Coming Home

Flat fields filled
with cornstalks and cattle
outline factories.

Swirls of smoke
rise from their stacks
and disperse.

Snow covered streets;
the peonies bloomed;
three seasons are gone.

Linda Haller

Richard J. Lank
This Abyss

We now have an Abyss here on campus. Down next to the Medical Center, across the street from the Gym on the site of the old Department of French Literature. No self respecting University can be without one.

The contractors razed the French Department in the middle of the night. They brought in Caterpillar tractors on flatbed trucks, big diesel cranes and heavy duty dump trucks to haul the rubble away. It only took them a few hours to tear down the old building. The wrecking ball went down through the roof and came out with a twisted skin of pipes and floorboards and such. After a while the walls just fell in against each other because there was nothing left to hold them up.

In the morning the French Literature Department was gone and they had started work on the Abyss. The President of the University came out and broke ground with a silver spade given him by the Trustees. He smiled and said that this should be the finest Abyss in the eastern United States.

I came down on my lunch hour to watch the work on the Abyss. The workmen laughed and yelled at each other and looked vacant and happy to be at work. I leaned against the plywood barricade and watched the power shovel. It was scraping up tons and tons of brown dirt and filling up the heavy duty dump trucks. The power shovel also seemed vacant and happy to be working.

Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter came up out of the unfinished Abyss as I was standing there. He began to tell me all about the project.

"There is nothing modest about this Abyss, even for an American," he told me. "The University has been most generous."

Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter was the head of the Abyss Committee. He was on loan to our University from the East Germans. We were all very proud and honored to be associated with him.

"When the construction is completed," Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter said, stress second syllables when he should have been stressing first, "we will actually have established the illusion of bottomlessness." Smiling here in a way that didn't seem to be quite kosher, "Of course, the best we can hope for is illusion, you understand." Wistful grin.

The woman from Time magazine called to do a story about our Abyss. It was part of a "Modern Living" feature called "The Abyss Craze Takes America Holesale." She stood in front of the construction site and talked to Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter at some length. I watched the whole interview from my office window, across the street. The woman from Time was tall and had nice breasts below her Amazon necklace. I sat at my window and threw wads of paper, but they fell short.

"The Abyss is a valuable research tool," Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter was telling the woman with the nice breasts. "If you will pardon the asperion, in my opinion the Western nations have only begun to tap its potential. In my country we have for a long time recognized the interdisciplinary possibilities of the Abyss. It has proved most instrumental in the diagnosis and treatment of certain types of depression, for instance. And then there are the obvious applications in the fields of microwave propagation and particle physics."

The woman from Time asked Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter if he thought it would be long before the average American could have "market access" to his or her own Abyss. This was the one genuinely awkward moment of the interview. Herr Professor Doctor at first did not seem to understand the question. Then he did understand, but all he did was look at the woman from Time with his eyebrows cocked strangely. After a little while the woman caught on and asked another question.

By the end of the month the Abyss had been finished. There was a gala academic festival. All the deans and emeriti and department chairmen and significant alumni were there. The President stepped up to the velvet railing and looked for a while down into the Abyss. He was speechless, and obviously moved. Herr Professor Doctor Donnenwerter stood at the edge of the crowd of dignitaries and beamed.

"This is a great moment in the history of our Institution," The President said. "I am speechless and moved."

I stood in the back with the rest of the untented staff. "God bless our Abyss," we all shouted.

The day they dedicated the Abyss I went with you and a bunch of our mutual friends to a new restaurant. The restaurant was called "Beyond Freedom and Dignity," or "BFD," for short. It had just opened in our city, though the parent operation in New York had been thriving for months.

I stood behind you on the street. The waiting line stretched for three blocks. You told me that BFD took reservations, but never honored them. It was, you said, part of the concept.

When we got to the head of the line, the hostess came out to greet us. She was wearing a pale blue lab coat and carried a spiral notebook.

"Here are your cubicule numbers," the hostess said, handing each of us a plastic tab like the ones in bakeries. Mine said, "NOW SERVING NUMBER 137."

After a few minutes more in the line the hostess came back and showed us to our seats. The hostess called them "Dining Cubicles," which I suppose is what they were. Each of us sat in a separate white booth with a row of colored lights and a spring-loaded door in the front panel.

"Your supervisor will be by shortly with your reward schedules," the hostess said.

"It's everything the papers said," you whispered when she had gone.

There was no menu. They gave us what they wanted to give us, and we had to work for that. The colored lights would flash in a certain pattern and we had to watch them and punch the same pattern out on the buttons underneath the lights. If we did it right three times we got fed.

Our mutual friends were all scandalized by the new restaurant, but you thought it was hilarious. When you asked me how it struck me, I said I had no reaction.

Joey Manlapaz
That night you asked me about the Abyss.
"It's a large, dark hole in the ground," I said.
You said you thought things like the Abyss were
significant of something, but you weren't sure of what.
"I am the Abyss," I said.

Our mutual friends were upset with me. They said I was
vacant and melancholic and drank too much. They said
all these things came from a false sense of superiority. The
word "Olympian" was used.
I would have stood up on the table and showed them all
my Olympian arse, but you said I ought to go home in-
stead. It's the thought that counts, I thought.

On my way home I saw a bunch of kids from the
fraternities frolicking around the Abyss. They were
drinking beer and making daredevil diagonal leaps across
the edges. Loudspeakers from a frat house window were
blaring the Ninth Symphony.
"Whoa!" cried the crowd as one of the jumpers
tetered on the lip of the Abyss after a clumsy landing.
Someone ran up and hauled him to safety and everybody
went back to drinking beer.

I stood watching them for a little bit, then decided to
leave. But as I turned to go I thought I saw Herr Professor
Doctor Donnerwetter sitting with the fraternity boys by
the beer keg. Sure enough, it was he.
Herr Professor Doctor Donnerwetter was singing along
with Beethoven in his native tongue, marking time with
his beer mug. He must have seen me staring at him,
because he turned in my direction with a look of com-
prehension, shaking his head "yes," to some question I
hadn't asked.

Stuart Moultropp
Early Meeting

Can you be the same woman?
the same stranger sitting with me,
in my memory at that cafe bar
talking politics
women issues, the Black movement
and drinking Cappuccino
The cafe a bubble of glare
with high ceilings
thinning the cold avenue night
All I remember is surface
your green coat
the hard wood stool
the Italian bread butting out
of a woven basket
items but not the qualities of you
Not the warmth keeping your skin soft
or your eyes gentle
I couldn't see you there
obscured among the clarity of surfaces
the memory seems so fresh yet cold
like a bubble of brittle ice

W.M. Turner

there is Rooster Boy.
Cock-a-Doodle-Doing his thing.
Out there on the dance floor.
So confidant, what a bore.

there he was in my dream,
Cock-a-doodle Doing his thing.
Later he told me what Freud would say,
"Your fears are part of the embodiment,
You can't keep thoughts together with sand and cement."
He said.
(In other words, there is no mortar to keep the order).
It all reminds me of Marx,
And uniformed guards in all the parks,
Who fear Darwin's chains and capitol gains.

there he was in my dream,
Cock-a-doodle-Doing his thing.
Out there on the dance floor.
He was the one.
Who explained,
To me,
That it was Freud who fills the void.
The embodiment of my fears,
The sand and cement of the years.
Now they say there is no mortar to keep the order.

there he was in my dream,
Cock-a-doodle-Doing.
His thing.
Out there on the dance floor.
He then explained to me that it was Freud,
Who filled the void,
Who mixed the mortar of disorder,
The embodiment of years and fears.
The sand and cemented years and fears.

there he was in my dream,
 Appropriately clad, (casual plumage),
Shaking his high head, eyes closed,
Cock-a-doodle-Doing his thing,
On the dance floor.

Diane Shatro
The Seven for Penny
(Fée[r]e pour une autre fois)

Around that time as on a carousel...
Spinning...reeling grace...an ignorant hope...
Blind through that time...wheels, themselves called a trope,
Oiled by these stationary words I’d tell
To you such strange and pretty times ago.
However cunning over was I fools;
And, plonge in Santayana’s bright pools,
Recirculate things that from life you know...
Engraving “Beauty is pleasure perceived
As the quality of a thing...” on the
Paling shades of past eves... Seeking to see
Archacally... turns I never received
Rain down... the wake of that shore’s tide... you... th...
These aped philosophies prove naught... here’s true... th...

Abstemiousness will not do at times
Such as this such as this tries to recount.
Beer...yes...at such hollow performances, limes
Only fiery things to be thrown around.
They filter social service wares through sleights....
Hooked and/or weaving when/if comes the end....
All rejoice in bars and bloom for lost sights
Reached for with silenced heroed wings that lend
Echoes only, noisily, for the damned-up gift
Abjuring self... hounded after parties
Passed...flow of water... Molly’s enclosed drift...
And dark the old man saved for such artistes.
Roiling shade, interpolate this into
This: in an open field was wine for you.

And anyway, it’s impossible to
State things in some different way to you. Forming
Brutal darkened feelings soon exiles the few
Open doors left when, closed by the storming,
They crumble that time’s contiguity...
Hopefully that won’t o’erlood this poming,
And I might mfcoup that I might... the sea
Recedes to stay ever dry; the gloaming
Entertains visions of Blake’s endless night.
And all of its horror... and forgetting...
Fishogue! Some witchry... stole a well-known sight...
A word once found... under the rod... setting
Recall off track... before life’s December...
Tortures ignobly... I can’t... remember....

...Appearing in shades of scarlet and bronze...
Showing the shiny clear schism... one sought
Breasts and hips... measured emotion in pounds
Or dollars... knew the emptiness and fought
Through lies... muddily facing that reeling
Hollowness which is one alone, both when
Acknowledgment mixes thought and feeling.
Read this to your wound... we both know... Again
Ends the sense of the past. Hear, then! ’twas you
...Appearing in shades of bronze and scarlet.
Portrayed that moonlit gap of self, which through
All shared was between us... we were its target.
Read this as you may, you that heard, and know:
That not there is animate, as this should show.

About the rains that night that night the rains,
So pure, were smooth crystalline globes, freezing
Before striking ground. Wet blackness seizing
Our childish wandering voices... gains
Then faced with you ever glow, argently.
How came you through that prayer? Was I that night
As I now seem... fleeing your ever smiling sight...
Reflections you knew as in revery?
Even through the clumsiness that winds this
Age, such things lead me still... alone... away...
Past years rise, then maze vision; your kindness
And mercy that eve follows every day...
Restores the scene of that night, yet alas!
That warmth shines through a shaded depth of glass.
And that lore seemed of more than one night...
So run, river! Thaw the entrance of that terminal
Base understood...a little cloud before light
Opinely learned, supinely germinal.
That's about all I though I'd say here, so,
Having said it, this is transitory...
And yet I'll amilk the dugs of my song, crow
Reckless lays, ripoff/plan a story...
Even though I'm not much of a writer....
Anyway, I write things like poems; as though
Prattling's not what I'm doing...lighter
And campy those words...yeah, right...though their sound's hollow.
Read, and if you rightly set your sights,
These rhymes should seem histories of much better nights.

As I would have you glean some truth amid
Such a whirlwind of bent-learning learned lines...
Both realities create for you...signs
Of the keys to give...always a kid...
To have conducted times of a change to you
Had been this Janus spawned desire...yet these
Are a narcissistic flow...a bay to please
Readings of self...they mark not the swerving true
Epistrophe the times were then...graced with...
Apart from disinterested fucking
Playing Ulysses and such I was blithe,
And liked pale bête noir's spleen...yet struck things.
Read then as through the dead, that, as would a myth,
Tined the form of that shadowed, sea-struck ring.

M. Clemens

Linda Jean Sherman
PLEA FOR PROGRESS

Everyone please wreck your car.
By doing that you may think you
Won't get far, but just think:
no sticky ignitions
no stick shifts
no credit cards
no OPEC nations
no assembly lines
no prestige no shells
no thirty billion decibels
no annual inspecting no hood checking
no self servitude
(put green paper in a box
put this orange fume in a tank
get in this metal hunk and just
drive your body away...)
no tidal basin rides
no oil corporation bribes
no more transmissions
no highway commissions
no highways no LA freeways
no driveways no throughways
for always no one-ways
no cavernous potholes
no holiday death thols
no interstate monolith!
no parking meters no stop signs
no gasoline eaters no yellow lines
no no-fault insurance
no performance endurance
no good years no retreads
no broken limbs and busted heads
no tune-ups no pick-ups no smash-ups
no fan belts no seat belts
no dashboards no billboards
no highway patrol no losing control
no drive-ins to drive in to
no texaco star to trust your car to
no squealing disc brakes
no petroleum embargos
no squished sunbaked snakes
no wide-load winnebagos
no driving into lakes
no (good buddy) CB radios
no lemons
no limousines

no volare wo wo wo wo
no Mobil Oil sponsored sucker
educational TV show
no head lamps no exit ramps
no A. J. Foxt and no Detroit!
no smothered babies in the trunk
no kudzu-covered piles of junk
no tire tools no fenderskirts
no fear of sneezing no staying alert
no dumb survivors that don’t work
no avis no hertz
no sleazy hippy vans no disgruntled doormen
no billion gallon zillion dollar
penis pipeline exploding devil’s bile
ghororol sodomizing come
deep into Mother Alaska...
no MG no LTD no KXE
no burning rubber no STP
no overhead cam no trans am
no chevys II no pontiacs
no oncoming lane maniacs
no porsche-school no (alas) terraris
no Skylarks no firebirds
no more these awful colored turds!
no mustangs no colts no cougars
no corsets no corvairs
no malibus no venturas
no catalinas no centuras
no falcons no fairlanes
no terrible car names
no heart-stopping pollution
no hauling ass no asphalt
no used car deals
no, perhaps, no more wheels
no intersections no whiplash no honking
no tiris no flashing arrows mowers ahead
no no fishing from bridge
no no passing over hill
no no turning back
no rockslides no hitching rides
no carbon monoxide suicides
no start no stall
just wreck your cars, that’s all.

Richard Howorth

Don't Rock the Bed Rock Baby

The rock clock's tick-tock ticks tock on the bed-rock,
Rocking the baby in the tree tops,
The ticking tocking, rocking the rock cradle,
Near the rolling river below.

One, Two cradles,
One in the tree tops,
(this baby rocks alone).
Two by the bed-rock,
(two babies, to and fro).
While still the clock tocks, tick tock.

And the door’s lock,
Locked locked the tick of the latch,
The catch, and that’s that.
Three, we are together,
Listening to the tick tock, all rock.
Baby on top and two below,
Fearing nothing, but the river flow.

Diane Shufro
ERASER-HEAD REVISITED

The wasteland
names on the rocks
a system of rivers
filled with mud.
a mountain with seagulls
floating over
all the cans and things
once used and
now no more
long structures of brick
'dark Heineken beer'
it's intentional reality
this intestinally
call it Roman jelly
Newark, New Jersey
seen from metroliner, metro liner
a row and a row of
blocks and brick buildings
alone man under bridge
goddamn this soot!
and the darkening plain.

Amy Naylor

City

'it say here that this building were built in '835
things were different in '835
not nearly so much hustle-bustle, what you think George?'

but George don't hear me—he worried
he don't like it here, he too scared
he never seen so many people
so many black people
and he scared of them
and if it ain't black people it's foreign people
he scared of them too
George think they laughin at him talkin bout him
gonna get him
he don't know and he scared
he don't like it here

but I know
I know that everybody thinks like George
the black people think they laughin at there
the foreign people think they talkin bout them
everybody think they gonna get got
but I know so I ain't scared
I know everybody so worried bout they own ass
they don't got nothin to do with me
so I ain't scared
I just don't like it here

Charles Dennis
Rapture

Then,
A song,
Comes along.
It brings to me,
An impulse to be,
More and more of myself
Natural vigor, renewed health,
Births conceived from song of healing.
Grand, so grand the heavenly feeling.
Soul! Feel yourself lifted from the deep mire,
Higher and higher and higher and higher...

Broken spirits over ages,
Nestle free of words of sages.

Scot Han

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A Ball Bouncing...

A ball bouncing
against a wall
goes beyond it
into the depths
of the universe—
far out—
ever returning—
never resounding—
just its deafening silence
can be heard, leaving
a dust-filled trail—
falling particles
upon each other—
the air’s converging
molecule’s resuming
their previous behavior,
just as they were
before the ball
transcended space...
only
remembering well
their strange visitor.

Dollyna Perry

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Collage

From these old photographs
I build my characters
I place them in pockets
(To have and to hold)
Lace and cattails
Define their edges
Scraps of material
(Blue jean, lavender satin)
My sister collects
For only a year
Then throws away
Fill in the depths of their lives

Today
I give up the idea
There is no need
for deodorant
The smell of mildew haunts me
And in the morning sun
The blood runs down my legs

Nancy G. Moore

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Particles of sand
Each with our own color
and edge
Are softened by tears
meshed together
To build a castle
of dreams
Only to meet
our fate
Under the tide
As the sky
grows pastel
They say autumn
is a time of death

L.J. Sherman

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The heat
penetrating deep into the skin
until the pulsing heart
is the only movement
except for the limp hand
periodically wiping small
sweat beads
from the pounding forehead
Liquids tunnel through the body
coaxed back out
to the skin’s surface
draining energy
from small reservoirs
Slowly
the sun’s intensity begins
to diminish
leaving the exhausted body
to await
the cooling air

patricia fiedstra

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p.k. ganzel
At the same time, I used to have a great Blues collection, which I lost. I listen to just about anything though.

WT: In Black Music, you identified Sun Ra as having made the most interesting application of the 'New Music' ideas to a big band setting. And I notice David Murray and Sam Rivers are doing large group work. Do you see that as something people are wanting to do but are held back from because of costs?

AB: Yes. I think that it's only natural that they want to hear the music in its extended context. Lester Bowie had a fifty piece orchestra last week. I didn't see that because I was at another gig. But I know what that might mean. I think it just demonstrates that people want to hear the music in a big orchestral kind of setting. I think it's a good idea.

WT: Simultaneously, there has been the development of soloists and small groups.

AB: Now on the one hand that's interesting to hear, if the musicians can sustain themselves in solo situations. Some of these soloists become so solipsistic and individualistic that it's like we ain't even out here. Some of it's interesting because a really good musician can sustain very well by himself, soloing. But I hope that doesn't become the alternative to groups. I'm in favor of collectives.

WT: There's been a lot of interest in applying New Music to orchestral settings. There was Ornette's Skys of America, and Braxton's Creative Orchestra Music. Now, in Braxton's case you're coming out of a post-Webern kind of thing.

AB: I think that the problem, and again it cycles to a higher level, is that a lot of people don't really understand that when Duke Ellington came on the scene, that whole European concert music was understood, had been thoroughly absorbed. And that influence could be put to good read. I mean you listen to 'Transbluesency' or 'Diminuendo and Crescendo in C'. Duke understood Delius, Ravel, Debussy. That has definitely been under. So that now, somebody who wants to find out if you've heard Karhein Stockhausen, or John Cage or Webern, is less interesting to me, because I can actually listen to Webern. It's no big thing. So while I think world music is one source for jazz to develop, obviously, because it's become an international expression.

WT: Are you afraid that's going to happen with some of your writing?

AB: Could be. I'm not immune to that... Say Sun Ra's whole use of electronics. Now that's way back. But Sun Ra couldn't even be heard until everybody picked up on electronic music. I believe he was the first one to use electronic music, and also the light show. He was doing that... I don't mean nothing about light shows, and he was doing light shows then, hooked up to his organ so that when he played a low note there was a low color, and when he played a high note a high color. And he'd be playing the lights and coming off the wave lengths of the sound. He was doing those kind of innovative things. But he was kept away from interchange with a real consistent audience. It was a fugitive kind of thing.

WT: Bringing this all back to Washington, you're mid-way through your second semester here; how do you feel about the writing that's been submitted to you this year?

AB: I've been very impressed by a lot of it. I'm just sorry that there's not more outlets for a lot of writers. Because I think that people sometimes get discouraged and get into stuff that really is not beneficial to their writing. I wish there were more outlets; that I could provide more outlets in terms of publishing and readings. But I've been impressed in the main.

WT: As a teacher of creative writing what is your main objective in working with your students?

AB: To try to get them to develop a style of their own, to sort of cut loose various kinds of obstructions and impediments to their own self expression, in the sense of trying to revise styles and lead them into making their own statements.

WT: Where do you go after GWU?

AB: That's a good question. I don't have a job for next year. I'm supposed to teach at Columbia School for the Arts, second semester, one course. But everybody knows, then there's no guarantee that they'll get to me. I've got some job offers; offers. I'm still looking for a job in Newark.

WT: Have you ever been able to work in Newark for an extended period?

AB: I've never had a job there.

WT: But you live there...

AB: No, I can't get work there. There's a bunch of colleges in New Jersey. There are about four of them in Newark at least. And of course, New York has mucho mucho. But I can't get there either. So, we'll see.

Amiri Baraka, this year's writer in residence, was born LeRoi Jones in 1934, and spent the greater part of his early years in Newark, New Jersey. After completion of high school in that city, he attended Howard University in Washington D.C., graduating at the age of nineteen. While there, he formed friendships with other writers, such as Ted Shine, and A.B. Spellman, author of Four Lives in the Be-Bop Business. Baraka briefly pursued further studies at Columbia University, and The New School, and served a term in the United States armed forces, stationed for a period in Puerto Rico. Settling in New York's Village area, Baraka began a career as poet, playwright, publisher and activist which quickly brought him into contact with a community of artists and writers as diverse as Frank O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg. His early success with the Obie award-winning play Dutchman brought him wide popular acclaim, along with his increasing frequency of appearance in publications including Down Beat, and Evergreen Review. Leaving the Village for Harlem in the early sixties, Baraka expanded the scope of his activities to include a role in the founding and direction of the Black Arts Repertory Theater School. He later returned to his home-town of Newark, where he has been involved with Spirit House, The Committee for a United Newark, Jihad Publications, the Congress of African Peoples, the Revolutionary Communist League, and the Anti-Imperialist Cultural Union. Amiri Baraka's published works include: Preface To A Twenty Volume Suicide Note; The Dead Lecturer: Black Magic; In Our Terribleness; Hard Facts: Dutchman and the Slave; The Baptism, and the Toilet; Four Black Revolutionary Plays; The Motion of History; Tales; The System of Dante's Hell; Home; Race, Race, Rays, Raze; Blues People; and Black Music. His works have been selected for publication in nearly every major anthology of American writing to appear since the early sixties, including Langston Hughes' New Negro Poets USA, and Donald Allen's The New American Poetry.
Siege-line

We all went over to the window and stared.
I think we're going to be here for some time,” Doctor Socrates lamented, beating chalk-dust from tweedy sleeves. “There must be five or six thousand of the slimy buggers out there.”

I don't read Denebians, so I couldn't make out most of the signs they were carrying. Only a few were in English. They said things like, “UNDERMINE THE UNMOVED MOVER!” and “COKE ADDS LIFE!” This last, I assumed, was a metaphor.

There were, indeed, quite a few of them out there.

Doctor Socrates lit a cigarette and held in the smoke, looking down at the street through heavy lenses, carefully. “We are under siege,” he declared. “Shit. Oh shit.” thundered Thrasymachus.

“'There's really nothing for it,'” rejoined Doctor Socrates. "Relax."

Eugenius stretched himself full length on the window sill and pillow's his head on Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton. “All things considered, there's something comfortable about being in here,” he yawned.

“As opposed to being out there,” Demogorgon elucidated.


“I don't see what's so cozy about it,” Diotoma complained, scowling down into the street.

Thrasymachus grumbled. “Listen to the noise down there,” Demogorgon rhapsodized. “The whole city could be coming apart.”

“It sounds like every drain in three blocks is half clogged up,” Thrasymachus objected.


“Merry Christmas,” Eugenius mumbled, half asleep.

“Happy New Year.”

The Denebians arrived on our planet about 18 months ago. Science understands them as VISCO's Very Large Single-Celled Organisms. They are about five feet long (or tall, depending on the circumstances) and look much like our parameciums, except that they are bright purple.

Naturally, the Denebians have an advanced technology. They have understood space travel for a long time, and it's rumored that they know how to do interesting things with the fabric of space and time. Yet oddly enough, they seem to possess a rather backward social organization. There is practically no written history on Deneb, only a rudimentary kind of government, and no cultural institutions to speak of.

Their primary interest in dealing with earthpeople is the study of political economy.

We have almost 300,000 Denebians living here in Washington. This is the largest Denebian population of any city in the world. They seem to like it here.

The government likes the Denebians, too. Of course our guests haven't offered anything in trade yet that would be really useful on Earth—we haven't understood most of what they've shown us—but there is one happy circumstance. Denebians metabolize a set of hydrocarbons remarkably similar to those found in crude oil. They do this quite unintentionally, as far as we can tell. The average Denebian puts out about two and a half barrels every ten days.

The Denebians have been very cooperative about the oil. They don't seem to mind taking it off their hands (I should say pseudopods). The government has built storage tanks at regular intervals along all the big streets in the city. The Denebians just locomote in and make their deposits wherever the mood strikes them. The Arab states aren't too happy about the Denebians, but as yet there have been no major international repercussions.

To be sure, we have our problems with our purple friends. Some people have a hard time getting used to the idea of sharing the sidewalk with giant iridescent ovoids covered all over with quivering cilia. Running into one on a dark street late at night can be disquieting. Some folks think they have an offensive odor (the Denebians are not known to bathe). Others complain about their voices, which are admittedly very loud and do sound a little like old plumbing. They aren't awfully polite for intelligent beings. Sometimes they roll right over people in the street without an apology.

Anti-Denebian committees have been formed in New York and Los Angeles, but the government is unsympathetic. The President made a speech last week to calm the people down. The Denebians, the President said, may grow on us in time.

It was the second day of the siege.

“What are they murmuring about anyway?” Thrasymachus wondered, watching the unending stream in the street.

“They're protesting the absence of a central government on their home planet,” Demogorgon said.

“Who are they protesting for?” Diotoma wanted to know.

Eugenius rubbed his stubby 'ace. “Quien sabe!” he said.

Doctor Socrates came in with ginger ale and donuts from the vending machines in the lobby. We had broken into them that morning with a chair. Outside, the sun was going down among the condominums on the Virginia side of the Potomac.

“What you looking at, Marlrow?” Thrasymachus called over.

“The sun is going down,” I said.

“Are you in or out of this hand?” Eugenius wanted to know.

“Out,” I said.

Doctor Socrates shuffled, cut, and dealt. They had been playing seven card stud for about eighteen hours. Diotoma was winning by a large margin.

“Got any more cigarettes, Doc?” Demogorgon asked.

Doctor Socrates smiled around a butt. “I just looted these,” he said, offering a pack.

“See what you can do with tenure,” Eugenius said.

Thrasymachus put down his cards and got up from the table. He came over to the window and stood next to me.

“This place is getting to me,” he muttered. “I think I'll go out there and splash a couple hundred of those oversized germs all over the pavement.”

“Some people have already tried to get out,” I reminded him. “The Denebians just rolled over them.”

“I don't care. I just can't sit still for this anymore. I want to know what happens when you smack one of those bastards real hard with a table leg.” He tapped his table leg against a curved palm.

“I don't think it's wise,” I said.
It was the fifth day of the siege.

Thrasymachus had disappeared without a trace into the
clash of Denebians a few moments after he waded in. I
had watched from the half-open door of our building,
powerless to help in any way. He went down swinging.
Meanwhile, the rest of us did our best to survive. We
hoisted the rest of the vending machines in the building
and put together a food supply that we figured could last
a month. The heat, lights, and plumbing were working
normally, so we were quite comfortable.

The Denebian demonstration showed no signs of letting
up. The city police, the Executive Protective Service, the
National Guard, and a squad of Army Rangers showed up
at various intervals and tried to disperse the crowd. They
used tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons to no
avail. I heard the Rangers call in an air strike finally, but
no planes showed up.

The poker game continued. Diotoma was still winning.
"What would you be doing on the outside right now?"
Demogorgon asked Doctor Socrates as Diotoma dealt.
"What time is it?" Doctor Socrates returned.
"3:49 p.m.," Eugenius supplied, glancing at his watch.
"And what day is this?
"Thursday."
In that case I'd be at home trying to prepare my lecture
for Friday's Comparative Literature."
My full house beat Diotoma's three queens. I won fifty
dollars.
"Who gives a shit about comparative literature,"
Demogorgon said.
"The Denebians don't," Eugenius observed taking over
the deal.

It was the seventh day of the siege.
"We can never be rescued," Doctor Socrates said to
Diotoma. "I owe you more than three thousand dollars."
"Double or nothing," Diotoma offered.
"Maybe the Denebians will never go away," Eugenius
said. He was lying on the windowsill again, watching the
street idly. "Maybe they could just airdrop food and
supplies to us, and we could stay here for the rest of our
lives."
"More likely they'd pick us up in a helicopter," I
pointed out.

Diotoma dealt another hand. Doctor Socrates got more
heavily into debt.
"Then why haven't they done that already?" Eugenius
wondered.

Demogorgon, Diotoma, and Doctor Socrates put down
their cards and thought for a moment.
"Maybe they don't know we're in here," Demogorgon
suggested.
They were silent.
"Then someone ought to call the police or the army,"
Doctor Socrates said.
No one volunteered.
"Anyone got fifteen cents?" Eugenius asked
halfheartedly.

It was the eighth day of the siege.

Doctor Socrates stood at the front of the classroom
with his arms spread in a V over his head. The morning
sunlight was at his back. With his new beard he looked a
little prophetic.
"I never intend to go out there again as long as I live,"
he cried.
"Huzzah!" shouted Eugenius.

I looked out the window. The last of the Denebians
were just leaving the street. I didn't say anything.
It wasn't long before the soldiers came. They set a
medevac helicopter down right on the roof of our building
and came down the fire escape to our classroom. We were
sitting at the card table when they came. Everyone had
noticed the absence of noise in the street, and then they
heard the helicopter coming in. No one said anything.
"Is everyone OK here?" the lieutenant from the
helicopter asked.
No one answered. We all just got up and crossed the
room.

We were standing at the window, staring.

Standing at the window, staring.

Standing staring.

Stuart Moulthrop

Amy Gould
CONVERSATION WITH

Note: Al Nielsen, Willie Turner, and David Goren are the interviewers. The following is an edited transcript of a tape-recorded interview.

WOODEN TEETH: Your literary works over the past few years have seemed to be moving towards a direct treatment of the content and style. To what extent has the application of political theory that grows out of your path of experience been responsible for that change?

AMIRI BARAKA: I think by 1964 or 5, I had begun to realize that the work needed to be more direct, that the abstraction and the difficulty in my writing was unnecessary. It was just the result of the kinds of subjectivism and lack of discipline, because I’m not against experimentation at all. I think experimentation is absolutely necessary, just like you experiment with a certain kind of instrument, like that and we give (it to) somebody and (they) say, ‘it don’t work, what’s this experiment?’ You have to raise it to a consolidated rational principle. But I’ve understood that the work to reach the people has to be directed at them. It has to be a mass style, more and more of a mass style, and I think that started in my work in ’65; more direct.

WT: There’s always been an element of ritual in a play such as Dutchman with it’s circular structure and say, Mad Heart. To what extent is that now changing from ritual to historic paganty? I’m thinking of a play like Slaveship for example.

AB: Well, the ritual form comes out of concern (for) the focus on cultural nationalism...it came out of the whole attention to Africa, but particularly the cultural nationalists’ focus on Africa, which tells us to go back to history, then try and make those rituals and things relevant to today. But I think, having understood ritual, and I don’t see anything wrong with ritual in terms of using it as a form, but theater is a kind of ritual anyway. It takes on a ritual form, without being particularly religious, but I think in terms of the pageant thing, I saw it as a good form for that. I wanted to say a lot of things, actually I got the form from a little church form my grandmother used to have. They would do Bible histories, march up on stage, each one would be somebody different in Bible history. They would tell that story. I could see the question and problem of telling history on the stage. Still, it fascinates me.

The Motion of History is an attempt to do that again, an attempt to string it out, and deal with history. And you know personally in terms of history, I still think that some dramatist or dramatists may be, will be collectible, we still need to do a history of all these presidents, for instance, of the U.S. the same way. Just think if we approached the presidents of the United States the way Shakespeare did Richard the III, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, they wouldn’t call it classic in our time, though maybe (laughs) it would finally one day be called classic, because I think that’s really what Shakespeare was saying. Shakespeare shows a kind of degeneracy, the horror of the feudal age...the coming to an end, really, of feudalism and the rise of capitalism, which at that time the bourgeoisie was a heroic class, because they were getting rid of the kings and stuff. You know, cutting their heads off and things like that. But now, they’re about to shuffle off...they ended their heroic phase many years ago and now they are an obstruction to society’s development, you know, their degeneracy and demise needs to be told. So, I can see a historical necessity in dealing with this age.

WT: One of the things that’s always disturbed me is that there’s so much concentration on the changes and phases of your career, that little is said of the continuity.

AB: By the late fifties, I really lived in a community that was made up by the Black Mountain poets on one hand and the Beats on the other hand, and the New York poets on the other hand. There was a certain kind of, what would you call it, a domination by certain schools. I tended to be at sort of a crossroads of all the schools. I published a magazine, Yugen, that had all of them in it. But I saw my own work changing, and at first it was good because I liked the things that, say, association with other folks did. I think it gave me much more firmness in handling the image, you know, concrete image certainly, save an understanding that I could use all of the things I knew about.

I think Ginsberg, certainly, principally, and Olson in terms of form and things, they opened my eyes, my head, you know, all those poets I learned from all...everybody...Frank O’Hara, because I was young and serious about it, and I wanted to know people who were doing...then came a time by the end of the fifties when I really thought I couldn’t write poetry myself. I was writing poetry that sounded like somebody else’s form, somebody else’s voice, even somebody else’s concerns. I’d be writing about things I didn’t even know anything about. Which was ‘hip,’ because I’d seen poems written about that subject, therefore that subject must be important. So, but the things I’d really want to write about...see, the whole book The Dead Lecturer actually is about that. I mean that’s the book where I tried to sort of see my way out of this kind of morass of connection with things I wasn’t totally in favor of.

WT: In your book Raise, you say ‘White poetry is intellectual and physical for the most part. Physical in its attempt to make forms which endure past their meaning as organic creations.’ This sounds like a reaction against the objectivism of people like Zukovsky...the notion of a poem as an object, the poem as an artifact.

AB: See, like in terms of trying to get away from that whole form and content that I thought was boxing me in, I worked on this thing called Dante...which sounds very super academic and formal but at that time I just wrote and I abandoned any attempt to make sense. I just wanted to find out what I really wanted to say. Somewhere instinctively, automatically, without any prethought about it. I developed a method of doing that where I focused on an image conjured up in my mind. Like, if I wanted to talk about a person, for instance, I’d visualize that person and rather than saying, ‘I am thinking of Tommy Tucker.’ I would just let my mind react to Tommy Tucker and all the things that I wanted to say about him would come, like, all kinds of wild things...might be how tall he was, who he reminded me of, or a song I heard him sing, how he sounded when he ran, something like that. I started to get away from those old ready-made forms.

And that’s the way I broke out of that in terms of the thing of saying White poetry is addicted to those forms. See, as a cultural nationalist, I saw things essentially as Black and White.
Amiri Baraka

AB: But what it is, actually, is Bourgeoisie culture, like I said before, why the Bourgeoisie, the rulers of this society have to consistently turn to the past. See, in the future, their thing's playing out. In the future their thing has played out, the present is playing out. Therefore...this constant domination by old and outmoded forms is another aspect of psychology of trying to maintain the status quo. You must learn from tradition, if you don't learn from tradition, you're trying to recreate the wheel, which is really unnecessary because you use up all that energy to make a wheel and you could be making a spaceship. You know what I'm saying, you have to learn from history, but at the same time you don't become dominated by it. Where you want to be it, because that's already happened, so this whole focus on the unchanging excellence elements of classics and things like that...which is metaphysical. It's just another attempt to, like, maintain the status quo, which is to say things don't change, and my reaction to that particular statement was like a classic cultural nationalist. Where I saw bourgeois culture essentially as White culture, though the bourgeoisie in the United States is White.

WT: In an early poem, 'Theory of Art,' you said, 'The root is likewise an animal. A totem. Pure & flamboyant.' In your more recent poem 'Literary Statement on Struggle' you say, 'A poem is the naked advice of the heart—and this should be noted/noted/our statement of life, summations of reality/sh'd try to make people progress/our life here go forward.'

AB: I think there is a consistency in content. The method of analysis has changed. And given my own world-view at that particular time...that's what changes. But I think I've always had that sense of struggling for human progress, for one thing, advance of consciousness and advance of material life. But that's just the clarity of it; it gets clearer.

And so now, in the The Washington Post, this dude wrote what he didn't like about this stuff is that now it is very clear. But that's like what Sartre said. If you write about something, some tragedy, and say at the end you don't know how it happened well that's 'ART.' But if you say you do know how it happened and who did it, that's social protest. See, when it gets too clear, then people have to take sides.

It's like Brecht's article on non-objective painting; as long as it's a red, independent of blood coming out of somebody's body, or as long as it's a yellow, and not a dead Puerto Rican child, then it's cool. It can hang in anybody's house, and anybody will be willing to pay for it. But if you're going to actually hook it up to reality, the realities that we know, then people will react to it in the same way that they react in reality. They'll take sides.

You see, the so-called poster-style is where the people figure that all that you have to have is correct ideology and automatically, if they say it, that's great art because what they're saying is correct socialism. But you're saying you still have to learn to be whatever you're going to be, if you're going to be a writer, if you're going to be a painter, I don't care what you're going to be.

But that's still the opposite of formalism, where just learning the form is sufficient to being an artist. Whatever the hell you're going to talk about...it doesn't make any difference because it's going to be obscure anyway. I am opposed to that. I think that it has to be artistically powerful, otherwise you'd just putting a speech on it, or painting a poster. But at the same time, revolutionary content does not make things automatically artistically powerful, or automatically artistically unpowerful. There are two separate aspects of form and content. And the others, Four Black Revolutionary Plays...and Grove's distribution thing is nowhere. I mean it's distributed by Random House. What is that stuff?

The only books of mine that have been coming out consistently since they were published are Blues People, and Dutchman, and The Slave. Morrow publishes those and they keep them fairly well in print.

WT: The plays have been given much wider circulation than either the poems or your essays. Does that cause any problems for you with your audiences? Do you run into audiences that aren't familiar with your verse?

AB: No. Usually if they know your plays they at least know you write poetry. I had a book of plays come out about a year ago, The Motion of History, and Morrow's bringing out this selected poems in the fall, and a reader, a fiction and drama reader.

WT: Will there be any new material in the reader?

AB: Yeah, there's new material in it. So that at least brings it halfway up to date. But at the same time, there's stuff I've had around for ten years that I haven't been able to publish. Because people just fool around. They're not interested in it.

Then again, there are books that I should write myself. I wrote a book summing up the experience with the elections in Newark, but it was written from a cultural nationalist perspective. Anc Howard University Press held onto it for so long that by the time they went to publish it I had changed my mind about a lot of the thing. And so I told them, we can't publish it now because I don't hold to that anymore. But I would be willing to publish it if they let me criticize what I had written at the end of each chapter, so that I could have a real dialogue with myself. I think it would be interesting because it's a viciously cultural nationalist book. But I thought that by taking my own thought and showing it to be shallow, actually, that it would be an interesting thing for people to see the arguments...what I used to be saying and what I'm saying now. But now, Howard claims that costs too much money. So now they can't publish it because I don't uphold that anymore, and they don't want to print the other part of it, so the books in Embo. That book needs to be published because it tells a whole six or seven years of history, and shows in practice the whole question about changing ideology, the whole struggle with Gibson, the whole Black middle-class bullshit in Newark. That really needs to be know by people. For instance, you're going to go through that here in Washington now.
REINCARNATION IN A DREAM

The heel slipped on the brick
and the rest of the body seemed to follow
shooting up like a B730Z.
up fast it became that rocket of tomorrow
ready to be invented in the year 2041.

Out of the bed, born again
through beams and shades of the light spectrum
it eased in ace, whereupon, with me
it arrived at the beginning of deux mum corridors
both different in appearance
as they were in humors.
one narrow, one wide
straight from Psalm X35.

You fools! I attended Sunday school
every month with Jean Baptiste for many years
we were slammed with the rules
of what the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost means.
i shall pick the door at the end of the narrow path
the stone
thrown.
my try in life again to be cast.

The pinched hole was opened with a creak,
yet when the opening was spread apart, he briskly
shot a glance at the other half’s door.
devils cunning were seen greasing the hinges,
leading to the pitless abyss of infertility.

The painter came, left
He didn’t say
He left paint on the tiles

The water drips
I am counting the tiles
Across the shower floor
A tan one, a brown one
They all fit together
Neat boxes
Only slightly out of place
The golden shadow
Of the plastic curtain
Falls across them:
A curve

Out there
Are my paintings
There, in my bedroom
Paced around the walls
Where I put them
To live with
To catch them unawares
From the corner of my eye
Like a mirror

They stare at me through the door
I have closed

Each one needs
A touch, a stroke here
Ochre dabbed, rubbed away
Layer upon layer
Facets upon faces

In matted canvas
Muddy disarray
Their structure crumbles
And I
Wash them white
One by one

If I washed these tiles
They would paint themselves
In the night

p.k. gancel

The time had come again as had been done
for centuries upon centuries anon
he became a minute shape
spedily taking forms one after another, various embryos,
of evolution
until the flame of light ceased the momentary process of man
and he was granted human form
ready for the year 2041 came.

The thief of life sent the heart throbbing
and it woke up, reached over, as if to puncture
the lumenescent object in darkness
pushed its shut off button.

Undine
The Ice Dolls

On hard cold crystal, shimmering frost, and deep grooves, where rushing, hissing silver flashes whisper their way into the mist with swishing bodies, who wrap themselves, like dolls, around a Winter Maypole, some skaters break apart like legs of upturned chairs which splinter, then slide adrift a flesh of life (in silhouette against a mass of glassy whiteness) a motley intermission in kaleidoscope.

Dollyna Perry

Live! In Person!

See in person, for one night only, in his first Washington appearance, the one and only Jesus! That's right, Sodom and Gomorrah Productions proudly present Jesus in His only Washington area appearance as the start of His whirlwind redemption Holy Ghost Tour.

You'll see Jesus raise the dead, turn water to wine, cure lepers, convert and redeem sinners, show everyone the light and the way to Heaven, and generally make a big fuss about everything!

Yes you'll see those and all of the other feats that made him No. 1 in the Old Testament hit parade for over 2,000 years, and the biggest box-office draw on the Holy Ghost circuit playing to SRO (standing room only) crowds from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Also appearing in concert with Jesus will be the stars of the Old Testament review featuring Herod and the Sacrilege Band, Job and the Galilee Swingers, John the Baptist And the Adulterers Big Band and Show, The Joshua and The Battle of Jericho Combo Plus Two. Also special guest star Lucifer and his Infernal Legion Big band and Show featuring Original Sin and Eternal Damnation Greg Anderson

David Boxer
Brilliant, like Betelgeuse brightest in the heavens.
But the star itself sees none of this light,
only the belt of Orion:
Gazing over his shoulder peaking at his copy of Salinger,
yet denying her brilliance like a mule who refuses to walk up the hill.
Betelgeuse remains blind to her own light:
"only a few are brilliant-Polaris in the north or Wordsworth..."

I

II

Beautiful, no
not like Helen,
but like an angry poem
crying out a truth,
honesty sliding down
your face, like tears
on a child who has just fallen,
and scraped her knee,
for the very first time.

III

You:
who could not be fooled
by con men,
trying to sell you diamonds
made of glass.
You:
who are made of diamond
insist on calling yourself
glass.

IV

Forever...
From the Egyptians,
Greeks, Romans, Christians, Humanists, Romantics,
answers have come.
Changing like hands on a clock
and always returning.
I sketch no conclusions,
only reasons for my love.

Heidi Hahn

Sketching With Words

Joey Manlapaz

Steven Kashdan
baraka continued...

WT: What kind of jazz are you getting into these days?
AB: I’m listening to a lot of the young musicians. A lot of Chicago musicians. A lot of people came to New York the last few years; like David Murray, James Newton, a flute player; Oliver Lake, an altoist. An old friend of mine, Don Pullen, a piano player who’s been around quite a while, but is just now coming into his own with people, and I think one of the fine piano players. People like that.

I still believe that if it gets too far away from people’s music, and too hooked up into the cloisters of the concert halls and academies, and bourgeois expression, then it loses it’s force. It reminds you something of ‘Third Stream’ music that came in the fifties, and on the other hand all this right-wing ‘Fusion.’ That’s like the ‘Cool’ School in the fifties. They both divert the music the Hot mainstream, but then it rejuvenates itself. And people come back, and you trick them, and after Be-Bop they go Third Stream, and then they go into Cool, but then here’s the stream that comes back with Hard Bop, and that brings it right back. And one of the reasons David Murray is so valuable in his playing is that he always swings. No matter how far out or intellectually stimulated he wants to get, he still comes back to Duke’s adage: ‘It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing,’ which is really a rule of thumb.

WT: Some of the avant-garde musicians during the period when you were coming of age haven’t developed too much beyond that point, but are just now acquiring a popular audience. Cecil Taylor’s been accused of that at times. Do you see this as a real problem for musicians and other artists?
AB: A lot of times, if you are deprived of the real process of bringing your art to society, if you’re deprived of audiences...and to a lot of artists, either very serious or artists who are trying to deal with trying to tell the truth about this country...then you’re actually deprived of the audiences, and you’re really deprived of development to a certain extent. Because the art tends to develop through practice. And if you’re deprived of that kind of inter-change and inter-reaction, it can be stunted.

I know a lot of musicians don’t get a chance to play as much as they need to play, because they can’t work. Which is really a drag. Now I heard Cecil playing at a concert last year, and he’s still one of the most spectacular piano players around. I’m sure he’s attempting to develop.

WT: Some of his recent records are old recordings. That’s another thing. Albums are just coming out of music he recorded six years ago.
AB: That’s the problem always. That’s what they do. They keep you away until they can absorb it all, until they can steal it all.

continued p. 11
INVESTIGATIONS IN AN INVISIBLE RUIN

1

The apex of the monument is all that stands. Toppled from an estimable height through the plan. Of the plaza remains clearly visible the procession Must have formed outside the city among the feathers. Of the birds whose image we have seen in outlying districts Stamped on sojourn stones of taxable peoples who gave up Sons on demand to war and their women. To the urban altars somebody among us imagines A screaming in the rain forests someone translates From himself to an aerial photograph savagery. That cannot be seen as close as the ground rust red. Beneath the block a white liquid splats. Widens against the gaze incomprehensibly somebody Discerns himself a part of the procession crosses a line Into the square a pen pressing notes from the field. Onto a loose leaf page crowded with citizens who teem Around the base of the block anticipating the rent. Fabric the stone blade above whirling thighs arms bound. Behind the ungodly sight the knife splits. The ribs float free below harvesting suns someone imagines a miracle moving through time to fertile. Signs borne on the breast of a snow white bird. Thrown splot against this empty field of floor. Lowered by an examining eye.

2

The apex of the clearly visible remains caked. With the red of countless blood etchings somewhere. A woman’s scream petrified robs the air of a vault thieves will never find above this a startled. Explorer peering through visor scint suddenly drops A handful of beads breaks the mirrors brought for trade. This must be conquered this much must be. Torn off from all approaches and flooded with a foreign language to obscure once and forever what he has sensed. The procession coming towards him birdlike through the forest. Bearing the outlying women on feathered shoulders over the barricade. Of burnt ships on unbilled shores to the square in which He turns from disbelief to think with the priests advance towering. Each with an adze scooping air from around the monument. An explorer must extinguish this dancing he notes. Translating from the frieze that wends about the block they set the women. On it is visible between their feet being tied to hands loins bared. To an instable sky a priest mounts with his adze raised. Above the flickering female whose provincial tongue tastes no honor. In this explorer’s quill pricking after feet this much must. Be obscured the priest drawing a blood red line along one of her. Floating ribs peels back the flesh as she is still conscious and roaring. Against the hieroglyphs reaches in and steals it out clutching it. Flute like between his lips and the sun singing.

Richard J. Lank
We estimate the city sat down in three lost places
Official recording of its sacrifice and that the priests
Having sucked the marrow from the bones mistakenly
Believing this an aid to potency made of them
Breast pieces to be worn in battle or on ceremonial occasions
Otherwise stored for memory
Where they faded from age but left clearly discernable
Imprints in the conquered dirt screaming
To one of us who brushes the evidence lightly into a sieve
Up to his eyes in earth this one’s attention wanders
A local woman sang to him last night words dusted his left ear
As thighs heaved up against him and rib to rib they fell
From the hammock into a heap of paralyzed feathers one of us felt a stabbing
Pain at the chest he brushed at this asidiously the motion
Taxes his strength the concentration of the eye upon the particles
Wavers on a history of blackened sand from which protrude the red tipped quills
How long has he been here he wonders scooping at the waves
Of agony humping from the heat released in layers till striking
Something hard he uncovers bone bled and sucked dry inscribed
Along one side in a tongue none of us has seen before characters so
Minute they must have been pricked out with the most insubstantial of
Instruments unnoticed the pit edge begins to give the woman crumbled
Thrust from the hammock fell to feathers the layers rose he brushed at
The city falls on him and he becomes one of us

Next seen the square was filled with the rubble of construction
Bearing an unearthly hue and somewhat to the north
Of its last reported location I raced there from the pit
Where the language of history had collapsed for fear
Of missing the procession but it was just forming in the suburbs
Feathers and ornaments being assumed and I was welcomed by all
As if expected as if property restored or pledged return
The women took me in hand and redressed me the whole
Providing in unison untellable pleasures placed the weighted
White wings across my shoulders to prevent me lifting away
In reconstructed wind it was then I felt myself
The foreigner cast out of amnesiac earth before their scooping breasts
A priestess brushed me giving a sign and the women picked me
Up bearing me in a hammock hung from their shoulders toward the city the quills
Of my wings twitched in the skin of my back drawing a single drop
Of blood that splattered to the arm of one of my bearers she smeared
A finger through it and slapped it with her tongue smiling through
Her head dress at me blushing in her naked gut and they
Carried me through singing over the barricade and into the central
Plaza where I was set down before the looming ruin and led up steps
Rounded with age by the priestess to that worded stone where suddenly
The wings fell from me I was thrown across the block tied someone
Touched me in my side eyes fly open on a bird hurtling through space at my chest
Screaming this is no goddess coming splat to kill you these are no women

Beads blocks mirroring
Instruments applied to the apex induces
Outline of a history clearly discerned
Collapse of economy advent of adventurers agricultural disaster
Plagues and logic
This much sure
Blood enough to drown cities
Certain
Enough to dissolve stone Beneath
A biology of forgetfulness proceeds
Swarming vegetation of surmise
Scooping away the actual
The extinguishable alone survives Noted
There are no worms but research
Sacrifice Barreling through
Sinkhole
Whistling with phantoms A dream of cities

Where never was

A.L.
The Revelation

They said they were sane, 
and I believed them 
while walking at their side, 
each beacon of theirs 
flashing in the sky— 
focusing, individually, on different things.

I, amazed, watched the others applaud, 
and strained, too, hoping 
to behold something magnificent, 
but saw only 
their bizarre lights— 
which others craned their necks to glimpse.

Disappointed, I 
parted from them, 
making my way along another path, 
lit only by the stars, 
while a new moon, hovering, 
whispered its awesome secret to me.

Dollyna Perry

REFLECTION

A man is watching an orange sun 
vapor down an arid plain 
& feels somehow a part of it 
He can feel his life 
in the subtle brushings of wind 
rising from the desert, across his arms

Once a Pharaoh stood in a passage 
atop the temple of the sun 
his body shining heavy yellow 
with the sun’s crafted metal— 
in awe before his god

It is that same sun. 
The Pharaoh is gone & does not remember 
It is another day now 
& another man stands, alone in the distant sun 
himself a captive in the gaseous glow

W.M. Turner

MAXWELL DOESN’T

Maxwell doesn’t like me. 
He doesn’t like me & he doesn’t exactly know why. 
But I do. 
He doesn’t like me because I remind him of someone. 
Though he can’t quite remember who 
But I can. 
That someone just happens to be Maxwell. 
Himself. 
Maxwell doesn’t like me because I remind him of a part of himself. 
That he would do a very good job of forgetting. 
If I wasn’t around. 
But his thoughts don’t travel that route. 
Exactly. 
Maxwell doesn’t like me because I remind him of a trap. 
His trap. 
And my existence proves to him that the trap is self-imposed. 
Though he doesn’t see it that way. 
Maxwell doesn’t like me. 
So he just sees me. 
Maxwell doesn’t like me and he doesn’t like the trap. 
That he tries so hard to forget. 
But he can’t. 
Quite. 
The problem is that Maxwell (And I) have trapped ourselves. 
In something we use to find out. 
Who we are. 
But it doesn’t quite work. 
It just traps.

Maxwell (And I) both know (without being told), 
That you have to go outside of yourself to find out. 
Who you are. 
Maxwell (And I) know that people (another person) 
Is a good way to find out. 
About yourself. 
But Maxwell (And I) don’t like this way. 
We don’t like what we find out. 
So Maxwell (And I) find out. 
Another way. 
This way is a trap. 
It is a trap. 
Because it is self-induced. 
Suicidal. 
Masoehism. 
Which we are both intelligent enough. 
To realize. 
But Maxwell (And I). 
Don’t care. 
The sickness is that Maxwell (And I). 
Don’t need the trap. 
We make it into. 
A habit. 
And feed it. 
Like a habit. 
Which neither Maxwell (Nor I). 
Can afford. 
To do.
LIKE ME ANYMORE.

Which we do.
Anyway.
Because it is a trap.
Which we made.
For ourselves.
For lack of anything better.
To use.
Or do.
Maxwell (And I) use our trap.
To open our eyes
But Maxwell (And I) both. 
Know.
That it only shuts them.
Maxwell (And I) use our trap.
Because we are afraid to use.
Anything else.
Which is strange.
When you think about it.
Because anything else.
Wouldn’t kill us.
It might.
Shake us up.

Or down.
Or make us want.
To die.
But it would not.
Kill us.
And the funny thing is.
That neither Maxwell (Nor I).
Really want to die.
Maxwell (And I) use our trap.
Because we want.
to do.
Something.
Or be.
Something.
And the trap we use.
Is self-induced.
Which means.
It is in our control.
For now.
And that.
Feels like something.

Or nothing.
Or both.
Maxwell doesn’t like me.
And I don’t like.
Maxwell.
And yet.
I am attracted to him.
Sometimes.
Because in him.
I see parts of me.
That I do like.
Even is they aren’t.
Necessarily.
Nice parts.
Maxwell (and I) are not alike.
But in many ways.
We are.
Each other.
Maxwell doesn’t like me.
He doesn’t like me.
He doesn’t like me & he doesn’t exactly know why.
But I do.
SLC
Ah, Hostility
like the stale smoke
taken from the
aged, menthol cigarette
giving thoughts to yesterdays
Let me be irrational
exaggerate my hurting
masochistically look at myself
sinfully feel a hatred toward you
Ah, Hostility inhaled with
the cold air
that presses my lips
And I flick my cigarette
to the hard ground
beneath me

loneliness is more
than just the absence
of folks around you

loneliness is more,
than just a lack
of meaning around you

loneliness is god's way of saying
I hate you

patricia fielstra

Charles Dennis
Ozy Mandias

Poppied down between the Tin Man's care
Sweetest Dorothy so young
And dear beyond her yearling fell
From slippers witching flight
Perchance to sleep among untrusted men
The limitless field lay full colored and woven
Disastrously spelled beneath emerald fingers
Undreamt before rewards could be
The croaking hunchbacked melt of sorcery
Gently plagued with doggerly and swept past
The monkeyed protectorate in revenge for
One housed sister and two stolen shoes
Twisted Dorothy's road forked
From brick to straw to break her fall
But the wicked flowering waylayed her
Pubescent odyssey then out of
Straw man's offal grew this one courageous tale
By which Dorothy's yearning was peopled not small
But plain under the poppies' sway
No cycling magic stole her off to lounge
Unpeeled scrotum of womanhood but tunnelled airs
Deposited her upon that shriveled bleeding bag
And here did Dorothy dream
Not of wizards overblown
Or even rainbows' splitting ends
But of that one for her
Imaginable thing
A Kansas man upon a Kansas horse

A.L.
LISTENING TO CANNONBALL LIVE "REMEMBERING BIRD"

I

He had a long chain on
Was his instrument played
Like a bird from its gravecircling
Beneath the nutrient tone
Till swooping up to talon it
A scream filling his wings
He wheeled above his weight astog that
Restructuring his aim to unlink its flight

II

Another man done gone
Is his hymn so sweet
He went outside to play
Got a heel in front
Got a heel behind
So they can't quite tell
Which way he's flying
Confusing the screeching beasts
Slavishly pursuing his revolving trace
The changes are apprehended
It's his melody escapes
Turns twice and disappears
Over the wall working
His roots
Powdered
Every element at his disposal
Tuned in exercises against the wall
This chain clanking is percussion
But flight is merely after all
Practice for the greater run
He lights out across the yard
Long gone
To reach that collecting rest
And lay his burden down to sing

III

I'm gonna tear this building down
Gonna tear this kingdom down
Don't you rush my burying
Don't you lay me too deep
Gonna tear this kingdom down*

A.L.

POEM TO THE EDITOR

Pulling (Wooden) Teeth
When the puzzle is finally deciphered,
(If ever it is)
Will anyone care what minor incident
In the life of a middle-class iconoclast
Was elevated into epic proportions?
There is a kind of mental masturbation
Involved in some poetry in which the aim
Of the poet is self-satisfaction--
Often mistakenly called "self-expression"--
With the key to the puzzle of the poem
Being known only to the poet.
Is it the job of the poet to obscure
Meaning or to clarify it?
The poem is for the poet's pleasure only
Why write?

Anonymous

WOODEN TEETH

that's all folks

VOLUME I NUMBER 2

Staph:
Pamela Alteggott
Charles Dennis
Paula Ganzel
David B. Goren, Editor
Linda Haller
Bouchelle Lewis

Front cover by Emanuel Becker
back cover by Scott Dykema

WOODEEN TEETH DON'T HURT.

Members of the editorial staph do not participate
in the selection of their own work.

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Professor A.E. Claeyseens, Advisor
Chris LaMarca and the folks at the Hatchet.
Sherman-Lank Communications.

To the memory of Joe Robinson.
Oh, my ITT Stock dropped fifty points yesterday, baby,
And my banana-oil plants in Cartoca were nationalized

Oh, I got them low-down capitalist running dog of Imperialism blues
Oh, my son flunked out of Harvard Business School yesterday talking some
stuff about esthetic self-fulfillment and meaningful work experience.
Well my share of the market decreased by twenty-one percent yesterday;
And my equilibrium price curve done fell below the supply and demand;
And the rebels done took my diamond mines in Mozambique and killed my
puppet flunky today.
Oh, I got dem ole tool of the capitalist toymakers neo- fascist monopolistic

HONORING
We are
eating pizza
in the living room
The couch
is covered with
deep blue plaid.
The lounge chair
that was stripped last Christmas
when the landlord was away,
wears a floral print
of wine and oyster,
accentuating the aged walls.

She has
come back
to visit.
It is
his birthday.
She wants
to know
what has happened
since the
change of rooms.

We bought glasses for the kitchen.
They painted the hallways.
You missed the party.
The grass is gone.
Bebe is the cat.
We are talking.

He massages
her neck.
She plays with
colored hairs.
We pass around
her poetry.
They read about
the bushes
in the back-
giving roses,
braided thorns,
tied and torn.

He wears white
instead of black.
She has her
own apartment.
Except for one,
he blows out
the candles
on his cake.
We are laughing.

MILITARY INDUSTRIAL CORPORATE MOGUL OPPRESSOR OF THE WORKING CLASS BLUES

Linda Haller
The g.w. literary and graphic artists' collective.

Greg Anderson

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