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*Robert Gibbons*

Out of the Pitch Darkness

Got up without imagery, but with the sound of the phrase “contrapuntal shores,” & Bach looming in the background. Lights moving down the river. A vessel I tried to make out through the looking-glass, but a triangular string of seven lights, six red, one green, was all I could make out. Then, trailing it, somewhat smaller, possibly towed, silently behind it, a string of five lights, four red, one green . . . Now, waves of their wake, gradually, & with a certain dreamlike symmetry, although too distant from this vantage to hear, curve toward either bank, at the same time, carrying a few added reflections, dividing, almost evenly.

*George Godeau*

Respect

Tomorrow, Jean-Louis, a factory worker, is coming to lunch at my house. His wife looks after children and in the evening, when they have left, she rushes to the doctor's office to answer the door and the telephone. When she comes back, exhausted, she goes to bed without eating dinner.

For them, I raked the driveway, leveled the gravel. I will put the dog on his leash early and open the front gate. In the dining room, they will sit in armchairs facing dry meadows. They are people of the plains. They love the wide open spaces, the quiet. While having a drink, I will listen to the story of their lives. It is a river of summer braided with plants and small currents, at the bottom of which fish in peril are hoping.

*Translated from the French  
by Kathleen McGookey*

*Oscar Hahn*

Almond Trees

In the Iowa winter  
all trees are almond trees

till the sun comes out  
and melts their petals of snow

They then dream about spring  
that will cover their branches with flowers

They forget that behind the hills  
the other sun is hiding

that melts the flowers the trees  
the birds

and the four seasons

*Translated from the Spanish  
by James Hoggard*

*Nathan Hoks*

Shrink to Fit

Being bored and being boring  
are not the same, though their symptoms  
often overlap. I was waiting for a box.  
The birds kept company, wintered  
in the yard. The less you do, the less you feel  
like doing, a simple economy always  
taking root. All winter we're in love  
with orange curtains. Our selves are neither  
here nor there. Wanting might disguise  
itself as need. I don't want an inside or  
an out. The trip was mostly monstrous  
castles, sprits of doubt. The awful sunshine  
never does desist but that does not mean  
I see. If I stand, I feel I'm falling. I think  
you know the rest. The palm, the armada  
of pointing digits. Whatever they want  
they touch. Nothing is merely an emblem.  
Being alive and living exhaust each other.  
When I think, a torch comes to mind.  
I'm caught somewhere between the burning  
and the spreading light. One command,  
many commanders. One spine, many signals.  
The brain is oozing—needs a sling.

*Bryan Tso Jones*

Zhang Xian and the Boy With the Gold Key

Threatened by a question from the Sung Emperor,  
my name was born from a court lady's lips.  
But in this instance, I am the speaker,  
Zhang Xian, protector of children, warden of dreams.

I am a male Guan Yin!  
My bow draws taut from Sichuan  
as I wander through gardens of ivory and horn,  
where goddesses, gods, ghosts and poets

rail in the waking hours.  
Listen, animals of the twelve houses  
this boy has carried me back  
inside him. He bears a gold key

we have misplaced. It opens the door  
we shut in our youth.  
Gather the threads left by ghost whispers  
into this silk embroidery.

For what are they but the colors of our myths,  
the needle we press to bone.

*Iztok Osojnik*

Fragments from Frankfurt Marketplace

17

Despair is rich  
for it reaches far  
and won't let go.  
In some kitchen  
you're stranded  
like flotsam on the shore.

22

Despair wanders around town.  
Bending over,  
you catch  
your two faces  
in the mirror,  
your tongue cut off.

23

You wake up in a sleeping grain.

24

Someday I'll be a coat  
falling off her shoulders.  
Say nothing—the emptiness  
will be free.

32

The touch of a finger  
on dewy glass,  
mist of a wolf  
just before it's absorbed  
by the morning sun.

33

In the night silence  
the old wolf's eyes  
gleam brighter  
than tomorrow's day.  
A flash that reflects  
the wolf's masterpiece.

34

When this touches words  
I'll be free.  
For here's  
the empty part  
of a poem we share.

*Translated from the Slovene  
by Barbara Siegel Carlson*

*Rush Rankin*

On Wittgenstein's Proverb

You'd like to say things  
that are unsayable  
because the obvious  
is just that, so that  
in saying this you expect  
the magic of chance  
implications to pull  
from an empty hat at least  
one rabbit or a dove.

You'd like to say that  
unsayable thing  
that even a mystic  
would hide, like a secret  
he forgot. So unsayable  
a mere hint reveals  
to people who suffer  
on the ground what  
a plane passes over.  
So unsayable those planes  
drop by parachute just  
those people right  
about whom to shoot,  
amidst all that screaming.

Even people made  
of dust, of atoms,  
that are like dots

in a painting, still  
    in a storm savor  
    what each flash  
reveals. As that ghost  
your students ignore  
while painting only  
what they can't see,  
as do the blind, you  
feel in them that life  
they can't feel, nor  
see, when planning  
    to live forever.

Invisible to yourself,  
like a baby in a bed  
looking out, though  
    able when called  
to answer, "Here,"  
    the invisibility  
    of others you see  
right through. That's  
you, right, glancing  
through that airy  
image of yourself  
on glass at stacks  
of books by mystics  
    now on sale?

*Kent Shaw*

Intimacy Can Be a Strange Motion

Intimacy can be a strange motion  
if it's storming and there are pine trees  
outside the window  
willing to pull themselves apart

an introduction to the man called my father  
or should I tell you my mother  
or should I be a good boy quiet  
during the introductions

I believe in faith as an emotion  
settling like rain in late afternoon  
before the rain again and again  
through the evening

this is the interminable month of September  
this is my city quartered  
by hedgerow upon hedgerow visible from the window

---

A family outside has been asked to stand still  
for their portrait    you should know how this truth  
is always a bit delicate at the edges

a father not always a father    or courage  
as an understanding of what it means when fate is displaced  
for a moment and then that moment is lost

---

KENT SHAW

I could never know my mother so I say she is a prayer  
“made of one hundred syllables”  
I told her one night over dinner

she smiled  
and I traced each leaf of the clematis  
with glue then I spun it

“it’s a helicopter” I told her  
“this is the tale of your first marriage”

*Lesley Strutt*

Grace

There's a moment  
when the day forgives you everything,  
lights up its eyes for you.  
And every branch of every tree  
bends your name into a rising;  
one swift shot at the mark -  
a ladder to heaven, illuminated.  
For one moment.  
And then you move on.

*Charles Harper Webb*

Dickhead Jim

The print above our bed shows two women  
with spiked black hair, standing back-  
to-back like duelists. My wife, the teacher,  
sees “a *doppelganger* theme.”  
I see twin sisters who don’t speak  
because one keeps taking back a bad boyfriend.

What draws her to him? Does a good job  
compensate for a bad man? What good  
is goodness, chirping, “Be empathic. Fret.  
Don’t have much fun”? Is Art’s function  
to create beauty or questions? Rick Smith  
and I debated this, up to our appendices

in Tinker Creek. Our strike-indicators’ pink-  
pearl beads surged with the current  
as we waited for the stutter, the minute  
direction-change that meant a fish. We caught  
our fill, then headed home as the sun squeezed  
behind mountains, and the last light

drained away: a perfect ending to a perfect day  
until the sign, BRIDGE DOWN. DETOUR.  
So up we spiraled as night grew thick.  
“Christ on a stick,” Rick yelled. “Slow down.”  
“Relax,” I yelled back. “It’s *my* truck.”  
As werewolf fog-puffs bounded by,

I rubbed my eyes and tried to clear them  
before the mountains' gray breath snuffed  
my headlights, or the road dropped into an abyss.  
Rick—just promoted—prayed  
for a chance to enjoy his new prestige. I wondered  
if my wife would nurse a quadriplegic.

Then, like the first time I put on glasses,  
the air cleared. Below us lay the L.A. basin,  
lights sparkling like a million spider-eyes.  
“Sonofabitch,” Rick snarled. “We’re here.”  
We spit out the sour chewing gum of fear,  
feeling our friendship flood back, deepened

by shared dangers survived. We were ourselves  
again: good fishermen with tales to tell.  
But when I made it home—two hours late—  
my wife’s sister had gone back to Dickhead Jim.  
“My folks are having twin cows,” my wife said,  
and didn’t even ask me where I’d been.

## Contributors

**Robert Gibbons** has published three full-length books of prose poems. A fourth book, *Beyond Time: New & Selected Work, 1977-2007*, has recently been published by Trivium Publications, Amherst, NY. He is Poetry & Fiction Editor of *Janus Head*.

**Georges Godeau** was born in 1921 in Villiers-en-Plaine, France, worked as an engineer, and published sixteen books before his death in 1999. His work won the Prix du Livre in Poitou-Charentes. His works have been widely translated into Russian, and Japanese but not into English.

**Oscar Hahn** has, since the late 1970s, been considered one of the most important poets of Latin American literature. His most recent collection, *En un abrir y cerrar de ojos*, recently won the Casa de America Award in Spain. Called the “most important poet of the fantastic in Spanish-American letters,” he has had collections of his work published recently in Chile, Venezuela, Argentina, Spain, and other countries.

**Nathan Hoks’** poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *Crazyhorse*, *Octopus Magazine*, *Pilot Magazine*, *The Burnside Review*, *Court Green* and *CutBank*. He has received fellowships from the University of Iowa and the Vermont Studio Center. He lives and teaches in the Boston area.

**Bryan Tso Jones** won the 2007 Rhea and Seymour Gorsline Poetry Prize for his first collection, *Raking the Hollow Bones*, which will be published by Bedbug Press. His poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Crab Orchard Review*, *Hayden’s Ferry Review*, *Minnesota Review*, and *The MacGuffin*, among others. He has attended the Napa Valley Writer’s Conference and Squaw Valley Community of Writers as a fellowship recipient. He lives in Chico, CA.

**Iztok Osojnik** has published 18 books of poetry, 4 novels, and a collection of literary essays. Most recent poetry publications are *Gospod Danes (Mister Today)* and *Pesmi Nia (Poems of Nothing)*. The English translation of his *Mister Today* was published by Jacaranda Press in 2003. His work has received many awards and

has been translated into many languages. Osojnik is a freelance writer and translator living in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**Rush Rankin's** book on aesthetics, *In Theory*, and a new collection of poems *Pascal's Other Wager*, have just been published. His book, *Bene-Dictions*, selected by Rosanna Warren, won the Vassar Miller Prize and was published in 2003. His writing has also appeared in *Paris Review*, *Pleiades*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Quarterly West*, among others.

**Kent Shaw** won the 2007 Tampa Review Prize for Poetry for his first collection, *Calenture*. He will receive a \$1,000 cash award and book publication by the University of Tampa Press in 2008. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Cimarron Review*, *Quarterly West*, *New Orleans Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *American Literary Review*, *Smartish Pace*, and others. Currently a Ph.D. student in the Creative Writing Program at University of Houston, he serves as poetry editor at *Gulf Coast* literary journal.

**Lesley Strutt** has had poetry published by Leaf Press, in the *Canadian Woman Studies Journal* and *Bywords*. She was long-listed for the Descant Poetry 2006 Best Poem in Canada prize.

**Charles Harper Webb's** book *Amplified Dog* won the Saltman Prize for Poetry and was published in 2006 by Red Hen Press. His book of prose poems, *Hot Popsicles*, was published in 2005 by the University of Wisconsin Press. Recipient of grants from the Whiting and Guggenheim foundations, he directs Creative Writing at California State University, Long Beach.

## Translators

**Barbara Siegel Carlson's** poetry has appeared in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Poetry East* and *Ashtville Poetry Review*, among others. Translations have appeared or are forthcoming in *Hunger Mountain*, *Poetry Miscellany*, *Sulphur River Literary Review* and *Mid-American Review*. She is the author of a chapbook *Between this Quivering* (Coreopsis Press).

**James Hoggard** is the author of 17 books, including novels, collections of stories, poems, translations, and personal essays, has been an NEA Fellow, and in 2000 was named Poet Laureate of Texas. He is the Perkins-Prothro Distinguished Professor of English at Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls, Texas. His work has appeared in *Southwest Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Manoa*, *Arts & Letters*, *Massachusetts Review*, and numerous other publications.

**Kathleen McGookey's** first book of poems, *Whatever Shines*, is available from White Pine Press. More of her translations of Godeau's work appear in *Chase Park*, *Connecticut Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The Interlochen Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Natural Bridge*, *Rhino*, *Salt Hill*, and *Stand*.