moving to walk, 42:32.

Barnes, Dick. p: Be With Me Beauty, 43:31; p: Lucky Lady Video, 44:5:41.

Barnes, Mary Ellen. p: earthquake, 18:11; p: on our 19th anniversary, 20:7; p: and i had always thought they named the club for the furniture style, to add a touch of class, 20:20.

Barney, Anne. p: The Cesianian, 37:8:35.

Barr, Missy. p: untitled: If the sun would shine forever, 10:15.

Barrigar, Dale. f: Beautiful Loon's Lament, 30:17.

Bartholomew, Hillary. p: Cow, 18:23.

Bartley, Nellis M. p: I am, 6:11; photography: Bandana, 7:1. 20:1; photography: Timeless Rides, 18:1.

Barton, John. p: Ripper, 33:45.

Bastian, Richard. p: Last Laughs for Charles, 5:8.

Bates, Tamara. ps: Scream of the Butterfly: The Ocean's Song, 4:2; ph, ps: An Unwritten Letter; Indifference; Crisis December 8; City; A Cloud Nested In My Eye; War Song of Nemesis; Sullen Lover; Hot Air Balloons & Carnival Lies; by Comparison, 9:6; p: The Hunt, 9:15; p: D.O.A., 16:16.

Battram, Michael R. p: The Night of the First Spring Storm, 27:48; p: Now, If They Call You An Asshole, What Should You Say?, 28:45.

Bax, Martin. intd by Gerald Locklin: An Interview with Martin Bax, 29:21.

Beard, Francesca (England). p: All of the Goodness, None of the Mess, 56:9.

Beeman, Nancy Brea. p: two segmented worms, 10:10.

Bears, Hilea. p: untitled: Violet is the night, 15:20.

Beatty, Jan. rhb: Mad River, 49:42.

Beck, Pam. proofreader, 3-7:12. 8:2. 13-14:2. 17:2.

Begley, Mark. p: Blue Veined, 43:30.

Belfield, Judy. p: Another Folly, 7:11; p: A Word In Passing, 10:7.

Belile, Elisabeth. ph. 51:1; p: Women's Experimental Fiction, 51:2; p: Writer's Block, Los Angeles, moving through 1995, 51:3; ph, intd by Oberc: Talking to Elisabeth Belile: A Touch of the Wild Side Coming Strong, 51:4.

Bellerose, Sally. story: Flush, 33:5; p: Mama Was Not, 33:42.

Benevento, Joe. p: Haleene Crying with her Poem, 14:24.

Benjamin, Jerry. p: It Was Really, 32:32.

Benjamin, Ruth. p: You Must Go To the Moon, 27:42.

Bennett, John M. p: Blending the Ox, 14:25.

Bennett, John (WA). ph, intd by Oberc, A Few Words with John Bennett, 40:22; ph 40:23; p: Where We're Going, 43:20; p: Time Slants Thru Space Like Acid Rain & What's A Dream?, 46:7:37; p: What Enlightenment Was Like Before It Got Packaged, 49:17; lte, 51:6; r: Remembering Ray: A Composite Biography of Raymond Carver, William Stull and Maureen P. Carroll, Eds., 51:44; p: What They Didn't Tell Us, 54:37; lte: An Open Letter to American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, 55:6; e: In Defense of Icono-

clasts, 56:29; f: The Invisible Tracker & Twirling Girl, 57:17.

Berbrich, John. ph/bio, f: Real Art, 56:8.

Berg, Nancy. p: star-swing, 6:11; p: Divorce, 10:7.

Bergamino, Gina (aka Gina Bergamino-Frey, Gina Frey, G.M. Frey, G. Marie, Gina Berry). p: it's a black & blue holiday, 12:6; ph/bio, ps: Still; In This Part of Georgia; The Big Nose Theory; This; In Tampa; Our New Apartment; October Chill; Off Dale Mabry Highway; In Harrisonville, Missouri; Nothing Better To Do; Oedipus Club, 14:14; p: Born To Die, 21:11; rhb: My Name Isn't Richard Brautigan, 21:15; thx, 29:24; ph/bio, ps: The Next Thing I Know; When You Read This You'll Know Who You Are; If I Could; Autumn Sky; Wings; Blue Hotel; Feet, 30:13; rhb: When You Read This You'll Know Who You Are, 31:22; rhbs: American Cannibal (w/Todd Moore); Dream Poems; In This Village We Join Hands; The Reality Mother Goose; White Horse Cafe (w/Lyn Lifshin), 32:22; rhb: Wednesday, There Is More, 35:12; ph/bio, ps: Lower East Side; Blue Boy; Language; Wall; The Candle; Twisted Kind Of Love; Secret Garden, 41:18; p: Eight Poems And I Still Can't Sleep, 46:7:44; phs, intd by Oberc: Talking to Gina Bergamino by Oberc, 48:6; p: Another Town Is Different From the Last, 48:8.

Bernard, Christopher. rhb: The Dilettante of Cruelty: Deserts, 57:46.

Bernhardt, Suzanne. p: That's the Island where the Wild Ponies Are, 7:10.

Bernichon, Janet. [p: Monotony of Lovers: Night of the Full Lunar Eclipse by Alison Apotheker, inadvertently credited to her, 43:31]; p: The Last Detail, 43:36.

Berry, Simeon. p: Folk Tales, 46:7:44.

Berry, Wendell. rhb: Sabbaths, 24:34.

Bertram, Anne. p: Taking Wings, 14:27; p: Stargazing with Vincent, 15:20.

Beskin, Lisa. ph/bio, ps: At the Bookstore in Seattle; Massage; Sex with Evan, 33:10.

Beveridge, Robert P. p: how to write poetry, 24:40.

Bezner, Kevin. rhb: The Tools of Ignorance, 52:46.

Bibbins, Mark. ps: Safe: Oracle, 50:23.

Billickie, Tom. r: Flaming Tail Out of the Ground Near Your Farm by Janet Gray, 15:2.

Birks, Lynda. p: Movie Scene, 10:5.

Bissonette, David. ph/bio, ps: Planet Eyes; The Skeleton Has a Dream; Down from Dreams: Lessons for Being Misunderstood; Costume Brains; A Young Newspaper Boy Mistaken for the Messiah; bongo bash; Transvestite Vegetables; A Small Room Mistaken for a Whale's Mouth; Manstones, 13:6; rhb: Cruising the Moon, 13:6.

Bitá, Lili. rhb: Firewalkers, 14:11; r: Warm Storm by Rochelle Lynn Holt, 31:24; rhb: Striking the Sky (trans by Robert Zaller), 53:47; rhb: The Scorpion and Other Stories, 55:46; ph/bio, ps: Abortion in the Mythic City: Credo; The Train: Athens-Piraeus, 56:27.

### ABBREVIATIONS

ac = audio cassette  
anth = anthology  
bk = book  
cn = creative nonfiction  
ded = dedication, dedicated  
e = essay  
es = essays  
ex = excerpt  
f = fiction  
ff = flash fiction  
ffs = flash fictions  
fs = fictions  
install = installment  
intd = interviewed  
ints = interviews  
lte = letter to the editor  
p = poem  
ps = poems  
r = review  
re: regarding  
rhb = review of his/her book  
rhbs = review of his/her books  
rhc = review of his/her cassette  
rhcs = review of his/her cassettes  
rhCD = review of his/her CD  
rhCDs = review of his/her CDs  
rs = reviews  
so = subject of  
soe: subject of essay  
trans = translated, translation  
thx = thanks for help or support



- Bizzaro, Patrick. rhb: *Undressing the Mannequin*, 24:33.
- Blain, Alexander. ps: Sauna. In a Sauna: From saunas drenching; The Four Poster, 2:5; ps: Lotus Lake: I Must Be On My Way; The Stelae, 5:11; ph/bio, ps: Leander; Your Shadow Walking Through Maples; Dancing With Spanish Gypsies; In the Cemetery; 'I Imagine Druids Timeless'; Porcupine Mountains; Huron Mountains Music; Woman's Song; Love Song; Prescription; Crickets Sing; Coffee Song, 6:4; p: L'Adieu, 10:7.
- Bledsoe, Lucy Jane. f: Three Weddings, 50:34.
- Bledsoe, Tony. p: Always Alone, 43:15; p: Days and Nights of the Slow Death, 44:5:33.
- Blessing, Tom. p: no philosophical outlook, 9:10.
- Bloch, Albert. rhb: *German Poetry In War and Peace: Poems by Karl Kraus and George Trakl*, 49:40.
- Block, Jonathan. p: October at the War Memorial, 26:20.
- Block, Ron. rhb: *Dismal River*, 28:36.
- Blomain, Karen. rhb: *The Slap*, 28:28.
- Blue Train, Rhonda. See Poynter, Rhonda C.
- Boadiba, trans (w/Jack Hirschman) from Haitian Creole: Zombie by Jan Mapou; I'm Dreaming of Your Body All Nude by Lyonel Trouillot, 52:23.
- Bobelis, Viktor. p: To Frame, 16:8.
- Bogen, Laurel Ann. ph/bio, ps: Also Frankenstein; Listen, 23:3; p: Journal Entry from an Empty Hand, 37:8:43; ph/bio, ps: For B.B. King, My 44th Birthday and You, Too; cold, cold, cold; Wings/That Which Takes Flight, 40:8; ph/bio, ps: Orpheus Ascending/Homage to Orwell; I Have a Religious Experience; Part of This is True But I Forget Which Part; The Room, 49:10; ph, 58:1; ps: The Fear That Murders Love; Hollywood Hills Noir; The Door For Love And Death; Washing A Language; 58:2; p trans: Poem #175: Except For My Heart; Poem #204: untitled (Last night we gathered speaking only of your hair); Poem #165: The Transformation, by Hafiz; 58:3; ph, intd by Jamie O'Halloran; Laurel Ann Bogen: The Chiron Interview, 58:4.
- Boger, Ann A. p: Moving On, 53:15.
- Bontemps, Arna. rhb (co-auth Langston Hughes): *Letters: 1925-1967*, 27:36.
- Booth, Barbara. p: Owl, 9:14.
- Borchers, Terry K. p: Little Fictions, 48:40.
- Borczon, Mark. rhb (co-auth Lonnie Sherman): *The Wisdom of Night Spiders*, 54:45; rhb (co-auth Todd Moore): *Some Die Along the Way*, 57:46.
- Borden, Robert. ints Antler: Talking with Antler, 43:4.
- Borges, Millicent C. ph/bio, ps: Transit Confessional: An Uninvited Guest's Description of a Parisian Cafe; The Chattel Element; The Chameleon, 22:5.
- Boscia, Edward. art: The Good Catch (pen and ink, 1995), 54:11.
- Bosveld, Jennifer. p: Response to Guided Imagery Wksp in Which We Were to Find Great Solace in Going to the Sea, 43:33; p: Maple Climax Skycapades, 48:11; ph/bio, ps: The Biggest Hardest Boner of All Time; Drawing about the Car, or a Carousel, 54:11; p: Not Just For Stepford Wives: Personality Probe, 56:15.
- Bounds, Kim. p: The Tooth Fairy Slept, Too, 12:6.
- Bourbon, Nita. ps: The New Church; Family Tree, 5:8.
- Bousset, Louise. p: dying flower, 9:10.
- Bove, Robert. r: *Women at War* by Elizabeth Norman, 26:14; *Life After Vietnam* by Delores A. Kuenig; *Just For Laughs* by W.D. Ehrhart, 28:33.
- Bowen, Kevin. bio, ps: Nui Ba Den: Black Virgin Mountain; Danang, 26:13; rhb: *Playing Basketball with the Viet Cong*, 44:5:38.
- Box, Thadis W. p: Cadastral Survey, 7:11.
- Boyer, Dale W. p: The Disease, 33:46.
- Boyer, Mason Russell. f: Just Wait, 59:8.
- Brackenridge, Valery. p: Want to Write, 27:45.
- Brackett, Patricia. p: Liberty, 14:30.
- Bradley, John. rhb: *Love-In-Idleness: The Poetry of Robert Zingarello*, 24:39; r: *Kinky* by Denise Duhamel, 51:42.
- Brady, Dan. p: Whaling, 9:15.
- Brady, Meg. p: Conversation Piece at the Dinner Party, 55:35.
- Braithwaite, Kent. p: Hubble, 44:5:7.
- Brandenburg, Dawn. art: Smurfette, 49:33; art, 50:9; art: Gwen - No Doubt, 50:47.
- Brantingham, John. ph/bio, f: Bribing a Dutchman, 57:18.
- Brattman, Steven Ronald. p: Subject, 10:10; p: Selling Out, 14:27.
- Brett, Peter. p: The Face of God, The Sadness of Ice, 10:6.
- Brevard, Adam Liam. p: <<calvin kleins>>, 50:33.
- Brewer, Gay. p: The Monolith, 20:23; p: November, 27:44; ph/bio, ps: Legend of the Porch; Students and Master; Sitting with Dog, I Assume His Mood, 41:7; p: Cold House, 49:46.
- Breytenbach, Breyten. rhb: *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist*, 34:21.
- Bridewell, Leslie. p: Long Winter, Warm Barn, 27:38.
- Bridford, Kim. f: Slow, 37:8:8.
- Britton, Wesley. p: The White Man is Blue, Not Grey, 48:35; p: Why Franklin Swore Off Sex, 49:38.
- Broadbelt, Eileen Connor. p: Evening descends, 6:11.
- Brock, James. rhb: *The Sunshine Mine Disaster*, 52:45.
- Brock, Randall. ps: POEM; i am; please, 4:2; ps: i am; golden hands; ancient blood; i am, 7:12; p: seasons, 9:10; ps: run; inside, 10:3; p: untitled: cold dark, 10:12.
- Brodsky, Louie Daniel. rhb: *Three Early Books of Poems*, 54:42.
- Brooks, Gwendolyn. rhb: *Blacks*, 36:10.
- Broughton, James. p: For the Young Departed, 33:42; ph, 50:1; bio/ph (w/Joel Singer), signature, ps: Life With Big Joy; Litany for the Lord of my Chakras; ex from Imp of the Inner Ear, 50:2; 2 phs, ps: Windward Ho; Total Package: Love for Big Joy; Rejoice; Big Joy to the Rescue, 50:3; ph, intd by Martin Goodman; James Broughton: *The Chiron Interview*, 56:30; so lte, 57:2; ded, 58:2.
- Brower, Rachel. ph/bio, ps: Welcome to Denver; Car Payment #59; So I See, Bob; The Thing Done Right; Restaurant Chatter, 51:9.
- Brown, Allison. f: So. Are You Circumcised?, 21:20.
- Brown, Angela. f: On The Mountain, 21:10.
- Brown, Arthur. rhb: *Mississippi River Poems*, 27:37.
- Brown, Barnsley. ph/bio, ps: Mother; Medusa's Dread Locks; Wings, 29:6.
- Brown, Gary H. art (charcoal): Dug; Jack, 1993, 50:24; Hallucination At Solstice Full Moon, 1982; Dream Girl, 1980; Protecting Heart, 1991, 50:25.
- Brown, Rita Mae. rhb: *Poems*, 17:17.
- Brown, Tim W. r: *Tonguing the Zeitgeist* by Lance Olsen, 42:23; r: *The Best of Impetus: The First Ten Years*, Cheryl Townsend, Ed., 54:42; ints Jay Marvin: An Interview with Jay Marvin, 57:22; r: *Ghost Radio* by Dick Lourie, 58:43.
- Bryant, Rebecca. p: *Dropped Like a Peach*, 50:43.
- Brubaker, Pamela. p: Snare, 10:5; p: Cult, 10:7.
- Bubbadinos, The. See Weber, Mark.
- Buchanan, Jim. p: I Need a New Hiding Place, 48:15.
- Buck, Hydie. p: A Shell's Story, 10:15.
- Buckaway, C.M. p: untitled: An old tabby cat, 10:10.
- Buckbee, Robin. photography: The Cloisters, 19:1; 4 phs of The Cloisters, 19:49.
- Buege, Bill. p: Forget #15, 46:7:35; p: Forget #16, 48:47; p: Forget #11, 52:29; ph/bio, p: Pinups, 58:21.
- Buisson, Justine. p: Like Roethke, For Instance, 28:44.
- Bukowski, Charles (1920-1994). bio / self-portrait, ps: nowhere within nothing; until the last day or night of your life; cause and effect, 12:4; rhb: *You Get So Alone At Times That It Just Makes Sense*, 12:4; self-portrait, p: Snapshots, 13:9; p: here in the history of me, 15:15; self-portrait, ps: the movement; symphony #3; you are the big name on the marquee, 16:10; ps: instructions to a malcontent; stand-off; the question most asked is; dear editor; all right now; the gods send it laughing; let's have some fun, 16:11; rhbs: *Beauti-Ful & Other Long Poems; The Roominghouse Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966*, 17:15; ps: I got your amnesty!; it's fair enough, 21:4; bio, ps: Henry Miller and Burroughs; My Turn, 22:4; bio, ps: the valet; mugged, 24:4; rhb: *Septuagenarian Stew: Stories and Poems*, 27:28; p: bar stool, 30:5; bio, ps: clipboard; large and small and none at all, 32:10; ps: for the lady who hates it; and the fish with the yellow eyes and the green tail fins leaped into the volcano, 35:17; p: confessions of a freak, 37:8:2; bio, ps: dead; the word, 41:5; soe by Joan Jobe Smith; Charles Bukowski: The Poet as Entertainer, 41:16; *Spinning off Bukowski*, chapters 70, 74 by Steve Richmond, 42:28; *The Charles Bukowski/Second Coming Years* (Part 1) by A.D. Winans, 46:7:28; Part 2, 49:26; Part 3, 52:18; Part 4, first installment, 55:32; Part 4, 2nd inst, 56:34; Part 4, 3rd inst, 57:38; Part 4, 4th and final installment, 58:34; bio, self-portrait, art, p: the greatest actor of our day, 49:9; ph (w/John Thomas, Philomene Long, 1986), 56:43; sor: *Bukowski in the Bathtub: Recollections of Charles Bukowski with John Thomas* by Philomene Long, 56:43; sketch, so ps by Joan Jobe Smith, 57:6; soe lte by Norman J. Olson, 59:27.
- Bundy, Gary. p: Black Jack, 29:23.
- Burger, Terry L. p: April, 1979, 10:5.
- Burke, Thomas. f: Boyfriend's New Shoes, 33:35.
- Burkhart, Fred. photography: Guy Aitchison and The Ghost of Lorri Jackson, 54:24; Lorri Jackson, 54:25.
- Burras, Ron. r: *The Rochester Trip* by Gerald Locklin: *The Conference* by Gerald Locklin, 28:34.
- Burroughs, William. rhb: *Tornado Alley*, 21:13; soe by Robert Peters: A Visit with William Burroughs, 48:30; ph, 49:4.
- Burton, A. Lyn. p: Remember, 10:6; p: Windlaugh, 11:13.
- Burwell, Martin. p: untitled: Turgenev, 15:20.
- Buschmeier, Donna. p: Crippled, 10:7.
- Butler, Thirl Michael. p: Growing Up, 14:24.
- Butters, Christopher. rhb: *The White Room*, 15:11.
- Byrd, Stephanie D. rhb: *A Distant Footstep on the Plain*, 17:16.
- Byrne, Nan. lte, 54:6.
- C -
- COSMEP. so nov ex by A.D. Winans: *The Charles Bukowski/Second Coming Years*, Part 4, 2nd installment, 56:34; Part 4, 3rd installment, 57:38.
- Caddy, David (England). p: Early One Morning, 14:28; ps: On the deaths of Leigh and Adlem.; Tonight I want Diane and the Moon, 30:14; p: The village claws to its feet, 34:41.
- Caldwell, Erskine (1903-1987). intd by Frank Anthony (1978): Erskine Caldwell: A Man With an Attitude, 55:28.
- Calhoun, Colleen. p: Caught there, 33:43; The Unicorn, 33:45.
- Calhoun, Harry. ps: A Short Haircut; Lost Boy In A Doughnut Storm; Sidewalk Mystic, 18:8; ph/bio, ps: Death And A Dog; Groin Death, 18:9; rhb: *Watering Hole*, 19:14; lte, 20:2; p: Take The Kid Out, 23:15; p: A Tropical Depression (To a memory), 27:46.
- Calone, Vincent J. p: The Yawning, 48:27; p: The Life of Charles, 48:41.
- Campbell, Erik. p: watching the Discovery channel, 57:27; p: the pathetic symphony, 58:23.
- Campbell, Mary Belle. rhb: *Light From Dark Tombs: A Traveler's Map To Mysteries of the Ancient Maya*, 32:25.
- Cannon, Rick. p: Mozart's Flute While Driving to Work, 58:23.
- Carbo, Nick. r: *Wife* by Jim Cory, 37:8:41.
- Carlin, E.R. p: The Original Dozens, 57:11; p: Crazy Jake, 58:5.
- Carmen, Crystall. rhb (co-auth Aisha Eshe-Carmen): *Images of What's Goin' On*, 14:11.
- Carney, Thomas. p: charging knights, 48:13.
- Carr, Jennifer. ph/bio, f: Weather, 58:18.
- Carter, Catherine. ph/bio, ps: The Sting; Me They Live Life on the Edge; Shit These Days, 49:8.
- Carter, Kenneth. p: Comedy, 4:12.
- Carter, Steven. f: A Bad Day, 44:5:20.
- Carter, Virginia. p: Visitors Day, 10:7.
- Casey, Michael. rhb: *Millrat*, 48:21.
- Casey, Sean. ph/bio, ps: asst. coach mcdonald; sweet swing, 57:17.
- Cassidy, Steven. p: Voices From The Well, 10:6.
- Castlebury, John. p: untitled: Whisperings fix, 14:29.
- Catlin, Alan. p: Mahler, 3:12; r: *You Get So Alone At Times That It Just Makes Sense* by Charles Bukowski, 12:4; rhb: *An Unresolved Argument With Shadows*, 13:13; r: *Without Shoes* by David Chorlton; *Teeth of the Hydra* by Edward Lynskey, 14:11-12.
- Catterson, Thomas. r: *POETS on the line: a continuing anthology* (on-line magazine), Linda Lerner, Ed., 54:46.
- Caulfield, Tom. ph/bio, ps: going down to a gay bar, honey; downtown, memphis, 28:7; p: tough bitch, 31:29.
- Cecilione, Michael. p: Burying the Birds, 10:5; r: *Kiss the Skin Off* by Lyn Lifshin, 10:9; p: Stillborn, 14:9.
- Celano, Ellen. p: Border Poem, 10:6; ps: A Walk After Daylight; Lisa, 14:28.
- CENSORSHIP. r: *Poems*, Irina Ratushinskaya, 9:4; r: *Pencil Letter: Poems*, Irina Ratushinskaya, 22:14; blurb: *Gas. The A Novel of Sex and Violence*, Charles Platt, 46:7:15; r: *Forbidden Passages*, 48:23; Oberer ints Brenda Loew Tatelbaum, editor of *EIDOS*: Talking to Brenda Loew Tatelbaum, 48:32; lte by John Bennett (WA): An Open Letter to American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, 55:6; e: The McDonaldization of the Internet by Kurt Nimmo, 58:22.
- Cepero, Nilda. ph, 59:1; ps: Premium; Divine Comedy; Salvation; My First Commandment, 59:2; 2 phs, intd by Rog Albel: Barefoot in the Garden with Nilda Cepero, 59:3.
- Cervantes, James. rhb: *The Headlong Future*, 28:36; r: *A Natural Good Shot*, Leilani Wright, 40:26.
- Chamberlain, Cara. bio, f: The Object, 56:40.
- Champagne, John. p: Three Married Men, 28:46.
- Chandler, Joyce A. ph/bio, ps: Abuse of Substance; Awareness; Brooklyn Beat; Alcoholics Anonymous; poodles & noodles; Catching Cockroaches, 28:16.
- Charara, Hayan. ph/bio, ps: Arab to Arab, Dust to Dust; Camel Jockey, 48:14; bio, ps: Beer & Wine; Mail; Elegy Drifting the Great Lakes, 59:38.
- Chase, Karen. p: Abandoning Sadness, 58:32.
- Chavez, Lisa D. ph/bio 23:5; ps: The Unveiling of the Paris Collections, 1926; At the Sorbonne, 1925; In A Letter Unsent, 23:5.
- Cherin, Tricia. ph/bio, p: Why Bother, 59:24; ps: Matfield Green, Insignias, 59:25.
- Chester, Alfred (1928-1971). letter: Alfred Chester in Morocco (submitted and introduced by Edward Field), 54:7.
- Chester, Laura. rhb: *In the Zone: New and Selected Writing*, 18:12.
- CHIRON REVIEW. blurbs: 44/5:34, 46/7:14; sop by Norman J. Olson: On Reading a copy of Chiron Review, 56:39.
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- CHIRON REVIEW POETRY FESTIVAL 1. 8/7-8/99, 1st Natl Bank, St. John; feat Virginia Love Long, Tony Moffett, Kyle Laws; wksp Ruth Moon Kempher; hosts: Michael, Jane, Jerry Hathaway, Rusty Effenbeck, Shon Fox, (55:2; 56:2, 48; 57:2, 48; 58:48; 59:2).
- CHIRON REVIEW PRESS. Issue 18 and thereafter pub under Chiron Review Press imprint; and several chapbooks.
- Chism, Brit. p: The Gamble, Tough Love, 59:5.
- Chmielarz, Sharon. p: In Each Other's Hair, 58:13.
- Chorlton, David. rhb: *Without Shoes*, 14:11; ph. ps: The Early Riser; Babushka; Gilbertus and the Humours: The Courtesan; Gilbertus Describes a Dancing Woman; One Town's Rain; Gilbertus Treats a Blind Man, 16:2; rhb: *The Village Painters*, 27:31; *Madera Canyon Notebook*, 49:42; lte, 51:6; r: *Verses of a Marriage* by Hans Raimund, trans by Robert Dassanowsky, 51:45; r: *complete w/tongue* by Charlie Mehrhoff, 52:46; r: *El Corro: A Chorus of Latino and Latina Poetry*, Martin Espada, Ed., 53:45; ph/bio, ps: Faith, Hope and Charity; Endangered, 54:30; rhbs: *Country of Two Seasons; Getting Across*, 54:45; r: *Poor People* by Shelby Stephenson, 55:45; r: *Staining the Grass Red* by Jack Rickard, 55:46; r: *Zapata's Disciple* by Martin Espada, 56:45.
- Church, Dave. ph/bio, ps: Handbag Annie; Lips are Lips; Crazy Cab Driver; I might be kidding myself - But it sure feels good, 57:20.
- Chute, Robert. rhb: *When Grandmother Decides To Dig*, 22:16; r: *Oregon Coast*, 22:16; r: *My Grandfather Always Understood*; Last time I rode on this highway; Reflection; Point Arena; Rising Thoughts at 4 A.M., 4:3; bio, ps: The Spot; Drawing the Dark; I Try Again; The Agape of Complete Despair; The Wilderness; Learning the Exact Centers, 6:3; p: The Horn No-Plenty Fills, 12:6; lte, 21:2; rhb: *The Source of Precious Life*, 21:14; for you/on stones, 22:17; ps: Sweeney Descends The Stairs, 24:23; Sweeney: A Man For All Seasons, 24:25; rhb: *A Collage*, 27:31; *Poems After the Spaniards of '27*, 32:22.
- Clark, Brian C. ps: The Sound of One Egg Cracking (co-auth Donald E. Colvin Jr.), 7:10; Bug Man, 9:10; Tree Man, 10:3; e: What is a Little Magazine, 13:18.
- Clark, LaVerne Harrell. rhb: *Keepers of the Earth*, 56:46.
- Clark, Tom. rhb: *Jack Kerouac*, 27:34.
- Clausen, Andy. rhb: *40th Century Man: Selected Verse: 1996-1966*, 56:46.
- Clay, Mel. rhb: *Jazz - Jail and God*, Bob Kaufman, 28:35.
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- Clinton, Michelle. rhb: *High Blood / Pressure*, 17:16.
- CLOISTERS, THE. ph, 19:1, 4 phs by Robin Buckbee, 19:19.
- Coates, Carole (England). Cruising, 31:12.
- Coats, Tim. f: The Lonely Die Young, 24:22.
- Cobb, Sonya. p: untitled: and your flatten grass feet, 11:9.
- Cohen, Marc. p: For Winter, 14:9.
- Cohen, Marion C. (aka Marion Deutsche Cohen). ps: The Feelin' of Monogamy (Dream, 1976); The Only Thing Arin-At-9 Remembers About the Womb; Yet Another Adolescent Fantasy; The Boy in the Bush, 2:10; ph/bio, ps: Poor-God Dream No. 2; Poor-God Dream No. 3; Poor-God Dream No. 4; Some Things I Still Refuse to Admit; What is the topological difference; Selected Fantasies, 1978, 4:6; ps: Where Do?; Arin-At-7 Playing Tic Tac Toe; Me-at-38 Trying To Get Arin-at-8 To Write Me a Poem; More About Where Arin-at-7 Came From; Arin-at-8 and the Sad Ending, 4:7; p: Three Months, 11:13; Home Life, 13:8; untitled: grab bars, 14:27; Bug Poem #2, 14:30; rhb: *Counting To Zero: Poems On Repeated*
- Charara, Hayan. ph/bio, ps: Arab to Arab, Dust to Dust; Camel Jockey, 48:14; bio, ps: Beer & Wine; Mail; Elegy Drifting the Great Lakes, 59:38.
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- Cohen, Miriam A. p: Last Quietude, A Castle, 6:11; This Summer (Of '83) I'm, 9:10; bio, ps: Poem of this Moment; This Summer (Of '83) I'm; Concerning Women Who Watch From Old Tenements; Nightscope #1: Cognizance; Last Quietude, A Castle; Between Us; noxious news; We Are Sisters; telephone giggle pest, 11:14; p: Sympathies, 21:19; Peace, 29:22; Love Pet, 46/7:44; p: The Box, 53:15; ps: The Secretive Smile; Prying Colors Loose, 54:36; p: God Knows, 58:38; p: Poem of a Subway Ride, 59:13; dear departed mother, 59:40.
- Cohen, Mitchell. p: Web of Caring, 7:10.
- Cohn, Lynne Meredith. rhb: *Driving Off the Horizon*, 49:41.
- Colburn, John. p: at the airport, I always feel like I'm in a movie, 51:46; p: oompapa, 52:21.
- Cole, Bradley. p: Ravens, 14:30.
- Cole, Casey. p: The Jackals of APC, 10:5.
- Coleman, Jane Candia. rhb: *Deep In His Heart, JR Is Laughing At Us*, 31:22.
- Coleman, Reed. p: New Orleans, 20:20.
- Coleman, Wanda. ph/bio, ps: In San Francisco They Wrap Their Garbage in Burlap Bags; Signatures (15); Hurry Hurry; Variation on a Fairy Tale, 17:3; rhc: *High Priestess of Word*, 27:32.
- Coller, Kaye. p: In the Year A, 10:5.
- Collins, Martha. rhb: *A Catastrophe of Rainbows*, 9:4.
- Collins, Richard. ph/bio, ps: Rearranging Things You Said; Linoleum Light, 27:6.
- Colvin, Donald E. Jr. p: The Sound of One Egg Cracking (co-auth Brian C. Clark), 7:10.
- Colwell, Ann F. ps: Follow Me; Autumn Haiku, 4:9.
- Cooke, Robert P. p: Welding Electrode Holder, 42:29.
- Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (CCLM). 12:2; 17:2.
- Condit, David L. ps: What the Gov'nor Tried to Hold; The Magic Carpet Dream (telling the children); Why I Gave Up Track; The April Within; Jazz At Madrid, N.M.; Cheeks; Blue & Black (Spanish-tap?); The Risk, 3:5; ph/bio, ps: Suicide-Matador Swallows the Moon; Coal Heat's Primitive Dream-songs, 18:22.
- Conkle, D. Steven. rhb: *Samadhi*, 22:16; r: *What Do You Want, Blood?* by Chuck Taylor, 24:38.
- Connolly, David. ph/bio, ps: Thach, First NVA Confirmed; A Goodybye; On Security For a Medcan, 26:7; rhb: *Last in American love*; Familiar Spring, 41:12.
- CONTESTS.
- Chiron Review Chapbook Contest Winners
- 1989: Chapbook search, no fee; judge: Gerald Locklin; 1st: *Earthbound* in Betty Grable's Shoes by Susannah Foster (1944-1982), submitted, edited by Wanda Coleman; 2nd: *Photographs of the Jungle* by Jon Forrest Glade; 3rd: *The Persistence of Desire* by Cliff Dweller; 1991 contest: *Fountains Dyed Blue for the Day* by Peter Morris; 1992: *Saved from Drowning* by Scott Heim; 1995: *Finding Reality in Myth: Travels with Belinda* by Belinda Subraman; 1996: *Love Birds* by Joan Jobe Smith and Fred Voss; 1998: *Blue Forms* by Robert L. Penick; 1999: *My G-Rated Life* by Jacqueline Smith.
- Chiron Review Poetry Contest Winners
- 1984 Groovy Gray Cat Poetry Contest
- Judges: Michael, Jane Hathaway, Connie Edmards; 1st: we, Donna Thomas; 2nd: Midnight Stroll, C.M. Franck; 3rd (5 awarded): Spin Me, Noel Valis; The Little Gods, Ruth Stewart Schenley; Colors, Hal B. Fernandez; Leopards, Marc Munroe; Harbors, Elena C. Fahey. All but Harbors, Issue 7.
- 1987 Groovy Gray Cat Poetry Contest
- Judge: Hathaway; 1st: straw, Mary Lou Pilkinton; 2nd: Poem on a Compact, Jennifer Jesseph; 3rd: Interpersonal Communication, John Eberly; Long Distance, R. Franklin Pate; Humanity, Sandra A. Fender; In a Deep Breath, Jalelah Karriem; Explanation, Janet McCann; Issue 14.
- 1989 Chiron Review Poetry Contest
- Judges: Hathaway; 1st: Massacre, Donna M. Park; 2nd: Creators, John E. Poch; 3rd: What Do You Say at a Communist Funeral?; Paul Agostino; Poem to be Sung to No One, Teresa Anderson; The Chameleon Changes His Colors, Keith A. Dodson; Woman Living Alone in Wagon Mound, Mary McGinnis; John Is Dying, Kathleen Malley; Issue 25.



### 1991 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Lunch With Ginsberg, Sandra Lake Lassen; 2nd: The Railroad Engineer Paces the Kitchen Talking of the Tragedy, Susan Dunn; 3rd: Like Roethke, For Instance, Justine Buisson; Grandma's Palette, Martha V. Williams; Going Through My Pockets, Barbara Adams; Sixth Sense, Steven Craig De Frates; Joe Krausman, Dan Wilcox; Issue 28.

### 1992 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Me and My Mother's Morphine, Joan Jobe Smith; 2nd: Nature of the Beast, Linda Nemec Foster; 3rd: Reading the Water, Charles Webb; Addie At Eighty, Glenna Holloway; This Great Stone, Lauri Siegal; Revising Myself, Edward William Stever; Issue 32; also see 33:2.

### 1993 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: about your iguana, James Valvis; 2nd: Links, Leslie Rankin; 3rd: Clutching the Known, Belinda Subraman; Learning How to Cry, Scott Preston; Carnage, Paul Agostino; Pipe Organ, Connie Ralston; The Dildo, david newman; Issue 37/8.

### 1994 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: R.S.V.P., CACONRAD; 2nd: Colors of the Night, M.C. Astor (aka Martha Sinkevich); 3rd: Voices, Phyllis Settles; Incident on Times Square, Edmund Penant; Chagall's Angel, June Owens; Knowing What I've Got, Stephanie Rinka; Basso profundo, Joanne Lowery; Issue 41.

### 1995 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Dead Armadillos, Gail White; 2nd: Come of Age, Kit-Bacon Gressitt; 3rd: Poetry in Public Places, Michelle Perez; Answering the Manatee, June Owens; The Duchess, Thom Stang; On Leaving the Old House in Fallbrook, Karen Cunagin; The Jerk, Matthew S. LaPierre; Issue 44/5.

### 1996 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Changing, Anne L. Haehl; 2nd: Mansion of Dead Animals, William Hart; 3rd: Mother, Jennifer Jesseph; At A Western Movie With My Grandmother, Richard M. Rocco; Silver Dust, Holly Williams; Pursuit of Enlightenment, Jacquelin Smith; Exile, Louise Tili; Issue 49.

### 1998 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Big Picture, Jason Kelly Richards; 2nd: Credo, Lili Bitar; 3rd: When I was tattooed Jesus, Geezus Lee; pimping the moon, Samantha Magrath; Haiku, Margaret Hehman-Smith; Withdrawal, Angelo Verga; Bitter Root, Marc Swan. Issue 56.

Conti, Edmund, ps: One Day At A Time; Bang; 29:35; ph/bio, ps: Gross National Product: I Write Short Poems; Albert Einstein Explains Relativity Once and For All; Hey Buddy, 37/8:27.

### 1999 Chiron Review Poetry Contest

Judge: Hathaway; 1st: Abortion as Ecstasy, Jude Nutter; 2nd: maternal polemic, Todd Balazic; 3rd: richard burton d. august, 1984, Robert L. Greenfield (withdrawn from publication); Groceries, Angelo Verga; Hippo, Phebe Davidson; A Bit Groggy, Tennessee Ernie Ford Returns from the Grave to Complete His Last Fucking Timesheet, Kemp Gregory; 'You Really Have, Susan Deer Cloud, scheduled for Issue 60.

Cook, Bob. See Cook, Rob.

Cook, Rob (aka Bob Cook): ph/bio, ps: Micronauts; hotel on the purple sea, 46/7:12; bio, ps: shadows and curtains and lions; my grandmother; Subliminal Extinction, 52:12; ps: for 60 years I've been rehearsing for death like an opera recital; death count, 52:13; p: lizard messiah, 54:23; p: the weight of moons and sorrows, 54:47; p: All My Mother Ever Talks About, 56:33.

Cooper, Bill. p: Wearing a Tie, 55:37.

Cooperman, Robert. ph/bio, ps: Don't: Edith Dyer Climbs Pikes Peak, July 3, 1930; On The Ransoming of Chaucer by King Edward III, 1630, 28:18; ph/bio, ps: The General's Daughter Remembers Her Mother; Dusk; December 10, 1991, 36:18; ph/bio, ps: The General's Opposite Number; On Watching Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* Again; To Make It Big; Roland of Nantes, Forced To Bring His Wife and Daughter on the Second Crusade, 36:19; ph/bio, ps: Civilian Life; Still He Smiled; A Texas Miracle, 42:10; p: Cold Companionship, 46/7:45; At the Movies, 48:7; p: A Hanging Tree, 49:29; ps: Eleanor of Aquitaine is Bedazzled by Constantinople, the Second Crusade; Rosalie Lamorlieu Remembers Marie Antoinette in Prison Before the Queen Was Executed; Retired General George Edward Pickett, Years After His Disastrous Charge at Gettysburg, 52:31; rbb: *Case-worker Days: 1968-1970*, 58:44.

Corbett, Nicole. p: Three Confessions, 49:23.

Corbett, William. rbb: *Don't Think: Look*, 34:19.

Corbett-Fiacco, Christopher. p: True Stories, 22:26.

Corey, Chet. p: The Island of Anger, 43:32; p: Hunter, 43:36.

CORRECTIONS. *Cherry Ferris Wheels*, reviewed by Marilyn Taylor, written by Patrick McKinnon, not Taylor, 22:14; p: her mouth, 29:38, by Dren McDonald, not William Player, 30:27; p: The Blues, plagiarized by Ken Hancock 32:5, is The Penalty For Big-

amy Is Two Wives by William Matthews, 33:2; r: *Age of the Mother*, 35:14, by Glenn Bach not Robert Headley; rs: *The Firebird Poems and in/word/out*, 35:13, by Robert Headley not Glenn Bach, 36:32; 2 Michael C Ford poem titles switched, 43:10; p: Monotony of Lovers; Night of the Full Lunar Eclipse, 43:31, by Alison Apotheker, not Janet Bernichon; Harry Northup's name misspelled 51:1, 2, 7; 52:2; Louis Adame's name misspelled Adams, 50:48, 52:2; ephebophilia misspelled ephephilia, 54:6; mistakenly reported Joan Smith used Bukowski's drawings from letters to her in *Bukowski Boulevard*, 56:42, 57:2; r: *Organic Consciousness: New & Selected Poems*, 54:44, by Robert Peters not Paul Trachtenberg, 58:2; r: *The Witness Tree*, 57:45, by Mike Hovancsek not Michael McIrvn, 58:2.

Cortez, Sarah. p: Her, 33:45.

Cory, Jim. p: Feet, 33:41; rbb: *Wife*, 37/8:41; p: by the balls, 40:7.

Costanzo, Mike. p: Oscar, 36:27.

Courson, Gregory. ph, intd by Ober: Talking to Greg Courson, 51:28.

Council, Wendy. p: A Curiosity, 39:15.

Cowles, Joseph. ph, intd by Barbara Hauk: Guts and Glory on the Small Press Scene, 34:26.

Crandall, Jeff. p: Conversation Over Dinner, 33:46.

Crandall, Patricia. p: My Daughter, 5:11; p: If This Could Only Be, 10:10.

Crawford, Terri (aka Terri Nye). ph, intd by Margaret Shauers: Terri Crawford, Backbone of Poetry Rendezvous, 30:16.

Creasy-Fontaine, Paula. ph/bio, ps: writing as cunt or eat me just you try it; untitled: French Tickler he says proudly; untitled: Being a little kid and trying to masturbate is; 25:16; p: sexisms, 30:26.

Creek, Shawl. p: The Ritual, 7:12.

Creeley, Robert. rbb: *Echoes*, 41:22.

Crew, Louie (aka Li Min Hua). p: We Who Nudge Close, 3:12; p: Olympic, 7:12; ps: A Quiet Description of a Queer-Basher; Breeder #1, 13:8; p: Inside Out, 14:9; rbb: *Midnight Lessons*, 15:11; ps: So Great A Crowd of Witnesses; Watching the Watcher, 18:11; p: Reflections of Mister Antolini, 20:11.

Crews, Judson. p: If we are gentle in the frosty air, who, 15:15; ph, ps: How could she, loathing her own guts; The Lugubrious Meanderer; Your White; Choosing; the moon's shroud is a weepy wisp, 17:7; rbb: *Against All Wounds*, 19:14; p: Haunted as if, Haunted with a fear, 24:23; ph/bio, ps: I was out-mannoeuvred from the start; My old typewriter is dead. It is; It seems the besetting cause of generic man's; The poisoned springs of my unction - how; My studio, as I call it - where I live. That, 30:2; ph, intd by Mark Weber: Perchance a Little Drink?, 34:8; ph: 34:10; ps: How often I used silence to mask anger.; I parked that damn girl's Cadillac; If I have not trashed my dearest treasures; Tell me of the hells you went through; 'Our lives teach us who we are' -; Some wonder why I need fantasy women, or, 34:11; rbb: *Henry Miller and My Big Sur Days*, 34:18; ph (w/Belinda Subraman), 36:14; p: My Phoenix stunts were never meant, 54:36; p: My protestations of love would hardly, 54:37.

Crocker, Daniel. p: I believe Socrates, 44/5:15; p: I was .... 46/7:35; p: skiiiny, 55:39; rbb: *People Everyday and Other Poems*, 59:45.

Cuenca, Mike. p: Not Me, 8:12; p: Reality Blues, 10:7.

Cullar, Carol. p: The Alaska Question, 41:25.

Cunagin, Karen. p: On Leaving the Old House in Fallbrook, 44/5:32.

Curbelo, Silvia. rbb: *The Secret History of Water*, 53:47.

Curtis, Craig. f: Rothko, 56:20.

Curtis, Linda Lee. ps: Morning; The Only Word I Knew; by Accident, 4:9; p: Night Waltz, 6:11; p: With No Apologies, 9:10; p: The One-Margarita Poem, 10:6; p: And Like A Dust Mote, 12:6.

Cushing, Bill. r: *Sad Fashions* by Richard Peabody, 27:36; rs: *Abhorrences* by Edward Dorn; *Puzzling Through the News* by Pat Rushin, 29:30; r: *Living in Cincinnati* by Kevin Walzer, 46/7:16; r: *Driving Off the Horizon* by Lynne Meredith Cohn, 49:41; r: *The Tools of Ignorance* by Kevin Bezner, 52:46.

Czapla, Cathy Young (aka Cathy Czapla). p: Last Trip, 7:10; p: Mountain Weather, 8:12; rbb: *Ahenaki Ghosts*, 15:11.

- D -

Dahi, Soheyl. p: The Gift, 10:5; p: Town to Town, 14:22; ps: This Poem; If, 14:29.

Dahl, Jill. p: I Never Told Anybody, 4:9.

Daigon, Ruth. ph/bio, ps: 'Every Herring Hangs by Its Own Head' - Thomas Carlyle; in this watching place; Ecology Lesson, 44/5:10; rbb: *Between One Future and the Next*, 44/5:36; p: Basic, 46/7:19.

Dailey, Joel. p: Mal Air, 20:21; ph/bio, ps: Baby Seals; Fred & Ethel Mertz Dissolve in Twilight's Bouffant; Life With The Quotes, 20:21.

Daily, Mike. ints Rick Lupert; Rick Lupert: It's The Chiron Interview, 59:10.

Daldorph, Brian. rbb: *Domestic Politics*, 31:24; rbb: *The Holocaust and Hiroshima: Poems*, 54:45.

Dale, Jo Anna. p: #11; 29:39.

Daly, Brian. p: Swallowing, 51:47; p: ... Or Do You Spit It Out???, 53:43.

Daly, Chris. f: *The Sign Of Seymour*, 19:10; ph/bio, ps: industry leader; mister moonlight; God's precis, 24:14; f: The Ride, 28:22; p: kilo note address, 32:29; f: Town, 36:22; bio, ps: ice; woody n me, 37/8:34; f: Late Kid, 54:7.

Daniel, Hal J. III. rbb: *Pamlico Sound*, 15:11; p: Why I Like My Father, 15:15; ph/bio, ps: My Mother's Drippings; Why I Like My Father: C-Squared Vision, 23:23; p: Certain Thieves, 49:28.

Daniels, Carl M. (aka Carl Miller Daniels; David Starkey [Blackburg, VA]), p: A Sweet Story, 33:26; ps: Touchers; Dick Cavett, 36:21; ph/bio, p: Life is Like a Multiple-Choice Test, 39:28; p: WASP Guilt, 41:25; ph/bio, ps: dern all the overly passionate pricks of the world; jesu; and the turtles (this fantasy's so peculiar it surprises even me), 46/7:42; ps: bumper sticker; skunks, 50:4; ph/bio, ps: A little confused on the matter of pride; why, goodness, i do believe it's a genuine, honest-to-gosh pang, 50:4; lte, 51:6; ph/bio, ps: speculation; timmy, age 16, decides to be fighter pilot; shy boys at home, 55:27; p: the young-fag stage, or: what we learn from wanking off, 56:41.

Daniels, Ruth. ph/bio, ps: Maggie; Unlikely Connoisseur; Summer Nights, 46/7:39; p: Country Musicals, 49:39.

Dannov, David Mark. p: What Else Is There To Say, 57:34; ps: A Diamond in the Face of Death; The Clean Freak, 58:22.

Darlington, Andrew. p: Analysis of a Compulsive Neuroses/Tropic of Valerie, 11:9.

Dassanowsky, Robert. rh trans: *Verses of a Marriage* by Hans Raimund, 51:45.

Daughterty, Sarah. p: Quintessence, 36:31.

David, Gary. p: Dying Reflection, 13:7; rbb: *A Log of Deadwood*, 41:22; rbb: *Remember to Murder the Numbers*, 51:44.

Davignon, Richard. p: Mrs. Johnson, 37/8:31.

Davis, Barbara. p: Snow, 14:24; p: Flowers, 15:15.

Davis, Barbara Nector. ph, ps: Circle; The Miscellaneous Man; Rain in Cocksackie; I Was a Summer Night; Roxanne; Curtainfall; Old Poet; The American, 15:18.

Davis, Carolyn. p: Doorway, 15:20.

Davis, David. p: Whenever the morning newspaper, 7:4; ps: My night is but a star's wink; There is a little black girl, 7:9.

Davis, Ed. rbb: *Haskell*, 14:13.

Davison, Irene. p: Rebirth, 8:12; p: Earthly Love, 10:5.

De France, Steve. p: Before She Died, My Mother Thumb-Tacked A Picture Of A Cheshire Cat To The Wallpaper, 57:21; p: The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie, 58:33.

De Frates, Steven Craig. p: Sixth Sense, 28:44.

de Jesus, Justin. r: *Split Horizon* by Thomas Lux, 42:23.

de Nicolas, Antonio T. rbb: *The Sea Tug Elegies of Angels and Women, Mostly*, 29:26.

De Winter, Corrine. p: Silent Pictures, 48:13; p: Babylonian Charm, 53:19.

Deahl, James. rbb (co-auth Milton Acorn): *A Stand of Jackpine: Two Dozen Canadian Sonnets*, 19:13.

Dean, Gerald L. p: Faith, 23:7.

Dean, Larry O. lte, 21:2; p: The Holy Trinity, 24:23.

Debes, Karla. ps: A weekend spent in Colorado; What's it like: A flower you picked out of Mrs. Smith's garden.; How do you tell someone; A boy of five, a girl of four.; the pain surrounded me.; 1:8.

Debavian, Sebastian (aka William Shadden). ph/obit, ps: A Little Extortion on Traction Ave; The Open Mic Massacre; To Wordsworth, 36:6.

DEDICATIONS. Samson, Ike (cats), 4:12; Lucy Brown, Ricky (cats), 6:12; Rhonda Heren, 7:12; Richard Rankin Fisher, 8:2; mem of Sybil Irene Hacker, 9:4; Linda Joan Zeiser, 33:2; mem of Marvin Malone, 49:2; mem of Karen Elizabeth Roach, 51:2; mem of James Broughton, Warren Wickliffe, 58:2.

deFreese, Allison. p: Affairs, 44/5:7.

Degley, Frank. f: Big Mabel's Coming, 28:20.

Del Guidice, Carole. p: From One Eye, 13:8; p: Black Leather, 15:20; ph, ps: Sprouting Red in Union; Serving At Stuft Shirt; Walter; Haiku; Mother's Morning; Haiku I & II; The Pool; Fruition, 16:14.

DellaRocca, Lenny. ph/bio, ps: Dark Matter; The Wonderful Viola Player; Oil, 51:30; p: The Gang, 54:23; p: The Dream, 56:39.

DeLaurentis, Louise Budde. p: Winter Solstice, 15:20.

Delea, Christine. p: Tea Roses, 10:6.

Deley, John Paul. p: Because It Happened, 50:41.

DELFT (poem by Albert Goldbarth). see

by Robert Miltner: Albert Goldbarth: Impure Form, 'Delft' and *Popular Culture*, 40:10.

Demcak, Andrew. p: Indifference: A Trio, 30:22; p: the beautiful house, 31:14; ph/bio, ps: Wanting to Die; To the Man Who Kissed Me Twice at the Poetry Reading; Moth Knowledge, 33:22; ph/bio, ps: First Crush; Valentine, 36:7; ps: Reading a Poetry Assignment on Wednesday at 11:09 p.m.; Liars; Seaward, 37/8:22; ph, ps: Traffic was stopped on P.V. Drive North; Dime, 37/8:23; ph/bio, ps: Crossing; Wife, 40:14; p: Money Cousin, 48:40; p: cucumber, 50:48; p: Iodine, 51:19; p: Other Pursuits, 52:17; p: Teeth on the Faithful Bit, 54:47; p: Unpacking, 56:8.

Dennison, Matt. ps: O; The clock; I feel so good; O Lord, 6:3; ps: She; View; Interiors; Touch Birth; Comeupance; Blade; Blind; Soil; Dream; Laugh; He; Boo; Ultimate; Caught, 7:4; p: Sunday Brunch Musings at the Outdoor Cafe, 30:24; p: something actual, 31:29; p: Who Among Us?, 43:28.

Dent, Alan. e: "No More Ambition than a Mexican"; The Poetry of Fred Voss, 52:38.

Denworthy. p: It Was Three Fifty An Hour, 56:41.

Derge, William. p: Second Chance / Thoughts, 42:29.

Derrick, Paul Scott. p: Rondo Impromptu Epistemological, 10:5.

DeRugers, C.K. (aka Levi Winter). ps: Road Hogs; Spanish Fly; Old Adam's Eve, 5:2; ph/bio, ps: Tuesday Coffee; Chief Joseph; Hot City Sunday; Hunting in South; Jesus; Missionary Position; Winter Piss; Road song; Yucatan Breakfast; Personals; Parting Shots, 6:6; p: The Wetting of Alice, 10:5; p: Hop Along, 14:27; p: Spring Song, 20:23; p: Blue Balls and the 'A' Train (Levi Winter), 33:48.

Desy, Peter. p: Outrigger Fishing for Salmon, 27:41; p: A Short History of Psychoanalysis, 30:25.

DeWolf, Martha. p: untitled: There is no need, 10:5; untitled: My breasts rise, 12:6; ps: untitled: After his mother died; untitled: On the map; untitled: The sky; untitled: The purple scent, 14:13.

Dial, Bob. ph/bio, ps: A Prayer for Winter; Avalanche Pass; The Town, 42:11; p: McDonald's Is Now Accepting Applications For .... 46/7:43.

Diamond, Dave. p: For Shirley D., 10:4; p: Behind on Points, 14:27; p: Betty's Panties (2), 14:29.

DiCarolis, Kristen. ph/bio, ps: 1. 4th and Orange; 2. 3121 E. Corto Place #1 (across from Taco Bell); 3. Long Beach is the Murphy Bed capital of the world.; 4. In the privacy of your own home.; 5. It's like doo-wop, 27:12.

Dickey, James. rbb: *The Eagle's Mile*, 29:25.

Dickinson, Stephanie. p: Mercury Marquis, 52:28; p: The Paralyzed Man, 53:33.

Didsbury, Peter. p: Pokerwork, 31:12.

Diedrich, René. p: Memories of an Acid Baby, 53:38; p: 'The spectator is a dying animal,' 54:36; ph/bio, ps: 'Morbidity obesity,' Guardian; 'Demimonde,' Monday's Coward; An Apologia, 58:17; p: Ironie, 59:23.

Dierbeck, Lisa. f: Gregory, the Boarder, 42:12; f: Jailbait, 48:38.

Dillard, Gavin. bio, ps: I had met him before.; Don was large and effeminate; Josh's dad was generous, the Colonel; He got jumped from behind and they, 13:17; ph, ps: Once again he's thrown his face; He was from a farm; We should have remained in the darkness; Little Sweetheart, I called him; I hid in the mountains; Joel touched me and talked about; Tommy and I tried the cheesecake in every; Margot, Amy and I went out dancing and; Johnny's truck was old and blue I; His father was the national chaplain for the; Philip's dad was generous the Colonel, 15:7; rbb: *Pagan Love Songs*, 15:7; ph/bio, ps: untitled: Let's be fair about this, if there's; untitled: Poems always stay the same.; untitled: When God farts; Requiem; untitled: In this week's efforts to rescue three, 18:3; p: untitled: The wind makes the cats crazy, blowin up their, 22:22; ph/bio, ps: 8/27/90; 4/14/90; 4/15/90; 6/3/90; 6/24/90, 27:13; ph/bio, ps: Geeks and Peeks; Socks and Shorts; Smoke Rings; Taylor, 33:9; bio, ps: It's Been a Long Time Since I Lived with a Straight Boy; Drinking Trebor's Pee; *Cottus Felinus*, 50:42; rbb: *In the Flesh: Undressing for Success*, 54:40; rbb: *A Day For A Lay: A Century of Gay Poetry*, Gavin Dillard, Ed., 58:41.

Dillon, Mike. p: Maybe the First Modern Laugh, 41:30.

DiMaggio, Jill. p: The Unwrapped Gift, 10:7; p: The Blue Valise, 11:13; p: A Reminder of a Sad Good-bye, 14:27.

Dinkens, Paul E. rbb: *Sins and Cigarettes*, 18:14.

Dion, Marc (Munroe). p: Leopard, 7:2; p: Saint Ursula, 10:5.

Diorio, Margaret. p: The Graduate, 24:17; p: Holdup, 27:45.

DiSpoldo, Nick. e: Postcards From Prison, 29:16; e: The Strange, Strange Sex Lives of Convicts, 35:10.

Dittmer, Mike. bio, ps: The Masculine Candy Bar Trap; The moon vs. one man's monogamous relationship; You Tied Me Up

Last Night; global periodicity, 13:17.

Dlugi-King, Julie. p: For One Day I Forget You Hate Green, 27:42; p: As Soon as You Step into Juarez, 29:36.

Dobratz, Cindy. thx, 29:24.

Dodson, Keith A. p: The Reviews Are In, 18:23; ph/bio, ps: Put A Lid On It; I Really Want; Sure, No Problem; Poor Losers; Death Jelly, 19:18; p: Got This Rot, 21:18; ph/bio, ps: Bent After Dinner; And Me In My First Suit; Too Early For Questions, 22:6; p: The Chameleon Changes His 'Colors', 25:14; ph (circa 1959), ps: Let's Take a Walk; It Was an Honor; I Watch the Moon; Tried; Maybe I Shouldn't Have Talked So Much; In the Night; I Don't Mind, 27:8; p: 'You'll Like It Better If It's Wet, 30:20; p: Got This Friend, 31:13; ph/bio, ps: Never Thought; My Daughters; Fourth Anniversary; Middle Age, 40:16.

Doering, Steven. p: A Reasonable Request, 14:28; ph/bio, ps: Brahms pours into; Death became a habit; Additional Evidence of The Onset of Aging; It's Not How You Look, But How They Look At You, 23:13; ph/bio, ps: Slithering thru the mall; Yes, the system doesn't work.; Ten years gone.; Intro to Sociology, 30:15.

Doherty, Dennis. p: In The Beginning Was Intent, 46/7:44; p: So Long Lives This, 49:29; ph/bio, p: To Be Drunk and Maudlin In a Red Lit Bar, 51:34; ps: The Solo; Hands, 51:35.

Donahue, Peter. ph/bio, f: Tallboys, 55:20.

Dongell, Robert. bio, ps: Miners; modern rites; buck fever, 57:28.

Donnelly, Laura. p: untitled: land of my birth, 40:31; p: Another Stafford County Curve Poem, 43:15.

Doreski, William. p: A Synapse, 10:10; rbb: *Pianos in the Woods*, 56:44.

Dorn, Edward. rbb: *Abhorrences*, 29:30.

Dorph, Doug. p: Pumice, 41:24; p: Family Whistle, 42:29.

Dorris, Michael. rbb (co-auth Louis Edrich): *The Crown of Columbus*, 29:31.

Dorset, Gerald. p: Poet Was Born, 10:5.

Doubiago, Sharon. rbb: *Oedipus Drowned*, 22:16.



- Duhamel, Denise. ph/bio. ps: The Dark; You. 34:39; rs: *Durable Breath: Contemporary Native American Poetry*. John E. Smelser, D.L. Birchfield, Eds.: *Marilyn Monroe* by Lyn Lifshin. 42:22; rbb: *The Woman With Two Vaginas*. 44/5:36; ph/bio. ps: Fat Lip: How I Barely Have Time to Write This Poem and the Worst Thing About Work Is Having to Wear Shoes All Day. 46/7:8; rs: *When I Was Straight* by Janet Mason; *The Big Question* by David Lehman; *Feathers and Dust* by Donna Hilbert. 48:19; rbb: *Kinky*. 51:42; rs: *Before Our Very Eyes* by Cherry Jean Vasconcellos; *Jesus Christ Live (and in the Flesh)* by Lyn Lifshin. *Bonanza* by Lynn McGee. 52:43.
- Dunguy, Christopher. p: Old Story. 27:43.
- Dunkelberg, Kendall. trans: Poem for a friend: What you didn't know yet: If I have no more red: Hanging garden by Paul Snoek. 58:8.
- Dunn, Robert (aka Raucous Robert Dunn). p: St. Misbehavior. 22:13; p: Fertility Goddess. 55:40.
- Dunn, Susan E. ph/bio. ps: The Railroad Engineer Paces the Kitchen. Talking of the Tragedy: Dusk at The Twi-lite Inn: What Brought Her to This. 28:43.
- Dunwich, Gerina. p: Freaks. 9:10; p: Gypsy. 10:10; p: 2000. 14:27.
- Duval, Maggie (aka Margaret Louise Duval Patch). art: Unicorn. 1-6:1; f: Jonathan Leamington. 1:2; e: Maggie's Blues. 1:2; p: He speaks pure truth. 1:2; ps: I look to you with loving eyes: I am sane insanity. 1:8; e: This is one story. 2:7.
- Duval, Lana. p: Sunlight. 10:5.
- Dweller, Cliff. p: Dandelion. 16:8.
- Dyer, Robert. p: The Song Of Your Heart. 10:15.
- E -
- Eaton, Amy. p: Headache. 27:43; p: Memory #28. 29:36.
- Eaton, Tom. p: Here and Now. 43:21.
- Eberly, John. p: Interpersonal Communication. 14:4; rbb: *The Last Cigarette*. 15:11; rbb: *Cunt In My Face*. 19:12.
- Echelberger, M.J. ph/bio. ps: The All-Night Hotline and Drop-In Center: Words of Comfort. 34:40; p: Undressing. 37/8:25; p: Pagan Sacrifice. 43:15.
- Eden, Everett. rbb: *I'm Not a White Man*. 34:14.
- Eden, Lori (aka Lori Eden Larsen). ps: Rebirth: It is myself. On the wings of my pen.: Breathless Finales: Biding My Time: Love. I think. by Mistake: Days Ago Inspiration: Streaming down the window pane.: Our Song. 1:6.
- Edgerton, Leslie. f: *Dream Flyer*. 51:36.
- Edney, Julian. p: little envelopes. 46/7:25.
- Edrich, Louis. rbb (co-auth Michael Dorris): *The Crown of Columbus*. 29:31.
- Edwards, Benjamin Lucas. thx. 8:2; p: Space. 8:12; thx. 9:4; 10:2; p: In Kansas. 10:15; thx. 11:4; 12:11; 17-21:2.
- Edwards, Connie (aka Connie). ps: The Executioner: You are a pain, you son-of-a-bitch.: God help me through the changing times.: Shaky pen touches the page.: Forgive me, for I've not been well.: Come dance with me by pale moonlight: Sometimes I am a little girl: A chalky moon, a starbird's tune.: I have been robbed: I don't know you.: I trusted you, I trusted you.: It's not that I'm less accustomed: Immaturity Observes Maturity: Go: Oh professor.: Careless, wouldn't you say: Was he here? Did he stay long?: My anger over losing you is as acid: My kindred spirit thou must be. 1:4: All My Love to Those Who Love Me at Valley Hope: Interference: Here is an awful lot of bull.: He was a wanderer, born before his time.: Alice: Rationalize, rationalize.: Good-bye: Here in my corner, La Vaughn: Empty lot.: Here We Go Round the Sexuality Bush: I feel so happy: Winter's come. The house is cold.: Where am I?: Was that a camel you rode in on!: The snow comes to the mountains: There was a time. 1:5; p: Let us sit together. 2:5; thx. 9:4; 10:2; 11:4; p: untitled: I know what it's like. 12:6; thx. 12:11; proofreader. 13:2; 15:2; 17-32:2; 34-51:2.
- Edwards, Dennis S. p: Daybreak. 7:11.
- Edwards, Sally. ph. 4:12; thx. 8:2; 9:4; 10:2; 11:4; 12:11; 17-21:2.
- Effenbeck, Russell. thx. 29:24; ps: First Taste of Blue. Venice Beach. Calif.: Kansas Cold. 50:47.
- Ehrhart, W.D. ph. ps: Awaiting the Harvest: Water: The Ducks on Wissahickon Creek: Winter Bells: Some Other World: The Beech Tree: On the Right To Vote. 16:3; p: Afraid of Myself. 22:22; p: Games People Play. 23:20; ph/bio. ps: The Invasion of Grenada: The Lotus Cutters of Hô Tay: For a Coming Extinction: To Those Who Have Gone Home Tired. 26:3; rbb: *Just For Laughs*. 28:3; rbb: *Mostly Nothing Happens*. 48:21.
- EIDOS (Everyone Is Doing Outrageous Sex). See Tattelbaum, Brenda Loew.
- Eidus, Janice. f: The Kitchen. The Bathroom. The Bedroom. 2:11; f: Toby's Passage. 4:5; rbb: *Vito Loves Geraldine*. 24:31; ints
- Lyn Lifshin: The Chiron Review interview: Janice Eidus Interviews Lyn Lifshin. 27:17; intd by Lyn Lifshin: The Chiron Review interview: Lyn Lifshin Interviews Janice Eidus. 27:19; ph (w/Lifshin). 27:20; f: Girls of the Sixties. 27:21; f: The Ping-Pong Vampire. 39:20; ph. 57:1; intd by Mary Mackey: Janice Eidus: The Chiron Interview. 2 phs. 57:2-3; f: Elvis. Axl and Me. 57:4.
- Einarsson, Einar. p: When God Sings the Blues. 43:36.
- Einzig, Barbara. rbb: *Life Moves Outside*. 15:10.
- Eisenberg, Phil. rbb: *Above And Beyond*. 31:22.
- Eisenstat, Adam. p: At the Recruiting Table. 14:24.
- Eisiminger, S.K. p: Senryu. 7:11; haiku: on my flowered. 10:5; ph/bio. ps: A Bike Ride East of Eden: Notes Toward an Elegy. 58:16; p: Eighty and Still Leading. 59:4.
- Eklund, George. ps. 26; 27: 28; 29; 25:8.
- Eknoian, Barbara. Baptism. 46/7:43; ph/bio. ps: Serendipity: On the Waterfront With My Brothers: Diner. 51:20; ps: Dreams: Clown. 55:41; p: The Luck of the Drawer. 59:19.
- Elana, Myrna. ph/bio. ps: Sleep Over: Air over Breath. 33:13.
- Elkind, Sue Sanie (1913-1992). ps: In My Fear; scanner: House Without Closets: I Sorrow: Plastic Man. 2:8; ps: Real: Demolition Expert. 4:9; ph/bio. ps: Summer's End and a New Year Begins: My Other Senses: In My Dream: Driving Through Steeltown. U.S.A.: Grandfather: The Man Inside: Camps: My Rage: Man's Descent. 9:2; rbb: *No Longer Afraid*. 9:2; p: Nephew - Sister's Legacy. 15:15; ps: The Artist: No Tears: Stranger to Myself. 15:20; rbb: *Another Language*. 19:11.
- Elledge, Jim. ph/bio. ps: Song - Heads & Tails: Hacker's Psalm: Driving to Work, the Man I Love and I Discuss Music: Billie of Holiday. Our Rottweiler Puppy. Turns the Table on Me, the Beta Parent, as the Man I Love, the Alpha Parent, Said She Would Someday. 50:12.
- elliott (aka William P. Haynes/Elliott). p: untitled: I ain't normal; not even close. 44/5:15; p (co-auth r.l. nichols): who has seen the wind? part v (reprise). 50:41.
- Ellsworth, Anne. p: Solitary Cheating. 37/8:15.
- Ellsworth, Priscilla. p: The Inexact Science. 53:15.
- Elmore, James. p: Kindred Spirits. 10:15.
- Elrod, John. p: Fear. 17:18.
- Elsay, David. rbb: *Gray Light*. 51:43.
- Embre, Bruce (d. 1996). p: Stone Kitters. 46/7:46; obit. rbb: *Beneath the Chickenshit Mormon Sun*. 52:47.
- Emery, Rick. untitled: Be a good boy. 10:7.
- Epstein, Joel. p: Of Course. 11:9.
- Equi, Elaine. rbb: *Views Without Rooms*. 27:33.
- Erdman, Erica. p: epiphany for amphibians abandoned by their god. 55:39; p: espionage. 56:13.
- Erdmann, Di C. r: *Reflections of Genius* by Rochelle Lynn Holt. 15:10.
- Erhardt, Jean. p: Later That Same Year. 33:46; p: King's Island. 33:47.
- Erickson, Martha. p: Between Darkness and Light. 14:22.
- Esarey, Gary. p: When Walla Walla becomes crow with November. 56:8.
- Eshe-Carmen, Aisha. rbb (co-auth Crystall Carmen): *Images of What's Goin' On*. 14:11.
- Espada, Martin. rbb: *Zapata's Disciple*. 56:45.
- Estabrook, Michael. p: Drunk All The Time. 32:28; p: Dishes & Diapers. 37/8:15; p: could have been something I ate. 46/7:37; p: some people can't stop living in the good old days. 49:45.
- Esteve, Jean. p: If Then. 43:24; p: A Clear Sunday. 43:33; p: Good Throw. 49:45; ph/bio. ps: Family Values: James: Strip Malls. 52:9; rbb: *Swim*. 52:46.
- Esteves, Sandra Maria. rbb: *Bluestown Mockingbird Mambo*. 28:30.
- Etter, Carrie. (aka Carole A. Etter). bio. ps: after hibernation: a secret; Molly: dead drunk saturday night: She's Talkative: raindrop kisses: watching him set the world aflame: Hot Chocolate Words: Enjoying Eccentricity. 9:6; Television Evangelist. 14:24; ph/bio. ps: Suddenly Persimmons: The Woman in the Cage Remembers: Meeting My Birthmother. 28:17.
- Evans, David Jr. p: The Compromise. 22:21; To an Injured Grackle. 27:41.
- Every, Gary. f: The Buddha's Embrace. 53:10.
- F -
- Fabian, R. Gerry. ps: An Interview: Prevarications: You Shouldn't go Alone. 2:8; ps: Outward Lament: A slight breeze pushes: You always take a chance. 5:11; p: Briar Patch Revisited. 7:5; ph. ps: In an Emergency: Sunday Homework: After Hours at Aubrey's Atlantic City. New Jersey: Losing Streak: Where Logic Fails: Sassafra: The Most Successful. French Fried Onion Rings: Avoiding Hunger Strikes. 8:7; p: Insomnia. 9:10; p: It Might As Well Rain. 10:3; p: Sensationalism. 14:29.
- FACTSHEET FIVE. see by Mike Gunderloy: The Facts About *Factsheet Five*. 19:8.
- Falcon, Asha Zoe. p: Private Property. 49:45; p: Tanya Calls From New York. 55:40.
- Farnsworth, John. p: Holy Water. 37/8:29.
- Faucher, Real. ph/bio. ps: lovers: Poem: memo to God: communion: dream prayers: the day always comes: genesis: with words: mysteries of the flesh. 9:8; p: untitled: when I was young. 14:22; p: when the time comes. 14:29.
- Fausel, Raymond. ps: The Waiting Game. 5:2; Forewarned: Morning Sickness. 5:11.
- Feeny, Thomas. p: a springtime. 11:13.
- Feldman, Al. ps: The Illumination: The Forest: She Is: Night Sings. 15:20.
- Felgenhauer, H.R. p: Somewhere. 7:10; p: Letter To A Pretend Girlfriend With Slide Trombone & Saxophone Solo. 10:7.
- Fellman, Stanley A. p: Elections and Destination. 11:9.
- Feeny, Thomas. p: autumn. 13:7.
- Feinfeld, D.A. ph/bio. ps: Blood of a Poet: Scissors Paper Rock (a children's street game). 49:35.
- Fender, Sandra A. p: Humanity. 14:4.
- Ferencz, Amalia. p: Waiting You With Love. 4:9; e: The Story of Love (God's and an Angel's Suggestion). 5:9; ps: Blood Given with Love Cures. To My Mother: The Most Beautiful: Waiting You With Love. 5:9.
- Ferine, Timothy. p: Graceful Atrocities. 7:8; p: Autobody. 14:22; ph/bio. ps: The Human Beings: Sorrow. 40:21.
- Fernandez, Hal B. p: Colors. 7:2; p: Certainty. 10:7; p: December 5th. 14:22.
- Ferrante, Lou. p: The Metaphysical Consideration of Smoking. 43:30.
- Festa, Gail. ps: Freewheeling: Subterranean Sounds. 14:27.
- Ficaro, Donna. See Kieah.
- Field, Edward. ph. 25:1; bio. ps: 'Que c'est drole, l'amour qui marche dans les rues ...': Post Masturbation: *Enconado*. 25:3; p: Dirty Old Man. 30:21; p: Anthropologist. 31:23; p: From *The Book of Shyting*. 32:16; bio. p: One More For The Quilt. 33:27; lte: 34:2; rbb: *Counting Myself Lucky: Selected Poems 1963-1992*. 34:18; p: A Man and His Penis, or The Lover's Complaint. 44/5:42; p: On His Posture. 46/7:23; p: from 'A Frieze for a Temple of Love'. 50:22; p: Movie Moments: *Bahamas*. 50:23; r: *The Sanity of Earth and Grass: Complete Poems* by Robert Winner. 52:47; intro to letter by Alfred Chester. 54:7; p: Living Will. 56:37; rbb: *A Frieze For a Temple of Love*. 50:22; p: James Winner's Honest Man. 22:21.
- Figgis, Jean. p: Now Lucy's Gone. 31:12.
- Figler, David J. p: Look It Up. 41:11; p: Everytime. 41:30.
- Files, Meg. f: Serpentine. 27:25.
- Finch, Roger. ps: Watching Tintoretto's Bacchus Discover Ariadne: Abuse of the Second Person Singular: 'L' is for 'LifeGuard': 'Ph' is for 'Phantom': Not Another Bee Poem for Sylvia Plath: 'W' is for 'Werewolf': 'Sh' is for 'Shaman'. 13:15; rbb: *What is Written in the Wind*. 13:15.
- Finley, Mike. ph/bio. ps: This Gun Shoots Black Holes: The Audience: Four Lousy Miracles. 41:19; p: Girls of the Intercoastal Highway. 46/7:17; p: Reminders. 48:46.
- Fisher, Richard (aka Rankin Fisher). p: To My Favorite Bigots & Gossipomongors. 1:6; thx. 4:12; ded. 8:2.
- Fisher, Robert. p: View From A Seaside Villa 21 September 1983, Villanova. 10:7.
- Fisher, Steve (1955-1993). ph/bio. ps: Controlled Populations #2: Responding to Minions. 41:8; p: Skull Monkeys. 41:9; ph/bio. f: Mooncraft. 54:12; p: Tightening the Rings on the Sun with My Forehead. 56:9; p: A Laggard In Blood-Red Love. 57:19; p: My Friends are the Next Generation of Ants. 58:6; ph/bio. f: Cactus Fish. 59:30.
- Fisk, Molly. p: A Long Year of Hands and Mouths. 41:30.
- FitzPatrick, Kevin. p: Starving Birds. 9:14.
- Fitzpatrick, Laurie. f: Over There. On the Other Side. 50:26.
- Flanagan, Jennifer. p: 1955. Traveling West. 55:35; p: Leda, after the swan. 56:38.
- Fleischman, E.D. r: *Forbidden Passages: Writings Banned in Canada*. 48:23.
- Fontaine, Teri. ps: Morning: A Heart, A Minute: Poem of the Night: Hour of Moments. 2:8.
- Fontana, Michael. e: The Flesh and Blood of the Human: A Memoir On Masculinity and Madness. 50:40.
- Ford, Michael C. ph/bio. ps: French Valentine to the Girl On Avenue Les Gobelins: How to Score Women At Discos: Skyscraper Pumps on the Staircase. 43:10 (2 poems titles inadvertently transposed): rbb: *Emergency Exits: The Selected Poems 1970-1995*. 57:44.
- Fosco, Cory Alan. p: Baggage. 40:7; p: Four Score and Seven Years Ago. 52:17.
- Foster, Barbara. ps: Grandma Bessie: A Phantom Returns: Hawk Mountain: Aloha Hawaii: Footfall. 2:10.
- Foster, Leslie D. p: The Tough Exam Paper. 27:46.
- Foster, Linda Nemec. ph/bio. ps: Copper Harbor, Michigan: Early October: Untangling The Knot: That Wild Boy. 32:8; p: Nature of the Beast. 32:14; p: The Tao of Junk Mail. 37/8:15.
- Foster, Nick. bio. ps: A Winter Away.: The Leave-Taking: The Captain of Scipio: The Willow Moves. (Spring 1983). 52:34.
- Foster, Sesshu. p: Critic. 11:9.
- Foster, Susannah (1944-1982). ph/bio. ps: Losing Grace: In The Rain Today: Whys. 22:11.
- Fox, Connie. See Hugh Fox.
- Fox, Hugh (aka Connie Fox). ph/bio. ps: Reincarnation: Christmas Day. 30:8; nov ex: *Papa Funk*. 33:4; p: Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. 37/8:31; p: Sex Talk to Boys. 43:28; p: Christmas Presents. 46/7:24; p: Weasels. 50:21; cn: Two Me's: One Writer. 53:26; cn: Nocturne - Waterloo Bridge. 55:36.
- Fox, Shon (aka Ratboy). thx. 35-36:2; composition asst.. 39:2; p: i smoke. 48:8; thx. 57:2; 58:40; 59:2.
- Frach, Shannon. p: old. 30:23; p: welcome to america. 34:43.
- Fracker, Susan. p: When You Think of Me. 7:8.
- France, Brandel. p: The King and Queen of Cassava. 29:33.
- Frank, C.M. ps: Midnight Stroll: Faded Vision: Divorce: Humble Pie: Quiet Lessons. 7:2.
- Frandsen, Charles W. p: His War With Hell. 10:7.
- Frank, Brandy Nicole. ph. 4:12; thx. 7:12; 11:4.
- Frank, Karen. See Hathaway, Karen.
- Frank, Natalie. p: Rhino Whittling. 8:12; p: Night Noises. 9:10.
- Franklin, Walt. p: First Love. 14:29; rbb: *The Wild Trout*. 22:17.
- Franz, Arthur IV. f: Arm and the Needle. 58:30; bio. 58:31.
- Fredrickson, Staffan. p: Lightmare. 10:5.
- Free, George. p: Hometown Boys. 46/7:45.
- Freeman, Glenn J. p: Something Like a Poet. 43:29.
- French, Richard. p: New At The Court. 10:5.
- French, Todd. p: rage. 6:11; haiku. 11:00 looking. 14:24.
- Friebert, Stuart. ph/bio. ps: Shoebill: In the End They'll Say We Were Wrong To: I'll Bring Him Back in an Iron Cage. 40:9.
- Fried, Elliot. p: The Captain of the Exxon Valdez Finally Has His Say. 20:8; p: Why I Want To Be The Next Poet Laureate. 21:19; ph/bio. ps: Souls: Thirty-Gallon Heater: Marvel Mystery Oil: Chain Mail. 25:7; rbb: *Marvel Mystery Oil*. 28:27; ph/bio. ps: Near Afton Canyon: Please Recycle This: I Wrote This Poem. 31:5; f: Hookers 1; Hookers 2. 34:12.
- Friis-Baastad, Erling. p: The Inmate Of This Forest. 23:19; rbb: *Cendrars' Hand*. 24:36.
- Frumpkin, Gene. rbb: *The Old Man Who Swam Away And Left Only His Wet Feet*. 56:45.
- Fulton, Len. r: *Cold Comfort: Selected Poems, 1970-1996* by Lyn Lifshin. 54:41.
- Fuqua, C.S. p: Recycling. 27:44; ph/bio. ps: Emeute: On Reading 'Emeute' to the College Girl: Connecting Lots: Parent Child. 39:16; p: Ashes. 40:24; ph/bio. ps: Thomas: Hunchback: Holidays. 48:28.
- Furbish, Dean. trans from Russian: Morning (Awakening of the Elements): untitled: Spring arrived.: Wicked Gathering of the Faithless, by Daniil Kharms. 39:7; Un-Now: To an Unknown Natasha.: "The Neva flows by the Academy ...". by Daniil Kharms. 49:24.
- G -
- Gadness, Jamie. p: Look backward into the blind mirror. 8:12; p: untitled: You are a master of manipulation. 13:8.
- Gaines, Ruben. rbb: *Mountain Lyrics*. 29:30.
- Gale, Kate. rbb: *Selling the Hammock*. 58:42.
- Galef, David. f: A Night in Korea. 29:18.
- Galioto, Salvatore. p: Facism in the Air. 7:9.
- Gallagher, Tess. rbb: *Moon Crossing Bridge*. 32:21.
- Galing, Ed. p: janis. this is for you. 58:31; rbb: *Minyan*. 58:43.
- Garriga, Michael. ph/bio. p: Bag Lady on my street. 23:17.
- Garrison, David. p: The Poet Kneading Bread at 40. 40:16.
- Gary, Nelson. rbb: *Cinema*. 54:45.
- Gavin, Michael A. p: A Story About a Man. 54:37.
- GAY AND LESBIAN. blurb: *Big Gay Book*. John Preston, Ed.. 17:6; blurb: *Ceremonies of the Heart: Celebrating Lesbian Un-*
- ions and Lesbian Couples. 29:24; 52:42; Issues 33, 50, gay and lesbian writers: r: *Gents, Bad Boys & Barbarians: New Gay Male Poetry*. Rudy Kikel, Ed.. 44/5:35; blurb: *Best Gay Erotica*. 1996. 48:17; *Best Lesbian Erotica*. 1996. 48:17; 1998. 53:44; r: *A Day For A Lay: A Century of Gay Poetry*. Gavin Dillard, Ed.. 58:41; ps by Kenneth Pobo: Frotage: Debate About My Brain: Leather Jesus: Natural: Don't Ask: That Winter: Disarming Forces. 59:35; ps by John Gilgun: The Way They Are: My Grief Has a Young Man In It: Death of the Avis Lounge. St. Joseph, MO. 59:39; rs: *A Ritual of Drowning: poems of love and mourning* by Teya Schaffer: *Blood & Tears: Poems for Matthew Shepard*. 59:43.
- Gebron, Donna. p: Extreme Femininity. 53:19.
- Gehman, Pleasant. \*ph. int: Talking to Pleasant Gehman. 46/7:20; ps: Season of the Witch: Senorita Sin. 46/7:22.
- Gehrke, Steve. p: Walter Mondale At McDonald's. 57:41.
- Geleta, Greg. p: Next Life. 2:5; p: she was standing. 3:10; rbb: *The Year I Learned To Drive*. 19:14.
- Gellepes, Dan. p: Shawls and Candles. 5:2; ph/bio. ps: May 21, 1941: Invasion: Outpost: Poetry: Time: Sins: Stillborn: The War is Lost: Power: Midnight Reading: The Vineyard: An Incomplete. 6:10; p: Face to Face. 10:7; p: Property. 14:22; p: Contractor. 14:25; p: The Only White Boy on the Bus. 48:28; p: First Stages. 51:19.
- Gendre Jacqueline Karp. p: Ready for the freezer. 54:23.
- German, Greg. p: Coyote. 55:29.
- German, Norman. rs: *The Year I Learned to Drive* by Greg Geleta: *Against All Wounds* by Judson Crews: *Baudelaire's Brain* by Ivan Arguelles: *Children of a Lesser Demagogue: A Constituency of Dunces: Return to Ronnie Scott's* by Gerald Locklin: *Watering Hole* by Harry Calhoun. 19:14; *Boogie Alley* by Tony Moffett. 20:5; *Body and Soul* by Julie Kane. 22:18; *Red Flower: Rethinking Menstruation*. Dena Taylor, Ed.: *Undressing the Mannequin* by Patrick Bizzaro. 24:3; *Malice* by Kate Jennings: *Sabbaths* by Wendell Berry. 24:34; *Doggedness* by David Graham: *The Way Winter Works* by Harry Humes. 28:25; *The Eagle's Mile* by James Dickey: *Towns Facing Railroads* by Jo McDougall. 29:25; *Hard Evidence* by Heather Ross Miller: *Fielder's Choice* by Rick Norman. 31:19; *Blacks* by Gwendolyn Brooks. 36:10; rbb: *The Liberation of Bonner Child: No Other World*. 37/8:42.
- Geyer, Andrew. ph/bio. f: Tea With Jesus. 58:26.
- Gholson, Christian. rbb: *House Burning*. 34:14; ps: I am the Bodhisattva who saves the people on this bus from the smell of my feet: The Glass Tower. 34:35; f: The Secret Life of Plants. 44/5:28.
- Giammarino, Jaye. p: Unforsaken. 5:8.
- Gibson, Christopher. p: Tequila #2. 46/7:46; p: Voices. 55:37.
- Gibson, Kevin. p: If I'd Been a Hamster. 14:30.
- Gibson, Scott. rh anth: *Blood & Tears: Poems for Matthew Shepard*. 59:43.
- Giencke, Jill. p: ex from: My Vow. 9:15.
- Gilbert, El. p: Tapestry. 13:7.
- Gilbert, Jack. rbb: *The Great Fires: Poems 1982-1992*. 41:23.
- Gildner, Gary. rbb: *Clackamas*. 49:41.
- Gilgun, John. p: Farm Crisis. 14:24; ph/bio. ps: Dan Turner: Whitman's Hands: Bashing. 28:6; ph/bio. ps: Right From Wrong: Cremation. 33:20; ph/bio. ps: Right From Wrong: Sissy Boy List: Real Boy List: Hard Times. 50:29; ph/bio. ps: The Way They Are: My Grief Has a Young Man In It: Death of the Avis Lounge. St. Joseph, MO. 59:39.
- Ginsberg, Allen. ph (w/Antler). 43:5; ph of Antler. 50:14; sop by Sandra Lake Lassen: Lunch With Ginsberg. 28:42.
- Giovannucci, Lucy. ph (w/Kent Kruse). 56:15.
- Gitin, David. rbb: *Fire Dance*. 22:18.
- Givens, Rebecca. bio. ps: The Bright Bait: Golden Certainty. 58:32.
- Glade, Jon Forrest. ps: Blood Trail: The Weight Of The Sheets: The Dark Side of the Moon. 21:3; ph/bio. ps: Walking Wounded: Souvenirs: Payday in the Jungle. 26:11; rs: *Carrying the Darkness: The Poetry of the Vietnam War*. W.D. Ehrhart, Ed.: *Flesh Wounds* by B.D. Trail: *Post-Vietnam Stress Syndrome* by Bill Shields: *Nam* by Bill Shields: *Drinking Gasoline in Hell* by Bill Shields. 26:16-17; rbb: *Photographs of the Jungle*. 26:17; bio. ps: Burn Victim: Going Under: Med-Evac. 37/8:26.



Glancy, Diane. p: Visiting the Old Grave. 14:22.  
Glaser, Paul Michael. p: Lazy Lala floated through the garden of colors. 2:2; p: To Ariel (my daughter) March 82. 3:3.  
Glatt, Lisa. ph/bio. ps: When It Started; The Reading. 19:6; p: A Good Hag's Advice. 22:24; ph/bio. ps: Crank; Monsters and Other Lovers; The World in my Mother's Hair. 27:5; p: I Will See Their Teeth. 46/7:17; r/b: *Monsters and Other Lovers*. 51:44.  
Glaze, David D. p: Garden. 51:25.  
Glen, Emilie. p: Sure. 6:11; p: Just Love. 7:10; p: Fun Street Folk Street. 14:22; p: No Sense of Values. 18:16; p: Book To Close. 22:23.  
Gloegler, Tony. p: Spaces. 55:31; r/b: *One On One*. 59:45.  
Goddard, Cynthia L. p: Escape. 7:11.  
Godfrey, John. r/b: *Midnight On Your Left*. 12:19.  
Goetsch, Douglas. p: Short Song. 55:40; p: Silhouette. 55:42.  
Gold, Jerome. r: *A Band of Brothers* by Walter McDonald. 26:15; r/b: *The Negligence of Death*. 26:14; f: Ritual. 26:19.  
Goldbarth, Albert. soe by Robert Miltner: Albert Goldbarth: Impure Form, 'Delft' and *Popular Culture*. 40:10.  
Golden, Renny. ph/bio. ps: For Bernadette Devlin McAliskey; I Remember You Amanda; Messenger. 17:2.  
Goldman, Edward M. p: Summer Gift. 6:11; p: Von Briesen Park, Staten Island. 7:10; p: Earth. 10:4; p: Grandfather Clock. 14:29.  
Gomez, Max. r: *A Hundred Flowers* by Janet Gray. 37/8:40.  
Goodman, Martin. bio. ints James Broughton: James Broughton: The Chiron Interview. 56:30.  
Goodwin, Douglas. ph. ps: Hazardous Atmosphere; Don't Hire Me; Love Crawled Along the Floor. 16:7; ph. intd by Jay Dougherty: Partaking of the Ritual: An Interview with Douglas Goodwin. 17:8; r/b: *Half Memory of a Distant Life*. 17:15; p: Noah's Ark. 18:16; ph/bio. ps: I'm Here; Territorial Imperative; All Over; I Drifted On A River; Face The Day. 19:4; f: Changing Lines. 19:24; lte. 21:2; p: New Information. 46/7:17; p: The Enemy of Irony. 46/7:32.  
Goodwin, Nicole Lee. p: To Be Held Sometimes. 52:30.  
Gordon, Kirpal. p: After Having Taught 'The Fall of the House Usher'. 14:25; ph/bio. ps: Don't Get Caught; Waiting for Friends Who Do Not Arrive. 27:4.  
Gordon, Margaret Ann. p: For You Cannot Do Evil. 9:15.  
Gordon, Myles. p: Mother and Daughter. 39:19.  
Gossett, Hattie. r/b: *Presenting ... Sister NoBlues*. 19:13.  
Gott, George. ph/bio. ps: The Myrick Creek Road; Endeavor; The Hotel Dunwich; Yuki-Otoko; Carmel; Deadly Weapons; A Cold Day; Gilbert; Mayflies; The Many Roads; Most Of All; 11:3.  
Gottlieb, Art. p: Vietnam Vet. 26:20; p: The Sentry. 42:14; p: The Way We Won the War. 43:32.  
Goude, Gary. 2 phs. intd by Ober: Looking at Gary Goude. 53:22.  
Gove, Jim. p: God Image(s) No. 2. 18:11; p: 1990's Fantasy or Song For One's Self. 22:13; ph/bio. ps: Under The Sun; White Pigeons; Summer On The Boat. 24:7; ph/bio. ps: Of Cats Chickens Cows & Men (a letter to Will Inman); Plums & Chips; dumb deaths i; A Twenty Liner Ending with an Exodus in Renaults. 28:5; thx. 29:24; ph/bio. ps: On My Wedding Day; Moonshot; It Was Toward the End of the Revolution that Tatanya Melanovna Became a Sensation in Petersburg. 37/8:5.  
Graeser, Bill. bio. ps: Ziggy; The Smokestack; Apology To The Grasshopper. 57:25.  
Graham, Adelle. p: The Entry Into. 40:24.  
Graham, Barry. p: God Knows I'm Really Fond Of You. 48:31.  
Graham, David. r/b: *Doggedness*. 28:25.  
Graham, Toni. f: Lying in Bed. 51:24.  
Grant, Paul. p: Graveyard Working. 27:40.  
Graves, Fran. p: untitled: I'm not answering the door. 9:10.  
Gray, Douglas. ps: Incidents after the Heartbreak; Falling Off from the Upper Ranges. 40:31.  
Gray, James F. p: In Heaven We Would Be Groovy. 55:25; p: Swasa Said. 57:41.  
Gray, Janet. r: *SAVE SAVE SAVE SAVE* by Nichola Manning. 12:11; rs: *The Ambivalent Journey* by Hans Juergensen; *Poems for Lost and Unlost Boys* by Michael Lassell. 13:12; *Wanted: A Crooked Woman* by Cathy Voisard; *The Observatory* (ac) by Kevin Zepper; *River Rat Review* #1; *Sore Dove* #1; *Night Fog*; *Pavane*; *Monday*; *Monday*; *Living Doll* by David Trinidad. 14:12; ph/bio. ps: Do not try to pull up anything by the root; Unspeakables (#2); The Flowermaker; People Who Like Me Quiet; In Preparation; Any Replacement for God Must Be Funny. 15:2; r/b: *Flaming Tail Out of the Ground Near Your Farm*. 15:2; rs: *Chimera*. *Connections*. #2

*Samisdat* Vol. 49, #1; *Clock Radio* #8. 15:9; *Shoot the Wheels of Time* by Jack Moskovitz; *Rain Away* by Dan Raphael; *Small Town Big City* by Donald McLeod; *Life Moves Outside* by Barbara Einzig; *Hour History* by Pat Smith; *My Name Also Happens* by Elizabeth Robinson. 15:10; *Midnight Lessons* by Louie Crew; *The White Room* by Christopher Butters; *Pamlico Sound* by Hal J. Daniel III. 15:11; r/b: *I Hate Men*. 15:11; ph. ps: XLVII; XLIX; XLVI; L; XLVII; LXXXIX. 17:9; r: *Seconds Thoughts Over Bourget* by Laurel Speer. 17:15; r/b: *A Hundred Flowers*. 37/8:40.  
Graziano, Laurie. p: Just Mine. 14:25.  
GREAT BEND TRIBUNE. thx. 8:2, 9:4; *CR Censored*. 44/5:34, 46/7:14.  
Green, Benjamin. ph/bio. ps: We Are the Carrion People I; Goodbye I; Goodbye II; The Realm of Silence; Peach Lining. 2:2; ps: Sorting Through; Three California Seasons; Zida's Eyes; Show and Tell; The What For Blues; Man/Woman; You: Headings; Faith; Then. Maybe. I Could Love You; Tonight; Rhododendron; Untitled; Picture this ... Don't Mean Nothin; Picture this ... 3:6; ps: What Poet Will Be Born?; We Are the Carrion People (II); I Know; A Rock Has Risen. 3:7; f: Two Silhouettes Against the L.A. Smog. 3:7; p: Vacancy. 14:25.  
Greenberg, Pamela. p: Morning Poem. 55:25; p: Walking Home At Night Along the Mystic. 56:29.  
Greenblatt, Ray. p: Omen. 14:25.  
Greenslit, Sara. p: The Drag Queen's Garage Sale. 52:31.  
Green, Jeanne M. p: Don't Be Afraid of Halloween. 14:24.  
Greenley, Ken. r/b: *Sons of Mass Production (and Other High-Tech Tales)*. 32:25.  
Grega, Gina. p: Name Calling. 48:41.  
Gregory, Kemp. p: Chicken Reflections (I). 59:40; p: The Anonymous X-Mas Edition of Human Resources Headline: A [Slightly Modified] E-Mail Message to Staff. 59:41.  
Gregory, Robert. p: Sound of Something Falling. 46/7:25.  
Grenier, Arpine Konyalian. ph. 32:1; bio. ps: Nothing Is Dirtier Than Virginity - Desnos; Orestes Weeps; Things In You We Wish Were Us. 32:2; r/b: *St. Gregory's Daughter: Whores From Samarkand*. 39:14; p: Night fares. 43:36.  
Gressitt, Kit-Bacon. ph/bio. ps: Come of Age; Scheherazade; Duplicité. 44/5:31.  
Grey, John. p: Cry From the Candlelight. 11:9; p: Reaching the Beach. 12:6; ph. ps: Prom Night; Weaver Wants to be a Warrior; Dark Rider; No Call; Dead of Night; Cyanide Swallow; No Monsters; I Can't Let Ruth Die. 15:13; p: Chinese Girl In The Library. 20:10; p: Territory. 24:21; p: Identities. 27:46; p: The Naturalist. 30:23; p: Visiting My Ex-Wife And Her New Husband. 31:17; p: Coffee House. 41:11.  
Gribble, Thomas. p: How To Dress After A Few Poems. 55:41.  
Gribble-Neal, Iris. ph/bio. ps: Atomic Energy; Like Red-Haired Stepchildren; Grandmothers. 43:26; p: Timothy Leary's Parents Were Old. 55:36.  
Grice, Gordon. ph/bio. ps: Her Husband's Name; Faith. 34:38.  
Griffin, S.A. ph/bio. ps: Suddenly Down; I Have No Poem For You Today; There is a River. 52:6.  
Griffin, Walter. ph/bio. ps: The Season of the Falling Face; The Descent; Anima. 37/8:30; ph/bio. ps: The Winged Leper; My Stepfather's Eyebrows; Crazy Billy. 44/5:9.  
Griffith, Mike. ps: Writing A Sonnet; The Monster. 10:15.  
Griggs, Valerie. p: Deeper in the Grass. 11:9; p: Letter. 14:24.  
Griswold, Jay. ps: Alferd Packer (misspelled Packard); In Praise of Skimmerhorn. 25:15; p: Meditation at Red Canyon. 37/8:47; ps: Girl With A Lock Of Hair; The Assassinated Guitar. 56:13.  
Groom, Kelle D. p: Leialoha - Valley of the Temples. 1970. 57:35.  
GROOVY GRAY CAT PUBL. (See also Pandora). Issues 5-15 of *The Kindred Spirit* pub under GGCP imprint. First 2 poetry contests [1985, 1987] in honor of Pandora's bday. One GGCP chapbook: *Puddle of Stars* by MH. 1984. 20 cc.. 24 pp.? [Issues 16. 17 pub under Kindred Spirit Press imprint. Issue 18 and thereafter under Chiron Review Press imprint.]  
Grossman, Dorothea. r/b: *Poems From Cave 17: Selected Poems 1989-1996*. 57:46.  
Groth, Brian J. p: Treadmill. 14:29; p: Products of Man. 14:30; p: tuesday in n.y.. 16:16.  
Groves, Maketa. r/b: *Red Hot on a Silver Note*. 53:47.  
Grow, Eric. p: Scatology. 20:8; lte. 21:2; f: Annette Funicello Versus The Smog Monster. 24:20.  
Guentz, Susan Louise. p: Jade. 13:8.  
Guinan, Stephen. ph/bio. f: Rain. 57:26.  
GULF WAR. r: *Gulf War: Many Perspectives*. Belinda Subraman. Ed. 31:23; p: The American Troops, by Aubrey Montague. 26:24.  
Gulling, Dennis. r/b: *Wreckage*. 19:12.  
Gunderloy, Mike. ph. e: The Facts About

*Factsheet Five*. 19:8.  
Guess, Jim. ph/bio. ps: Take a Look in the Mirror, Alice; Anal Sex With An Art Major. 53:35.  
- H -  
Hacker, Sibyl Irene (1930-1986). ded. 9:4.  
Haehl, Anne L. (aka Anne Lockhart Haehl). p: You don't often hear. 43:28; ph/bio. ps: Marcia; More Terrifying than Werewolves; Changing. 49:20.  
Hafiz, bio. ps: Poem #175: Except For My Heart; Poem #204: untitled (Last night we gathered speaking only of your hair.); Poem #165: The Transformation, trans by Laurel Ann Bogen. 58:3.  
Hageland, Katherine. p: Three Wishes. 43:25; ph/bio. ps: The Card Players; Want to Play?; Lot -Lizard; Personal Ads. 49:34; ph/bio. ps: The Flame of Salt; Speechless; Relics. 53:12.  
Hagins, Jerry. p: No MacArthur Grant This Year. 59:41.  
Hahn, Alex. p: Moustache. 36:31.  
Hahn, S.C. p: Philip Marlowe in the 1990s. 52:28.  
Haines, Robert. p: Ghost. 10:3.  
Hall, Bill. p: Holding Cathy. 14:24.  
Hall, Rich. 36 Sniglets. 5:5.  
Hamilton, Bruce. p: 933. 7:11; 258. 10:4.  
Hamilton, Carol. p: On Being Struck By A Tornado At The End-of-the-Year Picnic. 10:4; ph/bio. ps: A Backyard Without Psychic Roots; December; My Mother's Relish Plate. 43:16; p: Warning. 46/7:44; p: I Would Never Have Seen Baryshnikov. 48:37; p: Bread and Wine. 52:28; p: Intact. 52:30; p: Meeting Unamuno. 55:39.  
Hamilton, Fritz. p: To Splash & Then. 6:11; p: Learning Process. 10:4; ps: Morning Song; With Nary A Pinch (for Bob). 14:25.  
Hamilton, M.B. p: untitled: There is a lot of time. 14:13; p: A Late February Storm. 14:21.  
Hancock, Ken. The Blues, plagiarized by Ken Hancock. 32:5, is The Penalty For Bigamy Is Two Wives. by William Matthews. 33:2.  
Hansen, Tom. f: February 13. 46/7:36; f: Invitation; The Great Unwritten Encyclopedia of Water. 53:40.  
Hanson, Paul A. f: Woolf, Brandy & the Liberated Dog. 10:14.  
Harkness, Edward. r/b: *Fiddle Wrapped in a Gunny Sack*. 13:12.  
Harman, Padi. ps: Normil Livin' What Is It; Doorbell Blues; Closing the Door; i never chased rainbows; prophesy in ink; story telling; cures: time is a flower; Sidewalk Thunder. 3:3; art: Flower Clock. 3:3; ps: banks & other vampires; changes. 5:2; ph/bio. ps: God answers prayers: This Can Isn't Kosher; wolfmen: art shows; in the process of war; the closet. 6:2; ph/bio. ps: Doors: 1: Doors:2: time zones; archeologist: How to Raise Children on Bubblegum; two stones: dog woman; Reformation; The Mute; woman who dances on thin ice; High Strung. 8:3; ph/bio. ps: Modern Jesus (useless as lover); Modern Jesus (i see him). 36:30.  
Harmon, Geoff W. ps: The Land of Bach and Frankenstein; Piano Lessons. 33:43; ph/bio. ps: in response to Cole Porter's 'You're the Top'; Transitions: 1979-1992. 36:25.  
Harpootian, Alysia K. p: You Can't Take My Father To A Museum. 52:31.  
Harrington, Brett. ps: Progression; Johnny's Wish Came True. 58:15.  
Harrison, Ruth F. r: *Swim* by Jean Esteve. 52:46.  
Hart, William. ph/bio. ps: Mansion of Dead Animals; Factory Clock. 49:21.  
Hartenbach, Mark. p: Matter of Perception. 43:28; ph/bio. ps: easter asylum; Cotton Mouth (Sign Language); Untitled (Glad); last temptation (artificial light). 51:27.  
Hartzell, Tim N. p: untitled: I knew a man once.. 24:25.  
Harvey, Gayle Elen. p: Premature. 5:11; p: Christmas Past. 10:6; p: Moon. 11:13; ps: A Mare with Her Colts Resting Among Flowers; The Hunter; Georgia. 15:19; p: Another Man. 28:37; p: Then, As Now (after a photograph ...). 29:34.  
Harvey, Joan. f: Summerschool. 12:7.  
Harvey, Richard F. p: Portrait of the Dog as a Young Artist. 27:45.  
Haslam, Gerald. ints Gerald Locklin: Reflections of a Literary Maverick: An Interview with Gerald Locklin. 22:8; f: It's Over. 27:24.  
Haslam, Thomas. p: For Nora Fitzgerald. 10:11.  
Hathaway, Jane (Mom). ps: My Angel; Falling Star. 1:6; p: Changes. 3:10; e: April 16. 4:2; ph. thx (gracious mysterious benefactor). 4:12; thx. 5:12. 6:12; ps: Jennifer; For Jingl. 7:8; thx. 7:12. 9:4. 10:2. 11:4. 12:11; asst. ed. proofreader. 13:15;2; asst. ed. 16:2; thx. 29:24; r/b: *My Angel & Other Poems*. 49:43; ph (w/M Hathaway. 12/94). ps: My Angel; Falling Star; Changes; For Adam. 50:46.  
Hathaway, Jerry (Dad). thx. 7:12. 9:4.

10:2. 11:4. 12:11.  
Hathaway, Karen (aka Karen Frank). p: First Love. 1:6; thx. 2. 4. 7. 11:12.  
Hathaway, Michael (aka Jeremy King; mjh: MJH; see also News, Etc.). Founder. editor. f: Mother Earth. 1:2; e: A Train of Thought. 1:2; ps: September in the Country; Do you remember the flower that you gave me; Our Dead Children: The Urge to Kill; If I loved you.. Joplin's Classic Kozmic Blues; Peace of Mind; Summer at the Lake; Diversion: The Darkness Calls; I'd Live on the Wind; love those people; Death Comes Nigh; Feel Like Crying; When the Magic Goes Away; Like a Flower; Sunshine. 1:7; e: Slaughter of the Innocent. 1:8; ps: As the Winds; Flower; Pretty People; Hunger; First day of School; Ode to Progress; Money Blues; Little Lives; Slithering Blues; Through Miles and Miles of Empty Space; Puddle of Stars; Save the Angels; I tripped and fell today; Song for Dad; Fossil. 2:12; p (pseud Jeremy King): Tracy in Chains: A Dark Fantasy. 2:2; ps: Chains; isn't the. 3:8; p: The Curse (Or the Question); The Answer (Or the Other Question). 3:9; ps: A Virgo's Annual Renaissance; Death is Fading. 3:10; p (anonymous): Rock House. 3:12; ps: Your Darkness; What Ben Said!; Silver Tribute; fly on a whim. 4:12; ps: Moon babies; Moon Babies' Rainbow Dream; Moon Babies' Nightmare; Moon Babies Waking. 5:12; p: summer gloves. 6:11; p: Me & Tracy's Morning Dialogue (8-31-93). 7:12; ph. 15:8. 17:6. 16:18; cn: basher. 33:40; ph (w/Jane Hathaway, Dec.. 1994). 50:46; p: me & ratboy run the gamut of literary lovers. 50:47; ph of Kyle Laws. 58:8.  
Hauk, Barbara. ints Joseph Cowles: Guts & Glory on the Small Press Scene: An Interview with Joseph Cowles. 34:26; p: A Proper Blank Wall. 37/8:29; r/b: *Confetti*. 37/8:40; p: Men's Lib Poem. 46/7:24.  
Haynes/Elliott, William P. See Elliott.  
Hayward, L.N. p: Auto Wreck. 25:18.  
Head, Robert. p: untitled: to live with a woman as if you were. 18:23; ph/bio. p: you've heard all those stories about Saturday night well they aren't true. 29:5.  
Headley, Robert. r: *The Age of the Mother* by Clifton Snider. 35:14; p: Milagro. 39:17; rs: *Woman Trouble* by Gerald Locklin; *The Durango Poems* by Rafael Zepeda. Gerald Locklin: *Sudden Fictions* by Ronald Moran. 40:25; *Swindler's Harmonica Sista* by Mark Weber; *Shooting Out the Lights* by Todd Moore. 40:26; the last good thing by Todd Moore; *Big Man on Canvas: the old mongoose & other poems* by Gerald Locklin; *Mud Woman: Trois* by Maral Johnson; *Women Who Make Money and the Men Who Love Them* by Donna Hilbert. 42:21; r: *The Woman with Two Vaginas* by Denise Duhamel. 44/5:36; ph/bio. ps: four turning points in grandmother's life; of the old country. 46/7:40; f: Pemberton's Lament. 48:44; r: *The New Male. The macao/Hong Kong Trip; The Pittsburgh Poems* by Gerald Locklin. 51:42; rs: *Death Glory Sequins and Smoke* by Todd Moore; *Near the Cathedral* by James Synald; *Gray Light* by David Else; *Places* by Scott C. Holstad; *Libretto to Obligatos for Terpsichorean Dipsomaniacs. Transitory Like Smoke: Not the Pittsburgh Poems* by Mark Weber. 51:43; *The Rudy Duck* by Sharon Krinsky; *Getting the Body to Dance Again* by Ronald Moran; *Monsters and Other Lovers* by Lisa Glatt; *Remember to Murder the Numbers* by Gary David. 51:44; rs: *The Active Ingredient & Other Poems* by Gerald Locklin; *The Dilettante of Cruelty: Deserts* by Christopher Bernard; *Little Houses* by Tim Hoppey; *Poems From Cave 17: Selected Poems 1989-1996; Some Die Along the Way* by Todd Moore; Mark S. Borczon; *Wolf Mask* by Todd Moore; *Mother Earth Needs A Pap Smear*. 57:46; r: *Caseworker Days: 1968-1970* by Robert Cooperman. 58:44; r: *The Henry Miller Acrostics* by Richard Wilmarth. 59:46.  
Headrick, Lora Dawn. p: untitled: Earth poised on a cricket's last comment. 10:6; p: untitled: it's too late for a poem. 14:21; p: untitled: spilling from the mountain. 14:29.  
Heath, William. r/b: *The Children Bob Moses* Led. 49:43.  
Hecht, Susan. p: Wkspping with the Great Male Poets. 43:30.  
Hedley, Leslie Woolf. f: An Evening With Dr. Samuel Johnson. 19:24.  
Hedman-Smith, Margaret. art. p: Haiku. 56:28; p: Pasione In Olde English. 58:15.  
Heim, Scott. ph/bio. ps: The Collector; Killing Sam. 32:3; 4 phs. p: Brian Bloodynose. 33:25.  
Heller, Chaia Zblocki. p: israeli dancing. 33:48.  
Hellus, Al. p: participation in the food chain. 49:28; p: 6 novels and a shitty note from Theodore Roethke. 51:39.  
Hemingway, Ernest. r/b: *The Garden of Eden*. 27:37.  
heineman, wf. p: the stars spread. 6:11; p: At The Hospital. 10:7; p: untitled: in a place that does not become families. the heart is. 14:25.  
Hendrix, Tom. ph/bio. ps: paying your dues: Who Ate Holes In My Cherio Box. 18:20; art; mailbox. 18:20.

Henn, Mary Ann (aka Sr. Mary Ann Henn). p: Threats. 8:12; ph/bio. ps: Strange; Meditation: They Get the Publicity: 'But, Why?'; Some Stereotypes; Letdown; What Is More Now Than a Butterfly; My Mansion; Like a Nun. 9:11; p: Why?. 9:14; art: Candle. 10:5; p: In Answer To Gethsemane. 10:6; art: teddy bear. 10:7; squirrel with nut. 10:10; scarecrow. 13:7; dark horse. 14:13; fall leaves. 14:14; cat standing on two feet. 14:16; two kittens. 14:17; p: Peace Keeping Troops. 14:27; p: Does God Love Bugs?. 14:30; p: God and Nature Mix. 15:15; art: goose; buck. 15:19; p: Images of Madness. 16:16; p: She Hated Walks. 18:23; p: Umbilical Cord. 24:40; p: You Cry. 42:29; p: Positive Thinking. 46/7:24.  
Henri-Ford, Charles. intd \*by Felice Picano: Interview with Charles Henri-Ford. 55:12.  
Herman, Pee Wee. See Reubens, Paul.  
Hernandez, David. p: Badmouthing the Muse. 52:36; p: On Having to Write a Poem in Iambic Pentameter for Class. 55:25; ph/bio. ps: Pool-Side with Pamela Anderson; Narcissus. 58:24.  
Herren, Rhonda Yvonne (aka Rhondak). ded. 7:12; ps: A Poem; Another Poem; Yet Another Poem; One More Poem. 7:12.  
Hershey, Sibilia. p: So What. 10:15.  
Hervey, Virgil. p: 3:00 A.M. Peninsula Blvd. (proof that there is a God). 55:25.  
Hettich, Michael. ps: I Remember When; Poem In June; The Same Story; Simple Facts; My One True Story. 2:9.  
Hibbard, Tom (aka T. Hibbard). p: Making No Mark. 10:4; r: *My Mother's Body* by Marge Piercy. 13:7; art: lamppost. 13:8; r: *Meadowlark West* by Philip Lamantia; The New Beat. 14:7; article: Beat writers have reunion in Sunflower State. 14:7; r: *The Last Cigarette* by John Eberly. 15:11; r: *Down In My Heart* by William Stafford. 15:12; e: On Richard Wilbur, U.S.A. Poet Laureate. 15:14; e: On W.S. Merwin. 17:11; r: *The Witness of Poetry* by Czelaw Milosz. 18:12; e: Ezra Pound in Utopia. 24:28; r: *Jack Kerouac* by Tom Clark. 27:34; r: *What Work Is* by Philip Levine. 29:27; rs: *Mind in Motion*. Celeste Goyer. Ed. *The New Press*. Bob Abramson. Ed.. 29:32; e: Some Eastern European Writers. 31:25; r: *What's This Cat's Story* by Seymour Krim. 32:19; rs: *Dillinger and Dillinger II* by Todd Moore; *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* by Breyten Breytenbach. 34:20; r: *Goodstone* by Fred Voss. 35:15; r: *Deep Red* by Donna Hilbert. 35:14; r: *Confetti* by Barbara Hauk. 37/8:40; r: *Echoes* by Robert Creeley. 41:22; r: *Synaesthetic #2*. Alex Cigale. Ed.. 44/5:39; trans: Black Garden, by Antonin Artaud. 53:41.  
Hickey, Evelyn. p: Chanced Upon. 9:14.  
High, Egiyba. r/b (co-auth Kesho Scott. Cherry Muhajji): *Tight Spaces*. 17:16.  
Hilbert, Donna. ph/bio. ps: In This Farce Which Lends Our Life Its Form; Culling; Walking The Palo Alto Marshes In My Red Coat. 21:5; ph/bio. ps: The Penis; Boy With The Pee Scared Out of Him; 64 Flavors. 27:2; ph/bio. ps: Neighbors; Uncle Eugene; Please Knock Softly. 31:7; r/b: *Deep Red*. 35:14; ph/bio. ps: The Doctor Book; Vocabulary Builders; The Body Is. 36:16; ph (w/Gerald Locklin). 39:4; r/b: *Women Who Make Money and the Men Who Love Them*. 42:21; r/b: *Feathers and Dust*. 48:19; p: City of Lakewood. 51:19; p: First Love. 56:39; ph (w/Gerald Locklin). 58:9.  
Hildebrandt, R. (Rosemary). p: The Marrow Tree. 49:39.  
Hier, Grant. p: nouns and intentions. 51:38.  
Hillman, Elizabeth. p: Refusal. 14:25; p: Bomb Alternative. 14:27.  
Hillmer, Timothy. p: Hunger. 30:27; p: Sister Lenora. 31:17.  
Hilton, Barbara. ps: We Must Care; Wings of Merch. 9:15; p: We Call It Sport. 10:10; ph. ps: Thought; Memory of a Cat; Save a Harp for Me; Deception; Cry; Man in His Image; Parallel Two; Threads of Light; Memories. 15:6; p: Mana Danced. 30:26.  
Himes, Chester. r/b: *My Life of Absurdity: The Later Years*. 29:28.  
Hinds, John. f: The Healing. 23:8.  
Hines, Patsy (aka Patsy Sears). thx. 5:12.  
Hipp, Gwen. thx. 30:27.  
Hirsch, Edward. r/b: *The Night Parade*. 19:11; *Earthly Measures*. 41:21.  
Hirschman, Jack. ph. 37/8:1; bio. ps: Balkan Irony; National Pastime. 37/8:3; trans fm Spanish: Black Stone on a White Stone. by Cesar Vallejo. 37/8:3; bio. p: Curandera. 52:23; trans (w/ Boadiba) from Haitian Creole: Zombie by Jan Mapou: I'm Dreaming of Your Body All Nude by Lyonel Trouillot. 52:23.  
Hix, Blacky. ph/bio. ps: Lice; Dogs: They strapped him; Back Road To Beyond. 30:4; p: Wild Dog. 32:16; r: *Human Shrapnel* by Bill Shields. 32:24; p: The Prison Room. 34:44.  
Ho Hong Leung. p: "no children, no pets." 7:5; p: Tommy and Jerry (For the Nuclear War). 10:4.  
Hobbet, Anastasia Wertz. f: Sacramento's Vacation. 21:20.  
Hoepfner, Edward Hawthorn. p: Pickets



Not Chosen at Random, 27:46; p: Shade Tree Mechanics, 29:22.

Hofer, Marianna. p: Gun Shy, 27:41.

Hoffman, Barry. lte, 19:2.

Hoffman, Judy. p: Van Gogh, 7:10.

Hofstadter, Marc Elihu. rbb: *House of Peace*, 59:44.

Hogan, Wayne. p: My Mother's Heart, 7:4; p: In Kansas Somewhere, 8:12; p: God's Sweat, 9:10; art: Man Skiing on Easter Egg, 10:1; art: Owl & Stars, 10:2; p: Now I Lay Me Down To Death, 10:4; art: This Space For Rent (logo for Sure Thing col), 10:8; art: Cat in Window, 11:1; p: To Catch a Breeze, 13:8; art: boat at night, 14:14; art: bird in hand, 15:3; art: cowboy, 15:11; art: trees and moon, 15:13; art: picnic, 15:15; art: umbrella, 16:1; art: reading man, 16:4; ph. ps: O.K.?, The Way with Breath; Intimate Epidemics; Moma On Sunday; Fast; Harps; A Chance for Some Winter, 16:9; art: drawing hand, 16:9; art: horse and parking meter, 17:1; art: dancing women, 17:7; art: "... (and) the face grave cloud against the evening ..." - Samuel Beckett; One Shoe and Two Missing Socks or Contemporary. American Poetry, 56:24; p: O.K.?, 56:24; art: "... the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell and the profit and loss." - T.S. Eliot; Gertrude Stein leans back on her low brown heels, 56:25; bio, p: Harps, 56:25; art: bird with clarinet, 57:7.

Holland, Barbara A. p: The Haunted Guitar, 6:11; p: The Face of the Land, 10:4.

Hollembeak, Cindy. thx, 4:12.

Holloway, Glenna. p: Addie At Eighty, 32:15.

Holstad, Scott C. ph/bio, ps: melting pot; but it's a lot like wearing a raincoat, 36:20; rbb: *Places*, 51:43.

Holt, Rochelle Lynn (aka Rochelle DuBois). ps: Dear Father, I want to write: Currents of Love II: Nature is *Todo* (Everything); The Poet; The Color of Evening, 5:3; r: *No Longer Afraid* by Sue Daniel Elkind, 9:2; ps: Lovesong #1; Lovesong #2; Chinese Folks; Songs; Return To Desire; My Heart Laid Bare; Reunion; Past Life; ex from: Bitter Blessing (for Dot & Lou); Awake; Epitaph; Revision; Conversation; Violet Bouquet, 9:3; rbb: *The Blue Guitar*, 9:3; r: Wyoming, the Hub of the Wheel ... A Journey for Universal Spokesmen #1, 9:4; rbb (co-auth Linda Zeiser): *Mendsongs & Soulspice*, 9:5; rbb (co-auth Linda Zeiser): *Haiku of Desire*, 10:8; r: *The Lust Songs and Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage* by Ruth Moon Kemper, 11:2; thx, 11:4; r: Wyoming, the Hub of the Wheel ... A Journey for Universal Spokesmen #2, 11:5; rbb: *The Elusive Rose*, 11:5; r: *To the Great Horned Owl Come to My Doorstep Dying* by Willoughby F. Senior, 11:5; p: To Converse with stars, 11:13; ph. 12:1; ph/bio, ps: The Red Sweater; Impatience In A Blue Bowl; Full Worm Moon; New Love; Unspoken Contradiction?; Silence, 12:3; rbb: *The Suicide Chap*, 12:3; rs: *Upstream* by Virginia Love Long, 12:5; *Their Combs Turn Red in Spring* by Sheryl L. Nelms, 12:7; *Black Mullet Review* #1, 12:11; *The Forum for Universal Spokesmen ... A Journey for Universal Spokesmen* #3, 13:11; rbb (co-auth Virginia Love Long): *Shared Journey*, 13:11; r: *Coming to Terms with Geese* by Lois Van Houten, 13:12; *Ask the Dreamer Where Night Begins* by Patti Tana; *Patterns of Poetry. An Encyclopedia of Form* by Miller Williams; *Writing Poems* by Wallace Robert; *The Bridge* by Claire Nicolas White; *Firewalkers* by Lili Bitá; *Tricks of the Voice* by Mia Albright; *Images of What's Goin' On* by Aisha Eshe-Carmen and Crystal Carmen, 14:11; f: Reaping Wheat, 14:26; rbb: *Reflections of Genius*, 15:10; ps: Flashback; Arrival to Suburb; Agate Squirrel; The Ghost of Hope; Valentine's Day 1986; Question?, 15:21; ps: Vision; Poems; The Mind; Rituals; Dance, 16:12; ph. ps: Puddles; View from Back Window; Cold Reign; Wet Paint; Quiet Lesson; Full Moon; Melba's Laundry; Naked Apple Trees; Fresh Snow; Frozen Dawn; Evening Sorrow; Deer Sight; 16:14; p: The Promise, 20:9; p: Out Of Hibernation, 24:21; rbb: *Warm Storm*, 31:24; r: *All Roads Lead to Bushy Fork* by Virginia Love Long, 35:15; rbb: *The Diver's Shadow*, 37:8;42; r: *Fire: From a Journal of Love, the Previously Unpublished Unexpurgated Diary 1934-1937* by Anais Nin, 46/47:16; p: Yellow Pears, Smooth as Silk, 50:13; rbb (co-auth Marie Asner): *Tree of Life*, 51:45; ph/bio, p: A New Definition of the Zodiac, 52:22; rbb (co-auth Virginia Love Long): *Infamous In Our Prime*, 52:47; rs: *Striking the Sky* by Lila Bitá (trans by Robert Zaller); *Red Hot on a Silver Note* by Maketa Groves; *The Secret History of Water* by Silvia Curbelo, 53:47; rbb: *Anais Nin: An Understanding of Her Art*, 54:43; r: *The Scorpion and Other Stories* by Lili Bitá, 55:46; rbb: *Scars*, 58:44; r: *Dance of the Ariadnes* by Sharon Spencer, 58:44.

Homan, Agnes. p: Rainy Weather, 10:12.

Hood, Michael. p: Waiting On A Poem-Train, 10:4.

Hoover, Paul. e: Flesh in Excess, 25:5.

Hoppey, Tim. p: Red Raiders, 51:29; rbb: *Little Houses*, 57:46; p: Sex God Of Saturn, 59:23.

Horvath, Helen. p: Longing, 7:10;

Horvath, Linda M. p: Inhibitions, 25:17; p: Jailhouse Games, 27:38; p: Long Shots Seldom Come In, 36:15; p: Love Letter, 55:36; p: Daddy's Little Girl, 58:27.

Hospodar, Riq. rbb: *To You in Your Closets*, 27:32; ph/bio, ps: The Innocent One; Queers in Space, 33:12.

House, Elizabeth. p: Even in Eden, 7:10.

House, Tom. ph. ps: a synopsis; facing the door; genius; roughing it; the getaway; drunk man stealing wife from himself, 8:4; p: the white man, 10:8; ph/bio, ps: the next new bukowskii; the cutesy-pie poetry review.; s & m commentary.. 29:8.

Hovancsek, Mike. r (inadvertently credited to Michael McIrvn): *The Witness Tree* by Terry L. Persun, 57:45.

Howard, Julie Kate. p: An Ex-Husband's New Address, 43:33.

Howard, Justice. ph/bio, ps: Not Any More I Don't; Sparks For The Firemen, 21:9; ph/bio, ps: Black Garters. Marilyn Dreams; Maybe if the Moon Turns Opaque, 27:11; p: Plumbers of the Liquid Word or: How to be a Good Poet, 34:41.

Hoyt, Don A. p: A Time of Wondering, 55:38.

Hubinger, Bert. p: Those Special Fears, 10:6.

Hubka, R. (Ron). f: Both Sides Now, 15:24.

Huddle, David. rbb: *Stopping By Home*, 18:14.

Hudler, Ad. bio, f: Back and Forth, 56:16.

Hudson, David. p: Brain, 14:28.

Hudson, Marc. rbb: *Afterlight*, 28:28.

Huffstickler, Albert. ph/bio, ps: Seasonal; Interfacing Childhood, 19:7; ph/bio, ps: It's Always Getting Later; Tornadoes and Other Hassles, 36:17; f: Journey or Stroke of Fate, 46/7:10; p: The Bottom, 55:42.

Hughes, Carolyn J. Fairweather. ps: Mirrage; Coupling; Afterthoughts, 3:5.

Hughes, G. Scott. p: The Compliment, 56:37; p: English as a Second Language, 58:38.

Hughes, John. ps: Jesse; Morning hunger, 53:21.

Hughes, Langston. rbb (co-auth Arna Bontemps): *Letters: 1925-1967*, 27:36.

Hughes, R.E. p: I Could Be, 46/7:19.

Humes, Harry. rbb: *The Way Winter Works*, 28:25.

Humphreys, Doug. ph/bio, ps: Love; Autumn Stroll; Show; untitled: The forthcomings are usual; broom and dustpan; Boot; Pash; Whisper at Arm's Length; autumn morning daybreak; untitled: The birds on them mean little; Someone's Little Brother, 9:13.

Huncke, Herbert. rbb: *Guilty of Everything: The Autobiography of Herbert Huncke*, 24:38.

Hundley, Lynne. p: Packing, 39:19; p: Candy Smokes, 39:25.

Hunt, Tamara. p: Why I Keep Working, 6:11.

Hurlow, Marcia. rbb: *Dangers of Travel*, 41:21.

Hursey, Brett. p: A Jesus Like Everybody Else's, 39:24.

Huseman, Melissa. ph/bio, ps: Blue Celophane; The Pink Mouth, 59:7.

Hutchinson, Robert. p: The Outcome, 2:3; ps: An Epitaph of the Southern Civil War; Death of a Modern, 3:10.

Iddings, Kathleen. p: What If I Decide To Seduce The Mailman, 57:34.

IMPURE FORM. see by Robert Miltner: Albert Goldbarth: Impure Form, "Delft" and *Popular Culture*, 40:10.

Inbar, Tomer. p: i confine, 21:19.

Inez, Colette. rbb: *Clemency*, 56:45.

Ingmar (Belgium). ps: The Opportunists; Lexicon of Our Generation (X), 56:41.

Inman, Will. p: Essay Written on 4th of July Eve, 1990, 29:36; ph. #33:1; bio, ps: steep limbs; black night of my thirst; woke strawberries, 3:2; ps: mechanics' beach; John Baptizes Jesus; fractions for wholeness, 33:3; f: A Space For Wind To Breathe, 3:29; lte, 34:2; ph/bio, ps: washed in the blood to reclaim the son of woman; Son of Humankind, 50:8; ps: mysteries beyond comfort; in hanging rock state mountain park; The Sacred Egg of Paradox: A Call to Those Who Suffer Scorn, 50:9; r: *Keepers of the Earth* by LaVerne Harrell Clark, 56:46; rbb: *Surfing the Dark Sound, Sacred Chaff, Center, Waking*, 56:44.

Isaacson, Bruce. rbb: *love affairs with barely any people in them*, 32:23.

Isles, John. ph/bio, ps: The Temptation; Western Landscape with Storm, 49:36.

Ives, Rich. ph/bio, ps: The Animal; It Was a Beautiful Day, 55:26.

Ives, Robert W. p: untitled: Give back your skin, 10:3.

Izumi Shikibu. rbb (co-auth Ono no Comachi): *The Ink Dark Moon*, 27:35.

- J -

Jackson, Beverly. p: Page Five, Column One, 56:38.

Jackson, H. Kermit. p: Frozen Tree at Noon, 6:11; p: Scene, 10:7.

Jackson, Jennifer. ph/bio, ps: Disillusioned; Fat Girl Confuses Food and Sex;

Again: A Late Bloomer's Search For Meaning In All The Wrong Places, 54:15; p: The Feeder Said To Me, 59:48.

Jackson, Lorri (1961-1990). ph/bio, ps: Still Life: Boy On Couch; untitled (red); Here's My Contribution: 18:10; p: Judy Jetson (on her back tattooed), 20:24; ph. 22:1; ph/bio, ps: A Prophylactic Rag; Screwage: A Character Sketch, 22:7; rbb: *New Logic For New Sores*, 22:19; ph/bio, ps: Beat 1990 (the abbreviated version); a prima donna poet replies, 24:6; obit. ps: Still Life (a triangle of sorts); excuse me, i'm giving away diseases for free; Porch Monkey Eat Me; Brain Garbage, 25:4; ph. p: A Hole & A Pulse, 25:5; see by Paul Hoover: Flesh in Excess, 25:5; ph. see by Oberc: Looking For Lorri Jackson, 37/8:36; 3 phs, 37/8:38; ps and p exs in Looking for Lorri Jackson: A Character Sketch; Porch Monkey Eat Me; Screw Age; A Moment of Transcendence; Sex, Death and Fear; Gone / Flesh / Wise; John at the Bar; Bad Cup of Coffee; a prima donna poet replies; untitled: Because of you, 37/8:36-38; ex from letter to Michael Hathaway, Sept. 29, 1990, 37/8:38; so interview by Oberc: Talking About Lorri Jackson: An Interview with Guy Aitchison, 54:24; ph. 54:25; so lte by Phyllis Jackson, 55:6; blurb for *Scat*, 57:42.

Jackson, Phyllis. lte re: Lorri Jackson, 55:6.

Jacob, John. r: *German Poetry in War and Peace: Poems by Karl Kraus and George Trakl*, 49:40.

Jacob, Menet M. p: January Water, 6:11; p: Finesse, 7:11; p: Suspension, 12:6; p: The Rose, 14:25.

Jacobsen, Steven. e: Why Writers are Poor Editors, 17:13.

Jaech, Stephen. rbb: *Many Rooms*, 28:29.

Jaffe, Maggie. ph/bio, ps: Murder, Inc; At The Unemployment Office; George Grosz, 34:32; ph/bio, ps: Luz Parra; Van Gogh's Whore; Gustav Mahler, 41:28; rbb: *Continuous Performance*, 44/5:37; rbb: *How the West Was One*, 56:43; rbb: *7th Circle*, 57:45.

James, Colin. p: Crow Bait, 10:10.

James, David. ph/bio, ps: A Future Somewhere; On Edge; The End of the Poetry Line, 25:9; p: Summer Vacation, 30:21; p: Why are cows milked from the right side?, 31:16.

Jane, Tamara. p: Vienna, 52:25; p: reckon, 53:19.

Jason, Philip K. rbb: *The Separation: Poems*, 48:22.

jeanne, ave (aka ave jeanne zettlemoyer). haiku: in an open field, 7:10; haiku: April sun slices, 7:11; ph. ps: Miss Emily / attuned to the dark; just yesterday; tommy is; FULL MOON / above the children; OBSCENE Phone Call No. 398; 8 1/2x11 / Young Man on Street Corner; Asking Tommy, 8:4; r: *Black Cat Bone* by Tony Moffeit, 9:4; rbb: *Bittersweet*, 9:4; ps: Signs of Bounty Hunting or: Who is Wild?; Grizzly Bear; The Clattering of Steel Traps Is Silent; Leaning Away; Epitaph for CaNIS LuPUS, 9:14; r: *Pueblo Blues* by Tony Moffeit, 10:2; haiku: half way home, 10:4; col: Sure Thing, 10:8; r: *Sub Rosa* #9, 10:8; rbb: *Moon Moves: The Phases of a Woman*, 11:5; r: *Forever Wider: Poems New and Selected, 1954-1984*, by Charles Plymell, 11:7; haiku: The rain falls, 11:9; 2 haiku: Through veils of cloud; Thistle blossoms, 11:13; col: Sure Thing, 12:2; thx, 12:11; p: SCULPTURE / young children in a history class, 14:28; ph. ps: While Wearing Neon & a black hat, i eat oreos; POET / in perspective; STAYING IN THE EXIT / saturday; Macadam Poem; A SHORT POEM ON WRITING POEMS / in september, 15:21; ph. col: Sure Thing, 17:5.

Jellings, Dale. p: He Didn't Like Poems, 6:11.

Jenkinson, John. p: homegrown homeopathy, 37/8:44.

Jenks, Dorothy. p: Evening Prayer, 55:24.

Jennings, Kate. rbb: *Malice*, 24:34.

Jensen, Nancy A. p: Hope Takes Flight, 7:3.

Jerome, Judson. ph. ps: Departure; Adolescence; I. Elegy: Barefoot Boy; A Piddling Harvest; Bells for John Crowe Ransom; Beth at Seventeen, 15:16.

Jespersen, Ruth. f: After the War, 7:9; f: The Adventures of Iggy, 14:18; f: Bimbo, 23:18; f: Delilah Retires, 29:17; rbb: *The Blink of an Eye*, 31:23; f: Gillian Clicks, 37/8:14; f: The Enigma Variations, 42:18.

Jessup, Jennifer. ph/bio, ps: Poem on a Compact; After Dark; Roaming Daddy's Pastures; Once Reckless Girl; Cin; Poem on a Dollar Bill; Restless Girl with Rapunzel Hair; Bathroom Rats, 14:4; p: The Dandelion Chain, 21:17; ph/bio, ps: Mother Corn is Born; Mother Corn Ripens; Mother Corn Recedes, 48:8; p: Mother, 49:22.

Jewell, Terri L. (1954-1995). p: Ha'nt, 6:11; p: Leaving the Straits, 7:4; rs: *Tight Spaces* by Kesho Scott, Cherry Muhajji, Egyirba High; *High Blood / Pressure* by Michelle Clinton; *A Distant Footstep on the Plain* by

Stephanie D. Byrd; *Upside Down Tapestry Mosaic History* by Leslie A. Reese, 17:16; *Poems* by Rita Mae Brown, 17:17; *Women For All Seasons: Poetry and Prose About Transition in Women's Lives*, Wanda Coleman, Joanne Leedom-Ackerman, Eds.; *Presenting ... Sister NoBlues* by Hattie Gossett; *Abstract Blues (1980-1987)* by Rayfield Allen Waller, 19:13; *Solos* by Nubia Kai, 22:19; *The Venus Hottentot* by Elizabeth Alexander; *Deluged with Dudes: Platonic and Erotic Love Poems to Men* by Alta; *Bluestown Mockingbird Mambo* by Sandra Maria Esteves, 28:30; *Discriminating Evidence* by Mary Logue; *Flytrap* by Janet Snell; *Panhandling Papers* by Kady Van Deurs; *Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous?* by Haki R. Madhubuti, 28:31; *Proud Ones* by Koryne Ortega, 28:32; obit, 48:16.

Jobe, James Lee. p: Victor Wong On The #31 Bus, 54:35.

Jobe, Margaret (Margie). ph w/Joan Jobe Smith (daughter), 32:4.

Johnson Brad, thx, 20:2.

Johnson, Edward. ph/bio, ps: Hate Speech; Remains, 39:18.

Johnson, Frank. p: Why You've Tried to Kill Yourself (And How You might Break Clear, Sweetheart), 53:39.

Johnson, Jo E. p: Parlor Talk, 14:29.

Johnson, Marael. ph/bio, ps: Ambrosia; Collared And Cuffed; Glass Act; A Sobering Experience, 22:3; rbb: *Sin-A-Rama (Guts #4)*; Eine Verruckte Legt Los; Gedichte: *Mad Woman on the Loose*, 24:35; p: Reconnected, 24:40; ph/bio, ps: Waiting Games; Truth Decay; Common Blah Marriage; My Rhymes/His Reason, 32:6; ph/bio, ps: Fait Accompli; My Good Performance; Material Girl; Bio-Degra-ding; Pregnant Pos., 34:7; rbb: *Mad Woman: Trois*, 42:21.

Johnson, Marilyn. thx, 29:24; f: Jezebel, 31:15.

Johnson, Michael L. p: Late March, 14:22.

Johnson, Peter. r: *In the Zone: New and Selected Writing* by Laura Chester, 18:12; *Stopping By Home* by David Huddle, 18:14; *The Night Parade* by Edward Hirsch; *Another Language* by Sue Daniel Elkind; *Cheap & Nasty* by Todd Moore; *Playing Poker w/22 Longs* by Todd Moore; *Wreckage* by Dennis Gulling; *White Boy's Pitch* by Paul Weinman; *Cunt In My Face* by John Eberly, 19:12; *Gargoyle* #35, 19:16; *Tornado Alley* by William Burroughs, 21:13; e: A Note on the Synthetic Poem, 23:6; r: *A New Geography of Poets*, Edward Field, Gerald Locklin, Charles Stetler, Eds., 35:13; ph/bio, ps: Women They Could Kill For: The People Upstairs; Love Poem; Third Persons, 46/7:38.

Johnson, Regis. ps: Progressive Digression; Still Life; Personal Thunders, 3:3.

Johnson, Robert K. p: At the Ocean's Edge, 7:8; p: After A Late-Afternoon Nap, 10:6.

Johnson, T.C. f: Sandwich Shop, 54:22.

Johnston, Mark. p: At the Drive-In: Winter, 1962, 36:15; p: Permutations: Starting Again at Zero, 40:30.

Joice, Jackie. p: Mi Hermana, My Sista, Mi Sangre, 48:13; p: Street Poet, 49:46; rbb: *Mother Earth Needs A Pap Smear*, 57:46.

Jones, Christopher. ph/bio, ps: The Pigs All Cry for Circe; The Incomplete Road Kill Almanac, 43:27; p: Bad Mycophile, 44/5:21; p: No Poet, 55:37.

Jones, Ginger. p: Antiquarry, 7:9.

Jones, J.E.M. p: i learned to love to read, 16:16.

Jones, Matt. art: rose, 6:2.

Jones, Seaborn. p: Directions, 49:44.

Jordan, June. rbb: *Naming Our Destiny*, 27:37.

Joseph, Jenny. rbb: *The Inland Sea: A Selection From the Poetry of Jenny Joseph*, 22:15.

Joseph, Rachel. ph/bio, p: Drinking and Driving, 53:17.

Joy, Chuck C. p: Oh Really, 53:41; p: Irish Spring, 56:31.

Juergensen, Hans. rbb: *The Ambivalent Journey*, 13:12; p: Had They Been There, 14:27.

Juhl, Timothy J. p: Laguna Night, 33:47; p: At Worship in the House of Skin, 50:48.

Jurus, Betty. lte, 19:2.

- K -

Kahn, Peggy. f: Snow White - Joycean Style, 10:14.

Kai, Nubia. rbb: *Solos*, 22:18.

Kalinski, Todd. p: what a gas it was, 37/8:25; ph/bio, ps: 3 generations; the minister of the hot coals; mr. neptune, 39:11; p: another love letter to dick nixon, 43:34; p: losers are never lucky, 52:40; p: king storyteller's funeral, 53:39.

Kallsen, T.J. p: Plains Blizzard, 10:6.

Kane, Julie. rbb: *Body and Soul*, 22:18; rbb: *The Bartender Poems*, 31:24.

Kangas, J.R. p: On Being Told I Should Have A Dog, 23:7; p: Three Stabs at a Definition, 33:42; p: If Wishes Are Forces ..., 33:43; lte, 34:2; p: Dazzleblitz Tutorial, 43:33; p: Two Young Men in High Spirits, 46/7:11; p: Chart on the Wall, 50:43; p: Trout Creek Cemetery August Morning,

56:31.

Karlson, Kathy J. f: Who Puts Up Those Signs?, 48:26.

Karnick, Dane. ps: Familiar; D.J.'s; Blue Line; Tourist, 5:5.

Karp-Gendre, Jacqueline. p: *Fish* by Brancusi, 53:19.

Karr, Muriel. ps: Botanical Drawing Class; Muriel Mating Call, 39:25.

Karriem, Jaleelah. p: In a Deep Breath, 14:4.

Kashner, Sam. rbb: *Don Quixote in America*, 54:46.

Kathi (see also Elliot Richman). p: Death Night Present, 11:13; p: Schizophrenia Salad, 14:21.

Katz-Levine, Judy. r: *True Body* by Miriam Sagan, 29:28.

Keilen, Janean. p: Memories and emotions, 5:11; p: untitled: My thoughts used to travel with wings, 10:4.

Keith, Mary L. p: Whose Child, 10:5.

Kemper, Troxey. p: Neigh, Neigh, 10:4.

Kempher, Ruth Moon. ps: Found Poem #14; Quandry, Quandary, First Day of School, 3:11; p: The Lust Songs and Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage; IX., 4:8; ph/bio, ps: The Mashed Potato Threat; XXL (1-75); art, or, the passionate pink meatloaf; From the Tub, She Teaches Her Dog, Bubba, A Lesson of Tongues and Forbidden Fruits; Our Doomed Unicorn; Man/Poet; The White Guitar; Fog; After the Operation, Wondering A Bunch of Stuff, 6:5; nov ex: And Flights of Angels, 9:12; ps: A First Poem For Kalliope Jane A Basset-Beagle Pup; Short Poems For Lili Belly - A German Shepherd, 9:14; p: The Lust Songs and Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage; XXVII, 10:3; ph/bio, ps: Critique; Birthday; Sleep; The Old Dog; Items; XXXIII: Three Miles to Palatka; Freud, On Crop Supports, Etc.; Part Pagan, 11:2; rbb: *The Lust Songs and Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage*, 11:2; p: From 'The Prattsburg Correspondence' - The First Letter to C., Thursday May 27, Early, 13:8; ps: Otherwise, Was It An Even Trade; Making a Poem for Z. & Other Nonsense; Playing House and Other Games; Other than Bruises What Remains; Another Conversation: In Order to Forget Something Else: Other Creatures Than The Moth; The Love Apple and Other Superstitions; Bang! And Another Bun Rab Bites the Dust, 14:8; p: Herb Garden, 20:23; p: Gina's Taste, 36:27; p: Her Explanation, 37/8:15; ph/bio, ps: Pole Beans and Fences; Woodstock Reverie, At the Brookwood Inn; Tough Audience, 44/5:14; ph. 56:1; ps: Collage: Rainy Night; At the Drive-In [Rebel Without a Cause]; Song; Papayas, 56:2; ps: Going Down; Waiting for the Dempsey Dumpster Man; The Persistence of Memory, 56:3; 2 phs, intd by Mary Sue Koeppel; Ruth Moon Kemper: The *Chiron* Interview, 56:4; ps: The White Guitar; Fog; Second Languages, 56:5.

Kennedy, L.H. p: He Marries the Night Woods, 52:30.

Kennedy, Patrick. f: Pancakes, 20:16; ph/bio, ps: An Eternal Flame; Report Card, 22:30; f: A Preliminary Bout, 30:19.

Keogh, Gerard F. p: The Dinosaur Died Yesterday, 7:10.

Kesler, Charles. p: Let Me In, 48:35; p: Willie Discovers Art, 54:36.

Kessler, Stephen. p: Jack's Last Words, 53:27.

Ketchek, Michael. p: untitled: For one moment, 24:40; p: untitled: there are only two things, 27:39; p: untitled: You see I believe, 31:29; p: untitled: There are these dangerous positions, 32:29; p: Charlie Said, 32:30; p: untitled: after she caught him, 49:23.

Kettner, M. p: untitled: autumn, like a nasty note, 13:7.

Keys, Kerry Shawn. ph/bio, ps: The Kitchen; The Glass Cage; Fishing with Izaak Walton, 37/8:11; p: Satori Sattva, 46/7:44.

Kharmis, Daniil (1905-1942). self-portrait, ps: Morning (Awakening of the Elements); untitled: Everyone in the end advances; untitled: Spring arrived; Wicked Gathering of the Faithless, 39:7; self-portrait, ps: Un-Now: To an Unknown Natasha; "The Neva flows by the Academy ...", 49:24.

khristianekey. p: Here's My Pen, 5:11.

Kieah (Donna Ficaró). p: Beautiful, the stars, 4:8; f: The Other Side of the Sun, 5:6; art, 5:6.

Kilcher, Jewel. p: Me, 44/5:47.

Kincaid, Joan Payne. ps: Princess Ping-pong Born 2/11/73; Safety, 9:14; p: Animals and Humans, 10:10; ph/bio, ps: Camp Rules; Fadeout; Through the Slot; Sporting Man; Gambles; Winter Forever; Bloody Cat & Barricades, 11:6; p: In the Past/Better Tomorrow, 14:29; p: Rollin' Home From Old New England, 14:30.

KINDRED SPIRIT PRESS. Issues 16, 17 and some chapbooks published under Kindred Spirit Press imprint. Issue 18 and thereafter under Chiron Review Press imprint.

King, Jeremy (aka Michael Hathaway). p: Tracy in Chains: A Dark Fantasy, 2:2.

King, Jon. p: Afternoon, 16:8.

King, Kevin. p: Fans & Chaos, 59:19.

King, Roland. p: Cathy, 14:29.

Kinnear, Cal. p: A Visit, 53:33.



Kinsey, C.A. p: She Is Privileged, 36:15; p: Suicide Written in Red Ink, 43:15.  
Kirby, Larry D. III. p: Captain Kinky, 11:9; rbb: *Combat Poetry*, 13:4.  
Kistulentz, Steve. f: Valedictory, or a Brief History of Me Before My Mormon Conquest, 49:38.  
Kitchens, Romella. p: N.Y.C., 9:10; ps: The Inquiry: Squaw: The Scientist's Night Off; test monkey; Sins, 9:14; p: Character, 10:7.  
Kittell, Ronald Edward. p: Often, 10:12.  
Klein, Evan. p: on a road, 23:20.  
Klein, Shirley. p: Poem, 36:11.  
Klipschutz (Kurt Lipschutz). p: Side Street Tableau, 21:18; ph/bio, ps: Fragment; Maybe You Had To Be There; Capitalism Is A Contact Sport, 23:12.  
Kloefkorn, William. rbb: *Drinking the Cup Dry*, 28:34.  
Knestaut, Dan. p: she says of her tattoos, 56:39.  
Knight, Arthur Winfield. p: Bad, 3:10; p: Making Excuses, 14:6; p: Frank James: The Ultimate Reality, 20:9; p: Bill Pickett: The Dusky Demon, 23:16; p: Taylor Moore: Queer, 34:37.  
Knight, John Cantey. ps: Twenty-five Years Ago; I Wish I Was in Dixie; Try Again; Metaphysical Poets; A Woman With a Sense of Humor Is a Real Find, 51:35.  
Knight, Julie. ph/bio, ps: Thursday Afternoon at the Orange County Jail; Good Enough, 41:6.  
Knight, Kit. p: Domestic Scene, 14:9.  
Knighen, Merrell. p: Negotiable Demands, 29:37; p: Petitioner, 30:27.  
Knott, Doug. ph/bio, ps: Mom At Sea; Towel Winds, 51:11.  
Konofalski, Zbigniew. p: Dead Bird, 7:11; p: To Robert Lowell's 'Christmas Eve Under Hooker's Statue', 10:4.  
Kober, Franklin Dale. ph/bio, ps: On a Cool Summer's Evening: Follow the Wind My Child: She Walks in the Night; It Doesn't Matter; I Wish I Were An Angel's Tear; Death Walks, 9:13.  
Koeppel, Mary Sue. ints Ruth Moon Kempher: Ruth Moon Kempher: The Chiron Interview, 56:4.  
Koertge, Ron. bio, ps: The War; Snow Tires; Models of Instruction That Encourage Critical Thinking, 34:6; p: Aphrodisiacs, 44:5:15.  
Kolumban, Nicholas. ps: A Message Sent with Exceptional Speed; Bosnia-Bound Soldier On Vorosmarthy Square in 1995, 56:33.  
Kopp, Karl. ph/bio, ps: Herrenbad; Cana; Rude But Nonetheless An Awakening, 36:12; ph/bio, play: Pearl and Doris, 55:8.  
Kossman, Nina. trans: Two flames! - no, two mirrors! And then they gave us meat to drink.; The eyes of a sympathetic neighbor, by Marina Tsvetayeva, 49:32; p: Shadow over the Town, 49:45.  
Kostelanetz, Richard. e: Literary Video, 16:13; e: Mediumistic Integrity, 19:8; e: Communication, 20:13; e: Notes on the Poetry Biz, 1990, 22:31; e: Notes on 'Duets, Trios & Choruses' (1988), 31:11; ph, p (co-auth Kathie Antrim): Increments, 31:11; e: Retrospect on My Fictions (1988), 42:28; f: Visual Fiction, 48:45; bio, e: The Rule of Mediocrity at the Endowment of Arts and Humanities, 52:41; rbb: *Minimal Fictions*, 55:46.  
Kostos, Dean. p: Cheating Death, 25:17; p: I Loved Spring, 27:42.  
Kriesel, Michael. p: The Dark Man, 57:35.  
Krim, Seymour. rbb: *What's This Cat's Story*, 32:19; so lte by Edward Field, 34:2.  
Krinsky, Sharon. rbb: *The Ruddy Duck*, 51:44.  
Kronistik, Anna. r: *Still in the Game* by Fred Voss, 40:25.  
Kruse, Kent. bio/ph (w/Lucy Giovannucci). ps: I Light Her Up and She Tells Her Story: The Death of Rafael's Soul Lying There Stinking, 56:15.  
Kryss, Tom. p: How People Learn, 43:20.  
Kubie, Rachel. ph/bio, ps: Dirt Bikes: Up; Eight Tattoos, 36:8.  
Kuchinsky, Walter. p: Earth, 43:25; p: Bore, 46:7:17; p: Hermits, 46:7:19.  
Kuening, Delores A. rbb: *Life After Vietnam*, 28:3.  
Kupferberg, Tuli. art/comic, One Man's Meat is Another Cow's Daughter, 57:5.  
Kuypers, Janet. ps: More Than We Should Have: New To Chicago, 55:35.  
-L-  
Lackey, Joe. p: Malice: Special Savagery, 10:5; p: Farm Woman, 14:25.  
Laczi, D.E. p: For M.L.H. In Surrey, 14:22.  
LaFleur, Tom. p: ex from: Selected Works, 7:11.  
Lamantia, Philip. rbb: *Meadowlark West*, 14:7.  
Lambert, Nancy. p: untitled: I could be white, 24:40; p: choice, 27:48.  
Lamothe, Lorene. p: For a Ghost, 55:41.  
Landgraf, Susan. p: Puzzles, 24:16; p: One Hand, 25:15.  
Lane, Larry. photography: Joseph Conrad - Mystic Seaport, 3:4; The End; Mill house, 5:4.  
Lane, Mary T. p: On Long Illness, 59:48.  
Laning, Carrie. bio, p: i recommend,

58:29.  
LaPierre, Matthew Scott. p: Thirteenth Summer, 43:30; p: Passenger Seat, 44:5:15; p: The Jerk, 44:5:32; ph/bio, ps: An Ex-girlfriend Visits; Black Ice; Cellar Beers, 49:25; p: Unmade Bed (Travel Lodge, San Francisco, 8/95), 51:39; p: Second-Rate Miracle, 53:38; p: San Francisco Hangover, 55:39.  
Lark, Gary L. p: By the River, 15:20.  
Lark, Lolita. r: *The Yale Younger Poets Anthology*, George Bradley, Ed., 57:43.  
Larken, Audrey. p: The Cougar In My Garden Shed, 48:40.  
Larsen, Deborah. rbb: *Stitching Porcelain: After Mateo Ricci In Sixteenth-Century China*, 29:25.  
LaRue, Dorie. p: Uncle Panky, 10:4; p: The Turn Row, 14:25.  
Laskowski, Timothy. r: *The Crown of Columbus* by Michael Dorris, Louis Edrich, 29:31.  
Lassell, Michael (aka M. Lassell). rbb: *Poems For Lost and Unlost Boys*, 13:12; p: The Ides of August, 22:24; bio, ps: Diva; Imagining a peach; Running into Ramon, 33:23; portrait, bio, ps: Love / sonnet 2: I want to fuck a boy; I want to fuck a boy (2), 50:17.  
Lassen, Sandra Lake. ph/bio, ps: Lunch With Ginsberg; Secrets, 1953; Death By Flamingo; Rag Doll, 28:42.  
Last, Curt. p: A True Story, 58:39.  
Lato, Trisha. p: Smokey, 8:12; p: Gloves, 10:4.  
Lau, Barbara. p: Moving North, 20:8; p: Reassurances, 20:24.  
Laue, John. p: Til Death Do Us Part, 43:21; p: To My Daughter, 44:5:7.  
Law, L. Bradley. p: adam's birth relived by proxy, 15:20.  
Law, Michelle. thx, 2-4:12; ps: Randy; How Long?; Time and Distance; I just severed the last tie with the past, 5:12.  
Lawlor, William. rbb: *Let's Go Down to the Beach*, 48:20.  
Laws, Kyle. ps: Brown Skin; Edge; Midnight Dreams; Roadhouse Rails, 3:12; ps: Lottery; Path to Red Skies, 5:5; p: Under a Belly of Clouds, 36:15; ph/bio, ps: Debris; Cemetery on the Banks of the Purgatoire, 42:26; rbb (co-auth Tony Moffett): *Tango*, 52:44; ph/bio, ps: Dressed Up For Paradise: I Belong To My Owner; Frida Kahlo; A Few Small Nips, 58:8.  
Lawson, Charles Owen. p: A 6th Grader's Interpretation of 'Ars Poetica', 53:39; p: Reply to Joyce Kilmer, 54:23.  
Lawson, D.S. p: Words for John Seaberg, 50:21; p: A Warning, 50:31.  
Layden, Robert E. ph/bio, f: A Healing Hand, 57:10.  
Le Thi Tham Van. p: Viet Nam on my return, 51:38.  
Leake, Brent T. ph/bio, ps: Freedom's Poem: Death of a Blackman in a Holding Cell; Take a Whiff It's Home, 36:24; p: There Are a Few Who Call It Rape, 51:47; p: Another Evening At The Wooden Dog, 52:21; p: Our Grandfathers, 56:38; ps: Up Against Shotgun: Letting It All Pass By Me One More Time, 57:35.  
Lechlitter, Gary. ph/bio, ps: Beyond Dysmorphia; Waking Up In A Cold Sweat, 57:29.  
Lecomte, Serge. ph/bio, ps: Tiananmen Square: When She Was A Child; Oted, 24:8.  
Ledbetter, J.T. p: Winter Farm, 25:18.  
Lee, Bill. rbb: *Different Slopes: A Bisexual Man's Novel*, 51:45.  
Lee, Dennis. p: Following Words, 10:3; p: The Reaping, 13:8; p: Dusk, 14:22.  
Lee, Geezus. f: The Butterfly Temple, 53:42; ph/bio, ps: At A Garage Sale I Asked If I Could Use His Restroom; A Fact About Genocide: The Corporated Family, 54:20; p: When I was tattooed Jesus, 56:28; p: Cervantes, the Ninth Step, 58:31.  
LeGuyader, Jacqueline D. p: You Are To Me, 10:4.  
Lehman, David. rbb: *The Big Question*, 48:19.  
Lem, Carol. ph/bio, ps: Ode to the Bed; The Watch, 53:29.  
Lemperly, Robert. f: Be the Monkey, 54:32.  
Lemuz, Jack. thx, 29:24, 30:27.  
Lenihan, Dan. p: Swan Lake: Ruth and Ellis, 20:10; p: Burgers: Ruth and Ellis, 21:17; p: Airplane Rides, 28:19.  
Lennon, Frank. p: Mrs. Charles Sanders Pierce, 28:19; p: Those Brilliant Ideas, 29:33.  
Lent, Jack. ph/bio, ps: Six Stop Signs & a Traffic Light: On the Removal of a Foley Catheter; He Asks My Favorite Question, 48:12.  
Lerner, Ben. p: Auschwitz-Birkenau and Ms. Kreutzer's Gym Class, 51:19.  
Lerner, Linda. p: On hearing three lady poets teething on Poetry Society of America Radcliff Bunting Prizes, 48:34; r: *The Last of the Moccasins* by Charles Plymell, 49:40; ints Robert Peters: An Interview with Robert Peters, 51:16; rs: *Tracking The Serpent* by Janine Pommy Vega; *Catfish* by Catfish McDaris, 54:40; rbb: *Organic Consciousness: New & Selected Poems*, 54:44; r: *40th Century Man: Selected Verse: 1996-1966*, 56:46; r: *The Cutting Edge* by Julia Virograd, 57:45; rbb: *Anytime Blues*, 58:42;

r: *People Everyday and Other Poems*, 59:45.  
LESBIAN. See Gay & Lesbian.  
Leto, Denise Nico. ps: Tonight the Moon; My Lover's Mouth, 33:41; ph/bio, ps: Clay Would Become More Beautiful There; Sometimes Her Tongue Appeared, 50:7.  
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR. re: *Guidelines Newsletter* r, Susan Neline Salaki, Barry Hoffman, Daniel Quinn, Betty Jurus, 19:2; re: female exploitation, Linda Zeiser, 20:2; re: r of *Watering Hole* by Harry Calhoun and other Norman German rs in CR 19, Harry Calhoun, 20:2; re: Norman German's r of Gerald Locklin's books in CR 19, Eric Grow; re: German's r of *Boogie Alley* by Tony Moffett in CR 20, Charlie Mehrhoff; re: Linda Zeiser's lte in CR 20, Joan Jobe Smith; re: angry letters, Douglas Goodwin; re: Harry Calhoun's lte in CR 20, Larry O. Dean; re: CR 20 and sexually explicit material, Leonard Cirino; re: CR 20, Kevin Redlake, 21:2; re: T. Hibbard's r of *What's This Cat's Story* by Seymour Krim, Edward Field, 34:2; re: CR 33, Will Inman; re: CR 33 and Will Inman, Virginia Love Long; re: CR 33 and CR in general, Laurel Speer; re: CR 33 and CR in general, Jim Kangas; re: CR 33, Linda Joan Zeiser, 34:2; re: Charles Plymell and CR 49, A.D. Winans, Greg Hewitt, John Bennet, 51:6; re: John Jacob's r of *German Poetry of War and Peace* in CR 49, 51:6; re: Mark Weber's int of Kell Robertson in CR 48, Kell Robertson, 51:6; re: CR 50, 2nd gay/lesbian issue, Laurel Speer, Carl Miller Daniels, 51:6; re: CR 50, Antler and pedophilia, Paul Agostino, Michael Lowenthal, 51:6; re: CR 48 and Robert Milner's p, A Dinner Date With Anna Freud, 51:6; re: "Fireflies" by Carol Muske and mediocrity, Robert Peters, 54:6; re: Jack Micheline, normal, 54:6; re: CR and mediocrity, Micki Myers, 54:6; re: CR and distribution, Nan Byrne, 54:6; re: CR and "men's dicks," Linda Zeiser, 54:6; re: paidophilia and ephophobia (misspelled "ephephilia"), Antler, 54:6; re: censorship, John Bennett (WA), 55:6; re: Guy Aitchison's comments about Lorri Jackson in CR 54, Phyllis Jackson, 55:6; re: CR 54, Diane Wakoski, 55:6; re: negative r of 3 A.D. Winans books in CR 54, Roger Taus., 55:6; re: James Broughton int in CR 56, Robert Peters, 57:5; re: poetry profession, Bukowski, 59:27.  
Levant, Jonathan. p: Lazy Lady Susan, 10:4.  
Levi, Steven C. r: *Among A Godly Few* by Peter Magliocco, 5:12; r: *Mountain Lyrics* by Ruben Gaines, 29:30.  
Levin, John. p: 3 days after my death, 7:10.  
Levine, Anita. ps: Perfection; Sonnet on Austerity; January; propriety; Hand Me Downs; The Joys of Scouting, 2:3; ph/bio, ps: (Ignominious) end; Skyward; Hot Movie Nights; He Loves Me When I Smile; Can You Tell The Poet From the Poem?; Fern Play; Cat-Love; Water Witch; Michael My Obsession II, 6:7.  
Levine, Arlene Gay. p: Self-Conscious, 46:7:45.  
Levine, Barbara E. f: You're Pulling My Legs, 27:33.  
Levine, Philip. rbb: *What Work Is*, 29:27; rbb: *New and Selected Poems: What Work Is: Man at Work: Philip Levine's Poetry*, 37:8:28.  
Levinson, James Heller. p: Red Dress, 30:27; ph/bio, ps: untitled: BAD BOY ro; untitled: BAD BOY un; untitled: when whole town talk, 37:8:31; p: I Want A Woman Who Comes When I Put My Dick In Her, 53:19.  
Levy, Marc. bio, ps: Tuol Sleng Prison: The Dust of Ratanakiri, 57:21.  
Lewis, J. Patrick. p: Rust, 31:26.  
Lewis, O.S. (aka O. Sinclair Lewis). r: *Litany* by Scott Sonders, 14:3, 27:36.  
Lewyn, Gloria. p: Another Whopper, 56:39; p: Running for the Turnip Truck, 58:15.  
Lezon, Dale. play: Laundry Day, 20:17; play: Boils, 29:15.  
Li Min Hua. See Crew, Lhouie.  
Lieber, M.L. rbb: *Stripping the Adult Century Bare*, 52:45; rh anth: *Brooding the Heartlands: Poets of the Midwest*, 59:46.  
Lifshin, Lyn. ph, 8:1; ph, ps: Wanting and Haunting Blues; Ten Days in Bed; Madonna of the Dreams; Madonna Late with Dogs in Her Moaning, Letters She Shouldn't Send; Soot Madonna; Madonna Who'd Choose Her House Over Any Lover; Soot Madonna; Cough Madonna; Drained Madonna; How We Got Through the New Jersey Blizzard: When Middlebury High Burned Down; Chameleon Madonna; Madonna Who's a Hostage in Her Own House; Madonna With a Freezer Full of Men; Ballet Class Two Weeks Before the Election 1984; Madonna of the Distances; Spoiler Madonna; Otter Creek Madonna; The Hotel Lifshin; Potatoes; Black Ants; Hide Out Madonna; Chameleon Madonna; Almost October, 8:10; ps: That Other September; Madonna Volcano; Prairie Madonna; Early August 19; Answering Machine Madonna, 9:10; ps: Marijuana Ma-

donna; Mafia Madonna; Something In Me. Refugees In India; Diamond Panes Feel Icy by 5; Your Name On My Car; The Mad Girl Thinks Of Other Decembers; Sunday Letter West; Ballet Class; January Thaw; Frozen Lock Madonna; Christmas 1985; Sleet Madonna; Thursday February; It Must Have Been; The Hotel Lifshin, 10:9; rbb: *Kiss the Skin Off*, 10:9; ph/bio, ps: Rita On The Talk Show; My Head Aches And I Didn't Open the Mail; Seeing You at the Reading After 12 Years Cherokee Braid, Bones; On the First Night In April Heat Stays in the House; Sufi Wedding March Wind Lashing the Bark from Fresh Cherry Drying; Violet Jelly; May 14; Quartermoon; May Early; 6 AM Record Warm March; In the House of Ruined Shutters; Oh Yes; Friday Morning; Artist Colony Soup; Postcard to G; Thursday May; 17 Years Ago Martin Luther King Died, 11:11; ph/bio, ps: These Hot August Nights; Turkish Men Under the Wild Blood Wet Poppies; Trying to Find Something in the Abandoned Poems; After Not Writing For Too Long; Afterward; Rhumba For the Road; Dream of One Long Stemmend Rose; Heliotrope Madonna; Indian Summer Madonna (Charms and disarms); That July; Indian Summer Madonna (just as you're); Good Times Bar Ballston Lake; Early; Indian Summer Madonna (taunts and); Rain, Indian Lake Island, 12:12; p: Letter, 13:7; ph, ps: Dig; With You; Waiting Behind the Glass Doors in my Grandmother's Hallway; The Poems Cooling Like a Lover; Something Inside the Eye; The Blue Locked Inside; Another Dream of Hills, Italian Men Of Not Taking the Shovelled Path; With Him I Feel Like Someone Dressed in Clothes They Know They're Returning; Your Name Scraped in Snow on the Windshield of my Car; Blue Crystals Dripping; Typing Guilt for Quilt and Warn for Warm, 14:23; ph, ps: She said the story is in fragments; On Her Last Night In Her House; The Palm Reader in Macy's; Metal Blossoms in my Sister; Indiraji (I used to love to); Now On Sunday; Letter; Blood clouds.; After the Fight That Kills Whatever There May or Could or Should Have Been Between Me and My Sister; Indiraji (happy times in my); Sculpture in His House, 15:17; rbb: *Raw Opals: Many Madonnas*, 16:4; ph, ps: the same doctor who when I asked what was wrong and happening said; after the accident; after the first day in seven we haven't talked; on the night of the ironweed performance; plums and apricots; emptied out madonna; Vera, she, 17:4; ph/bio, ps: Dr. Sampson She Said; My Mother, Calling four Times On A Day, October You Can Taste Winter, For The First Time, Coming; Reading Tour; Kidnapped Woman Raped and Sodomized Five Hours, 19:22; contrib ed, 21:23:2; p: He Shoves Everyone Away, 22:26; ph, 24:1; ph/bio, ps: Whips At The Ritz (he said it was leather my skirt); Whips At The Ritz (he said it seared); Whips At The Ritz (he said it was like feeling a), 24:2; ph, rh film, *Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass*, 24:24; rh anth, *Unsealed Lips: Confidences From Contemporary Women Writers*, 24:31; intd by Janice Eidus: The Chiron Review Interview: Janice Eidus ints Lyn Lifshin, 27:17; ints Janice Eidus: The Chiron Review interview: Lyn Lifshin ints Janice Eidus, 27:19; ps: Elizabeth Taylor and I Are Dying; Wondering About Secrets My Mother Will Be Buried With; Madonna Who Leaves a Blue: The Bowls from Bavaria, 27:19; ph (w/Eidus), 27:20; rbb: *The Doctor Poems*, 27:35; ph/bio, ps: Let Me Make French Toast For You; Burn Patients Given Life Or Death Choice: 21 Out Of 24 Injured Victims Chose to Die Rather Than Undergo Treatment; Holyhocks Near The Pueblo; Even That October: The Mad Girl Wishes She'd Seen He Was, 31:10; p: When I First Saw Myself In A Mirror, 31:14; rbb: *Between My Lips*, 31:22; p: Charlie, 32:15; rbb (co-auth Gina Bergamino): *White Horse Cafe*, 32:22; rbb: *Marilyn Monroe*, 42:22; *Jesus Christ Live (and in the Flesh)*, 52:43; ph, intd by Ober: Talking to Lyn Lifshin, 54:16; ph, 54:17; p: Edison He Says Was The Columbus Of The Night, 54:18; ps: The Librarian; Sometimes It's Like Talking To Someone In A Casket, Whips At The Ritz (he said she was), 54:19; rbb: *Cold Comfort: Selected Poems, 1970-1996*, 54:41; ph/bio, ps: Oh Yes He Said: Later If We Both Were To Draw It: After What Happened: The Flesh Roses; For A Special Issue On Nothingness; Eclipse, 59:14.  
Ligerman, Robert. p: Heartbeats, 14:30.  
Ligi, Gary. p: Have a Nice Day, 7:5; p: A Big Mistake, 7:9; p: Primitive Myth, 10:3; p: I Must Go Fishing, 11:9.  
Lind, Laurinda. p: Network, 44:5:3.  
Linton, Deborah. ps: 'Lovers at the Eiffel Tower' by Chagall: Infidelity (For Juliette), 5:11.  
Lipsitz, David. ps: Mole; kicked paintings, 5:5.  
Little, Geraldine. rbb: *A Well-Tuned Harp*, 20:4.  
Llitas, Daniel S. rbb: *In the Heart of Things*, 32:23; nov ex: *Hill 452*, 44:5:19.  
lloyd, d.h. f: Elmer L. McCurdy, 4:11; p: More Than One Way to Lick a Problem, 20:9; ph/bio, ps: Bixby Park; Fan Mail; Don't

Drink and Drive'; The Christmas Spirit, 25:6; p: In-Laws, 29:13; p: Crystals, 31:29; p: Ticket, 37:8:29; ph (w/Fred Voss, Mark Weber, Ray Zepeda, Gerald Locklin), 46:7:3.  
Locklin, Gerald. p: a utilitarian function, 11:13; Contrib. Ed (Poetry) 17:58:2; rs: *Beautiful & Other Long Poems: The Roominghouse Madrigals: Early Selected Poems, 1946-1966* by Charles Bukowski, 17:15; rbb: *Children of a Lesser Demagogue: A Constituency of Dunces: Return to Ronnie Scott's*, 19:14; p: it's what makes our tuition such a bargain, 20:7; p: and neither do i, 20:8; ints Charles Webb: For the Fun of It: An Interview with Charles Webb, 20:14; intd by Gerald Haslam: Reflections of a Literary Maverick: An Interview with Gerald Locklin, 22:8; ph/bio, ps: morris meltzer: *bridgetown*, 1923; berlin: the more things change; two from ellsworth kelly, 24:11; r: *Photographs of the Jungle* by Jon Forrest Glade, 26:17; rbb: *The Rochester Trip: The Conference*, 28:34; ints Martin Bax: An Interview with Martin Bax, 29:21; ph/bio, ps: in the free blue - wassily kandinsky: the color is not purple; you say you've always been above such thinking, 31:6; rbb: *A Yank at Bangor: Poems from the Welsh Teaching Experience: Outtakes*, 34:19; *The Firebird Poems*, 35:13; ph, 39:1; ps: picasso: *seated woman*, april 27, 1938; picasso: *woman reclining on a couch*, 1939; lucian freud: *naked man, backview*, 1991-92; picasso: *the studio*, 1934; henri fantin-latour: *still life with panes*, 1974 (A reprise.); but it didn't stop me or the dog, 39:2; ps: maybe if i'd worn it on my wrist?; psychopathology of the after-dinner nap; the new male; will my *chirons* come home to roost?; oh well, humans eat tripe, 39:3; 2 phs. (1 w/Donna Hilbert), intd by Mark Weber: Locklin: *The Chiron Interview*, 39:4; rbb: *Woman Trouble: The Durango Poems* (co-auth Rafael Zepeda): 40:25; rbb: *Big Man on Canvas: the old mongoose & other poems*, 42:21; ph (w/Fred Voss, Mark Weber, Ray Zepeda, d.h. lloyd), 46:7:3; f: Not To Worry, 46:7:18; rbb: *The New Male*, 49:40; rbb: *Two Jazz Sequences*, 51:41; rbb: *The New Male: The Macao/Hong Kong Trip: The Pittsburgh Poems*, 51:42; ph/bio, ps: none too soon: i wore khakis too; retribution, here and there; whose double standard is it anyhow?; on the road to the recycling bin; maybe we need an affect-confusion hotline to tell us what we're really feeling, 52:14; ph/bio, f: Candy Bars, 53:30; p: ded: for an old teacher, an old friend, by Richard Vargas, 55:42; rbb: *The Active Ingredient & Other Poems*, 57:46; ph (w/Donna Hilbert)/bio, ps: fishing poles; betrayed by bill; almost too simple for words; against interpretation: "what fools these mortals be," 58:9.  
Logan, Jane E. p: The Offering, 10:4.  
Logue, Mary. rbb: *Discriminating Evidence*, 28:31.  
Lohr, Kathleen. p: Spinster's Lament, 48:41; p: the negative and the positive, 57:34.  
London, Jonathan. f: Family, 24:16.  
LONG BEACH PERSONALS, r gol by Catherine Lynn, 34:14, 35:12.  
Long, Lisa. bio, ps: Life Begins Here; Sobriety: Breaking the Silence; Thanksgiving, 33:24.  
Long, Philomene. ph (w/Charles Bukowski, John Thomas, 1986), rbb: *Bukowski in the Bathub: Recollections of Charles Bukowski with John Thomas*, 56:43.  
Long, Tracy. p: Despair, 10:7.  
Long, Virginia Love (aka Virginia Love Long-Glassok: Mariposa). ph/bio, ps: #1 Early Graves (for dearest Paloma); Who Knows, 12:5; rbb: *Upstream*, 12:5; lte: Gris and Momcat, 12:13; rbb (co-auth Rochelle Lynn Holt): *Shared Journey*, 13:11; ps: Love Song for a Siamese; Requiem for a Fallen Persian, 14:16; ps: For Tiffany PB (Pretty Baby); Baby Jaguar Poems (for Griselda), 14:17; rs: *Light From Dark Tombs: A Traveler's Map to Mysteries of the Ancient Maya* by Mary Belle Campbell, 32:25; lte, 34:2; ph/bio, ps: For Shawn; Aunt Annie And Me, 35:9; rbb: *All Roads Lead to Bushy Fork*, 35:15; ph/bio, ps: untitled: I have also loved; Ain't Living Long Like This; Where Does This Gladness Come From?, 37:8:4; p: Assurances, 46:7:32; rbb (co-auth Rochelle Lynn Holt): *Infamous In Our Prime*, 52:47.  
Longley, Judy. rbb: *Rowing Past Eden*, 37:8:41.  
Lorca, Federico Garcia. ph/bio, ps: romance of the moon: a reminder; song of the tiny death; trans by Joel Zeltzer, 24:5; ph/bio, ps: death; gypsy nun; trans by Joel Zeltzer, 31:4; ph/bio, ps: window nocturnes; tiny madrigal; student song; a waltz in the branches; trans by Joel Zeltzer, 49:11.  
Louis, Adrian C. ph/bio, ps: Palm Sunday in Pine Ridge; Coyote Night; Verdell Reports on His Trip, 28:4; rbb: *Fire Water World*, ph, 31:1; bio, ps: Dust World; A Visit To My Mother's Grave, 31:2; f: The Blood Thirst Of Tyler Ten Bears, 31:3; bio, p: Notes from Indian Country, 37:8:20; ps: Ancient Acid Flashing Back; Free China Girl; At the House of Ghosts, 37:8:21.  
Lourie, Dick. rbb: *Ghost Radio*, 58:43.



- Lovelace, David. p: Cavity. 59:41.
- Low, Denise. p: War Crimes. 43:32; p: Postmodernism in Kansas. 44/5:7.
- Lowe, Frederick. p: Meeting Frankie. 50:21.
- Lowe, Marinda. art: Sleeping Lion; Dog; Nugent. 2:4; ps: The Carrier's Arms; Without Him; The Snobs Poem. An Understatement! 2:7.
- Lowe, Zachary. p: Disconnection. 25:18; thx. 29:24; 30:27; asst. ed. 31-32:2; p: The Suicide Speaks. 31:17; col: News. Etc. 32:18; bio. p: The Shed. 33:28.
- Lowenthal, Michael. e: Are You a Pedophile? 50:18; lte. 51:6.
- Lowery, Joanne. p: Basso profundo. 41:14; p: Diviners. 59:40.
- Lowman, Anthony W. p: Daydreams of a Bloody Grunt. 30:24; p: Right Now (for Michelle). 37/8:25; p: When in Doubt, or Washington State. 39:25.
- Lowry, John. p: Here's Looking at You. 49:44.
- Loydell, Rupert M. bio. ps: Separations; No Joke; Zigzag. 39:27; p: Finally. 48:35.
- Lucero, Anthony. p: the living party. 31:17; p: after the storm. 32:29.
- Lummis, Suzanne. ints Charles Harper Webb: Interview with Charles Harper Webb. 52:4.
- Lupert, Rick. ph, intd by Mike Daily: Rick Lupert: It's The Chiron Interview. 59:10; ps: Expensive Shampoo; I Am A Sinner; How to Kiss. 59:12.
- Lux, Thomas. rhb: Split Horizon. 42:23.
- Lynn, Catherine. ph/bio. ps: If You Botch It: The Music Lover; Divorce; Coup. 25:11; thx. 29:24; r: In the Time of the Plague by Thomas Rush. 32:21; p: Why? 32:32; col: Long Beach Personals. rs: Drunk City by Mark Weber; House Burning by Christien Ghoslon; In the Moon When the Deer Lose Their Horns by Susan Clements; Get Back to Where You Once Belonged by Nate Tate; I'm Not a White Man by Everet Eden. 34:14; r: Henry Miller and My Big Sur Days by Judson Crews. 34:18; ph. 35:1; bio. ps: Bald-Headed Girl; Survival; Denial; With Apologies to Carl; All the Way Home (Instructions to a 10-year-old); 35:3; col: Long Beach Personals. rs: The Honeymoon of King Kong & Emily Dickinson by Fred Voss, Joan Jobe Smith; Todd Moore Packs It In by Todd Moore; Wednesday. There is More by Gina Bergamino. 35:12; f: Brandy's Predicament. 37/8:24; r: Rodeo and the Mimosa Tree by Jennifer Olds. 37/8:41; rhb: The Snake Pit. 39:14.
- Lynskey, Edward. rhb: Teeth of the Hydra. 14:12; ps: Hanging the Horse Thief Whose Second Life Is a Spider; Cleburne's Rude Coming. 39:30; ph/bio. ps: Town Remembers Tyler's Suicide Fifty Years Later; Ice Fishing on Lake Huron. Christmas Night; The Fiddler Rests at Last; 41:29; p: Jeff. 46/7:44; p: Phantom of the Grand Ole Opry. 49:47.
- Lyons, Larry D. p: Letter To Freud. 46/7:45; p: Uncle Loy. 48:28; lte. 51:6; p: I Might As Well Have. 53:39; p: Burnout. 57:11.
- M -
- MacGuire, Jamie. p: Max. 14:22.
- Mackey, Mary. ints Janice Eidus: Janice Eidus: The Chiron Interview. 57:2.
- MacKinnon, Jorie. p: untitled: I. My new moon friend. 14:24.
- MacLeod, Normajean. r: The Tree of Life by Marie A. Asner. Rochelle Lynn Holt. 51:45.
- Madhubuti, Haki R. rhb: Black Men: Obsolete, Single, Dangerous? 28:31.
- Madison, Tamara. p: I've Had Tits. 53:39; p: Big Dick. 54:38.
- Magarrell, Elaine. rhb: Blameless Lives. 31:21.
- Maginnes, Al. p: The Terrible Weight of Beauty. 43:35.
- Magliocco, Peter. rhb: Among A Godly Few. 5:12; p: Loss of Faith. 13:8.
- Magorian, James. p: My Father's Clock. 32:27; p: Why the Horse Sleeps Standing Up. 56:13.
- Magrath, Samantha. p: why men hate condoms. 52:21; ph/bio. ps: fucking on the american flag; the set up; cervix song; memory for a past love. 54:10; p: pimping the moon. 56:28; p: nurture. 58:23.
- Maha. p: untitled: the little Tibetan. 25:17.
- Mahoney, Brian. p: Drop And Wonder Why. 22:25.
- Mahony, Phillip. p: Multiple Sclerosis. 7:12.
- Malkus, Steven W. p: The Great Body. 14:27.
- Malley, Kathleen. p: John is Dying. 25:15.
- Malone, Marvin. obit. ded. 49:2; 3 phs. intd by Mark Weber: An Interview with Marvin Malone. 52:8.
- Mankiewicz, Angela Consolo. p: Song of Rabelais. 36:31; p: Radiation Order: 5 days a week - 6 weeks. 40:32; p: Working. 49:29.
- Mann, William J. f: Getting Past The Rainbow. 33:32.
- Manning, Lisa. rhb: the bird in your eye. 31:22.
- Manning, Nichola. rhb: SAVE SAVE SAVE SAVE. 12:11.
- Mapou, Jan. p: Zombie (trans fm Haitian Creole by Jack Hirschman. Boudiba). 52:23.
- Marcus, Adrienne. ps: Water; For You. 58:33.
- Margrave, Clint. p: the litter of the masses. 53:15; ph/bio. ps: the going rate; sirens; wishful thinking. 57:16.
- Mari, P. p: Dust: Michael's Harmonica. 7:9; p: The Wayfarer. 8:12.
- Marie, G. See Bergamino, Gina.
- Marrell, Heir (aka Billy Tyner, Jr.). p: Egad! 14:21.
- Martin, Andrea E. p: Maybe I'll Untangle Me. 59:23.
- Martin, D. Roger (Don Roger Martin). p: America. 8:12; rs: The Adastra Reader. Gary Metras, Ed.; Fiddle Wrapped in a Gunysack by Edward Harkness; The Scandal of Her Bath by Laurel Speer; Clock Radio #6-7; Impetus #9; Black Bear Review #5; Black Mountain Review #1; Daring Poetry Quarterly Vol. 2. #2; The Magazine of Speculative Poetry #4; Sub Rosa #14-15; An Unresolved Argument with Shadows by Alan Catlin. 13:12-13; p: No Stereotype. 14:30; rs: Alternative Fiction & Poetry #4; The Bloomsbury Review Vol. 7. #4; The Signal. Vol. 1. #1. 15:9; Abenaki Ghosts by Cathy Czaplá. 15:11; phs of Merritt Clifton. ints Merritt Clifton: An Interview with Merritt Clifton. 15:22.
- Martin, George. thx. 29:24.
- Martin, Herbert Woodward. p: No. 1: Do Not Ask. 7:11; p: No. 12: We Make Proposals. 10:6; p: Momentary Observations. 43:28; p: Passing Into Light. 44/5:21; p: The Dark Yellow House. 46/7:37.
- Martin, John. f: 911. 40:18.
- Martin, Paul. p: Living in the Combat Zone. 39:30; p: The Blue Silk Sportcoat. 41:11.
- Martin, Richard. p: Something To Do With Quiet. 27:39; p: Something To Do With Quiet (unrev version pub inadvertently). 28:48; p: The Student. 30:23; p: The Good Old Days. 31:14.
- Maruyama, David. p: Poem to you. 43:32.
- Marvin, Jay. p: The First Time. 39:31; ph. intd by Tim W. Brown: An Interview with Jay Marvin. 57:22; f: Buddy. 57:23.
- Mason, Janet. p: Newborn rhythms. 33:45; rhb: When I Was Straight. 48:18.
- Mason, Lucinda. p: 'Come here bitch (giggle) I got a doghouse for you.' 20:20.
- Mason, Steve. ph. 26:1; ps: Uncle Ho; After the Reading of the Names. 26:4; bio. ps: This Time, A Warrior for Peace. 26:5; rhb: Johnny's Song: Poetry of a Vietnam Veteran. 26:14.
- Matheson, Candace. p: 5 Fingers of Love. 7:10.
- Matthews, Patricia. f: Fable. 28:23.
- Matthews, William. The Blues, plagiarized by Ken Hancock. 32:5. is The Penalty For Bigamy Is Two Wives. by William Matthews. 33:2.
- Mattocks, Raylene. thx. 29:24.
- Mayer, Bernadette. rhb: Sonnets. 28:32.
- Maynard, Joe. r: Half-Angel. Half-Lunch by Sharon Mesmer. 56:46; r: Willieworld by Maggie Dubris. 58:42.
- Mechem, James. ff: Fast Track. 43:24; ff: The Lady or the Tiger. 44/5:21.
- Medeiros, John T. ps: Dust; Serendipity. 33:27.
- Mehrhoff, Charlie. ph. ps: He Has Risen; Blood from the Forest; Death; Reach; ghost; When We Were Children. 16:9; lte. 21:2; p: (christmas tree). 21:18; ps: passing through; Deanna Maria. 36:13; rhb: complete w/tongue. 52:46.
- Memmott, David. ps: Tinman; To Be Nailed On the Door of the Vacant Astor Hotel; Nightmare of Academic Atrophy; At the Seaside Turnaround; Salting Slugs; Hanged Man. 2:5.
- Mendel, Roberta. ps: Living and Death; Pondering the Imponderable; Madame Continuity; Fork in the Road. 2:3; p: Irish Spring. 4:8.
- Mendini, Douglas A. f: Big Trouble. 21:20.
- Menebroker, Ann. ph. ps: McKinley Park; The Price of Bells and Bombs; Fruits and Bread; Love; For My Friends Who Discovered a Weed Oasis; This. 16:7; contrib ed. 21-23:2; quote. 41:17.
- Menne, M. Susan. f: The Benefit Plan. 3:11.
- Mercer, Marcia. f: The Dark Side of the Moon. 48:10.
- Merrill, Christopher. rhb: Workbook. 18:14; rhb: FEVERS & TIDES. 24:36.
- Merwin, W.S. see by T. Hibbard: On W.S. Merwin. 17:11.
- Merz, Judy Lee. p: Shannon. 6:11.
- Mesmer, Sharon. rhb: Half-Angel. Half-Lunch. 56:46.
- Messick, Kurt. p: untitled: silent tones. 11:9; p: untitled: (G). 14:22.
- Messig, M. art: Fuck Death. 53:9.
- Meyer, William Jr. p: Texas Stars. 10:3; p: Emily Dickinson's Fly. 14:21.
- Meyers, Matt. p: I Killed a Mouse Today. 14:30.
- Michaels, Claire. p: Revolution & Trans-
- figuration II. 12:6.
- Michaud, Michael Gregg. ps: June 23. 1991; June 25. 1974; Sept. 4. 1974; May 17. 1990. 33:28; ph/bio. ps: Christopher Says His Mother Is Dating a Transsexual; The Night Joe Dallesandro Puked On Me. 50:37; trans (w/Donny Smith): sonnet (from My Master). by Salvador Novo. 53:33; bio. ps: Teen Idol: Tim's Wife Becomes A Lesbian And A Yoga Instructor. 59:28.
- Micheline, Jack (1930-1998). ph/bio. ps: My City; Poem; It Is Not Here On Earth What I Am Seeking. 30:6; ph (w/Charlie Mingus). 53:1; obit. ps: untitled: Beauty is everywhere Baudelaire; Poem For Tony. The Street of Lost Fools; Night City. 53:2; ph (w/A.D. Winans). intd by A.D. Winans: Jack Micheline: The Chiron Interview. 53:3; ph. p: Poem. 53:4; see by A.D. Winans: In Memoriam: Jack Micheline: Poet of the People; p: Tribute to Life; signature. 53:5; rhb: Sixty-Seven Poems for Downtrodden Saints. 53:45; so lte. 54:6.
- Michelsen, Amy R. p: The Dark Place Inside My Package. 49:37; p: I'm a Bartender In A Strip Club. 51:46.
- Mikoley, Jim. p: Phone Call To My Sister. 43:29; p: Road and Track and Hospital. 46/7:17; p: Conversion. 46/7:37; p: Same Difference. 49:23.
- Miller, Heather Ross. rhb: Hard Evidence. 31:19.
- Miller, Marlene. p: The Brain Sandwich. 22:27.
- Miller, Richard. r: Love-In-Idleness: The Poetry of Robert Zingarello by John Bradley. 24:29; rs: Mississippi River Poems by Arthur Brown; The Garden of Eden by Ernest Hemingway. 27:37; p: Remembering Rimbaud. 28:41.
- Miller, Tom. bio. ps: believe in something; net christ. 54:27.
- Miller, William (Jacksonville, AL). p: The Model. 7:12.
- Miller, William (Johnson City, NY). p: A Circuit Preacher Recalls. 22:22.
- Miller-Duggan, Devon. p: Steichen's Pepper. 46/7:35; p: The Real Hurricane. 48:46.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. rhb: The Witness of Poetry. 18:12.
- Miltner, Robert. e: Albert Goldbarth: Impure Form, 'Delft' and Popular Culture. 40:10; p: A Dinner Date with Anna Freud. 48:40.
- Milton, Marianne. p: Cobblestoned. 46/7:32.
- Milton, Michael. p: The Wallop. 43:31.
- Miner, Kirk Anthony. p: Jack. 59:5.
- Minet, Lawrence. p: Hospital. 8:12.
- Mingus, Charlie. ph (w/Jack Micheline). 53:1.
- Miriam-Goldberg, Caryn. p: Hurricane Sestina. 37/8:27.
- Mishler, Linda. thx. 8:2.
- Mitchell, Hayley R. ph/bio. ps: My father was electrocuted; Broken; Garden Party. 37/8:10.
- Mitchell, Rick. p: Fathers, Sons, and Remembrance. 32:27; p: Yesterday's Barn. 34:37.
- Mitsui, James. rhb: From A Three-Cornered World. 52:44.
- Mocarski, Tim. p: Comiskey Memory. 27:44; p: First Bike Ride. 29:38.
- Moe, Olga. f: Boat Ride. 41:10.
- Moffeit, Tony. ps: black cat bone; blues outlaw; lightning train; margarita. 2:2; ps: santa fe; juarez; voodoo snake woman blues; duende. 3:3; ps: brass bed; la nortanita; stormcloud headlights; dealing another hand. 5:2; ph. 9:1; rhb: Black Cat Bone. 9:4; ph/bio. ps: santa fe; it's nothing to me; cobra club; deuces wild; giving birth to thunder; ain't it a shame; dancers in the dark rain. 9:8; rhb: pueblo blues. 10:2; p: to be born again. 10:3; e: I Have Danced On My Father's Snow. 16:12; ph. ps: the sun was shining; magpie singer; ghost dancer (ghost dancer / drifting through); demon sway; learning to let go; midnight and backstreets; dancing in the void. 16:15; ph/bio. ps: rattlesnake woman; motionless motion; ghost dancer (i am the lonesome drifter); the only time is now the only place is here; slouched in the shadows of the honky tonk. 19:21; rhb: Boogie Alley. 20:5; ph/bio. ps: gypsy night; knives of lightning; billy the kid (garrett said he mostly); the kid; billy the kid (his gunhand his grin); the night singing in her nerves. 28:8; rhb: Ghost Moon Over Pueblo. 29:26; p: dreaming of crazy horse. 36:27; ph. 42:1; ph. p: luminous animal. 42:2; ps: poetry is dangerous, the poet is an outlaw; blue corn tortillas and mexican beer. 42:3; 3 phs. intd by Mark Weber: I Never Write On Black Ice. 42:4-6; see by Todd Moore: Tony Moffeit & The Luminous Dark. 44/5:16; ph (w/Kell Robertson. 48:3); rhb (co-auth Kyle Laws): Tango. 52:44; p: saeta. 54:38; p: st. louis cemetery no. 1. 55:42.
- Monagan, George C. ph/bio. ps: Hamburg Gravy; Uncle Jack; The Brothers. 49:13; p: Memorial Day. 56:41.
- Monaghan, Timothy. p: Purgatory. 48:47; p: Unleashing the Urge. 53:27.
- Money, Peter. ph/bio. ps: The Heart Of Bees; Sitting Here Thinking About the Nature of Chaos. 24:13.
- Monfredo, Louise. p: standing. 10:6; p: An Issue of Vanity Fair. 13:8.
- Monsour, Leslie. p: An Atmosphere of Heat. 29:38.
- Montague, Aubrey. ph/bio. p: The American Troops. 26:24.
- Moon, Janell. p: Braiding. 53:27.
- Moore, Edward. p: The Democrat. 39:31.
- Moore, Jacqueline. p: Gather the Five Petals. 16:8; p: Stars of Bethlehem. 16:16.
- Moore, Lenard D. haiku: red autumn sun. 7:8; haiku: under the full moon. 10:3; haiku: All evening long. 10:4; haiku: On dogwood blossoms. 14:29.
- Moore, Mack. p: Every Mother's Son. 26:20.
- Moore, Todd. ph/bio. ps: when leroy; after harley's; plumber liked; braden hated; lost her; stealing his father's; when i lived; mona used. 11:8; rhb: Cheap Thrills. 13:5; p: donna insisted. 15:15; see by Tony Moffeit: I Have Danced On My Father's Snow. 16:12; ph. ps: the bomb; that accident; the gunfight started; my great grand; ross had wrapped; when emma doyle; the day lonny; parker sd. 16:15; p: harry sd. 18:16; rhbs: Cheap & Nasty; Playing Poker W/22 Longs. 19:12; p: nights i'll. 20:23; p: untitled: german. 21:19; rs: Hunting the Snark by Robert Peters; The Music of What Happens by Helen Vendler. 27:28; ph/bio. ps: every; blowing up phil's; brenda dreams; took at; the girl coming; when his mother. 28:9; rhb (co-auth Gina Bergamino): American Cannibal. 32:22; p: he'd buried. 32:29; ph. 34:1; ps: besides the money; the whole idea; sometimes; i've never told; 6 year old; the first time. 34:3; 3 phs. intd by Ohere: Growing Up With Todd Moore. 34:4; rhbs: Dillinger; Dillinger Book II. 34:20; rhb: Todd Moore Packs It In. 35:12; p: miller & i were. 37/8:46; rhb: Shooting Out the Lights. 40:26; e: Sex, Work, and Ron Androla. 40:28; rhb: The Last Good Thing. 42:21; e: Tony Moffeit & The Luminous Dark. 44/5:16; e: Struck by Lightning: The Poetry of Kell Robertson. 48:4; ph. intd by Ohere: Cutting It With Todd Moore. 49:18; ps: all tecumseh; doc stood next; when i heard; watching wilma; i turned my back; we called him; something for; every time. 49:19; r: The New Male by Gerald Locklin. 40:40; rhb: Death Glory Sequins and Smoke. 51:43; rs: Tango by Kyle Laws, Tony Moffeit; O Shenandoah Be Not Telling Me This by Mark Hiroshima; Poems by Brian Daldorph; The Wisdom of Night Spiders by Lonnie Sherman. Mark Borczon. 54:45; r: Don Quixote in America by Sam Kashner. 54:46; p: the night after. 55:25; r: Ready As We'll Ever Be (music CD) by Mark Weber and the Bubbados. 55:47; r: The Old Man Who Swam Away And Left Only His Wet Feet by Gene Frumkin. 56:45; rhbs: Some Die Along the Way (co-auth Mark S. Borczon); Wolf Mask. 57:46; e: Oklahoma Litany. 59:22.
- Moran, Kevin. p: Tableau. 20:7; p: Wild Country. 22:25.
- Moran, Ronald. p: Mr. Harper's Cow. 27:43; p: Lucky. 29:32; p: Uncle Curly and Aunt Edna. 32:26; p: Double Imaging. 34:23; rhb: Sudden Fictions. 40:25; p: Harriet's Aunt Helena. 48:35; rhb: Getting the Body to Dance Again. 51:44; p: The Dow Jones Industrial Average. 56:37.
- Mordenski, Jan. ps: I Have News For You; at your son's death by his own hand. 9:15.
- Morgan, Charlene. thx. 4:12. 6:12. 9:4. 11:4. 12:11; proofreader. 13-15:2. 17-18:2.
- Morgan, Kevin Redlake. See Redlake, Kevin.
- Morizot, Carol Ann. p: Holiness. 7:9.
- Morro, Henry J. ph/bio. ps: Cousin; Nudist Camps & Queers. 1964; Growing Up Short. 34:31.
- Morris, Ann. p: Timethief. 10:6.
- Morris, Peter. p: The Eternal Flame. 20:11; ph/bio. ps: The God Of Joy; The Twin Cities; Twitchin' The Night Away; A Richer Man; Yen Up. Dollar Down. 24:9; ph/bio. ps: Omerta; Scrap Metal; Bulimia; The Texas School Book Depository. 27:9; p: Numerator. 27:9; ph/bio. ps: Stingers; I Was Gullible; The Fatherland. 34:24.
- Morrison, John. p: Kerouac Died. 42:32.
- Mortenson, Chris. p: O men, O mighty men. 41:25; p: No Apologies. 52:41.
- Moton, Bridget Balthrop. p: How Things Fit. 17:18.
- Morton, Colleen. r: Red Trousseau by Carol Muske. 41:22.
- Moseley, Stan. p: The City Of Men. 10:7; p: epiphany. 12:6.
- Moskovitz, Jack. rhb: Shoot the Wheels of Time. 15:10.
- Mosser, Jason. p: Celebrities of the Damned. 59:18.
- MOTHER OF ASHES PRESS. See Singer, Joe.
- Mounsey, Pauline. r: Surfing the Dark
- Sound, Sacred Chuff, Center, Waking by Will Inman. 56:44.
- Mowat, John. p: Beneath. 44/5:41; ph/bio. ps: Withersea; For Kenny and Kay. 48:43; p: The Cemetery above Bellegarde. 55:19.
- Muehleisen, Butch. Designed Chiron Review logo 3/89. Issues 18-
- Muhanji, Cherry. rhb (co-auth Kesho Scott, Egyirba High): Tight Spaces. 17:16.
- muir, r. f: Like A Split Lip It Will Heal. 18:6.
- Muldoon, Virginia. p: The Streets. 10:5.
- Mulligan, J.B. ps: the birch tree; comets of hearts glowing past. 4:2; ph/bio. ps: Frastus buys a round; the price; the sanitation department; various rites of life and death. 27:16; p: adrift. 58:38.
- Mulloy, Marcia. p: Three. 49:35; p: Eleven. 50:33; p: Four. 52:37.
- Munroe, Alice. rhb: Friend of My Youth. 28:33.
- Mura, David. rhb: Where The Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality and Identity. 40:41.
- Murphy, Rich. ps: Listening to the Punk: An Ascetic's History; Move Like a Spring. 3:5.
- Murphy, Sheila E. p: Logical Positivism. 10:3; p: Understanding Timothy Leary. 11:13; p: Why I Don't Drink Coffee. 13:8; p: A Small Miracle. 14:9; p: I Piss Her Off. 15:15; ps: Obituary Haibun: Wildflower; Sage. 16:8; p: Pause. 16:16; ph/bio. ps: Guernsey; Cycling; A System; The Lovely Muscles In Her Arms And Legs; Where I Am Going To Hide; Spectrum. 18:7; ph/bio. ps: I Disappear; Hyphen; Offspring; For Will. 27:15; p: Things To Read. 37/8:46; p: Prayer for the Father of My Friend. 48:15; r: Mudera Canyon Notebook by David Chorlton. 49:42.
- Murray, Virginia R. p: Monthly. 5:2; p: Fancy Has the Best of Me. 6:11.
- Muske, Carol. rhb: Red Trousseau. 41:22; so lte. 54:6.
- Mycue, Edward. p: A Speaking Gesture. 10:3.
- Myers, Bill. p: What It Takes. 44/5:7; p: Against the Grain. 52:33; r: Poem Revised 39 Times by Mark Weber. 59:45.
- Myers, Jane. p: My Lover Composes a Letter to Me in His Head. 53:41.
- Myers, Joan Rohr. ps: Winter Thoughts; The Cardinal; Secrets; Finale; Poem for Wil. 5:11.
- Myers, Micki. p: Poem for Jeffrey Dahmer, Convicted Necrophiliac & Cannibal, Murdered by Another Inmate. 11/28/94. 46/7:25; p: Indecent Exposure. 48:40; ph/bio. ps: Woman Camera. 51:21; p: When you have sex with your friend. 53:11; lte. 54:6.
- Mc -
- McAnulla, Charles. p: Rolling Quarters. 8:12; p: Morning. 10:10.
- mccain, gillian. rhb: Upside Down City. 31:20.
- McCallister, Andy. p: Poetry Hah. 31:12.
- McCann, Janet. p: The Dog Saint. 8:12; p: Explanation. 14:4; ph. ps: Magritte; Farmhouse Evenings; Every Morning; On the Roof; On Sunday Evening. 15:19.
- McCann, Richard. rhb: Ghost Letters. 44/5:36.
- McCarthy, Margaret. r: Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass. film by Mary Ann Lynch. 24:25.
- McClintic, Richard D. bio. ps: my eyes seek the stars; to a woman i met; Every morning the sun shines.; wonder if you can.; one step forward.; never say life's a dream; if i: what is love?.. 12:14.
- McCord, Terri. ph/bio. ps: Retribution; Passage; Retired Greyhound. 54:21.
- McCray, Jane. p: On the Beach. 21:18.
- McDade, Thomas Michael. p: Protection. 28:48; p: Brass Light. 46/7:23.
- McDaniel, Wilma Elizabeth. ph. 41:1; bio. ps: Beauty Contest of 1934; Sleepwalker; Sleeping Arrangements. 41:2; ps: Power; The Little Mean Gene; Substitutes; Black Roses. 41:3; ps: Today and Yesterday; Lament of a Tidy Housekeeper; Family Transportation. 1936; Poor Timing. 41:4; ps: Dustbowl Woman Ponders Manifest Destiny; Wanda Has Sunday Off; Advice of Atheist To An Arthritic; Uncle Garland; Abner Woodson - Critic. 44/5:13; ps: The Day Elray Read 'The Hollow Men'; Reservation By Poetry; Sunday Worship; Luck; Poets In Their Boats; Elwood Chronister. 46/7:13; ps: Homicide At Big Rocks Project; Winfield Lindsay, Chronic Worrier; Confeitor of Waste; In Clinic; Writing Poetry On Flyer At Avalon Cafe; Saturated with Travel Posters. 49:14; see by Julia Stein: Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel: Magical Storyteller. 49:15; ph/bio. ps: Mini Response To Loss Of Primal Forests; The Duchess of Big Muddy; Men and Roses; Walmart Watching; Sleepless Night; He Can Curb His Pride. 55:17; bio. ps: Getting the Vote April 8. 1992; Fooling With Watercolors; Dead Or Alive 1934; Jerry Brown at Democratic Barbecue. Jamestown, California. 6-10-89. 56:23; ps: Rose Bowl Parade; Three Women on A Day In 1960; Southwest Weather; Awake







-Pollock, Donald Raymond. ph. ps: Dynamite Hole, 1966; Pig; Relapse V: transmission (knockemstiff, oh); crackhouse lead; Bologna Eye, 53:8.

Poole, Francis. p: I Had a Dog Once, 48:13.

Poniewaz, Jeff. ph/bio. ps: Dahmer's Inferno; Lament for Bob's Cock; I'm Going To Let My Balls Hang Out, 33:16; ph (w/Antler), 43:6; ph/bio, ps: Jesus Was a Homo; The Senator of Obscenity, 50:15; a q. 1974-1975.







Subraman, Belinda. ph/bio, ps: Posterior Sunset; Winter Solstice; Barbara. in *Dreams of Red*; Meter Maid Love: We're Bound to Tangle; Fifty Cent Psychiatry; For Gertrude Stein; I Didn't Do It But ...; Hot Memories; Lady Punk Talks; Dracula; Bitch, 8:8; p: No Matter What They Think, 11:9; ph, ps: The Right Color; Peggy; Atmosphere; Praise Beyond Me: A Regular Guy; Be Careful What You Ask For; My Second Night in Germany; My Nature Lover; Going White, 16:5; p: Medieval Times, 29:37; rhb: *Gulf War: Many Perspectives*, 31:23; ph, intd by Oberc: Talking to Belinda Subraman, 36:14; ph (w/Judson Crews), 36:14; p: Clutching the Known, 37:18; p: Politics, 46:7:24; ph/bio, ps: Sunny, I'm looking ...; Notes for Ho's 56th Birthday; Not Quite Cured, 55:14.

Suchy, Jana. p: A Special Day, 10:15.

Sumberg, Chris. f: Descent, 31:16.

SURE THING. col by ave jeanne, 10:8, 12:2, 14:6, 17:5.

Surowiecki, John. p: Villa-Lobos, 58:39.

Sutherland, Colin. p: Southpaw, 31:13.

Sutherland, Kenneth (Ken, Zen). p: the rain makes me cry, 7:3; p: Three Moons, 7:4; ph, ps: one more machine revolution: Relativity; Women; trapped, like a booby: great shot, june 1976: uncle boogie: The Simple Object; Responsibility: sufi warrior: There's No Such Box to Check on This Form, 8:9.

Sutherland, Rick. p: Morning Dance, 13:7.

Sutton, Dorothy. p: When We Got Married, 23:7; p: And I Say Yes, 49:39.

Swan, Marc. p: Bottles, 36:31; p: Pigeon Fucking, 37:8:9; ps: Betty; Second Skin, 48:27; p: Tit Man, 55:39; p: If You Ask Me, 56:21; p: Bitter Root, 56:28; p: Guns & Dogs, 58:19.

Swanlund, Matthew. ph/bio, ps: The Slow Boat to China; My Penis: Right After Breakfast, 37:8:13.

Swensen, F.M. rs: *St. Gregory's Daughter: Whores From Samarkand* by Arpine Konyalian Grenier, 39:14.

Swetnam, Ford. rhb: 301, 53:46.

SWIMMING IN THE WORD STEW. col by Joan Jobe Smith, 41:16, 42:16.

swoh-Allen-BOLT. p: while I'm, 7:3; p: Night Boy, 7:8.

SYNTHETIC POEM. soe by Peter Johnson: A Note On the Synthetic Poem, 23:6.

- T -

Taetzsch, L. (Lynn). f: You Could Fall, 28:24.

Talbot, Peter. p: (Conservation), 49:29; p: There's Coffeehouse People and There's Dunkin Donuts People, 58:45.

Talcott, William. r: *Don't Think: Look* by William Corbett, 34:19.

Talkington, Michael. ph/bio, f: Susan's Kitchen, 52:16.

Talley, James. p: Keeping a Low Profile, 27:41.

Tana, Patti. rhb: *Ask the Dreamer Where Night Begins*, 14:11.

Tate, Nate. rhb: *Get back To Where You Once Belonged*, 34:14.

Tatelbaum, Brenda Loew. interviewwd by Oberc: Talking to Brenda Loew Tatelbaum, 48:32.

taub, yermiyahu ahron. p: scarcity, 49:47.

Taus, Roger. ltr re: A.D. Winans, 55:6.

Tauscher, Shannon. thx, 8:2; r: *The Luz Journal* by Juana Maria Paz, 13:12.

Taylor, Chuck. ps: voluntary simplicity: bird that sings from under water: Vietnam's Never End; NastypoeM 7: Who Needs Happiness When You've Got Wrap Around Sunglasses, 4:8; rhb: *What Do You Want, Blood?*, 24:38; f: Possessions, 32:12.

Taylor, Jean P. p: In The Kitchen, 10:15.

Taylor, Kathleen. p: Mad Dogs In Moonlight, 18:23; p: ... and White Man Conquered, 27:47; p: rodney called it bullshit, 29:39.

Taylor, Lisa C. ph/bio, ps: Something Greater: The Price: Pain's Friend, 55:11.

Taylor, Marilyn. r: *Cherry Ferris Wheels* by Patrick McKinnon, 22:14.

Taylor, William. p: Requiem, 57:33.

Tellman, Susan. p: Patina of a Hunger Moon, 51:38.

Temple, Thea. f: Kept, 21:12.

Terris, Susan. p: An Unlovely Story, 43:35; p: Baby Hunger, 49:39; p: All Hallows Eve, 52:30; rhb: *Curved Space*, 54:42; p: Tinky Winky the Teletubby Is Gay, Falwell Says, 57:11; p: Possum's Teeth and the Mystery of the Six-Legged Frogs, 58:31.

Terwelp, Wendy. p: How Do I Love Thee? I Don't Know How, But I Do, 14:21.

Thaxton, Terry Ann. p: Fight, 53:43.

Thelin, John R. p: Anti-Haiku, 49:39.

THEME ISSUES. #26, spring, 1991, all-Vietnam veteran writers issue: #33, winter, 1992, #50, spring, 1997, gay / lesbian writers.

Themstrup, Karen. ph/bio, ps: Nancy Yearnings; Viking: Gustav's Judith, 46:7:34; ph/bio, ps: College Session; Confession; Real Women: At the Apocalypse, 51:8.

Thomas, Christopher. ph/bio, ps: Supervising The Camp Showers; At 15 I Discover St. Mark's Cathedral, 33:20; ph/bio, ps: Learning to Grow Old Together: Letter Never

Sent: Living With the Uncommitted, 42:15; ph/bio, ps: The Taste of Sweat: First Morning After: AIDS: Naming the Darkness, 50:17; ph/bio, ps: Center Stage At the Theatre of the Real: Keeping Certain Dreams At Bay: Barreling Down A Midnight Road, 57:12.

Thomas, Donna. ps: we: Ghazal Written on a Damp Napkin: and the least shall inherit: Family Council: sunripe the mulberry, deep in the shade: awake my sister from walking sleep: Stonecutter Moves to the Country: The Caretaker: Reclamation: Bill of Fare, 7:6; ps: Moonlight and Lovesongs: Truck Stop on U.S. Highway 27: Excerpt from an Old Journal: the morning after: upon this dawn: The Aunts: I Think I Hear Your Tides: No Marriage of True Minds This: autumn ritual, 7:7.

Thomas, F. Richard. p: Popping in Hot Ghee, 29:22; p: Letter To My Ex On Her New Book Of Poems, 32:13.

Thomas, G. Murray. p: The Tattoo, 37:8:45.

Thomas, George T. p: -7-, 40:24.

Thomas, John. ph (w/Charles Bukowski, Philomene Long, 1986). sor: *Bukowski in the Bathub: Recollections of Charles Bukowski with John Thomas* by Philomene Long, 56:43.

Tiger, Madeline. p: Creator, 16:8; p: Two Kids, 27:43.

Till, Louise. ph/bio, ps: A Letter: Potions: A History, 46:7:27; p: Exile, 49:22.

timmm, s andrea. p: - BLVD. -, 51:46; p: - POEM -, 56:21.

Titus, MaryAnn. p: The Sale, 49:23.

Todd, Allen. p: The Rain Goddess, 10:15.

Tofer, Merle II. ph/bio, ps: Hunger: As A Poet I Remember Every Man That I Fuck, 33:15; p: Just Another Faggot Poet, 34:22; p: Jesus, 40:31.

Tolan, Jim. p: The Gentlemanly Art of Pugilism, 49:46.

tolek, p: I sprung I, 44/5:41.

Tom, Karen. p: untitled: Morning came and I found myself driving in this, 30:23; p: untitled: God went down on me in a graveyard ... down into the, 34:45.

Tompkins, John. thx, 29:24, 30:27.

Torren, Asher. p: Wausau, 10:12; p: F or F (From the Oratorio at Ponary), 14:19; p: Little Face, 14:21.

Townsend, Cheryl (aka Cheryl A. Townsend; cat). p: Hospital Advocacy / TAKE BACK THE NIGHT, 10:11; p: Your Deep, 11:13; ps: He Asked Me; untitled: I'm alone; Impetus to You, 14:21; p: Don't Really Matter, 18:23; p: You Need Say No More!, 22:27; ph/bio, ps: Blessed Are The Pro-Choice Children: Winning the Battle Losing The Fight; Connection: Fail Safe; Juxtaposition: Pro-Life/Pro-Choice Rally; Issue, 24:10; p: Smart ass blonde, 30:20; p: I Can't Help It That, 32:28; ps: Unemployment: Standards: Foreplay, 37:8:45; p: Mending, 44/5:33; p: Eating In Bed, 46/7:45; p: Even, 49:46; rhb: *The Best of Impetus: The First Ten Years*, 54:42.

Trachta, Carolyn. p: Reaction, 10:12.

Trachtenberg, Paul. ph (w/Robert Peters), p: Sir Robert, 33:19; rhb: *Ben's Exit*, 39:14; p: Ode to Marilyn, 42:32; rhb: *Alphabet Soup: A Laconic Lexicon for Word Lovers*, 54:41; [r by Robert Peters: *Organic Consciousness: New & Selected Poems* by Linda Lerner, 54:44, inadvertently credited to Trachtenberg, 58:2, 42].

Trail, B.D. ph/bio, ps: California Dreaming or: Shrapnel of Another Sort; Our Lady of the Flies; Vietnam Veteran Against the Wall; War Story, 26:10; rhb: *Flesh Wounds*, 26:17; p: Golf, 32:28.

TRANSLATIONS. ps: romance of the moon; a reminder: song of the tiny death; by Federico Garcia Lorca, trans fm Spanish by Joel Zeltzer, 24:5; ps: death: gypsy nun; by Federico Garcia Lorca, trans fm Spanish by Joel Zeltzer; p: Black Stone on a White Stone; by Cesar Vallejo, trans fm Spanish by Jack Hirschman, 37:8:3; ps: Morning (Awakening of the Elements); untitled: Everyone in the end advances; untitled: Spring arrived; Wicked Gathering of the Faithless; by Daniil Kharms, trans fm Russian by Dean Furbish, 39:7; ps: window nocturnes; tiny madrigal: student song; a waltz in the branches; by Federico Garcia Lorca, trans fm Spanish by Joel Zeltzer, 49:11; ps: Un-Now: To an Unknown Natasha: "The Neva flows by the Academy ..."; by Daniil Kharms, trans fm Russian by Dean Furbish, 49:24; ps: Two flames! - no, two mirrors!; And then they gave us mead to drink; The eyes of a sympathetic neighbor; by Marina Tsvetaeva, trans fm Russian by Nina Kossman, 49:32; p: Zombie, by Jan Mapou, trans fm Haitian Creole by Jack Hirschman, Boadiba, 52:23; p: I'm Dreaming of Your Body All Nude, by Lyonel Trouillot, trans by Jack Hirschman, Boadiba, 52:23; p: sonnet (from *My Master*), by Salvador Novo, trans by Donny Smith, Michael Gregg Michaud, 53:33; p: Black Garden, by Antonin Artaud, trans by Tom Hibbard, 53:41; ps: Poem for a friend: What you didn't know yet; If I have no more red: Hanging Garden, by Paul Snoek, trans by Kendall Dunkelberg, 57:8; ps: Poem #175: Except For My Heart: Poem #204: untitled: Poem #165: The Transformation; by

Hafiz, trans by Laurel Ann Bogen, 58:3.

Treat, Jessica. ph/bio, f: Pie, 52:36.

Trebhor, ph/bio, ps: My Perfect Androgyne; Our Lady of the Fine Torso (A Vision of Marky Mark in Calvin Kleins), 36:28.

Trechock, Mark. p: Grace, 14:19.

Trinidad, David. rhbs: *Night and Fog: Pavana: Monday: Monday: Living Doll: November*, 14:12; p: Wednesday Morning, 33:42.

Tristram, Claire. ph/bio, f: Nine Locks, 56:32.

Trombetta, Lynn. ph/bio, ps: The Wild Turkey: Anniversary Poem: The Turtle, 43:23; p: What My Brother Taught Me, 49:47; p: Hound's Tongue, 51:25.

Trouillot, Lyonel. p: I'm Dreaming of Your Body All Nude (trans fm Haitian Creole by Jack Hirschman, Boadiba), 52:23.

Tsvetaeva, Marina. bio, ps: Two flames! - no, two mirrors!; And then they gave us mead to drink; The eyes of a sympathetic neighbor (trans fm Russian by Nina Kossman), 49:32.

Tuinistra, Nancy. p: Making Beds, 8:12.

Tumbelson, Ray. p: Ecologies (ex), 5:11.

Tyler, Robert L. p: Passage, 14:19.

Tyner, Billy Jr. See Marrell, Heir.

- U -

Ullman, Michelle. p: Your Eyes, 7:9; p: Solitary Clouds, 10:11.

Ummel, Gary. art. Bo. 50:47.

Urbanus, Andrew (aka Andy Urbanus). p: untitled: sometimes a rainbow, 14:19; p: slice of the american pie, 41:24.

Usher, Jim. p: well hell, 7:4.

Utley, C.M. p: She Shell, 12:6; p: Warblers' Dream, 13:7; p: The Crossing, 14:5.

Utz, Heidi. p: Incarnation, 10:12.

- V -

Vajda, David. ps: The Fear: Silence; 8/5/25; The Apache; 9/10/25; 6/1/25; Two Entries from the Journals of David Offenbach, 4:3; p: Fear the Clowns, 7:3; ps: Donatello Davis: 19; When You Became More To Me Than Just Another Norton Anthology, 14:19.

Valis, Noel. p: Spin Me, 7:2; p: Sin Eater, 14:21.

Vallejo, Cesar. p: Black Stone on a White Stone (trans fm Spanish by Jack Hirschman), 37:8:3.

Vallet, Deborah R. p: My Father Takes Me To Breakfast, 49:35; p: Nursing the Baby, 51:39; p: We Have Come Six Thousand Miles, 52:28.

Valvis, James. bio, ps: Upon Receiving a Fan Letter Asking Me To Explain One of My Poems; what exactly is a valvis?; about your iguana, 37/8:16; ph/bio, ps: while cleaning the M-16; My Work!, 46/7:9; ph/bio, ps: free: band-aids, 52:35; ph/bio, ps: Helga Annette Olson; i am not an adrenaline junkie; \$17.12, 56:18; p: the devil's got a cunt too, 59:5; p: cocaine, 59:40.

Van Arsdale, Sarah. bio, ps: Pepper; Dear Peggy; Kiss, 33:17.

Van Cleave, Ryan G. p: Living With Jessie, 49:44; p: He Promised Us a Poem, 51:37; bio, ff: Perpetuation: Vigilance: Saving the World, 58:25.

Van Deurs, Kady. rhb: *Panhandling Papers*, 28:31.

Van Duyn, Mona. rhb: *Near Changes*, 27:30.

Van Dyck, David. p: I Am the Leopard, 9:15.

Van Houten, Lois. rhb: *Coming To Terms With Geese*, 13:12; p: Planting the Sun, 50:31.

Van Wagoner, Sandra. p: Strut Your Ass, 28:40; p: Sex, #2, 29:34.

Van Walleghen, Michael. rhb: *The Last Neanderthal*, 59:27.

Van Zant, Frank. p: Tug McGraw, Topps Card #728, 1984, 51:37.

Vancil, David. rhb: *The Homesick Patrol*, 48:22.

Vanderslice, John. ph/bio, f: Kind of an Explanation or Demonstration of How I Came to a Decision About Ma, 53:36; ph/bio, f: Running, 59:16.

Vargas, Richard. p: baby brother's blues, 53:32; p: for an old teacher, an old friend, 55:42; thx, 56:2; ph/bio, ps: ancestor; racism 101, 58:20.

Vasconcellos, Cherry Jean. rhb: *Before Our Very Eyes*, 52:43.

Vasquez, Marco Antonio. ph/bio, ps: About Her Dream: Carmen Dreams In Spanish: Just Letting Him Know, 55:23.

Vassilakis, Nico. p: untitled: In the morning I cry out, never again, 14:19; p: Deep Down Blues, 27:40.

Vaultonburg, Thomas L. ph/bio, ps: Returning to the Heart; Starting From Bucharest, 32:7; p: Starting From Westphalia, 52:30.

Vega, Janine Pommy. ph, 54:1; ps: your blues; Witchcraft: For Rabindranath Tagore (a kind of script for F.T.W.), 54:2; ph, intd by Catfish McDaris: Janine Pommy Vega: The Chiron Interview, 54:3; nov ex: *Tracking The Serpent*, 54:4; rhb: *Tracking the Serpent*, 54:40.

Veiock, Peggy A. p: Talent, 10:11; p: The Lesson, 14:19.

Vendler, Helen. rhb: *The Music of What Happens*, 27:28.

Verga, Angelo. p: Withdrawal, 56:28; r: *One On One* by Tony Gloggiogler, 59:45.

Verlaine, Paul. p: The Moon's Soft Glow (*Clair de Lune*), (trans fm French by Leslie H. Whitten Jr.), 46/7:25.

Vernon, William J. p: Lifting, 6:11; ph/bio, ps: The Two-Year Guarantee: At the Arts-Fund Sponsored Reception: The Decadence of Golf, 27:7.

VIETNAM WAR. p: Vietnams Never End, Chuck Taylor, 4:8; ps: Awaiting the Harvest; Water: The Ducks on Wissahickon Creek; Winter Bells: Some Other World; The Beach Tree: On the Right to Vote, W.D. Ehrhart, 16:3; ps: Blood Trail: The Weight Of The Sheets: The Dark Side of the Moon, Jon Forrest Glade, 21:3; p: Afraid of Myself, W.D. Ehrhart, 22:22; p: Games People Play, W.D. Ehrhart, 23:20; Issue 26, Vol. X, #1, spring, 1991, feat Vietnam vets: Steve Mason, Lamont B. Steptoe, David Connolly, James Soular, B.D. Trail, Jon Forrest Glade, Jabiya Dragon-sun, Kevin Bowen, 13 bks by Vietnam vets reviewed; nov ex by David A. Willson: *The REMF Returns*; f: The Ritual, by Jerome Gold; ps by Art Gottlieb, Mack Moore, Jonathan Block, r: *Life After Vietnam* by Dolores A. Kuening, 28:33; r: *Just For Laughs* by W.D. Ehrhart, 28:33; ps: The Showers; Thai Women; The Men, by Terry L. Persun, 29:7; rs: *In the Heart of Things* by Daniel S. Lliteras, 32:23; r: *Human Shrapnel* by Bill Shields, 32:24; p: PTSD, Bill Shields, 34:13; p: king maggot, Bill Shields, 36:31; p: Flickering, Terry Persun, 41:30; p: The Sentry, Art Gottlieb, 42:14; p: The Way We Won the War, Art Gottlieb, 43:32; rs: *Playing Basketball With the Viet Cong* by Kevin Bowen; *Lost in America* by David Connolly, 44/5:38; r: *The Separation: Poems* by Philip K. Jason, 48:22; p: Viet Nam on my return, Le Thi Tham Van, 51:38; r: *Stripping the Adult Century Bare* by M.L. Liebler, 52:45; Oberc ints Bill Shields: Looking at Bill Shields, 53:14; Oberc ints Gary Goude: Looking at Gary Goude, 53:22; r: *The Thousand-Yard Stare* by James Soular, 55:45; r: *How the West Was One* by Maggie Jaffe, 56:43.

VILLAGE IDIOT. THE. See Singer, Joe.

Villegas, Anna Tuttle. ph/bio, ps: Proud Flesh: Cattle In Rain: Garden Shed 1989, 29:9.

Vinograd, Julia. ph/bio, ps: T.V. Coverage: Why I'm Against the Death Penalty; Growing Up Without Religion, 30:12; ph/bio, ps: Not Exactly the Way It Happened, But Close Enough; Listening to the Radio, 39:6; rhb: *The Cutting Edge*, 57:45.

Vinz, Mark. rhb: *Mixed Blessings*, 28:36.

Verrilli, Joseph. p: Felicia's Glamour, 51:38; p: Dress Rehearsal, 55:40.

Viveros, Joy. p: Steps, 28:39.

Vlasak, Keith. ps: Life Reminds Me Now and Then; Mind's Eye: By Association (unrevised version published inadvertently), 2:10; p: By Association, 3:3; ps: Remain Silent; Face: Still Life, 4:2.

Vlautin, Willy. f: A Bad Man's A Bad Man, 41:26; f: The Communist Girlfriend, 43:24.

VOICES FOR THE VOICELESS. 9:14, 10:10, 14:30.

Voisard, Cathy. p: Ribbons, 12:6; rhb: *Wanted: A Crooked Woman*, 14:12; p: Song Bird, 14:19.

Voss, Fred. ph/bio, ps: Curly's Eyes; Altitude Adjustment: The Ideal Tenant: The Man in Charge Of Palm Trees, 18:2; ph/bio, ps: Celebration; No; Confession, 21:8; ph, 28:1; ph/bio, ps: The Dream; Joyride; Asking For It; Easy Rider, 28:2; ps: Tough; Revolution; Success; Rapport; A Christian, 28:3; ph/bio, ps: Protection; Blessed (Stu had a picture on his wall); Paradise; The Perfect Host, 35:4; ps: A Reason to Live; Seesaw; Better; Surprise; Double Standard, 35:5; ps: 1982; Arrangement; The Devil: Full Speed Ahead; The Laboratory, 35:6; ps: Goodguys; Night Shift; The Game Tries To Go On; Intrepid; Tough Audie, 35:7; ps: Partypooper; Hope; Getting It Together; Man About Town; A Serious Smoker, 35:8; rhb (co-auth Joan Jobe Smith): *The Honeymoon of King Kong & Emily Dickinson*, 35:12; rhb: *Goodstone*, 35:13; rhb: *Still in the Game*, 40:25; ph/bio, ps: Blessed (her dead husband haunts); Grateful; Getting the Most Out of Life, 42:8; ph, ps: Caring; Second Chance; Lifeboat, 44/5:11; ph (w/Mark Weber, Gerald Lockilin, Ray Zepeda, d.h. lloyd), 46/7:3; ph, soe by Alan Dent: "No More Ambition than a Mexican": The Poetry of Fred Voss, 52:38; ps: The Pen and the Switchblade; A Matter of Life and Death; Profiting; The Doctors, 52:39.

- W -

Wade, Seth. ps: Marriage; Dream Poem; Dear Bill, 5:8.

Wagoner, S. Craig. ps: Myrna Loy; she doesn't love me (I knew it after I blew); Basketball; Murderer/Prisoner; she doesn't love me (I can tell by the notes); she doesn't love me (I knew it that morning I), 3:3.

Wagner, Vivian. p: Meredith, 10:15.

Wakoski, Diane. rhb: *Emerald Ice: Selected Poems 1962-1987*, 18:13; ltr, 55:6.

Waldman, Ken. p: Warning Delilah, 29:35; p: Cranter-Wit, 46/7:17; ph/bio, ps: Nome Hoofers: Polar Bar, Nome; Dear Mother, 51:31; p: Runaway, 54:23; p: Winter's Five Miles Away, 55:39; ps: Front Street, Juneau; The Board of Trade Saloon, 58:6.

Walker, Dee. p: Too Late, 6:11; p: Tears, 10:12.

Walker, Jeffrey M. f: Mother's Hand, 33:38.

Walker, Marylisa. p: I Ask People How They Are, 28:40; p: At the Supermarket, 29:35.

Wall, Bryan. ph/bio, ps: Broken Glass; The Friendship Gage; Wider Than Darkness; The Bond of Love, 11:8.

Wallace, Brian Forry. p: Cinnamon Eucharist, 52:37.

Wallace, Robert. rhb: *Writing Poems*, 14:11.

Wallace, T.H.S. p: But I, I, Telemachus, 31:28; p: Summa, 32:28; p: A Guide to Ancient Places, 34:15.

Waller, Rayfield Allen. rhb: *Abstract Blues: Poems (1980-1987)*, 19:13.

Walsh, Timothy. p: Leatherback, 44/5:15.

Walz, JoLynne. p: Grandma Jeanette, 20:8; p: i swear, 23:16.

Walzer, Kevin. rhb: *Living in Cincinnati*, 46/7:16.

Ward, Dave. portrait, rhb: *Smoky City Girl*, 13:5; p: it is not: the dread gods wait; we speak: we dance: cool wind: where do the bones grow?, 17:10.

Ward, Mary Elizabeth. p: Spoon and Knife, 10:12.

Warner, Al. p: Jacktown Cemetery, 43:20.

Warwick, Robert. f: Ave, 33:31.

Washburn, V. Glen. p: Jesus of Navarone, 23:16.

Waterhouse, Philip A. p: only been here a year seems longer, 29:33; p: Author, Author, 29:38.

Webb, Charles (aka Charles Harper Webb). ph, intd by Gerald Locklin: For the Fun of It: An Interview With Charles Webb, 20:14; e: Five Stand-Up Poets, 20:18; ph/bio, ps: Twats; A Word-Consuming Thing, 21:6; p: Interesting Times, 22:13; e: Tyranny of the Anima: The Emaculating of Modern Poetry, 24:26; ph/bio, ps: His Life In Baseball: Flossing His Teeth; At Supper Time, 30:11; p: Reading the Water, 32:14; ph/bio, ps: To Beat the Shit Out of Someone, 36:9; e: The Myth of Maturity, 39:8; p: Thumping the Fat, 41:11; p: Weed Decides That, as a Child, Al Capone Must Have Decided to Skip Politics and Go Directly Into Crime, 42:14; p: At Supper Time (inadvertently re-pub), 43:25; p: This Is Not A Song, 44/5:18; ph, 52:1; ps: Civil Disobedience School; Driver's Ed; Attack of the Famous Bad Poets, 52:2; ph/bio, ps: Surrender; Writer's Block; Sexual Democracy; Symbiosis, 52:3; intd by Suzanne Lumis: Interview with Charles Harper Webb, 52:4; bio, ps: Meeting Ms. Parkinson: Gnosticism Made Simple; Don Wanna-Be, 58:7.

Wax, Charles Chaim. bio, f: The Place of Precious Things, 52:32.

Weber, Mark. ph/bio, ps: Quiet Cove: The Goodman Ray; Another Last Day of the Year; My Trusty Mezuzah; Stories, 18:5; p: Bi-Coastal, 22:21; p: Ode To Being A Poetry Editor, 24:25; ph/bio, ps: dad; night; A God for Every Weekend, and More, 29:11; p: Rednecks and Red Wine, 29:15; ph (w/Judson Crews), ints Judson Crews: Perchance A Little Drink? a conversation with Judson Crews, 34:8; rhb: *Drunk City*, 34:14; rhb: *Ceremonies Aboard the Drunken Boat*, 34:19; p: The Homeless, 34:47; ph, 36:1; ps: Same Sidewalk; A Bunch of Nuts: Typically Left-Handed & Oblivious, 36:2; ps: L.A. Cops; Sunday Drivers; It's Good But It Ain't Heroic; Love and Booze, 36:3; 3 phs, intd by Oberc: The Mark Weber Interview, 36:4; ph, 36:5; rhb: *Swindler's Harmonica Siesta*, 40:26; ints Tony Moffett: I Never Write On Black Ice, 42:4; ints Joan Jobe Smith: Joan Jobe Smith: The Chiron Interview, 43:12; ints Sherman Alexie: Talking With Sherman Alexie, 44/5:3; ph, ps: Judsonian Therapy: The Teapot Joan Scandal: And They Used to Call Faulkner In Oxford 'Count No Account,' 44/5:27; ph (w/Fred Voss, Gerald Lockilin, Ray Zepeda, d.h. lloyd), ints Rafael Zepeda: Rafael Zepeda: The Chiron Interview, 46/7:3; ints Kell Robertson: Kell Robertson: The Chiron Interview, 48:3; rhb: *Libretto to Obligatos for Terpsichorean Dipsomaniacs. Transitory Like Smoke and Not the Pittsburgh Poems*, 51:43; ints Marvin Malone: An Interview with Marvin Malone, 52:8; bio, ps: In Defense of the Unimmortal Poem (An Essay In Poem Form); The Pile; Lean Times, 52:15; rhCD: *O Shenandoah Be Not Telling Me This*, 52:44; art (linocut), rhCD: *Ready As We'll Ever Be* (Mark Weber and The Bubbados), 55:47; ph/bio, art (linocut), ps: Irene: Pissycanthropus Erectus; big web, 57:36; rhb: *Poem Revised 39 Times*, 59:45.

Webster, Diane. p: Sunset Pink, 10:11; p: The Patience Trap, 14:21.

Weddle, Jeff. ps: patchen things up: Picasso the Great haircut; freud visits the tropics; Where were you?, 30:14; p: above all this grinning confusion?, 37/8:9; p: A fine educa-



tion, 46/7:32; p: the woman poet, 48:27; ph/bio, ps: Those times she is with me; Jay's Bed; Object Lesson: This awful time, 55:30; ps: Heart of things; Big Loser, 55:31.

Weidman, Phil. ph, ps: Time Enough; Wrong Turn; Photo-Postcards; Always A Romantic; Chided; Mentor, 52:27; p: Brownies, 54:23.

Weiner, Jesse. p: Archetype, 49:23; p: Final Notice, 51:25.

Weinman, Paul. p: Bird Lifting, 11:9; p: In the People Way, 14:9; ph/bio, ps: Dressed in his new clown; Asking the ex-pres. how; In blackface, White Boy; Thinking of something, 18:22; rbb: *White Boy's Pitch*, 19:12; p: Old-Fashioned Cleansing, 52:28.

Weiss, Sigmund. ph/bio, ps: When I Was A Child; Earth-Mother ... eleven; Between Friends and Lovers; Dissolution; Early Evening; God Gave Me A Ride, 11:6; book blurb, 57:42.

Weldon-Siviy, D. haiku: Another day of, 9:1; haiku: Stopping to pounce at, 10:11.

Wells, Tim. p: When the Water Rises, So Does the Boat, 57:27.

Welsh, Lawrence. p: Black Lite, 43:32; p: Stretch, 52:33; r: *Engagements and Disengagements* by Paul Agostino, 55:47; p: For Robert Peters, 56:31.

Wenner, Denise. f: Easy Access, 33:29.

Wentz, Janie. p: Metamorphosis, 14:9.

Werner, Charles T. p: Rhetorical, 14:5.

Werner, Connie (aka Connie Star). thx, 8:2; 56-58:48.

West, Kathleen. p: Seattle 1970s, 59:5.

West, Richard M. p: Lyn Lifshin Stars in *Modern Times II*, 23:19; ph/bio, ps: An Ode To Most Women I Have Known; The Old Volvo In Grammercy Park, 28:16; rbb: *The Girl In the Albergo Borghese: Selected Poems*, 31:23.

West, Thomas A. Jr. ph/bio, ps: Shakers; Searching; MRI, 49:37.

Weston, Joanna M. p: Sun-Bitten, 46/7:19.

Whalen, Tom. f: Unstable Orbits, 2:7; f: In the Region of No Stars, 6:10; ph/bio, f: Unstable Orbits (reprinted from Issue 2), 8:9; f: Coming Home, 29:20; p: A Serious Man, 46/7:46.

WHAT MATTERS, r col by Jay Dougherty, 13:4, 14:20, 15:4, 16:4.

Wheatley, Deborah Jo. p: My Carnival, 5:8.

Whisler, Robert F. p: Village Voices (Washington Square), 12:6.

White, Claire Nicolas. rbb: *The Bridge*, 14:11.

White, Jeff. p: The Angel In Blue, 10:12.

White, Gail (aka Gail A. White). rbb: *All Night in the Churchyard*, 13:11; p: A Day in My Life, 16:8; ph/bio, ps: Fairy Tale; Old Woman With 25 Cats; The Embattled Gardener; Graffiti On A Roman Wall, 24:12; ph/bio, ps: The Superior Nature of Animals; No Epitaphs, Please; Dead Armadillos; The Intercessors, 44/5:30.

White, Lori Gama. p: Sisters on the Shore, 14:19.

White, Michael K. p: reefer madness, 5:2; ph/bio, ps: the boy with the green hair; avant-garde praying at McDonalds 1983; the new romantics; the rumble; Lullaby; blood lust of werewolves; the Prophet; astronomy lesson; i hear nightmares in 3-d; the Ballad of the staple gun, 6:6; bio, p: the Blue Homecoming; A Suite of Poems, 11:12; p: Storms, 22:23.

Whitten, Leslie H. Jr. trans fm French: The Moon's Soft Glow, by Paul Verlaine, 46/7:25.

Wickliffe, Warren B. p: Leaf-Touching, 33:45; ded, 58:2.

Wiekliniski, Don. p: little joe and the p.o., 49:46.

Wiggins, Jean. p: Spring Break, 10:15.

Wiggs, Terry. p: Don't Tell Me You Don't Like Bukowski, 34:45; p: A Lion Turns Seventy, 37/8:44; p: The Beauteous Castrato Harmonies of Academe, 39:17.

Wilbur, Richard. see by T. Hibbard: On Richard Wilbur, U.S.A. Poet Laureate, 15:14.

Wilcox, Dan. p: Joe Krausman, 28:44.

Wild, Peter. ps: John Muir; Wilderness, 48:15.

Wilensky, Ben. p: Hump, 52:30.

Wiley, Valerie. ps: Let; Send; Wonder, 3:3; p: The Open Door, 4:2; ph/bio, ps: Number Four; The Room: I (I am a poet); The Stars; Reading is a Chore; I Arose; I Love You; Tracks, 6:3; ps: Stars In Glass; Don't; I am the one you need for the; To the one I adore; paganini i did not mean to; I wore; I love to eat and love you; I (use pencil and and; He; Leave; Hand me; Teen-Ager; I pull my fingers and you; Something to remind me; Love Me; Circle the tie and; Send me the clock; No one let me see; Foot Hanging; Make Me Laugh; Sew; Justin; I Have Reached; Be; Looking for Mr.; Help me; High Wire; Winter; Trees fall all; Ugly; Cups for us all; Close the box; Holiday Cheer Christmas Poem, 10:13; p: You Bore My Mom, 16:8; p: Joystick, 16:16.

Willey, Edward r. (Ned). ps: Oaks; Two Bits; Suddenly; Nine to Five, 3:8; ps: Star-Crossed; Solitaire; The Mystery of Life, 4:12.

Williams, Diane. ps: Politically Incorrect;

A Leg To Stand On; Heart on The Sleeve, 21:7; bio, ps: The Big Bang Theory; Before Love at the Festival (from the Open a Vein series), 33:18.

Williams, Martha V. p: Grandma's Palette, 28:44.

Williams, Holly. p: Silver Dust, 49:22.

Williams, Miller. rbb: *Patterns of Poetry*, *An Encyclopedia of Form*, 14:11.

Williams, N. Sean. p: The sphinx as a child falls in love with her victims, 11:9.

Williams, Stanley. f: The River and How to Swim It, 49:30.

Williams, Tennessee. see by B.Z. Niditch: Stage Center: A Memoir, 10:14.

Williams, Tyrone. r: *Clemency* by Colette Inez, 56:45.

Williamson, Brenda. p: Gravy, 14:9.

Williamson, Tharin. p: Depressed, 56:38.

Willson, David A. rs: *Mad Minute* by Lamont B. Steptoe; *Hit Parade* by Jabiya Dragonsun, 26:15; rbb: *REMF Diary: A Novel of the Vietnam War Zone*, 26:16; nov ex: *The REMF Returns*, 26:18.

Wilmarth, Richard. ph/bio, ps: the end; the diplomat; tactics, 25:2; rbb: *The Henry Miller Acrostics*, 59:46.

Wilson, James. p: Nocturne, 14:5.

Wilson, John. p: Sense of Mission, 29:22.

Wilson, Leonore. p: Cadere, 55:9.

Winans, A.D. p: Pain, 11:9; ph/bio, ps: For Katherine Again; Small Press Poet Makes It Big; For Pattie; For Wayne, 18:4; rbb: *In Memoriam*, 24:37; ph/bio, ps: For Charles Olcott; For Angie; Memories, 29:2; ph/bio, ps: Old Men; Tough Guy Poets; She Said, 44/5:12; nov ex: *The Charles Bukowski/Second Coming Years* (Part 1), 46/7:28; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 2), 49:26; lte, 51:6; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 3), 52:18; ph (w/Jack Micheline), ints Jack Micheline: Jack Micheline: *The Chiron Interview*, 53:3; e: In memoriam: Jack Micheline: Poet of the People, 53:5; r: *Sixty-Seven Poems for Down-trodden Saints* by Jack Micheline, 53:45; rbb: *San Francisco Streets: It Serves You Right To Suffer: A Call To Poets*, 54:44; p: In Memory of Jack Micheline, 55:9; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 4, first installment), 55:32; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 4, second install), 56:34; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 4, 3rd install), 57:38; nov ex: *TCB/SCY* (Part 4, 4th and final install), 58:34.

Winner, Robert. rbb: *The Sanity of Earth and Grass: Complete Poems*, 52:47.

Wingeier, Stephen G. ps: Fair Deal; Sacramental Elements; All My Relations, 4:2.

Winter, Levi. see DeRugieris, C.K.

Winter-Damon, T. ps: NeO-Lo-glSm / like a contation ... like scattered seeds upon the wind ... words drifting softly on the night breeze ...; poem #81: yang patterns in the great tao ...; AIDES & COCYTUS EQUATIONS; TEN-PENNY URGINGS ...; WORD SCULPTOR, 11:12.

Winton, Laura. p: No Title, 14:9.

Wisniewski, Mark. ph/bio, f: Here on Earth, 52:24.

Woessner, Warren. rs: *Mixed Blessings* by Mark Vinz; *This Body She's Entered* by Mary Kay Rummel; *Dismal River* by Ron Block; *Suburban Metaphysics* by Ronald J. Rindo; *The Headlong Future* by James Cervantes, 28:36.

Wolf, Paul F. f: Notes, Poems and Music, 40:6.

Wood, Karenne. p: For My Ex-Husband, 57:34.

Woodhouse, Mark. p: Triangulation, 56:38.

Woodley, Ken. p: Broken Mirror, 7:3; p: ex from: While the Rhino Sleeps (there is a heart beating in the darkness), 14:5; p: ex from: While the Rhino Sleeps (the last shade of something), 14:19.

Woods, Linda. rbb: *One Night To Dance In Our Prime*, 24:37.

Worley, Jeff. rbb (co-auth Lance Olsen): *Natural Selections: Poems*, 34:18; rbb: *The Only Time There Is*, 44/5:37.

Wozek, Gerard. p: Ritual for Letting Go, 50:31.

Wright, Charlotte M. p: Left Ulna, 21:11; p: Pillows, 44/5:21.

Wright, Fred W. Jr. p: Sunday Morning, 4:8.

Wright, Howard. ph/bio, ps: A Place in Europe; At Robert Graves' Grave; A Forest, 53:25.

Wright, James. rbb: *Above The River: The Complete Poems*, 29:29.

Wright, Leilani. p: The Photo Critic's Last Request, 39:31; rbb: *A Natural Good Shot*, 40:26.

Wyndham, Harold. r: *Canyonvue* by Scott Preston, 53:45; 301 by Ford Swetnam; *Anything But Poetry* by Douglas Airmet, 53:46.

Wyzard, Jim. p: The Road to Success, 14:19.

- Y -

Yamada, Teri. ph/bio, ps: Touchless Touch; The Dinner Table; Shadows, 53:20.

yohe, john. p: woman in a restaurant, 55:41.

Yonning, Rick. p: A Thought, 10:15.

Yost, Eric. p: Homonculus Blues, 14:9.

Young, Gary. p: untitled: While I was away, a woman was dragged from her home and, 55:38.

Young, Margaret. p: One for the Ghost, 55:31.

Yurkovsky, Alexandra. p: Ballad Monger, 52:17.

Yurman, R. p: Anatomy, 39:15.

- Z -

Zable, Jeffrey A.Z. p: The Hypocrite, 7:8; p: An Incident at the Palms Cafe-Bar, 14:5.

Zaller, Robert. r: *Anais Nin: An Understanding of Her Art* by Rochelle Lynn Holt, 54:43.

Zauhar, David. bio, ps: Via Negativa; Even Here; Appalachian Foothills Town, 1998; Dying for a Living, 59:36.

Zeiser, Linda Joan. rbb (co-auth Rochelle Lynn Holt): *Mendsongs & Soulspase*, 9:5; rbb (co-auth Rochelle Lynn Holt): *Haiku of Desire*, 10:8; lte, 20:2; thx, 29:24; letter ex, ded, 33:2; bio/ph (w/Julie Ball), ps: Fearless Lady, Fearful Times; Notes From a Jewess; Waxing The Moon On Sundays, 33:14; lte, 34:2; rbb: *Kiss of Fire*, 40:27; ps: Dawn; Tenacity; Solace, 50:31; lte, 54:6.

Zelcer, Brook. p: Fishing Again, 16:8.

Zeltzer, Joel. ps: nocturne: 3-24-81; exhausted, 5:8; trans fm Spanish: romance of the moon; a reminder; song of the tiny death, by Federico Garcia Lorca, 24:5; trans fm Spanish: death; gypsy nun, Federico Garcia Lorca, 31:4; trans fm Spanish: window nocturnes; tiny madrigal; student song; a waltz in the branches, by Federico Garcia Lorca, 49:11.

Zepeda Rafael (aka Ray Zepeda). Contrib. Ed (Fiction), 19-58:2; p: one for the duke, 18:16; ph/bio, ps: Silicon Man; Stink Bug; My Alma Mater, 19:20; p: Pony, 28:19; rbb: *Horse Medicine and Other Stories*, 28:27; ph, 46/7:1; ps: Getting Back at Tara Jones; Betty Worked Part-time; Watching The Wedge, 46/7:2; ph (w/Fred Voss, Gerald Locklin, Ray Zepeda, d.h. lloyd), intd by Mark Weber: Rafael Zepeda: *The Chiron Interview*, 46/7:3; f: Hitting the Coyote, 46/7:5.

Zepper, Kevin. p: back track, 11:13; rbc: *The Observatory*, 14:12.

Ziglar, Vincent. p: Eudora, the Ball Python Who Has Ticks, 53:19.

Zimmerman, Lisa Horton. p: The Day My Daughter Smeared The Car With Lipstick, 23:20.

Ziolkowski, Heidi. p: Hey, Lady, We Don't Serve No Froufrou Coffee Here, 22:21; p: For Dennis Jurgens, Battered by His Adoptive Mother Until He Finally Died at the Age of 3, 31:27.

Zucker, David. p: Double, 49:46.

Zuckert, Kymm. p: untitled: When I'm lonely, 10:12.

Zauhar, David. p: Your Parents Get The News You Are Dead, 36:11.

Zweig, Martha. p: For Peter, 31:28.

Zweig, Paul. rbb: *Departures*, 28:35.

Zyskowski, Ginger. p: Trilogy, 7:8.

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- A -

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- B -

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- D -

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 - E -  
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 - F -  
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Watering Hole: Barry Calhoun: poetry: Third Lung Press: 1988: 19:14.  
Way Winter Works, The: Harry Humes: poetry: U of Arkansas: 1990: 28:25.  
Wednesday, There Is More: Gina Bergamino: poetry: Iota Press: 1992: 35:12.  
Well-Tuned Harp, A: Geraldine C. Little: poetry: Saturday Press Inc.: 20:4.  
What Do You Want, Blood?: Chuck Taylor: poetry: Slough Press: 24:38.  
What Is Written In the Wind: Roger Finch: poetry: 13:15.  
What Work Is: Philip Levine: poetry: Knopf: 1991: 29:27: 37:8:28.  
What's This Cat's Story: Seymour Krim: Paragon: 1991: 32:19.  
When Grandmother Decides To Die: Robert Chute: poetry: Blackberry Books: 1989: 22:16.  
When I Was Straight: Janet Mason: poetry: Insight to Riot: 48:18.  
When You Read This You'll Know Who You Are: Gina Bergamino: poetry: Penumbra Press: 31:22.  
Where The Body Meets Memory: An Odyssey of Race, Sexuality, Identity: David Mura: Anchor Books: 1996: 49:41.  
White Boy's Pitch: Paul Weinman: poetry: Samisdat: (Vol. 53, #3): 19:12.  
White Horse Cafe: Gina Bergamino, Lyn Lifshin: poetry: mulberry press: 1991: 32:22.  
White Man Problem, The: Jack Powers, Merritt Clifton: Samisdat: 13:12.  
White Room, The: Christopher Butters: poetry: Samisdat: 15:11.  
Wild Trout, The: Walt Franklin: poetry: Nightshade Press: 1989: 22:17.  
Willieworld: Maggie Dubris: poetry: UZ Editions: 58:42.  
Wise Potion: David Rivard: poetry: Graywolf: 1996: 59:26.  
Without Shoes: David Chorlton: poetry: American Studies Press: 1987: 14:11.  
Witness Tree, The: Terry L. Persun: novel: Implosion Press: 1998: 57:45.  
Who Can Touch These Knots: Simon Perchik: Scarecrow: 11:10.  
Whores From Samarkand: Arpine Konalyan Grenier: poetry: Florida Literary Foundation: 1992: 39:14.  
Wife: Jim Cory: Insight to Riot: 1993: 37:8:41.  
Wisconsin Daze: Joseph Shields: poetry: Liquid Paper Press: 51:41.  
Wisdom of Night Spiders, The: Lonnie Sherman, Mark Borczon: poetry: SpeakEASY: 54:45.  
Witness of Poetry, The: Czeslaw Milosz: essays: Harvard U Press: 18:12.  
Wolf Mask: Todd Moore: poetry: JCV Books: 1997: 57:46.  
Woman Behind You, The: Julie Ray: poetry: U of Pittsburgh Press: 1998: 58:14.  
Women For All Seasons: Poetry and Prose About Transitions In Women's Lives: Wanda Coleman, Joanne Leedom-Ackerman, Eds.: poetry, prose: The Woman's Building: 1988: 19:13.  
Woman With Two Vaginas, The: Denise Duhamel: poetry: Salmon Run Press: 44/5:36.  
Woman Trouble: Gerald Locklin: short story: Event Horizon: 1994: 40:25.  
Women At War: Elizabeth Norman: non-fiction: U of Pennsylvania Press: 1990: 26:14.  
Women Who Make Money and the Men Who Love them: short stories: Staple First Editions (England): 1994: 42:21.  
Workbook: Christopher Merrill: poetry: Teal Press: 1988: 18:14.  
Wreckage: Dennis Gulling: road/house (#38): 19:12.  
Writing Poems: Wallace Robert: Little Brown: 1987: 14:11.  
- Y -  
Yank At Bangor, A: Poems From the Welsh Teaching Experience: Gerald Locklin: poetry: Vergin Press: 1991: 34:19.  
Yale Younger Poets Anthology, The: George Bradley, Ed.: poetry: Yale U Press: 57:43.  
Year I Learned To Drive, The: Greg Geleta: poetry: The Axe Factory: 1988: 19:14.  
You Get So Along Sometimes That It Just Makes Sense: Charles Bukowski: Black Sparrow: 1987: 12:4.  
- Z -  
Zapata's Disciple: Martín Espada: essays: South End Press: 1998: 56:45.

## MAGAZINE REVIEWS

- A -  
Alternative Fiction & Poetry: Paul Athans, Ed.: #2, 13:4: #4, 1987, 15:9.  
Anemone: Nanette Morin, Ed.: fall/winter, 1986, 12:11.  
- B -  
Black Bear Review: ave jeanne, Ron Zetlemoyer, Eds.: #5, 13:13.  
Black Mountain Review: David A. Willson, Ed.: #1, 13:13.  
Black Mullet Review: Gina Bergamino, Ed.: #1, 12:11.  
Blood & Tears: Poems for Matthew Shepard: Scott Gibson, Ed.: poetry: Painted Leaf: 1999, 59:43.  
Bloomsbury Review, The: Tom Auer, Ed.: Vol. 7, #4, 15:9.  
Blue Light Review: Paul Dilsaver, Ed.: #11, 21:15.  
Bogg: John Elsbeg, Ed.: #56, 14:20: #59, 18:15.  
- C -  
Cat's Eye: Tom Bilicke, Ed.: Vol. 4, #3, fall, 1987, 14:32.  
Chimera Connections: Jeff VanderMeer, Duane Bray, Eds.: #2, 1987, 15:9.  
Clock Radio: Jay Dougherty, Ed.: #6/7, 13:13: #8, 1987, 15:9.  
- D -  
Daring Poetry Quarterly: Denise A. Reynolds, Ed.: Vol. 2, #2, 13:13.  
- E -  
EIDOS (Everyone Is Doing Outrageous Sex): Brenda Loew Tatelbaum, Ed.: Tatelbaum int'd, 48:32.

- F -  
Factsheet Five: Mike Gunderloy, Ed.: 1987, 15:5: e by Gunderloy, 19:8.  
Forum for Universal Spokesman, The: Lenore A. Senior, Ed.: #1, 12:11: #3, 13:11.  
Free Focus: Patricia D. Coscia, Ed.: 13:12.  
Free Lunch: Ron Offen, Ed.: #1, 21:16.  
- G -  
Gargoyle: Richard Peabody, Peggy Pfeiffer, Eds.: #32/33, 1987, 15:4: #35, 19:16.  
Guidelines Newsletter: Susan Salaki, Ed.: 18:16.  
Guts: Keith A. Dodson, Ed.: #4, 24:35.  
Gypsy: Belinda Subraman, Ed.: #5, Special Compilation Issue, 9:4.  
- H -  
Howling Dog: Mark Donovan, Ed.: Vol. 2 #3, 4, 13:4.  
- I -  
Impetus: Cheryl Townsend, Ed.: #9, 13:13: #10, 14:20: Best of Impetus, The: The First Ten Years (anthology), 54:42.  
- L -  
Lactuca: Mike Selender, Ed.: #10, 17:14.  
- M -  
Mind In Motion: Celeste Goyer, Ed.: 29:32.  
- N -  
Naked Man: Mike Smetzer, Ed.: #6, 1988, 15:4.  
New Press, The: Bob Abramson, Ed.: summer, 1990, 29:32.  
Nimrod: Francis Ringold, Ed.: special issue, Clap Hands, Sing: Writers of Age, 29:31.  
No: Brad Johnson, Ed.: #6, 13:5.  
Nothing Sinister: Michael Hannan, Ed.: 13:4.  
- O -  
Off My Face: D. Watt, Ed.: anthology: 1987, 15:5.  
One Hundred Suns: Glenn Bach, Ed.: #1-2, 41:23.  
Orbis: Mike Shields, Ed.: #64, 1988, 15:4.  
Ostentatious Mind: Patricia D. Coscis, Ed.: 13:12.  
Outre: Jake Berry, Ed.: #2, 13:4.  
- P -  
Painted Bride Quarterly: Louis Camp, Joanne DiPaolo, Louis McKee, Eds.: 14:32.  
POETS on the line: a continuing anthology: Linda Lerner, Ed.: on-line magazine: 54:46.  
- R -  
Ransom: Alan Howard, Ed.: #1, spring, 1988, 15:4.  
Raw Bone: Tom house, Ed.: #11, 17:14.  
Redstart: James Mechem, Mark Edwards, Eds.: #7, 1987, 16:4.  
Rhino: Enid Baron, Carol Hayes, Eds.: 1986, 12:11.  
Ritual of Drowning, A: poems of love and mourning: Teya Schaffer: poetry: Tabor Sarah Books, 1999, 59:43.  
River Rat Review: Daryl Rogers, Ed.: #1, 1987, 14:12.  
road/house: #35, #38, 19:12.  
- S -  
Samisdat, Merritt Clifton, Ed.: Vol. 41, #4, 13:12: Vol. 49, #1, 1987, 15:9: Merritt Clifton int'd, 15:22: Vol. 53, #3, 19:12.  
Signal, The: Joan Silva, David Chorlton, Eds.: Vol. 1, #1, 1987, 15:9.  
Silver Wings: Jackson Wilcox, Ed.: summer, 1987, 14:13.  
Sore Dove: Soheyl Dahi, Cathy Voisard, Marco Sottile, Eds.: #1, 1987, 14:12.  
Sub Rosa, Noemi Maxwell, Nico Vassilakia, Eds.: #9, 10:8: #14/15, 13:13.  
Swamp Root: Al Masarik, Ed.: #2/3, 21:16.  
Sycophant: Scott C. Virtes, Ed.: #2, 13:4.  
Synaesthetic: Alex Cigale, Ed.: #2, 44/5:39.  
- T -  
Tears in the Fence: Dave Caddy, Ed.: England: #5, 15:4.  
Thirteen Poetry Magazine: Ken Stone, Ed.: Vol. VI, #4, 17:14.  
- W -  
Wind: Quentin R. Howard, Ed.: Vol. 17, #59, 1987, 14:20.  
Wordsworth's Socks: Elliot Fried, Keith A. Dodson, Marc Cook, Eds.: #1, 1988, 18:15: #2, 21:16.  
Wormwood Review, The: Marvin Malone, Ed.: #110-111, Vol. 28, #2-3, 1988, 17:15: pp. 41-80, 1987, 19:14.  
Wyoming, The Hub of the Wheel ... A Journey for Universal Spokesmen: Lenore A. Senior, Ed.: #1, 9:4: #3, 11:5, 12:11.  
- Z -  
Z Miscellaneous: Charles Fabrizio, Ed.: Vol. 1, #3, July, 1987, 14:20.

## NEWS, ETC. BLURBS

- Abbey, David Greisman, Ed.: 10:8: #63, 22:28.  
ACLU, 52:42.  
Adastra Press, Gary Metras, Ed.: Diggers Territory, Jim Daniels, 20:22: The Ballad of Harmonica George, David Raffeld, 22:28: Northampton Poem, Gary Metras, 24:30: The Village Painters, David Chorlton, 24:30: Sonnets, Richard Jones, 28:47: Blue Flute by

- Linda Lee Harper, 59:42.  
Addictive Aversions, Alfredo de Palchi, Xenos Books, 58:40.  
Adirondack Lake Poems, Joanne Seltzer, 10:2.  
Advancing Back, Edward Locke, 48:16.  
Adventures of Lulu, Queen of Everything, The: Tales of Sexponage & A Satire Extraordinaire, Marael Johnson, Cacho Publ. House (Philippines), 54:22.  
Adult Themes, Kurt Nimmo, Implosion, 55:44.  
Aegean Doorway, Miriam Sagan, 16:18.  
After the End, 23:14.  
Age of Aquarius, The, Gerina Dunwich, Ed., 23:14.  
Aging Voices, Sigmund Weiss, 9:5: 11:6.  
Aguilar Expression, The, 54:22.  
Aileron Press, Michael Gilmore, Ed., 9:5.  
Alcoholism & Addictions Magazine, 12:2.  
Aller Retour New York, Henry Miller, 34:17.  
Aliens and Lovers: An Anthology of Erotic Poetry with Fantasy and Science Fiction Themes, 4:12.  
All About It, Dr. Marion Cohen, 11:5.  
All Around the Editor's Desk, Florence, Florence and Susie, Eds., 8:12: 10:2: 11:5: 12:10: 12:11: 13:10.  
All Available Light, McOne Press, John McElhenney, Ed., 22:28.  
Alpha Adventures, Scott Virtes, Ed. #15, 13:4.  
Alpha Beat Press, Dave Christy, Ed. The Ash Land, Erling Friis-Baastad, 18:18, 19:23: Mary Magdalen Sings the Mass in Ordinary Time, Joy Walsh, 19:23: 42:16.  
Alpha Beat Soup, Dave Christy, Ed., 18:17: 19:23: #5 (July 1989), 20:22: 24:30: 28:47.  
Alphabets Sublime, George Myers, Jr., 11:4.  
Alphabit Soup, Ruth Moon Kempher, little books, 53:44.  
Alternative fiction & poetry, Philip Athans, Ed., 11:4: 12:2: 13:4: folded, 26:21.  
Alternative Man, Michael Phillips, Mother Road Publ., 51:40.  
Alternative Press Center, Baltimore, MD, 19:23: 24:30.  
Amador Press, The Hummingbird Brigade, David L. Condit, 22:28.  
Amelia, Frederick A. Raborg, Jr., Ed., 10:2: 10:8: 15:8.  
American Book Review, 12:2.  
American Journals, Albert Camus, 13:11.  
American Poetry Review, 12:2.  
Amnesia #2, 28:47.  
Among the Dog Eaters, Adrian C. Louis, 31:29.  
An Ambitious Sort of Grief, Dr. Marion Cohen, 11:5.  
An Illustrated Jack Micheline, Jack Micheline, Implosion, 55:44.  
Anaconda Press, Andy Lowry, Ed., 26:21: 48:48.  
Ancient Mariner's Press, James Mechem, Ed., Oma's Story, Gina Bergamino, 28:47.  
and i the wind, Charlie Mehrhoff, 39:13.  
... And the Horse You Rode In On, Catfish McDaris, Augusto Sanchez, Born Again(st) Christian Press, 56:42.  
Anemone, Nanette Morris, Ed., fall, 1994, 42:20: autumn, 1995, 46/7:14.  
Angry Days, Sesshu Foster, 15:8.  
Animal Bride, The, Paulann Peterson, 42:16.  
Animal Tales Holiday Contest, 23:14.  
Annie, Richard Ray Solem, 14:11.  
Antheon, 44/5:34.  
Anthology (Baker's Dozen), Gina Bergamino, Ed., 25:19.  
Appalfofs of America Association 1990 Contests, 24:30.  
Appearances, #26 (Kamikaze Lover by Tsauroh Litzky), 59:42.  
Applezaba Press, d.h. Iloyd, Ed., Gridlock: An Anthology of Southern California Poetry, 23:14: Nude, Judson Jerome, 28:47.  
Ariadne's Thread, Lyn Lifshin, Ed., 11:11.  
Arroyo, Rane Arroyo, Ed. #1, 14:10: 15:8: Stage Whisper series, 28:47: New Sins Chapbook Series, The Color of Enlightenment, Diane Williams, 29:24.  
Art In Hell, Kurt Nimmo, Ed., 25:19.  
Art of Blessing the Day, The, Marge Piercy, Knopf, 58:40.  
Art of Love, The: New and Selected Poems, Miriam Sagan, 48:16.  
Artemis In Echo Park, Eloise Klein Healy, Firebrand, 53:44.  
ArtMag, Peter Magliocco, Ed., #8, 11:4: Roll Away the Stone by Charlie Mehrhoff, 18:18.  
Artifacts, B.J. Buckley, 13:11.  
Ashland, The, Erling Friis-Baastad, 18:18: 19:23.  
Asylums and Labyrinths: Deviance and Damnation Chronicled in Verse, Rob Cook, Rain Mountain Press, 53:44.  
Athena Incognito, Ronn Rosen, Kurt Cline, Eds., 10:2.  
Atom Mind, Gregory Smith, Ed., Vol. 3 #12, 39:12: Vol. 4 #14, 40:29: 41:17: winter, 1995, 42:20: Vol. 4 #16, 44/5:34:



- Vol. 5 #17, winter, 1996, 48:16; summer, 1997, 53:44.
- Avalanche, Bob Sears, Ed., 44/5:34; Vol. 1, #2, 46/7:14; 49:31.
- Avant-Garden, The, James Valvis, Ed., #1, 39:12.
- awake past midnight, Frederick Moe, 28:47.
- Axe, Robert A. Nagler, Ed., 23:14.
- Aztec Peak, Marsha Ward, Ed., 15:8; 58:40.
- Back Alley Review, Michael Garriga, Chi Ly, Eds., 23:14.
- Backtrack, Phil Weidman (Wormwood Review #139), 46/7:15.
- Bahl! Humberg Special, Dave & Ana Christy, Eds., 42:16.
- Baker Street Irregular, Jim Watson-Gove, Ed., #32, 57:42.
- Baker's Dozen anthology, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 25:19.
- Bakunin, Jordan Jones, Ed., spring/summer, 1992, 34:16.
- Ballad of Harmonica George, The, David Raffeld, 22:28.
- Barbaric Yawp, John and Nancy Berbrich, Eds., 52:42.
- Barbequed Poetry, Keith A. Dodson, Ed., 16:18.
- Barfly, Charles Bukowski, 14:10.
- Barn Red Door, The, Neydine Pille, Ed., 14:10; 17:6.
- Basic Training, Thaddeus Rutkowski, March Street Press, 51:40.
- Bathtub Gin, #3, 56:42; #4, 58:40.
- Bay Windows, Rudy Kikel, Poetry Editor, 13:10; 27:38.
- Beach & Co. (Chery Valley Editions), 9:5.
- Beneath My Heart, Janice Gould, Firebrand, 53:44.
- Bear Crossing, Kell Robertson, 18:18.
- Bear Tribe, 10:8.
- Beat Vision, The, Arthur and Kit Knight, Eds., 14:10.
- Beatnik Blues, Ana Christy, 42:16.
- Beautemous Everlasting, Mark Weber, CD, 55:44.
- Beet, Joe Maynard, Ed. #12, 44/5:34; 46/7:14; #13, 48:16.
- Before Our Very Eyes, Cherry Jean Vasconcellos, Pearl, 51:40.
- Benway Institute Studios, Pig's Hell, Harry R. Wilkens, 59:42.
- Best Gay Erotica, 1996, 48:17.
- Best Lesbian Erotica, 1996, 48:17; 1998, 53:44.
- Best of the Underground, Marti Hohmann, Ed., Masquerade Books, 56:42.
- Between My Lips, Lyn Lifshin, 28:47.
- Between the Cracks: The Daedalus Anthology of Kinky Verse, Gavin Dillard, Ed., 51:40.
- Bhakti Books, Pagan Love Songs, The Naked Poet, Gavin Dillard, 26:21.
- Big Gay Book, The, John Preston, Ed., 17:6.
- Big Head Press Broadside Series, Keith Dodson, Ed., 34:16.
- Big Man on Canvas, Gerald Locklin, 41:17.
- Big Red Leaks, Patrick McKinnon, 10:2.
- Big Table (early litmag), 13:18.
- Bikini Girls and the Flaming Monkeys of Hell, Joseph Verrilli, Norman J. Olson, Beaver Lake Press, 57:42.
- Bittersweet, ave jeanne, 6:8.
- Black Back-Ups, The, Kate Rushin, Firebrand, 53:44.
- Black Bear Review, ave jeanne, Ron Zettlemoyer, Eds., 7:12; 8:11; 10:2; 12:10; #6, 14:10; 15:8; 18:17; 20:22.
- Black Cat 115, 42:20; #6 (graffiti issue), #7 (final issue), 52:42.
- Black Moon, #1, 40:29; 41:20; #2, 51:40.
- Black Mountain Review, David A. Willson, Ed., 11:4; 12:2; #4, 12:10; 13:10; 14:6; 15:8.
- Black Mountain Review, The, Niall McGrath, Ed. (North Ireland), 58:40.
- Black Mullet Review, Gina Frey, Ed., 10:2; 11:4; 14:14; 16:18.
- Black Pirate, The, James E.F. Riley, Ed., 36:32.
- Black River Review, Kaye Collier, Ed., 16:18; 18:17.
- Black Sheep, Merle Tofer, 34:17.
- Blackfax, Bob McNeil, Ed., 44/5:34.
- blank gun silencer, #9, 42:20.
- Blast (early litmag), 13:18.
- bleeding heart press, 48:17.
- blind horse review, the, Todd Kalinski, Ed., #3, 39:12; #5, 42:20; #7, 48:17; #7, 8, 53:44.
- Blood Rain, Bill Shields, 31:30.
- Bloomsbury Review, 8:12.
- Blue Beat Jacket, Yusuke Keida, Ed., #14, 57:42.
- Blue Flute, Linda Lee Harper, Adastra Press, 59:42.
- Blue Glow, The/Egad!, Tom James, Ed., 10:8; 12:2.
- Blue Light Review, Paul Dilsaver, Ed., winter 1989-90, 22:28.
- Blue Rock, Steven Benson, 18:18.
- Blue Tattoo, Lyn Lifshin, 42:16.
- Blue Unicorn, Ila F. Berry, Ed., 25:19.
- Blueberry Pie, James Snyder, Wood Works, 55:44.
- Blues, (early litmag), 13:18.
- Blues for Bird, Martin Gray, 39:13.
- Bobby Star Newsletter, The, X-it Press, Vol. 1, #1, Jan., 1996, 46/7:14; #5, 52:42.
- Bodo: Infant of the Aftermath, John Bennett, 46/7:15.
- Body Politic, The, 9:5.
- Bogen, Laurel Ann, 22:29.
- Bogg, John Elsborg, Ed., 9:5; 10:8; 12:2; 14:6; #67, 44/5:34; #69, 57:42.
- Boogie Alley, Tony Moffeit, 16:18.
- Born Not to Laugh at Tornadoes, Joan Jobe Smith, Liquid Paper Press, 53:44.
- Both Hands Screaming, Simon Perchik, 11:10.
- Bouillabaisse, Dave and Ana Christy, Eds., #4, 42:16.
- Boundless Coalescence, The Mark Weber Poetry Band, CD, Zerx Leisure Prod., 59:42.
- Bourbon & Coke, Robert L. Penick, 53:44.
- Brave Wild Coast, The: A Year with Henry Miller, Judson Crews, Dumont Press, 53:44.
- Breast Cancer: Fear of Recurrence, Pioneer Valley Breast Cancer Network, 52:42; 57:42.
- Breathless, Kitty Tsui, Firebrand, 53:44.
- Bridge, The, Kathleen Cee, Kit-Bacon Gressitt, Jim Trageser, Eds., winter, 1995, 42:20; summer, 1995, 44/5:34; autumn, 1995, 46/7:14; 1996 contest issue, 51:40.
- Bristlecone, 24:30.
- Broken Lives, Soheyl Dahi, 10:2.
- Broken Streets, Ron Grossman, Ed., 10:8.
- Bronte Street, Linda S. Valentine, Ed., 18:17.
- Brother Can You Spare A Dime I Need a Christmas Tree, Mark Weber, Gerald Locklin, Todd Moore, J.B. Bryan, CD, Zerx Press, 57:42.
- Brouhaha, Christine Casalini, Ed., 42:20.
- Bruno's Bohemia, Guido Bruno, Ed., 13:18.
- Bukowski Boulevard, Joan Jobe Smith, Pearl Editions, 56:42.
- Bukowski, Charles, Twayne's U.S. Author's Series, 52:42.
- Burning Bright: An Anthology of Sacred Poetry, Patricia Hampl, Ed., 46/7:15.
- Burst of Light, A, Audre Lorde, Firebrand, 53:44.
- Burying the Dead, D. Watt, Ed., 13:4.
- Bus Poems, Gary Aspenberg, 39:13.
- Butchers and Brain Surgeons, Fred Voss, Liquid Paper Press, 53:44.
- Bygone Tumbleweeds Tarnation of Smoke, Mark Weber, Zerx Records, 56:42.
- Byline Magazine, 15:8.
- Byzantine, James Mechem, Gina Bergamino, 28:47.
- Cafes of Childhood, R. Nikolas Macioci, 31:18.
- Cain: A Short Story, Tony Bledsoe, 50 Gallons of Diesel, 59:42.
- Calliope's Corner, Padi Harman, Ed., 3:12; 4:12; 8:3; 9:5; 10:2; 16:18; folded, 19:23; revived, 30:27.
- Calli's Tales, Annice E. Hunt, Ed., 12:10.
- Camellia, Tomer Inbar, Ed., 20:2; fall/winter, 1994, 39:12; Oct., 1995, 46/7:14.
- Can Poetry Matter?, Dana Gioia, 34:17.
- Canyonvue, Scott Preston, Redneck Press, 51:40.
- Caprice, Lynne Savitt, James Mechem, Eds., 25:19; 42:16; Jan. 1998, 54:22.
- Captive of the Vision of Paradise, Ivan Arguilles, 12:14.
- Caravan Press, 12:2.
- Carnegie Hall with Tin Walls, Fred Voss, Bloodaxe Books/Dufour Editions, 59:42.
- Casting, Rand Clifford, 46/7:15.
- Cat's Eye, Tom Bilicke, Ed., fall 1986, 11:4; winter 1987, 12:10; spring 1987, 13:10.
- Catfish in the Pecos, Catfish McDaris, Angelflesh Press, 51:40.
- Cattle Bones & Coke Machines, anthology, Smiling Dog Press, 35:12.
- Caution: Contents Under Pressure, Bob Zark, chapbook, audio c, 44/5:34.
- Cedar Hill Review, G. Goyle, C. Presfield, Maggie Jaffe, Eds., spring 1999, 58:40.
- Celibacy Club, The, Janice Eidus, City Lights, 51:40.
- Ceremonies of the Damned, Adrian C. Louis, U of NV Press, 53:44.
- Ceremonies of the Heart: Celebrating Lesbian Unions and Lesbian Couples, 29:24; 52:42.
- Chaco Trilogy, V.B. Price, La Alameda Press, 58:40.
- Champagne Horror, Cathy Buburuz, Randy Nakoneshny, Eds., 19:23.
- Chance Magazine, Robert L. Penick, Ed., 42:20; #5, 44/5:34; #6, 48:16; #9, 52:42; #6-9, 53:44; #10, 54:22; #11, 56:42; 58:40.
- Changing Light at Sandover, The, 34:17.
- Charles Bukowski/Second Coming Years, The, A.D. Winans, 48:17.
- Cheap Thrills, Todd Moore, 11:8; 13:5.
- Cherry Valley Editions, (Beach & Co.), 9:5; Tornado Alley, William Burroughs, S. Clay Wilson, 19:23, 22:28.
- Chicago Library of Poetry Annual Poetry Contest, 31:18.
- Chicago Review, The, 13:18.
- Children & Angels: A Writing Conference On The Environment, IWWG, 25:19.
- Chimera Connections, Jeff Vander-Meer, Duane Bray, Penelope Miller, Eds., 12:10; 14:6; 14:10.
- Chiron Review Censored, Michael Hathaway, Ed., 44/5:34; 46/7:14.
- Chords, Rochelle Lynn Holt, 23:14.
- Chosen People from the Caucus, Michael Bradley, 34:17.
- Cicada, 15:8.
- Cigarettes, Lips, These Fingertips, anthology, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 34:17.
- City of the Rain, Albert Huffstickler, 39:13.
- City Rant #2, McOne Press, John McElhenney, Ed., 22:28.
- Clackshant: and other poems, Alexander Blain III, 6:8.
- Clock Radio, Jay Dougherty, Ed., Issue 5, 11:4.
- Club Fits Either Hand, The, Simon Perchik, 11:10.
- Clutch, Oberc, Dan Hodge, Eds., #4, 42:16; #5, spring, 1996, 48:16; #6, 53:44.
- Coal City Review, Brian Daldorph, Ed., #10, June, 1996, 48:16.
- Cobweb Review, 30:27.
- Cochran's Corner, 28:47.
- Cock 'ill Do You!, A, William P. Haynes/Elliott, Paul Weinman, 39:13.
- Cold Pocket, Kathleen Carlton Johnson, 53:44.
- Colony, The, Contoocook, NH, 18:18.
- Color of Enlightenment, The, Diane Williams, 29:24.
- Combat Poetry: A Collection of Poems, Larry D. Kirby, 13:4.
- Comet Halley, Brian C. Clark, Ed., 9:5; 13:10.
- Compages, Translation Center, Union of Left Writers, 18:17.
- Conan O'Brien, Micheline reading, 42:16.
- Concrete Bologna, Ana Christy, 34:17.
- concrete under my chin / portraits of the city, ave jeanne, 10:2.
- Conditioned Response, 20:22.
- Conflict of Interest, 40:29.
- Connecticut Poetry Society, 12:10.
- Connecticut Yankee, The, 14:10.
- Conservatory of American Letters, 11:4; 16:18; 17:6; The Iceman, 19:23.
- Contact (early litmag), 13:18.
- Contemporary American Satire, Exile Press, Leslie Woolf Hedley, Ed., 19:23.
- Contests & Contacts, Mary Keith, Ed., 19:23.
- Coolest Car in School, The, Joan Jobe Smith, 41:17.
- Cooper House Publ., Poet, 24:30.
- Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, 17:5.
- Corn Goddess, Stephanie Dickinson, Linear Arts, 54:22.
- Corse on a Cadillac Hood, Todd Moore, 42:17.
- Cottonwood, #50, 46/7:14.
- Cottonwood Press, Speaking French in Kansas and Other Stories, Robert Day, 22:28.
- Crazy Horse and Walt Whitman's Hands, Charlotte M. Wright, 37/8:39.
- Creative Endeavors, Rebecca T. Urrutia, Ed., 6:8.
- Creative With Words, Brigitta Geltrich, Ed., 46/7:14.
- Cricket in the Telephone (at Sunset), A, Lolita Lark, Ed., Mho & Mho Works, 57:42.
- Cripes!, Jim Tolan, Ed., 53:44.
- Criterion, The, T.S. Elliot, Ed., 13:18.
- Critique of Patriarchal Reason, Arthur Evans, White Crane Press, 52:42.
- Crunching Gravel: Growing Up in the Thirties, Robert Peters, 22:28.
- Cup of Fiction, Raymond Fort, Ed., #3 53:44.
- Cunt: A Declaration of Independence, Inga Muscio, Seal Press, 56:42.
- Curonymous, 42:20.
- Current, Loading Las Vegas, Charles Potts, 28:47.
- Curse, the, Daisy, Ed. #9, 46/7:14.
- Curved Space, Susan Terris, La Jolla Poets Press, 53:44.
- Cutthroat Blues, Blacky Hix, 31:30.
- Cyanosis, Darin De Stafano, Ed., 24:30.
- Dancer, The, Gary Skeens, 9:5.
- Dancing With the Ghosts of the Dead, Tony Moffeit, audio c, 18:18.
- Dancing Shadow Review, 41:20.
- Dancing w/Blood, Todd Moore, 42:17.
- Danger Music, Stepan Chapman, The Ministry of Whimsy, 51:40.
- Daring Poetry Quarterly, Denise A. Reynolds, Ed., 8:12; 11:4.
- Dark Optimism: Selected Short Tales 1989-1998, Alex Stein, Emerson's Eye Press, 58:40.
- Dark West Press, Angi Lowry, Ed., 24:30.
- Das ist Alles: Charles Bukowski Recollected, Joan Jobe Smith, Ed., anthology, Pearl Editions, 44/5:34.
- David Called Today, Virgil Hervey, AAR Press, 56:42.
- Day Tonight/Night Today, 12:2.
- Dead Angel, Chuck Oliveros, Ed., 8:11.
- Death Cab for Cutie, Rane Arroyo, 29:24.
- Death Glory Sequins and Smoke, Todd Moore, 48:17.
- Death Rides the Blood, Todd Moore, 48:17.
- Deconstruction Acres, Tim W. Brown, III Publ., 52:42.
- Deepening, The, Kaviraj George Dowden, 42:16.
- Deros, Lee-lee Schlegel, Ed., 10:8; 12:2.
- Desperado, Kell Robertson, Ed., Vol. 8 #1, 41:17.
- Deux Ex Machina, Vincent Ferrini, 3300 Press, 55:44.
- DHARMA beat, Attila Gyenis, Mark Hemenway, Eds., 39:12; #5, 46/7:14; #6, spring, 1996, 48:16.
- Dial, The, Margaret Fuller, founder, 13:18.
- Diari's Journal, 15:8.
- Diary Jottings of a Jaded Journalist, Nick DiSpaldo, Undulating Bedsheets, 52:42.
- Die Young, Skip Fox, Ed. #1, 25:19.
- Digger's Territory, Jim Daniels, 20:22.
- Dillinger, Todd Moore, 11:8.
- Ding Dong Dada, Steven Hartman, 39:13.
- Diptych Rome-London, Ezra Pound, 39:13.
- Direct Mail & Marketing Association, 6 E. 43rd St., NYC 10017, 25:19.
- Directory of Literary Magazines, CCLM, 17:5.
- Dirigible: Journal of Language Art, David Todd, Cynthia Conrad, Eds., 52:42; #12, 55:44; #13, 58:40.
- Dirty City, Haggard and Halloo, 59:42.
- Dirty Laundry: 100 Days in a Zen Monastery, Robert Winslow, La Alameda Press, 52:42.
- DisClosure: Voices of Women, various artists, New Alliance Records, 34:17.
- Do Iguanas Dance, Under the Moonlight, Laurel Ann Bogen, 23:14.
- Dockernet, Harry R. Wilkens, Ed., #16/17, 57:42; #18-21, Feb.-May 1999, 58:40; #22, 59:42.
- Dog River Review, 10:8; Entre Vous by Connie Fox (DR Poetry Series #10), 34:17; Vol. 12 #2, 37/8:39.
- Dolphin-Moon Press, 15:16.
- Doomsday Book of Animals, The, David Day, 6:12.
- doors, Michael Estabrook, 28:47.
- Down With the Move, Kirpal Gordon, 39:13.
- draconian measures, Zenith Beast Publications, 17:6.
- dream poems, Gina Bergamino, 28:47.
- Dr[ea]ms and Garbage and the Abyss, Mark Senkus, 53:44.
- Dreams, Myths & Other Realities, d.h. lloyd, 6:8.
- Drive, Hettie Jones, Hanging Loose, 53:44.
- Driver's Side Airbag, Mike Halchin, Ed., #30, 53:44; #29, 54:22.
- Dufus, Raindog, Ed., #1, 55:44.
- Dusty Dog Reviews, John Pierce, Ed., 29:24.
- E Pluribus Aluminum, Thomas Michael McDade, Liquid Paper Press, 56:42.
- Early Grrrl, Marge Piercy, Leapfrog Press, 56:42.
- Earth Tones, Belinda Subraman, 39:13.
- Earthly Measures, Edward Hirsch, 39:13.
- Earthwise, 10:8.
- Ecco Kosti, Richard Kostelanetz, 48:17.
- Echoes, Robert Creeley, 39:13.
- Eddies, Edmund Conti, 39:13.
- Editor's Digest, 19:23.
- Editors, Publishers and Writers of the Independent Literary Presses, projected book, Vergin Press, 28:47.
- Edizioni Universum, 41:20.
- Egad!, Tom James, Ed., 14:6.
- Ellipsis, Jon Robertson Ther, Ed., 16:18.
- Ellipsis Press, My Name Isn't Richard Brautigan, Gina Bergamino, 17:6; 19:23.
- Emerald Sky, The, Gina Bergamino, 31:18.
- Enchanted Mountain Monthly, The, Ken Wagner, Ed., 23:14.
- End All, Samona Beam, Ed., 39:12.
- Entre Nous, Connie Fox, 34:17.
- Entries, Wendell Berry, 39:13.
- Eratica: half a bubble off plumb, E.M. Hebron, William Emerson III, Eds., Vol. 3, #2, 55:44.
- Eros Comix, 46/7:15.
- Eros Errant, 54:22.
- Eros In Boys Town, Michael Lassell, Ed., 48:17.
- Ethereal Dances, Sara Hyatt, Ed., 42:20.
- Eustachia Stories, The: An Astro-romance, Tom Whalen, 8:9.
- Evening Train, Denise Levertov, 34:17.
- Event Horizon Press, Joseph Cowles, Ed., Cafes of Childhood, R. Nikolas Macioci, 31:18; 31:31; 32:18; 32:20; 32:24.
- Exclamations! (haiku), 14:6.
- Exile in Babylon, Michael Ketchek, Free Food Press, 55:44.
- Exile Press, Contemporary American Satire, 19:23.
- Ex-Lover Weird Shit, Debra Rigglin Waugh, Ed., 26:21.
- Experimental Love, Cheryl Clarke, Firebrand, 53:44.
- Explorer Magazine, Raymond Flory, Ed., 4:12; 58:40.
- Expressions, Sharon Lynn Drake, Ed., 11:4; 14:10; 15:8.
- Expressions: first state journal, Joanne S. Petrizzi, Ed., 11:4.
- Face Value, Bob Perelman, 18:18.
- Falling Water Farm Press, Wayne Hogan, 13:10.
- Famous Last Words, Jon King, Ed., 14:6; 14:10; 17:6.
- Fat's Child, Ruth Moon Kempher, 39:13.
- Fear Itself, Stan Rice, 46/7:15.
- Feather: A Child's Life and Death, Robert Peters, U of WI Press, 52:42.
- February is the crookedest month, Mark Weber, Clamp Down Press, 58:40.
- Feelings, 20:22; 34:16; Vol. 6 #4, 44/5:34; autumn, 1995, 46/7:14.
- Feh!, 41:20.
- Ferry Tales From Puget Sound, Joyce Delbridge, Ed., 10:2.
- Find Me a Sand Dollar, Tom Hendrix, 16:18.
- Fine Madness, #21, 44/5:34.
- Fire!, Rhonda Poynter, Ed., 6:12; 8:6; 9:5; 10:8.
- Fire Escapes, Michael C Ford, CD, 42:16.
- First & Third, G.W. Fisher, 28:47.
- First Class, Christopher M., Ed., #5, 52:42; #6, 53:44; 56:42; #11, 59:42.
- First Inago Anthology of Poetry, Del Reitz, Ed., 6:8.
- First Time He Saw Paris, Gerald Locklin, Event Horizon, 53:48.
- five, Mark Hartenbach, 48:17; 55:44.
- 5 AM, Ed Ochester, Judith Vollmer, Eds., #9, 52:42; #9, 53:44; #10, 55:44; #11, 58:40.
- 5 & 10 + 2, Laurel Speer, Ed., 34:16; Vol. II #4 (final issue), 42:16.
- Flame for the Touch that Matters, A. Michael Lassell, Painted Leaf, 53:44.
- Florida International University Poetry Competition, 37/8:39.
- Florida State Poets, 12:10.
- Flower-Of-Turning-Away, Gayle Elen Harvey, 31:18.
- Fluorescent Triptych, ellen, 28:47.
- Flying Over Sonny Liston, Gary Short, 48:17.
- Food, Lisa Manning, 28:47.
- Footwork, 10:8.
- For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is not Enuf, Ntozake Shange, 13:19.
- Fragments I Saved from the Fire, Mary Anne Ashley, 22:28.
- Frank: An International Journal of Contemporary Writing & Art, David Applefield, Ed. (France), 18:17.
- Frank O'Hara Award Chapbook Competition, 48:16; 49:31.
- Free Focus, Patricia D. Coscia, Ed., 12:10; 16:18; 22:28.
- Free Lunch, Ron Offen, Ed., 17:6; #15, autumn, 1995, 46/7:14; #16, spring, 1996, 48:16; 55:44; #21, 57:42; #22, 59:42.
- Free Thought Conceptions, Eric Smith, Ed., 46/7:14; 48:16.
- Free Will in a Benevolent Universe, Norman J. Olson, Beaver Lake Publ., 58:40.
- Freelancers' Report, The, Pat McDonald, Ed., 12:10; folded, 24:30.
- Friction, Mark W. Doyon, Ed., 39:12.
- Friday Night Desperate, Sheryl Lynn Nelms, IM Press, 51:40.
- Friends of All Creatures, Rose Evans, 7:11.
- From a Greyhound Bus, Benjamin Green, 16:18.
- From the Inside Out, John Gilgun, 28:47.
- From Mimeo to Macintosh, 35 Years in the Small Press: An Interview with Ben L. Hiatt, Conducted by Mark Weber, Mt. Aukum Press, 58:40.
- Fuck!, Lee Thorn, Ed., Vol. 2 #1, Jan. 1999, 57:42; Vol. 2, #6 & 7, 59:42.
- Fuck Death, Robert Penick, 53:44.
- fuel, Andy Lowry, Ed., 39:12; #9, 42:16; #12, 46/7:14; #17, #18 (the "work" issue), 51:40; #20, 52:42; #23/24, 55:44; 56:42; #26 (final issue), 59:42.
- Funk, Catfish McDaris, Marymark Press, 57:42.
- Furious Fictions, Joseph Lerner, Ed., 34:16.
- gagaku avenue, Steve Richmond, 10:2.
- Gaia: A Journal of Literary & Environmental Arts, Robert S. King, Ed., 34:16.
- Gargoyle, Richard Peabody, Lucinda Ebersole, Eds., #39/40, 58:40; #42, 59:42.
- Gas, The: A Novel of Sex and Violence, Charles Platt, 46/7:15.
- Gawd Is A Gangster, 24:30.
- Gay Writers Network, Allen Renfro, 35:12.
- German Publications, Poetry Plus Magazine, 29:24.
- gestalten [experimental poetry], Paul Silvia, Ed., 51:40.
- Getting Ready To Have Been Frightened, Bruce Andrews, 18:18.
- Ghost of Sappho Haunts My Panties, The,



- Sue DeNim, Implosion, 55:44.  
Giants Windmills & Snake Eyes, Mark Hartenbach, 48:17.  
Girder, Al Rogovin, Ed., 39:12.  
Girl That Time Passed By, The, Connie Edwards, 28:47.  
Ghost Moon Over Pueblo, Tony Moffeit, 28:47.  
Go West, Young Toad: A Collection of Selected Works, Gerald Locklin, Water Row, 58:40.  
God's Bar: un\*plugged, Virgil Hervey, Ed., Vol. 1 #3, 39:12; #4, 44/5:34.  
Golden Eagle Newsletter, Pat McDonald, Ed., 11:4; folded, 24:30.  
Golden Isis, Gerina Dunwich, Ed., 8:12; 9:5; 10:2; 12:2; 13:10; 15:8; 28:47.  
Good Cunt Boy Is Hard To Find, A, Doug Rice, Jasmine Sailing/CyberPsychos AOD, 56:42.  
Good Enough to Eat, Lesléa Newman, Firebrand, 53:44.  
Goosestep from Chains, A, Keith A. Dodson, 31:18.  
Gopherwood Review, The, Sandra Reiff, Sharon Crowson, Eds., 22:29.  
Gothica, Susan M. Jessen, Ed., 34:16; cease publication, 41:20; Macabre Manse: The Best of Gothica Magazine and Beyond, 48:17; rising from the grave, 56:42.  
Great Lake Review, Alison Burke, Ed., fall, 1995, 46/7:14.  
Green Feather, Gary S. Skeens, Ed., 8:11; 12:2; 12:10; 17:6; 20:22.  
Green River Writers, 16:18; 17:18; 18:18; 22:29.  
Greenfield Review, The, Joseph Bruchac, Ed., 10:8; 14:6.  
Green's Magazine, autumn 1998, 56:42.  
Greensboro Review, 57:42.  
Grey Matter, 46/7:14.  
Gridlock: An Anthology of Southern California Poetry, Elliot Fried, Ed., 23:14.  
Guerrilla Poetics, S. Jacobsen, Ed., 18:18.  
Gun Beneath the Bed, The, Vietnam Brought Home, Kay Porterfield, Ed., 42:20.  
Gypsy, Belinda Subraman, Ed., 7:12; 8:8; 9:5; 10:2; Issue 6/7, 11:4; Poet's Day, 16:18; Amnesty International fund raiser, 16:18, 22:29, 24:30, 26:21; #17, 29:24.  
Gyst, Edgar Silex, Assoc. Ed., 34:16.  
Haggard and Halloo, #14-16, 58:40; Dirty City, #59:42.  
Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Vol. 13 #1, 41:20.  
Haight Street, 1985, Vernon Frazer, Ed., 13:10.  
Hands You Are Secretly Wearing, Simon Perchik, 11:10.  
Hardball Ain't All Bucolic, Paul Weinman, 10:2.  
Haven, The, Michael McDaniel, Ed., 14:6.  
Heaven Bone, Steven Hirsch, Ed., 20:22; 22:29; 29:24.  
Heaven Bone Press, Steven Hirsch, Ed., Walking The Dead, Lori Anderson, 29:24.  
Hic Haiku Hoc, Edmund Cont, 39:13.  
Higginsville Reader, The, spring, 1997, 51:40.  
Highbrowed Cockroach, Robert Beaper, 29:24.  
Hilda Halfheart's Notes to the Milkman, Ruth Moon Kempher, 39:13.  
Hippo, Karl Heiss, Ed., 18:17; 23:14.  
Hindsight, or How I Survived the Depression, Albert Huffstickler, Liquid Paper, 51:40.  
Hitman, The: Selected Poems, Harry R. Wilkens; Christine Zwingmann, publisher, 55:44.  
Hob-Nob, M.K. Henderson, Ed., 29:24; #64-A, fall, 1995; #64-B, winter, 1995-96, 46/7:14.  
Holt, Rochelle Lynn, 11:4; 12:11.  
Holy Ranger, The: Harley-Davidson Poems, Martin Jack Rosenblum, 20:22.  
Home Planet News, 12:2.  
Honky Tonk Rising: poetry with a banjo on its knee, Tim Wells, Ed., #15, 57:42.  
Horse Called Desperation, A, Kell Robertson, Aspermont Press, 51:40.  
House Organ, Kenneth Warren, Ed., #6, 39:12; #12, fall 1995, 46/7:14; #14, spring 1996, 48:16; #17, 51:40; #23, 55:44; #24, fall 1998, 56:42; #25, winter 1999, 57:42.  
Housewife-Writer's Forum, 19:23; 23:14.  
How The West Was One, Maggie Jaffe, Vietnam Generation/Burning Cities Press, 53:44.  
How To Dream, Steven Riel, 34:17.  
How To Write and Publish Poetry, Larry Gross, 17:6; 34:16.  
Howl: San Francisco Poetry News, 30:27.  
Howling Dog, Mark Donovan, Ed., Vol. 2 #1, 11:4; #3, #4, 13:4; 19:23; 37/8:39.  
Human Rights Campaign, 53:44.  
Hummingbird Brigade, The, David L. Condit, 22:28.  
Hung Ruse, Chris Brockway, Noel Watson, Eds., bleeding heart press, 36:32; #1, 41:20; Vol. 1, #2, 46/7:14; #1, 2, 48:17; #1, 2, 53:44.  
Hungry Poets' Cookbook, Glenda McManus, Ed., 13:10.  
I ain't retarded but ..., Tom House, 28:47.  
I Am Becoming The Woman I Wanted, Papier-Mache Press anthology, 41:31.  
I am My Own Woman: The Outlaw Life of Germany's Most Distinguished Transvestite, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, 44/5:35.  
I am the Clay, Clay Harrison, 9:2.  
I Counted Only April, Simon Perchik, 11:10.  
I Discover My First Name: Water, Christien Gholsen, 46/7:15.  
Icarus Review, McOne Press, John McElhenney, Ed., 22:28.  
Ice Cubes, Kit Robinson, 18:18.  
Ice River, David Memmott, Ed., 13:10; 16:18; 18:17.  
Iceman, The, Conservatory of American Letters, 19:23.  
Illuminati Press: Do Iguanas Dance, Under the Moonlight, The Projects; Rag Tag We Kiss, Laurel Ann Bogen, 23:14.  
Impetus/Implosion Press, Cheryl A. Townsend, Ed., 9:5; 10:8; 12:2; 17:6; 22:28; 29:24; 42:20.  
In Awe, Scott Heim, HarperCollins, 52:42.  
In the Clearing, Albert Huffstickler, Foursep Pub., 53:44.  
In Your Face!, Gina Grega, Ed., #3, 34:16; #11, 44/5:34; 46/7:15; #12, 48:16; 51:40.  
Inkshed, (England), 24:30.  
Innings and Quarters, various artists, New Alliance Records, 34:17.  
Inside from the Outside, The, Normajan MacLeod, Ed., 14:10.  
Insomnia, B.Z. Niditch, Paisley Moon Press, 56:42.  
Intermission, Linda Lee Curtis, 3:12.  
International Book Fair, 1989, Managua, Nicaragua, 18:18.  
International Directory of Small Presses and Little Magazines, Len Fulton, Ellen Ferber, Eds., 6:8; 15:8; 17:5.  
International Society for Humor Studies, 24:30; 25:19.  
International Women's Writing Guild, 8:12; 11:4; 12:11; 18:18; 22:29; 25:19; 48:48; 57:42.  
Invention of Spain, The, Ivan Argüelles, 12:14.  
Invitation to Living, Gerald Dorset, 10:2.  
ism ( ), #2, 57:42.  
It's All The Rage!, Andrew Mountain, 55:44.  
Jacksboro Highway Review, Broadside #1, 56:42.  
James White Review, The, 23:14; fall, 1992, 34:16; Vol. 11 #3, 39:12; fall, 1994, 41:20; winter, 1995, 42:20; Vol. 12, #3, autumn, 1995, 46/7:14; Vol. 13, #2, spring, 1996, 48:16; #51, 51:40; changing hands, 53:44.  
Jerusalem Donuts, Steve Abec, New Alliance Records, 34:17.  
Jett W. Whitehead Rare Books, bookstore, 42:20.  
Jewish Women's Literary Annual, Henny Wenkart, Ed., 46/7:15.  
Joey & the Black Boots, Cari and Seth Taplin, Eds., #13, 16, 18, 52:42.  
Jokers Are Wild: 39 Plays to Ruffle Your Lover, Rochelle Lynn Holt, 39:13.  
Journey to the Center of My Id, Thaddeus Rutkowski, Linear Arts, 54:22.  
Jubilee Press, Gina Frey, Ed., 10:2; 11:4; 11:5; 17:6.  
Jukebox Terrorists With Typewriters, 13:4.  
Julia Moore Poetry Competition, International Society for Humor Studies, 24:30; 25:19.  
Juxta, #1, 40:29; #3, 1995, 46/7:14.  
Kaleidoscope: Women at Work, Diane Williams, Ed., 21:2.  
Kamikazi Lover, Tsarah Litzky, 59:42.  
Keith Publications, Mary Keith, Ed., 8:12; 9:5; 10:2; 11:4; 19:23.  
Kentucky Poetry Review, 10:8.  
Kentucky State Poetry Society, 23:14.  
Kerouac's Last Word, Tom Clark, 13:10.  
Killer Cocktails, Alan Catlin, Four-Sep Publ., 52:42.  
Killer Frog Contest, Scavenger's Newsletter, Janet Fox, Ed., 22:28.  
Kindred Spirit, The, Michael Hathaway, Ed., 10:8.  
Kingdom of the Loose Board & Rusted Nail, Christien Gholsen, Modest Proposal Chapbook #5, Lilliput Review, 55:44.  
King's Estate Press, Ruth Moon Kempher, Ed., 39:13.  
Kinship with all Life, J. Allen Boone, 6:12.  
Kirby, Larry D., sci-fi, fantasy, horror anthology, 12:10.  
Kiss the Skin Off, Lyn Lifshin, 8:10.  
Kiss of Fire, Linda Joan Zeiser, Julie Ball, 39:13.  
Korean Military Archives Group, 31:18.  
Krax, 14:10; Skin Divers, Belinda Subraman, Lyn Lifshin, 18:18; #28, 29:24; #31, 40:29.  
Kumquat Meringue, Christian Nelson, Ed., 28:47, 42:16.  
Kwan Yin Book of Changes, The, Diane Stein, 7:11.  
Lactuca, Mike Selender, Ed., 10:8; 16:18; 32:18.  
Last Dust Storm, The, Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel, 44/5:35.  
Lake Street Review, Kevin FitzPatrick, Ed., 12:10; 15:8; 18:17; #25, final issue, 26:21.  
Lap Dancing for Mommy: Tender Stories of Disgust, Blame and Inspiration, Lopez, Seal Press, 52:42.  
Last Fairfield Rodeo and other poems, The, Penelope Reedy, 37/8:39; 42:16.  
last good thing, the, Todd Moore, 39:13.  
Late Knocking, Vonnice Crist, Ed., 12:2.  
Latino Stuff Review, Nilda Cepero-Llevada, Ed., 55:44.  
Laughs Chuckles and Smiles, Dora Weiss, 9:5.  
League of Canadian Poets, 18:18.  
Leapfrog Press, 56:42.  
Ledge, The, Timothy Monaghan, Ed., 30:27; 36:32; 41:20; #17, 42:16; #19, 46/7:14; #22, 55:44.  
Legerete, 9:5; 11:4.  
Letter x, D. Pintonelli, Ed., 10:2.  
Letter to Harvey Milk, A, Lesléa Newman, Firebrand, 53:44.  
Letters of Human Nature, Rochelle Lynn Holt, Virginia Love Long, 12:5.  
License Renewal for the Blind, Clarinda Harriss Raymond, 39:13.  
Life Expectancy of Pantyhose and the Poems of Middle Age, The, Wilbur Topsail, 39:13.  
Light Thru Stained Glass, Mary Ann Henn, 9:5.  
Light Year, 10:8.  
Lighthouse Enterprises, 22:28.  
Lights of the City, The, Chuck Taylor, 7:11.  
Lil' Havana Blues, Nilda Cepero, Latino Stuff Press, 58:40.  
Lilliput Review, Don Wentworth, Ed., #51, 52, 55, 56, 39:12; 42:16; #71, 72, 44/5:34; #73-76, 46/7:14; #77-80, 48:16; #85-88, 51:40; #93, 94, 53:44; #97, 98, 55:44; #99, 100, 56:42; #101, 102, 57:42; #103, 58:40.  
Litany, Scott Sonders, 13:10; 14:3.  
Literary Anthology, Terri Jewell, Ed., 20:22.  
Literary Markets, Bill Marles, Ed., 10:2; 16:18.  
Literary Publications Co., Pat McDonald, Ed., 11:4; 12:10; 18:18; folded, 24:30.  
Lithic Review, The, 23:14.  
Literatura Magazine, J. Dolsen, Ed., 46/7:14.  
Little Butch Book, The, Lesléa Newman, New Victoria Publ., 56:42.  
Little Magazine, The: A History and a Bibliography, 13:19.  
Little Magazine, The: A Modern Documentary History, Elliot Anderson, Mary Kinzie, Eds., 13:19.  
Little Magazines, The: A Study of Six Editors, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 13:19.  
Little Review, The, Margaret Anderson, Ed., 13:18.  
Living on the Cusp, Andrea Hollander Budy, 3:12.  
Loading Las Vegas, Charles Potts, 28:47.  
Loca Viuda, Ruth Moon Kempher, 39:13.  
Locklin Biblio 2, Mark Weber, Zerx Press, 53:44.  
Long Beach Guts-ette, Guillotine Press, Keith Dodson, Ed., 39:12.  
Long Dark, Michael Kriesel, 39:13.  
Loose Woman, Sandra Cisneros, 39:13.  
Lost and Found Times, John M. Bennett, Ed., #20, 14:10.  
Lotus Sutra Poems, Robley Whitson, 48:17.  
Louisiana Literature Poetry Contest, 29:24.  
Lucid Moon, Ralph Haselman Jr., Ed., 52:42; #15, 53:44.  
Lucidity Quarterly Journal of Verse, 36:32.  
Lummox Journal, Raindog, Ed., June 1996, July 1996, 48:16; 51:40; Feb. 1998, 53:44; June 1998, 55:44; March-June 1999 issues, Lummox Sampler, 58:40; July 1999, 59:42.  
Luna Bisonte Productions, John M. Bennett, Ed., 14:10.  
Lyn Lifshin: A Critical Study, Hugh Fox, 8:10; 11:11.  
Lyn Lifshin: A Woman Speaks Out, 11:11.  
Lyn Lifshin: Not Made of Glass, Mary Ann Lynch, director, documentary, 22:29.  
Lust Songs & Travel Diary of Sylvia Savage, The, Ruth Moon Kempher, 9:5.  
MAAT, 10:8.  
Macabre Manse: The Best of Gothica Magazine and Beyond, S. Jessen, Ed., 48:17.  
Machine Gun, Todd Moore, 42:17.  
Mad Woman: Trois, Maraël Johnson, 41:31.  
M.A.F. Press, Ken Stone, Ed., 9:5; The.. C.K. DeRugieris, 22:28.  
Maggie Writes Home and Other Cat Poems, Virginia Love Long, 39:13.  
Magnolia Press, 16:18.  
Man Kind? Our Incredible War on Wildlife, Cleveland Amory, 6:12.  
Manic d Press, 12:2.  
Manicomio, Ivan Argüelles, 12:14.  
Manifesto, Joseph Verrilli, Alpha Beat, 53:44.  
Manna, Nina A. Wicker, Ed., 9:5; fall 86, 12:10.  
Many Madonnas, Lyn Lifshin, Kindred Spirit Press, 1988, 15:17.  
Many Mountains Moving, Naomi Horii, #1, 41:20, 42:16; Vol. II, #1, 46/7:14; #5, Vol. II, #2, 48:16.  
Marriage: a dialogue, Sigmund Weiss, 11:6.  
Martyr, The, Tony Bledsoe, 59:42.  
Mary Magdalene Sings the Mass in Ordinary Time, Joy Walsh, 19:23.  
Maryland Poetry Review, winter, 1988, 19:23; 34:16.  
Massachusetts State Poetry Society, Jeanette C. Maes, 18:17; 22:28.  
McOne Press, John McElhenney, Ed., The Icarus Review, City Rant #2, All Available Light, 22:28.  
Me and Your Sometimes Love Poems, Linda King, Charles Bukowski, 41:31.  
Meat Whistle Quarterly, V. Baldwin, L. Barrett, R. Holt, Eds., Vol. II #IV, spring 1999, 58:40.  
Medicinal Purposes, Thomas M. Catterson, Ed., #2, winter, 1996, 46/7:14; winter, 1997, 51:40; winter 1998, 53:44; Vol. I No. IX, 55:44; Vol. I No. X, 1998, 57:42; spring 1999, 58:40.  
Mercury House, Crunching Gravel: Growing Up in the Thirties, Robert Peters, 22:28.  
Merging Media, 10:2.  
Mescaline Chateau, Rob Cook, Ed., 53:44.  
Middlepassages, Kamau Brathwaite, 39:13.  
Millay Colony for the Arts, 18:18.  
Minotaur, Jim Gove, Ed., 22:28; #27, 39:12; #28, 40:29; #30, 48:16.  
misnomer, Eric Cash, Jeff Weddle, Eds. #1 (spring, 1992), 31:18; 32:18; fall, 1994, 41:20.  
Mockersatz, Ken Sutherland, Ed., 6:8; 8:11; 9:5; 10:2; 10:8.  
Modern Haiku, Robert Spiess, Ed., 12:2.  
Modest Proposal Chapbooks (Lilliput Review), Don Wentworth, Ed., #5, The Kingdom of the Loose Board & Rusted Nail by Christien Gholsen, 55:44.  
Monday's Meals, Leslie H. Edgerton, U of North Texas Press, 52:42.  
Moon Moves: The Phases of a Woman, ave jeanne, 9:5.  
Moon of Changing Seasons, Jeanne Shannon, 9:5.  
More Jazz Poems, Gerald Locklin, Zerx Press, 55:44.  
Moss Grows Everywhere, Amy Zimmerman, Ed., 54:22.  
Mother: A Meditation, Chuck Taylor, 4:12.  
Mother Goose on Wheels, Ruth Moon Kempher, 39:13.  
Mother Nature Poems, Sigmund Weiss, 11:6.  
Mother of Ashes Press, Joe Singer, Ed., cease publication, 41:20.  
Mother Road Publications, Greg Smith, Ed., 48:48.  
Motionless Poetry, 3:12.  
Motor Oil Queen, Cheryl B., Seat of Your Pants Press, 57:42.  
Mt. Aukum Review, 12:2.  
Mourning Our Mothers: Poems About Loss, Andrew Mountain Press, 59:42.  
Mulberry Press, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 26:21; i ain't retarded but ..., Tom House; awake past midnight, Frederick Moe; Food, Lisa Manning; Secret Place, Marie A. Asner; dream poems, Gina Bergamino; White Horse Cafe, Lyn Lifshin, Gina Bergamino; Between My Lips, Lyn Lifshin; Byzantine, James Mechem, Gina Bergamino; Nonnets, Ruth Moon Kempher; The Sun Splashing all Around, Michael Estabrook; doors, Michael Estabrook; Fluorescent Triptych, ellen; Romania, A Land of Lowering Darkness, Robert J. Ward; 7 degrees of something, G.O. Clark; First & Third, G.W. Fisher; Ghost Moon Over Pueblo, Tony Moffeit, 28:47; 31:18; Poetry Prize, 41:20.  
Murmurings and Palpitations, R. Gerry Fabian, 3:12.  
Muscle & Bone, Paul-Victor Winters, 48:17.  
Muse, J. William Griffin, Ed., 16:18; 18:17.  
Muse Poetry Calendar, 18:17; 1990, 23:14.  
Muses (software), Louie Crew, 14:10.  
Mutated Viruses, Angi (Andy Lowry), 17:6; Vampire Theology, Sigmund Weiss, 18:18; Vampire Theology, Sigmund Weiss; Sophia in the City (Part 1), Charles Rapp; UrbanGlyphics, Vincent Obregon; White Boy is a Punk, Paul Weinman; Only the Children are Innocent, George Dechant; RoadKill, Charlie Mehrhoff; Sophia in the City (Part 2), Charles Rapp, 19:23; 24:30.  
My Angel & Other Poems, Jane Hathaway, 40:27; 41:31.  
My Favorite Hell, Margaret and Daniel Crocker, Alpha Beat, 52:42.  
My Lips, Cheryl A. Townsend, 28:47.  
My Lover Is A Woman, Lesléa Newman, Ed., 48:17.  
My Mother's Body, Marge Piercy, 12:9.  
My Mouth Is a Hole In My Face, Lorri Jackson, Oyster, 57:42.  
My Name Isn't Richard Brautigan, Gina Bergamino, 17:6; 19:23.  
My Shameless St. Augustine Scrapbook, Ruth Moon Kempher, Ed., Kings Estate Press, 54:22.  
Mysterious Skin, Scott Heim, 44/5:35.  
Nailed to the Coffin of Life, Ivan Argüelles, 12:14; 13:11.  
Naked Lunch, William Burroughs, 13:18.  
Naked Review, The, Brian C. Clark, Ed., 10:2.  
National Poetry Bookfair, San Francisco, 11:5.  
Nazis & Nose Jobs, Tom House, 39:13.  
Nebraska State Penitentiary, 59:42.  
Necessity, Kurt Nimmo, 42:16.  
Nerve Cowboy, Joseph Shields, Ed., #1, spring, 1996, 48:16; #3, 51:40; #4, 52:42; spring, 1999, 59:42.  
Nether World, 20:22.  
Never Been to Yurp but I've Been to DC, Mark Weber, Zerx Press, 55:44.  
NEW, New England Writers, 18:18; 34:16.  
New & Selected Essays, Denise Levertov, 34:17.  
New CollAge Magazine, 29:24.  
New Dark Ages, The, Kurt Nimmo, 39:13; 48:17; 53:44.  
New England Writers, 18:17; 18:18.  
New Laurel Review, Lee Meitzen Grue, Ed., 57:42.  
New Male, The, Gerald Locklin, 48:17; 53:44.  
New Men, New Minds, Franklin Abbott, Ed., 13:11.  
New Millennium Writings, 44/5:34.  
New Myths: MSS, Liz Rosenberg, Robert Mooney, Eds., 24:30.  
New Poetries and Some Old, Richard Kostelanetz, 28:47.  
New Press, The, 32:18.  
New Romantics Publications, Kera, Ed., Symbiosis, Judson Crews, 28:47.  
New Sins, Rane Arroyo, Ed., 10:2; 12:2; 12:10; The Color of Enlightenment, Diane Williams, 29:24; Death Cab for Cutie, Rane Arroyo, 29:24; 30:27.  
New Society Publishers, 17:6.  
New Spirit Press, The Emerald Sky, Gina Bergamino, 31:18.  
Newspring, Tom C. Hunley, Linear Arts, 56:42.  
New Voices #3, 3:12.  
New Writer's Magazine, Ned Burke, Ed., 14:10; 15:8.  
New York Poets, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 42:16.  
News Notes, Gary S. Skeens, Ed., 6:8.  
Newsletter Inago, Del Reitz, Ed., 4:12; 8:11; 19:23.  
Next, Vol. 3, #4, June, 1996, 48:16; March, 1998, 53:44.  
Night Bites: Vampire Stories by Woman, Victoria A. Brownworth, Ed., 48:17.  
Night Roses, Allen T. Billy, Ed., 12:2.  
Nihilistic Review, The, 27:38.  
Nimrod, Francine Ringold, Ed., Hardman Literary Prize, 37/8:39; 42:17.  
98 Union St. Press, Susan Jessen, Ed., cease publication, 41:20.  
No Mag, Brad Johnson, Ed., 12:2; #6, 13:5.  
No Longer Afraid, Sue Sanial Elkind, 7:12.  
No Thanks, Chris Roush, Ed., 41:20.  
non compos mentis press, 55:44.  
Nonnets, Ruth Moon Kempher, 28:47.  
Nook News, Eugene Ortiz, Ed., 14:10.  
North Atlantic Review, 17:6.  
North Coast Review, Patrick McKinnon, Ed., #1, #3, 34:16.  
Northampton Poem, Gary Metras, 24:30.  
Northern Lit Quarterly, 10:2.  
Northern Review, The, DyAnne Korda, Assist. Ed., 20:22.  
Northwest Coast Gazette, Seattle, 30:27.  
Northwoods Journal, Robert W. Olmstead, Ed., 34:16; 39:12; 39:12.  
Notebook: a little magazine, Yoly Zentella, Ed., 10:2; 12:10; 18:17.  
Notes from a Marriage, Gavin Dillard, 13:17.  
Notes of a Human Warehouse Engineer, Belinda Subraman, Liquid Paper Press, 55:44.  
Nothing Sinister, Michael Hannan, Ed., 10:2; 13:4.  
Now It's Up To You Press, 12:2.  
Nude, Judson Jerome, 28:47.  
Oak Grove, John Sheirer, Ed., 12:2.  
Obligatos for Terpsichorean Dipsomaniacs, Mark Weber, Todd Moore, 48:17.  
obscene poems for obscene times, Tom House, 44/5:35.  
Observatory, The, Kevin Zepper, 14:10.  
Old Mongoose & Other Poems, The, Gerald Locklin, 41:31.  
Olympia Review, The #1, 36:32; 39:12.  
Oma's Story, Gina Bergamino, 28:47.  
On The Pulse Of Morning, Maya



- Angelou, 34:17.  
one hundred suns, Glen Bach, Ed. #1, 35:12, 39:12.  
1000 Reasons You Might Think She Is My Lover, Angela Costa, Ed., Pride Publ., 52:42.  
One Tree Press, Keith Dodson, Ed., A Goose-Step from Chains, Keith A. Dodson, 31:18.  
One Trick Pony, Louis McKee, Ed., #1, 52:42; #2, 53:44; #4, fall 1998, 57:42; #5, 59:42.  
ONTHEBUS #6, 24:30.  
Only the Children are Innocent, George Dechant, 19:23.  
Open Magazine, Greg Ruggiero, Ed., 15:8; 18:17.  
Open 24 Hours, Chris Toll, Ed., 12:2.  
Oral Delights, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 32:18.  
Ordinary Life, Chuck Taylor, 7:12.  
Ostentatious Mind, Patricia D. Coscia, Ed., 12:10; 16:18; 22:28.  
Out of A/Maze, Chiron Review Press anthology, Rochelle Lynn Holt, Ed., untitled as of this announcement, 41:20; 48:17.  
Outlaw!, 10:8.  
Outlaw Eyes, Todd Moore, 11:8.  
Ouvre, Jake Berry, Ed. #2, 13:4.  
Outsider Bookstore, 48:48.  
Owen Wister Review, 32:18.  
Oyster Publications, Lainie Duro, Ed., Symbiosis, Judson Crews, 28:47.  
Pacific Northwestern Spiritual Poetry, Charles Potts, Ed., Tsunami Inc., 56:42.  
Packing up For Paradise: Selected Poems 1946-1996, James Broughton, Black Sparrow, 53:44.  
Pagan Love Songs, Gavin Dillard, 13:17.  
Pagan, Richard Johns, Ed., 13:18.  
Painted Bride Quarterly, 10:8.  
Paisley Moon, Michael Spring, Ed., 32:18.  
Pancakes and Leather Jackets, Gabe Mittel, Peckerwood Press, 59:42.  
Panic Button Press, Highbrowed Cockroach, Robert Beaper, 29:24.  
Paper Air, Gil Ott, Tyrus Miller, Eds., 22:28.  
Paper Bag, The, Michael and D. Brownstein, Eds., 18:17.  
Papier-Mache Press, Fragments I Saved From the Fire, Mary Anne Ashley, 22:28.  
Parabolic Shadow Poems, Sigmund Weiss, Oyster, 57:42.  
Parnassus Literary Journal, Denver Stull, Ed., 10:8; 12:10.  
Part Time Poets, 6:12.  
Parting Gifts, 18:17.  
passager: a journal of remembrance and discovery, summer, 1991, 24:30.  
Paterson, William Carlos Williams, 34:17.  
patina of verdigris, Dan Nielsen, BGS Press, 53:44.  
Patterson Poetry Prize, 21:2.  
Patty Lou: Her World and Welcome To It, Wayne Hogan, 10:2.  
Paz Press, Juana Paz, Ed., 12:11.  
Pearl, Joan Jobe Smith, Marilyn Johnson, Barbara Hawk, Eds., Marilyn Monroe issue, 20:22; 22:28; 27:38; #20, 39:12; winter 1994 cancelled, 40:29; #21, 42:20; #22, fall/winter, 1995, 46/7:14; #27, fall/winter 1998, 57:42.  
Pearl Chapbook Contest, 18:17; 30:27; 35:12; 39:12.  
Pearl Short Story Contest, 49:31.  
Pearl Press, John J. Soldo, Ed., 15:8.  
Peckerwood Press, Pancakes and Leather Jackets by Gabe Mittel, 59:42.  
Peckerwood Serenade, William Bryan Massey III, Genuine Lizard Press, 59:42.  
Penny Dreadful Review, #34, 56:42.  
People Everyday & Other Poems, Daniel Crocker, Green Bean Press, 55:44.  
People Get Rising, Tim Wells, Ed., 55:44.  
People's Culture, John Crawford, Ed., 18:17.  
Perceptions, Temi Rose, Ed., 26:21.  
Perdam House, Publisher, Chords, Rochelle Lynn Holt, 23:14.  
Period Pieces, Rudy Kikel, Pride Publ., 52:42.  
Pet Gazette, Faith A. Senior, Ed., 14:10; 18:17.  
Pet Love, Betty White, 6:12.  
Phoenix Papers (26 Lawrence Poets), Stephen Addiss, Stanley Lombardo, Eds., 37/8:39.  
Pieces of the Bone, Ivan Argüelles, 12:14.  
Piedmont Literary Review, The, Gail White, Ed., 10:8; Vol. II #4, 13:10; 18:18; 22:29.  
Pig in a Poke, Harry Calhoun, Ed., 14:6.  
Pig Iron Press, 26:21; 32:18.  
Pig Pen, The, James Andrews, Ed., 20:22.  
Pig's Hell, Harry R. Wilkens, 59:42.  
Pikestaff Forum, The, 40:29; #13 (final issue), 51:40.  
Pineal Grit, Burton Strauss, Ed., 12:2.  
Pittsburgh Poems/Not the Pittsburgh Poems, Gerald Locklin, Mark Weber, 48:17.  
Plowman, The, Tony Scavetta, Ed., 17:6; 19:23.  
Poem Revised 39 Times, Mark Weber, Mt. Aukum Press, 58:40.  
Poems & Plays, Gay Brewer, Ed., #1, 39:13, 41:20.  
Poems From the Left Hand, Susan Sheppard, 14:15.  
Poems from the Nursing Home, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 28:47.  
Poems of a Runaway Boy, Sigmund Weiss, 11:6.  
Poet, Cooper House Pub., 24:30; 25:19.  
Poet News, Sacramento Poetry Center, 18:17.  
Poete Maudit, T. Kilgore Splake, 46/7:14.  
Poetic Justice, Alan Engebretsen, Ed., 10:8.  
Poetic Perspective, Inc., Pat Haley, Ed., 23:14.  
Poetic Space, Don Hildenbrand, Ed., 12:2.  
Poetpourri, Polly W. Swafford, Ed., Vol. VI #2, 39:12; Vol. 7 #1, 44/5:34.  
Poetry: Harriet Monroe, founder, 13:18.  
Poetry Australia, 15:8.  
Poetry Bone, Fat Cat Press, #1, 55:44.  
Poetry Connection, The, Sylvia Schichman, Ed., 24:30.  
Poetry Connexion, The, Wanda Coleman, 22:29.  
Poetry Forum, 19:23; 20:23.  
Poetry Forum Newsletter, 22:29; 41:20.  
Poetry Is Dangerous, The Poet Is An Outlaw, Tony Moffett, 42:17.  
Poetry Magic, 23:14.  
Poetry Motel, Patrick and Andrea McKinnon, Eds., 8:11; 13:4; 13:10; 22:28; #22, 42:20; #23, 46/7:14; #24, 51:40; #25, 53:44; #26, 56:42; #27, 59:42.  
Poetry of the People, 32:18.  
Poetry Peddler, The, 17:6; 18:17; 20:22.  
Poetry Placemat, Rochelle Lynn Holt, Ed., 39:13.  
Poetry Plus Magazine, German Publications, 29:24.  
Poetry/Rare Books Collection, U of Buffalo, Michael Basinski, 24:30.  
Poetry Rendezvous, 1989, 19:23; 1990 poetry contest, 22:28; 25:19; 1991 contest, 25:19; 26:21.  
Poetry Society of America, 11:4.  
Poets & Writers Magazine (Coda), 12:2; 16:18; 17:5; 18:18.  
Poet's Circle, Gina Bergamino, Ed., 11:4; 14:14.  
Poet's Craft, The, William Packard, Ed., 13:10.  
Poet's Fantasy, Gloria Stoeckel, Ed., 39:12.  
Poet's Market, Judson Jerome, Ed., 8:3; 10:8; 10:10; 17:5; 18:11; 22:28.  
Poets On, Ruth Daigon, Ed., Vol. 19, #1, winter, 1995, 46/7:14.  
Poet's Page, The, 39:12.  
Poet's Perspective, The, Neydine Pille, Ed., 14:10; 17:6.  
Poet's Review, 23:14.  
Poet's Roundtable, Esther Alman, Ed., 12:10.  
Poet's Study Club, 55th Annual International Poetry Contest, Esther Alman, director, 41:20.  
Positively Women: Women Living With AIDS, Sue O'Sullivan, Kate Thompson, Eds., 31:18.  
Post Poems II 1983, R. Gerry Fabian, Ed., 3:12; 8:11.  
Potomac Review, #13, 51:40.  
Potpourri, Craig J. Hlas, Ed., 13:10.  
Pow Wow Cafe, The, Joan Jobe Smith, 52:42.  
Prairie Journal, 19:23.  
Prattsburgh Correspondence, The, Ruth Moon Kempher, 39:13.  
Prayers To Protest: Poems That Center & Bless Us, Jennifer Bosveld, Ed., Pudding House, 53:44.  
Presently a Beast, Gay Brewer, 48:17.  
Projects, The, Laurel Ann Bogen, 23:14.  
Proof Rock, Don Conners, Ed., 12:2; 15:8; 16:18.  
Proper Noun Speller, Jean Emerich, 22:28.  
Prophet Outrage, Patrick McKinnon, 10:2.  
Prophetic Voices, Ruth W. Schuler, Ed., 10:8.  
Prose Poem, The: An International Journal, Peter Johnson, Ed. #1, 34:16; 42:17; Vol. 4, 1995, 46/7:14; Vol. 7, 55:44; Vol. 8, 59:42.  
Prying, Jack Micheline, Charles Bukowski, Catfish McDaris, Four-Sep Publ., 52:42.  
Psalms of a Sailor Jew, The, Ben Wilensky, 48:17.  
Psychologique of Small Press Publishing, The, Len Fulton, 13:19.  
Psychopoetica, Geoff Lowe, Ed., 10:2; 10:8.  
Published!, 10:2.  
Puck! The Unofficial Journal of the Irrepressible #9, 34:16; #11, 44/5:34.  
Pudding, Jennifer Bosveld, #13, 51:40.  
Purple, Daniel Crocker, Ed., 52:42; 53:44; Lynne Savitt broadside, 55:44; Kell Robertson/Daniel Crocker broadside, misc. broadside, 56:42.  
Putting Out!, Edisol Dotson, Ed., 41:20.  
Quarterly Review of Literature, 20:22.  
Queer Fuckers Magazine, Curtis Jensen, Devin Hanson, Eds., 34:16.  
Quicksilver, 52:42.  
QuikRef Publishing, Proper Noun Speller, Jean Emerich, 22:28.  
Quimby, 16:16.  
Rag Men, Terri Brown-Davidson, 42:17.  
Rag Tag We Kiss, Laurel Ann Bogen, 23:14.  
RaiZirr, 24:30.  
Ratboy, Etc., Michael Hathaway, 41:31.  
Raw Bone, Tom House, Ed., 6:8; 8:11; Issue 8, 11:4; #10, 15:8.  
Raw Dog Press, R. Gerry Fabian, Ed., 8:11; 12:2.  
Reading the Water, Charles Webb, Northeastern U, 53:44.  
Real Junkies Don't Eat Pie, Ana Christy, 39:13; 42:16.  
Red Bracelet, Janine Pommy Vega, 39:13.  
Red Brick Review, Sean Thomas Dougherty, Ed. #1, 34:17.  
Red Dirt, Lorna Dee Cervantes, Jay Griswold, Eds., 25:19.  
Red Eye, Tom Bilicic, Ed., 17:6.  
Red Pagoda, The, Lewis Sanders, Ed., 10:8; 14:6.  
Red Shift, P. Innan, 18:18.  
Red Wind Books, 32:31.  
Redneck Review of Literature, The, Penelope Reedy, Ed., 24:30; fall, 1993, 39:12; fall, 1994, 42:17; #28, 44/5:34; #29, fall, 1995, 48:16.  
Redstart, Mark Edwards, James Mechem, Eds., 15:8.  
Reflect, William Kennedy, Ed., 10:8.  
Reflections on Genius: Poems on Paintings, Rochelle Lynn Holt, 10:2.  
Reflections of a Rock Lobster, Aaron Fricke, 7:11.  
Return to "Pagany": The History, Correspondence, and Selections from a Little Magazine 1929-1932, Stephen Halpert, editor, with Richard Johns, 13:19.  
Returning to Eden, Dr. Michael W. Fox, 6:12.  
Reuben's Kincaid, Rebecca Schumedia, Ed., #5, 51:40.  
Rhapsody of a Barbaqued Lizard, William Bryan Massey III, Genuine Lizard, 58:40.  
Rhododendron, Steven Jacobsen, Ed., 17:6; 18:18.  
Rising Cost of Getting By, The, Conservatory of American Letters, 17:6.  
River Rat Review, Daryl Rogers, Ed., 13:10; 14:6.  
RoadKill, Charlie Mehrhoff, 19:23.  
RoadRunner Magazine, Bobbee Quinlan, 58:40.  
Rohwedder, 18:17.  
Roll Away the Stone, Charlie Mehrhoff, 18:18.  
Romania, A Land of Lowering Darkness, Robert J. Ward, 28:47.  
Rongwrong, (early litmag), 13:18.  
Rosemary's Tadpole, Killer Frog Contest, Scavenger's Newsletter, Janet Fox, Ed., 22:28.  
Roughhouse, Thaddeus Rutkowski, 59:42.  
Routledge Anthology of Cross-Gendered Verse, The, Alan Michael Parker, Mark Withardt, Eds., 46/7:15.  
Ruddy Duck, The, Sharon Krinsky, 44/5:35.  
Rusted Steel and Bordertown Starts, Lawrence Welsh, Sundance Press, 59:42.  
Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, 13:10.  
Sacrifice the Common Sense, Humberto Gomez Sequeira-HuGoS, Ed., 28:47.  
Sage Woman, Anne Newkirk Niven, Ed., #31, autumn, 1995, 46/7:14.  
St. Gregory's Daughter, Arpine Konyalian Grenier, 31:18.  
Samisdat, Merritt Clifton, Ed., 12:2; 14:6; 15:22; Vol. 56 #3 (final issue), 24:30.  
San Fernando Poetry Journal, Richard Cloke, Ed., 10:8.  
Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad, Renny Golden, Michael McConnell, 17:6.  
Sacks, Laurel Speer, Geryon Press, 53:44.  
Same Embrace, The, Michael Lowenthal, Dutton, 56:42.  
Sappho Says: Poems and Fragments of Sappho of Lesbos, Ibis Books, 58:40.  
Satire, 53:44.  
Scales & Weights, Todd Moore, 11:8.  
Scat, Lorri Jackson, Oyster Publ., 57:42.  
Scintillations, 7:12.  
Scavenger's Newsletter, Janet Fox, Ed., 9:5; 12:10; 14:10; 17:6.  
Scorpion, W. and D. Krussick, Eds., 12:10.  
Scrambled Eggs & Whiskey, Hayden Carruth, 48:17.  
Scream Press, Anthony Boyd, Ed., 42:20.  
Screaming Banshees, Alan Catlin, Paul Weinman, 42:17.  
Seagull Beach, Gary Metras, 44/5:35.  
Seal Press, Barbara Wilson, Rachel da Silva, Faith Conlon, Eds., 29:24.  
Seams Magazine, Carol Kyros Walker, Ed., 19:23.  
Secret Goldfish, The, bookstore, 39:13.  
Secret Place, Marie A. Asner, 28:47.  
Segue Foundation, NYC, 18:18.  
Sensualist, The, 16:18.  
Septic Stick, Todd Kalinski, 39:13; 48:17.  
Serious Pleasure: Lesbian Erotic Stories, 19:23.  
7 degrees of something, G.O. Clark, 28:47.  
Sex-Fiend Monologues, Thaddeus Rutkowski, 41:31.  
Shadow of An Angel, The, Dr. Marion Cohen, 11:5.  
Shadows Before the Maiming, Scott C. Holstad, Gothic Press, 59:42.  
Shadows of Myself, Michael Hathaway, 3:12; 7:12; 9:5.  
Shamrock Publishing, 20:22.  
Shared Journey, Rochelle Lynn Holt, Virginia Love Long, 12:5.  
Shaving and Drinking a Coke, Michael Estabrook, Alan Catlin, 42:17.  
Sheba Feminist Press, Positively Women: Women Living With AIDS, Sue O'Sullivan, Kate Thompson, Eds., 31:18.  
Shelley and the Romantics, Alan Catlin, 42:17.  
She's Back, Linda Lerner, 48:17.  
Showcase Writers' Club, Pat McDonald, Ed., 12:10.  
Sideshow, Glen Armstrong, Ed. #3, 23:14.  
Silence Opens, A. Amy Clappitt, 39:13.  
Silent Skies, Tammy Anderson, Ed., 37/8:39.  
Silver Wings, Jackson Wilcox, Ed., 10:2; 13:10; 14:10; 18:17; 24:30; 28:47; Vol. XII #2, 39:12; 44/5:34.  
Simple Vows, Kemp Gregory, 53:44; #1, summer 1998, 56:42; #2, Feb. 1999, 57:42.  
Sipapu, Noel Peattie, Ed., 24:30.  
Sistersong, Women Across Cultures: A Triennial Journal, 40:29.  
Sisyphus, Christopher Corbett-Fiocco, Ed., 23:14.  
six poems, Mark Hartenbach, non compos mentis press, 55:44.  
Skin Divers, Lyn Lifshin, Belinda Subraman, 18:18.  
Skylark, Suzanne Fortin, Ed., 24:30.  
Sleeping In A Truck, Wilma Elizabeth McDaniel, Mille Grazie Press, 54:22.  
Slime: The Secret Sex-Life of J. Edgar Hoover, Robert Peters, 46/7:15.  
Slipstream, Dan Sicoli, Ed., 9:5; 10:2; 11:4; 13:10; 14:6; 14:10; 20:22; 23:14; 28:47; 32:18; 34:16; 35:12; 39:12; #18, 56:42.  
S.L.U.G.fest, Ltd., M.T. Nowak, Ed., summer/fall 1998, 56:42.  
Small Press Book Fair, NYC, 1989, 19:23.  
Small Press News, Diane Kruchkow, Ed., 11:4.  
Small Press Review, Len Fulton, Ed., 12:2; 13:19; 17:5.  
smellfeast, Mark Begley, Steven Bruce, Eds., #1, 42:17; 42:20; #2, 44/5:34.  
Smoke the Soul Press, Elaine Hayes, Ed., 31:18; Cutthroat Blues, Blacky Hix; Blood Rain, Bill Shields, 31:30.  
Smoky City Girl, Dave Ward, 13:5.  
Snap! Black Gays and Lesbians Tell It!, Terri Jewell, Ed., 30:27.  
Snowcat Poems, The, 11:10.  
Society of Promethean Writers, 11:4.  
Some Sort of Easy Life, Mark Weber, Cold River Press, 53:44.  
Somoza's Teeth, Henry J. Morro, CD, 42:17.  
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Tallahassee Writers' Association, 34:16.  
Tangiers Nowhere, Todd Kalinski, 48:17; 53:44.  
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Dion, 14:10.  
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#11, 39:13; #14, 1996, 46/7:14; #17, 53:48;  
#18, 55:44; final issue, 58:40.  
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Weinman, 39:13.  
Too Many Things, Oberc, 44/5:35.  
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Clay Wilson, 19:23, 22:28.  
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New Alliance Records, 34:17.  
transition, 13:18.  
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3:12.  
Trouvere Company, 11:4; 14:10; 15:8;  
18:17.  
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Press, 59:42.  
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11:10.  
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Ed., 42:20.  
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14:10; 17:6; 20:22.  
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42:17.  
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53:48.  
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1st, 37/8:39; 2nd, 42:20.  
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Wannberg, 41:31.  
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Schlegel, Ed., 9:5; 10:8; 28:47.  
Urbanus, 24:30; 36:32.  
Urbanglyphics, Vincent Obregon, 19:23.  
Utne Reader, 23:14.  
Vagabond's House, 34:17.  
Theology, Sigmund Weiss,  
Catherine's Ear, Catfish McDaris, 48:17.  
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Lips, Cheryl A. Townsend, 28:47; Editors,  
Publishers and Writers of the Independent  
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Anthony, 18:17; 34:16.  
Verse & Universe, 10:8.  
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34:17.  
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publication, 41:20.  
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24:30.  
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Visions, 10:8.  
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Event Horizon, 53:48.  
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19:23; 20:22; 21:2; 22:28; 23:14; 24:30;  
25:19; 29:24; 31:18; 39:12; 41:20; 42:20;  
46/7:14.  
Wave He Caught, The, Rick Noguchi,  
42:17.  
We, the Dangerous, Janice Mirikitani,  
48:17.

Weed Green, SWOH Allen, 7:12.  
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Weber and The Bubbados, Zerx Records,  
58:40.  
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39:12.  
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#1, 58:40.  
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Bloch, owner, 17:6.  
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Ivan Argüelles, 12:14.  
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19:23.  
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Bergamino, 28:47.  
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p. haynes), Paul Weinman, r.l. nichols, 39:13.  
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Ansen, 13:10.  
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Award, 37/8:39.  
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19, 12:10.  
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Implosion, 55:44.  
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Womenwerks (Lyn Lifshin), 12:12.  
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wooden head review, Mark Hartenbach,  
Ed., 42:20; #3, 48:16; #6, 51:40; #7, 53:48;  
56:42.  
words from a little universe, Joseph  
Verrilli, 42:17.  
Words on the Moon, Douglas Gray,  
41:31.  
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Ed., 16:18; folded, 20:23.  
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41:31.  
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1988, 17:6.  
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18:18.  
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14:10.  
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17:5.  
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Ed., 39:12.  
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14:10; 19:23.  
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A. Senior, Ed., 9:5; 12:2; 12:8.  
X. Y. Z. Glenn Sheldon, Ed., 10:2;  
12:10; 14:6.  
xib, tolek, Ed., 40:29; #7, 44/5:34; #8  
(final issue), 52:42.  
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14:10.  
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(Japan), 37/8:39.  
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Review #100, 56:42.  
you whose eyes open naked to me, Will  
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7:11.

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Robertson; 48 pp.  
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pp.  
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ers; 48 pp.;  
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duction by Michael Hathaway; 47 pp., 100 cc.  
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