KENNEBEC
A PORTFOLIO OF MAINE WRITING

Bartels
Bradley
Coursen
Greenspan
Johnston
Kennedy
Kestenbaum
Kindred
Ladenheim
Larkin
Larsen
Liscomb
Lignell

McKenna
O'Flaherty
Phillips
Pohl
Pollet
Rawlings
Sanborn
Saum
Sharkey
Tagliabue
Walker
Ward
Well, Hans...

well, Hans, it would be just that day
the sink invisible
every dish crusted
even the cups unusable

the baby dragging her laden diaper
through the sawdust in the living room
leaving a trail, two trails really, one visible
one a blind man could follow

it would be the very day
the vice-grip slipped
off a stripped and buggered tailpipe nut
to knock out your eye-tooth

it would be then
just then
your long-loss prepmy chum
would appear from nowhere

bottoming his leathern Porsche in your rutting driveway
and come to the door
swaddled in the double cashmeres
of inherited and married wealth.

what could you do —
trying to shield that raw red nerve
from light and air —
but grimace and mumble:

it's just the day,
it's not like this —
I haven't sunk so low
to lose my smile.

sylvester Pollet
East Holden

around town

elvis presley
norwalk shoe closing
shrinks daughters
seed diminished in vigor
like that like that
immense no uncle aunt no creative
drift of an expanding universe of stars kites
and around the river
thread twisted round the horn of africa

gravid splice the legendary horse rock lost the horsepull
draft pairs work honest in the open arena

were a yaw yaw
smashed her hipbone
a son seventeens electrocuted
like holes through my memory
like water on cast iron
like skowhegan pizza

Lee Sharkey
Skohegan

Through the Window

It was one of those careless mornings when I awoke with you, the sun a factor
against the drawn curtains of your room. We kissed and you told me, smiling,
about the teen-age, a neighbor obsessed with watching you undress. You had
found this out from a downstairs roomer. I suggested perhaps he was just a peo-
ple-watcher, a student of your individual idiosyncracies. You told me at least he
was a constant watcher, observing you saw and curse each time you flubbed a
stitch or pulled a hem. You thought perhaps he was delighted when you would
lightly come to the window and water the flowers, cautiously, gently bending,
pouring the correct amount into each pot — marveling at the precision with
which you filled each one to its proper level.

You did not think of him as a voyeur. In fact you were certain that when he
watched you undressing he blushed, felt timid and often looked away, not wishing
to violate the virtuous relationship he'd established. You mentioned that though
he beds down only ten meters away from you, you would never know the warmth
of his young body; though not handsome you are certain he would have made a
lover of merit.

I thought how you could now know his jealous anger as he watched you smile,
lounging on your bed in mid-evening with gentleman visitors who often stayed
after the lights had been turned off and the house grown quiet, the neighborhood
rolled in a blanket of fog. This passive hurt burned in him but he could never con-
front you with it. A sily adolescent's dream. He will grow up, take a wife in deep
love, but it will be your image, your flowers on the sill, your cat and sewing ma-
chine, your wonderful silken blinds close off the foreign interior. He is his youth he finds in that window. You
are his captive. You are gain and loss. He presses you close. His wife cannot
touch him, cannot violate his union with you. When he returns to her she mentions
a fanciful male preoccupation with childhood. Her tone is dry and clinical. He
grows upset, is strangely impatient with her ignorance — but he will never tell
why he returns to this place, to you.

He will return — two, three more times before a fire levels the building on a
summer's night. He reads about it in his newspaper, the story picked up because
of the loss of life — an elderly couple, asleep at the time. Identifiable by dental
records only ... he reads this, wondering if it was your room. He sees you smile,
strange and sweet from the window, but not at him. You are smiling at someone
behind you in the room. But he recalls how he would steal that smile, hold it for
days when you two were parted. He thinks of the house he used to live in, still
standing, awkward, alone across the driveway below the window that has not
vanished.

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Sparrow Hawk

Small god
of telephone conversations
Down east,
His eyes encompass a landscape
while the stream of a dialect
passes through his feet.

His head,
curved with kiler's wisdom,
finds no murals
on the horizon
nor pointillism
in the barren.

He finds
the myopic head of a mouse,
the naivety of a banquet,
and leaves the wires
in the clutch of the wind.

Kris Larson
East Machias

Buck Fever

sit beside
a woodfire
all night long
in silent communion
with half a pint
of Southern Comfort
only to stumble
before the paper,
a hunter
still numbed by the cold,
another victim
of buck fever,
cursed to catch
only a glimpse
of form
stretching across
the page,
leaping through
the trees.

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

The Skowhegan State Fair

(The Skowhegan State Fair)

Night. We drive through the underpass to park in the center of the race track, walk under the pounding hooves through a corrugated metal tunnel. We are miniature golf balls. The warning bugle and then the race. Horses smooth, held from cantering by leather trace. Men fly behind, tails blowing in their faces. Dust rises up, powders car windshields, the grandstand, the wrinkled skin of fortune tellers on the midway, the breath of children, already sticky with cotton candy and fried dough.

Foam. A flash of hair. Muscles moving under satin. Crazed eyes glaring white as a mouth snarls open and teeth clamp at the trace. A jerk, a toss of the head. The stride is broken; then the whip. They love to run, I tell myself, they're bred to run, need to run, need to win.

But why do they need to run this way? With blinders on and tongues flaming from the bit, pulling cars and whipped if they skip a beat. The sound of hooves on dirt, skin against leather, a whispered curse in the ear.

My great-grandfather, Willie Kidd, bred and raced trotters, and watching them circle the track, I feel his blood in my veins.

On the midway, Fried dough, genuine lemonade, hamburgers, pizza, French fries, cotton candy in bags and on the stick. Bumper cars, the Cobra, a merry-go-round and ferris wheels, the Bavarian Slide, the freak show — ½-woman/½-man. The pygmy pig. Burlesque, sword swallowers, a solid gold Rolls Royce inside a tractor-trailer you can see for only $2.00. Cannies hawk, then stop and stare from sleep-hungry eyes ringed in red. Animal stalls with sheep in coats with hoods, milk-white cows, black-faced lambs.

Teenagers from the farm with $10 saved up from haying taste everything and follow young girls who walk so fast their breasts bob. Eyes meet, blushes, a hand, a touch, ride the Sky Wheel.

Two wheels spinning on themselves and round each other — why didn't the junior high science teacher, trying to explain how the earth rotates on its axis and also revolves about the sun, take us up on the Sky Wheel?

Up, high up and over the top, we're going to fall into vats of boiling oil, into the arms of strongmen and the woman with a moustache, down to the race track and trampled underfoot, or we'll never come down, but catch the wind and tumble on forever, over fields and barns, losing the smell of dough and machine oil and sweat, of axlegrease and paint and dreams lived. dreams shattered on the same day, going higher and higher like bright red and yellow balloons that children lose, higher until the air turns cold and we burst, two fertile eggs, spilling our colors on the midway.

The little girl riding beside me cries, "It's like a dream!" and I love her then, for a moment. She knows about dreams, about falling and learning to fly.

Kate Kennedy

For R.F., In Season

While boys who failed to winterize their song
Cash in fair-weather chips and cry all's lost,
I wait to pun my best bet on the strong:
What bears me up is partly perma-Frost.

David Walker
Freedom

For Someone Who Calls Regularly

In the dark I await you,
Knowing you will ring into my dreams,
Knowing how in half-sleep I will stumble
Alone in my flannel nightgown
To pick up the receiver —
Knowing it will be you.
Not the death of a relative,
Not the urgency of a loved one,
Not the surprise of someone old or new
Miraculously ringing into my life —
Only you, who know me.

Never fear,
I will always answer.
I will always listen
To your heavy breathing, your obscenities
Victims, like lovers, are faithful
And each never knows
What to say, what to do.

Barbara Bartels
Brunswick
Robert Muldoon, John Irving’s Tiresias, is a truly modern phenomenon, shaped by surgeons, not gods.

"Jenny’s newest colleague was a six-foot-four transsexual named Roberta Muldoon. Formerly Robert Muldoon, a standout tight end for the Philadelphia Eagles, Roberta’s weight had dropped from 225 to 180 since her successful sex-change operation. The doses of estrogen had bit into her once-massive strength and some of her endurance."

Tiresias was a unique figure in Greek mythology and subsequently plays an important part in Greek drama, most notably Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. The story goes that one day Tiresias saw two snakes mating and killed the female. At once, he became a woman. Some years later he saw another pair of snakes mating. He killed the male and became a man again. Thus, when the most powerful male and feminists on Mount Olympus, Zeus and Hera, were arguing about who received the most pleasure from sex — man or woman — they called on Tiresias, who had been both, to settle the argument. Tiresias stated that women enjoyed sex nine times more than men. Hera, furious at his decision, blinded him. Since gods, no matter how powerful, cannot undo another god’s work, Zeus tried to compensate blind Tiresias by giving him the twin gifts of prophecy and an extremely long life.

Irving commented at a reading of The World According to Garp at Colby College that he was struck with a real problem concerning two of his major characters, Jenny Fields, who hated men, and T. S. Garp, her writer son who is misunderstood to be a male chauvinist because he is a super jock. Irving needed a plausible way to facilitate, explain, and connect these two opposites. His highly innovative answer was the creation of Roberta Muldoon, a modern medical miracle, a trans-sex ex-professional football player.

The novel’s underlying male vs. female terms are developed through Jenny Fields. Garp, the protagonist, had been almost immaculately conceived by his man-hating mother Jenny, a nurse, on a dying bail turtlen gunner.

"Of course I felt something when he died," Jenny Fields wrote in her famous autobiography. "But the best of him was inside me. That was the best thing for both of us, the only way he could go on living, the only way I wanted to have a child. That the rest of the world finds this an immoral act only shows me that the rest of the world doesn’t respect the rights of an individual."

Jenny does not know his name. Her subsequent autobiography, A Sexual Spect, makes her a leader of the feminist movement. She is eventually assassinates a male chauvinist deer hunter. One of her supporting groups that emerges is the Ellen Jamesians, a cult of women who cut out their tongues as a protest against man as rapist. A young girl named Ellen James, like Philomela of old, had been raped and then had her tongue cut out by the man so that she could not explain what had happened. Ultimately, an Ellen Jamesian who is also a childhood friend of Garp, shoots Garp to death as he is coaching wrestling, a patently male chauvinistic activity to the Jamesians. Thus, one may understand the magnitude of the problem Irving faced in believably connecting the worlds of Jenny and Garp.

A Modern-day Tiresias — According to Garp

Robert Muldoon, ex-Philadelphia Eagle tight end, is a major and carefully developed character. She exhibits many of the traits of today’s liberated woman, one of which is standing up to situations both psychologically and physically. As an example of the double role that an Ellen Jamesian as a modern day Tiresias occurs when a young girl is staying with Jenny Fields at her seaside refuge because men are always bullying her. A big strong man from New York drives up to take her away — she considers a lesbian fair, he makes the mistake of intimidating Jenny and calling Roberta a big dyke.

Roberta Muldoon threw a cross-body block on the surprised man, hitting him from behind and a little to one side of the backs of his knees. It was a flagrant clip, worthy of a fifteen-yard penalty in Roberta’s days as a Philadelphia Eagle. The man hit the gray boards of the porch deck with such force that the hanging flowerpots were set swinging. He tried but could not get up. He appeared to have suffered a knee injury common to the sport of football — the very reason, in fact, why clipping was a fifteen-yard penalty. The man was not lucky enough to hurt further abuse, at anyone, from his back; he lay with a calm, moonlike expression upon his face, which whitened slightly in his pain.

"That was too hard, Roberta," Jenny said. "I’ll get Laurel," Roberta said, sheepishly, and she went inside. In Roberta’s heart of hearts, Garp and Jenny knew, she was more feminine than anyone; but in her body of bodies, she was a highly trained jock.

Thus, I believe that when John Irving created Roberta Muldoon, the pre-conscious psyche is trying to make sense of perhaps the most basic or archetypal debates, the differences, ambiguities, and similarities between male and female. These basic tensions of mankind have not really changed much since the days of Greek mythology; dead center is the questioning of sex roles and equality.

Irving has co-opted one of the most famous modern poems, The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot, the male-female figure of Tiresias (Elliot’s note):

"...although a mere spectator and not indeed a character, is yet the most important personage in the poem uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of curants, melts into the Phoenician sailor and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand, Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. These Tiresias see, in fact, is the substance of the poem."

For his central unifying character in The Wasteland, Eliot, in need of one who could feel and at least partially understand human sexuality from the viewpoints of both Venus and Mars, therefore chose Tiresias. Before the advent of modern medical technology and techniques only the gods, and even then only the very highest of gods, could shape such a fabulous figure.

In the scene from The Wasteland, which the Tiresias note explicates, a typist entertains a “caricaturish” clerk while Tiresias observes:

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled lungs
Perceived the scene, and fortol the rest —
I too awaited the expected guest...

(And I Tiresias have forestsoread all)
Enacted on this same divan or bed;
I who have sat by Thesive’s below the wall
And walked among the lowest of the dead.

She turns and takes a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass;
‘Well now that’s done, and I’m glad it’s over.’
When a lovely woman stoops to fally and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

The parallel can be seen as Irving dramatizes Roberta, not as a vacillating homosexual, but rather as one who has gone from male qua male to female qua female, playing each role in turn like Tiresias and thus experiencing “all.” In a late night phone call to Garp she says:

"I’m sorry," Roberta said, "But I thought it was too late to call your mother.
Garp found this logic astonishing, since he knew that Jenny was later than he did; but he also liked Roberta, very much, and she had certainly had a hard time.

"He said I wasn’t enough of a woman, that I confused him, sexually that I was confused sexually?" Roberta cries. "Oh, God, that prick. All he wanted was the novelty of him. It was just showing off for his friends."

"I’ll bet you could have taken him, Roberta," Garp said. "Why didn’t you beat the shit out of him?"

"You don’t understand," Roberta said. "I don’t feel like beating the shit out of anyone, anymore. I’m a woman."

"Don’t women ever feel like beating the shit out of someone?" Garp asked. Helen reached over to him and pulled his cock.

"I don’t know what women feel like," Roberta wailed. "I don’t know what they’re supposed to feel like, anyway. I just know what I feel like."

"What’s that?" Garp asked, knowing she wanted to tell him.

"I feel like beating the shit out of him now," Roberta confessed, "but when he was dumping all over me, I just sat there and took it. I even cried, and he even called me up and told me that if I was still crying I was taking myself."

As Roberta grows old she becomes more closely a recreation of Tiresias, particularly in terms of her prophetic powers:
On This Hot Night

Young woman in black on this hot night
swathes herself in mourning cotton.
Sweat streams between her breasts and thighs,
catches the soft flesh of her arms.
Sweat etches the insteps of her feet.

Young woman in black on this hot night
lifts her hair high off her neck.
Sweat tracks through the clooted hair,
rans down her nape and spine.
Sweat falls inside the cotton tent of dress

Young woman in black on this hot night
waits...
Sweat pearls between her brows,
forms tears, earlocks, a moustache.
Sweat rains within her tent
within her tent the black night rains.

Wendy Kindred
Fort Kent

The Widow

His death smashed
Something in her.

Leaving her wide-eyed
As a vacant house.

Does she,
Behind that blank gaze,

Continue to seek him
Through that night

Of scarlet tears?
Or does he lie within her

Abandoned.

Susan Phillips
Taos, New Mexico

"Roberta lived long enough to grow at least comfortable with her sex re-assignment. Approaching fifty, she would remark to Helen that she suffered the vanity of middle-aged men and the anxieties of a middle-aged woman, "but," Roberta added, this perspective is not without advantage. Now I always know what men are going to say before they say it."

It is within this framework that I believe Irving subconsciously recreated for our own time the inherent natural problems found in Sophocles and Eliot. According to David Daiches in a headnote to The Wasteeland in the Norton Anthology, Eliot, "writes about spiritual dryness, about the kind of existence in which no regenerating belief gives significance and value to men's activities, sex brings no fruitfulness, and death heralds no resurrection." Irving, in The World According to Garp, creates a modern Wasteeland in order to convey the same loneliness, mis-used sexuality, and barren existence of the 1970's in the United States.

The obsessions and questions of one age are apparently not very different from those of another and may be seen in the dominant art form, whether the drama of Sophocles, the poetry of Eliot, or the novel of Irving. It is here that the Jungian concept of the collective unconscious makes sense. The view by W. B. Yeats that artists in any medium and throughout time are those who receive, perceive, and subconsciously organize the archetypal symbols into a given form was illustrated most clearly for me in a student session with Robert Frost many years ago, Frost had read from his poems. A student asked if it were true that "Stopping by Woods" was his death poem. Frost smiled and said, "That's what they say," in his best New Hampshire accent. The student persisted. "Well, is it?"

Frost replied again, "That's what they say."

The student, distraught and angry, asked belligerently, "But you wrote the poem, right?"

To which Frost immediately replied, "Nope."

The student was stunned. Frost went on, "My hand wrote it. I had been up late attempting a session on New Hampshire that wasn't working, and so just before I gave up for the night that little poem just wrote itself out. I didn't even think about what I was writing."

The student sat down.

Frost had given a lesson, whether playfully intended or not, concerning what a poet does and does not do. Once again, the White Goddess image arises; that is to say, the personification that poets give to their non-conscious inspirations. In many artistic epiphanies, primordial images float up and are put in order, harmonized, almost without invitation. The symbols which exist in the unconscious become visible in dreams and creative moments, periodically float to the surface of our consciousness. But perhaps most strongly for the artist.

Obviously, Irving did not consciously attempt to recreate Tiresias in modern garb. What is important is that he did, in effect, give us consciously or unconsciously a modern variation on a very ancient theme.

As human beings we "understand" on many levels. The relative strengths and importance of our subconscious, our unconscious, and our conscious wide-awake world cannot be clearly measured. As David Leeming neatly sums it up:

Most of us have dreams of falling from great heights, dreams of being lost or left behind, dreams of conquest — sexual, athletic, or whatever. Nearly every society has myths which explain these themes on the group level. To be sure, dreams are in part products of the individual's personality and environment, but Jung has shown the individual's psyche cannot be divorced from the psyche of the human race as a whole. Dreams are also products of inherited themes which are buried in the very depths of the human psyche. These are themes — archetypes — which are when we come across them in literature, for instance, "strike a chord" for no apparent reason. So myths spring from the particular problems and concerns of a given race or tribe, but on a deeper level their source is the universal soul of the human race itself.

I submit that Tiresias is an archetypal theme that reappears once again in John Irving's The World According to Garp, as Roberta Muldoon — transsexual.

Sources:


John Newell Sandborn
Unity College
When the beer can had stamped ripples all over the formica table till it looked like a quilt, Hailee was all right driving the Chevy — if it broke down she wouldn’t have far to walk, either to the diner or back home.

He flinched as the heavy door slammed open against the trailer and an old-fashioned woven-splint basket scraped across the scaling linoleum. He shut his eyes, not wanting to watch his mother’s ballooning bosom and solid hands shoved down her drawers.

“My Lord, what you doin’ sittin’ there drinkin’ beer in the middle of the day? Where’s them kids, don’t you git them up yet?” She heaved the basket up onto the counter and began to rummage in a clothes basket for a clean diaper.

He supposed the old lady was doing her duty bringing stuff every day and taking care of the kids. Holding the empty can against his face, he surveyed her from half-closed eyes as she’d done a work at the time under the blue-neck smoke. She snatched her cigarette from where it lay scorching the chrome trim. Still, he said nothing. But someday, just someday, he was going to get his shotgun from under the bed and use the end below for a shooting gallery — one shot out at the thin old lady would be first. Made a man feel like garbage, his wife and mother making such a big deal of running everything, getting in the money and groceries. It wasn’t right, but he knew he’d do it until he got the goddamn bricks.

He reached in and slapped another can from the fridge. If he wanted to have a few beers to pass the time, who was going to stop him?

Not the old lady, for sure. God, she was ugly enough in the old days when she wore housedresses, white ankle socks and arch-support shoes. Now, in baggy stretch pants and his father’s old workshirt, she was hideous.

But he thought of sister Annie. She’d been older when he’d begun fooling around with her. The other boys put him up to it, really. His mother and father never said anything about it. Still, he figured they had to know about it or they couldn’t have had him and Annie, could they? It was like something was kept for themselves and tried to keep from the kids. So naturally he had to find out what it was. He knew they did it, and not just in the dark like the other boys said their folks did. When his pa and ma went to their room after Sunday dinner for a “nap”, he listened at the keyhole for the squeaks and whispers.

They’d lie in that fancy old house perched on a ledge just big enough for the house and barn. Worthless brush dropped off hundreds of feet. His father long ago had sold all the lots it fit to build on, by one.

Many a cold morning he’d shovelled and sanded the steep gravel drive so the old man could get the pickup up and over the hump to the blacktop road. He’d always liked this home, a small, shingled dollhouse sitting snugly on its shell, deep gullied behind, the bottom carpeted with emerald green pines. That’s where he and Ellie would go someday.

Of course he and Annie never went quite all the way. They just fooled around. Once, long after, when Annie was married and they were at the old place, some holiday, after dinner, he and Annie sneaked into the bedroom to see what Googie had sold them.

“Damn you and your messing around and nobody ever telling me anything. When I got married I didn’t even know if I was a virgin. If I ever catch you alone with one of my girls I’ll kill you, so help me God.

"He leaned back against the wall, rubbing his jaw.

"Ah, come on, Annie. You liked it as much as I did! I’ll tell you — turned into a woman. You were things pretty too. You know what it was like? And you never did it again until I had to. And even after I got married I never liked it. I can’t stand to be in the same room with a cold like you."

She jerked back to the sink. “I wonder why God ever let you come back from Viet Nam.”

He shook his head to throw off the memory. Ellie was eating cereal, peeling at him through lugged hair. He winked a whisky to warn you up on a cold morning when the oil burner had been out all night. He’d warned Donnie’s bottle and taken it in to him in the bedroom. Probably should have got him up and changed him, but as long as the old tiddler was under the covers he’d keep warm. It was only when they got out into the air they got cold.

Then he’d taken Ellie into bed with him, first rinsing out her glass so “Nosey Hailee” wouldn’t smell the whiskey. He’d, a l l o w s , he got everybody up and had his back till the wolf was still warm and he snuggled up with Ellie. Her bottom was so little he could cup it in one hand. He kissed her neck and stroked her all over, and she giggled against him. He finally sighted and clutched her away.

“Why the hell doesn’t she shut up, he thought. She knows damn well I don’t answer.

Earlier this morning when he picked her up she hadn’t acted so independent. He’d had a beer on an empty stomach, then poured orange juice for her and just sat there and looked at her. He’d told her he was going to have to leave the kids and keep the baby at my place ‘til I go to get her. Maybe the old lady would mop the floor after she got the kids cleaned up. God knew Hailee wouldn’t. He watched Ellie climb mother’s chair, making hard work of it, tongue sticking out.

Ellie pushed at him and wriggled down his shin. Maybe the old lady would mop the floor after she got the kids cleaned up. God knew Hailee wouldn’t. He watched Ellie climb mother’s chair, making hard work of it, tongue sticking out.

Time Out of Mind

Virginia Lliontomb

Gray
For the Love of Henry
(To John Berryman, xxx's and ooo's)

Is poetry a lark, a pigeon or a dove?
What's the connection of the ice, the drink, the bridge, the love,
the gift gone mad?? I'm so sad it had to be this way, you see. It means a lot,
it being three important things —
"the pump gone mad??" —
and "the crises in the ghost" and
"the love of the done."
My game's both deuced and won
from all the dreamy songs you sing and sang —

And that may take care of the millenium

Doodling away
in prehistoric times,
dreaming, scribbling on the cave,

whistling away
in prehistoric times
or singing a ditty to make
the gods envious,
taking it easy before
and after politics, shuffling one's feet,

watching the stars,
listening to the drums,

and the poems
in momentous and transient time,
we made the best, we could of it
and let it go at that.

Oh Henry love, I need your tunnel pain,
the drainage echo of it, the trickle-drizzle
of your health, or the way you gutter butter,
evaporate in maritnade, — of course,
that clink of drink on ice, how nice and cool
your kisses reek — they spice my blowzy life! I'm swishing away beneath the knife of words you yield, between the slice of bottled self you shelve and the slice you serve the world sauteed, with mushrooms over rice.

The whole show of it! Eat, Eat and Die! I'll die too! Go underground, with bye dissolve your bleachi bones and sprinkle sediment on my ground round, (Hold the pickle! No Tomato!)

Oh but I hate though —
the way you had to do it, did it,
the way they let you,
make your bed. It wasn't warmed
by Mr. Bones, no, no electric blanket wombed you up
hemmed and stitched with death, and yet

Henry baby, all those parties, panties, petticoats, brassieres — they've changed a bit in style since your wild libidinous years. But not the silky bodies, advertising's left them quite alone (although a little more is shown) the sexy moans still trilling low like beams from orange moons you've known. The thrilling brights of blood combed through with alcohol, "Last Call!" the pasty lights, a plethora of dipthonged, wooly tongue, so easily flung for momentary bliss — it's all still right! We're still turned on like true component systems crooning lusty Henry songs — my life throws kisses to all your wives and all the women's toes you've nibbled on... all the eons long of scores compelling passions over wisdoms.

Henry and the character called "Mr. Bones" sometimes function as personae, sometimes as alter egos, for Berryman in his work.

Maybe life's a porcelain cup slowly filling up with death. More than halfway there, these days, we're soon to Bloom, four horses, marked, a cratered tomb, thunder claps, black slanting sun... Man unkind, enliven, done in... God melting down like a starved dog, we clear off, on to out, right fog —

(But what we want and ought to know is everything we ever guessed and never asked. After the Blast will there be Sex?)

Henry baby, all those parties, panties, petticoats, brassieres — they've changed a bit in style since your wild libidinous years. But not the silky bodies, advertising's left them quite alone (although a little more is shown) the sexy moans still trilling low like beams from orange moons you've known. The thrilling brights of blood combed through with alcohol, "Last Call!" the pasty lights, a plethora of dipthonged, wooly tongue, so easily flung for momentary bliss — it's all still right! We're still turned on like true component systems crooning lusty Henry songs — my life throws kisses to all your wives and all the women's toes you've nibbled on... all the eons long of scores compelling passions over wisdoms.

Timing of tennis balls ticked off in
Mountain Moments / movements slow, exact, precise the jabbing light of eye on lobbing ball. Like sun on skin or sky on eye, the flash bulb vision follows through. The mind feels out expectantly the body's true intention — did I mention (too) that space that lacking form doth spot and drip, crowd and limit, lugging down upon the muscle's flex, and hesing, cramps, shrugs off ecstasy and then reflects? Is this me "End of tennis" or "The Beginning of the Dark?"

Oh and if I find him, find him, through the smoke, I'll mount and marry Mr. Bones. I'll give him shelter, cloak him, feed him, make him live with stops and starts this every/always life enlivened with diamond tiers of dying... 

------- the instant's never/moment pops up again in parts. In shades of winter's black and white. On deck. In spades A splash of ice behind your severed head. Rung white, your crystal eyes. I know the distances to silence, I know. I know you're dead —

But I Must Try
To Somehow Energize, (despite, somehow, the jump —)

Your Broken Henry Heart To Pump
and somehow pump me somehow up.

Somehow. Forever. Somehow up.
For Somehow ever pump me up...
Pump Me (Somehow) Oh Somehow Up.
For somehow ever pump me up
pump me some over how for up
for somehow wepumpme up —

Oh Me —

FOR SOME LONG EVER HOW ON UP-PUMPED!

-Yeah!

EDITOR'S NOTE: Henry is the major character in this many volumes of Dream Songs by the late John Berryman. Henry and the character called "Mr. Bones" sometimes function as personae, sometimes as alter egos, for Berryman in his work.

Deborah Ward
Portland
Conversations with:
Jennie Cirone, sheepfarmer
John Hedman, potato farmer

JENNIE CIRONE

I was born, 1912, in McKinley, near Bar Harbor. My parents were lighthouse keepers and I lived on Nash Island off Addison with my sister and seven brothers for 18 years, since age 3.
It was great living on the island. We had barns, hen houses, and our house next to the lighthouse. There were no trees on the island, and a boat house where we hauled our peapod lobster boats.

Q. — Were you lonely there on the island those 18 years?

Oh no! I don’t think we ever sat down to a meal that there wasn’t anywhere from one to a dozen guests who had come over on boat. All of my brothers and sisters had their friends over, often with their families. Some stayed months at a time. And then there were relatives who wanted to get away from Portland in the summer time. So the house was well full, and tick (the mechanism that ran the bell) and all gone in for a peapod.

For school there was one teacher who used to come right down the coast and stay at all the islands and lighthouses for two weeks at a time. Then she’d go back and start all over again. We had maybe four weeks of school all winter.

The only problem was that just as soon as a teacher came over to stay with us and teach, one of the boys would marry her, and that would be the end of that! Quite an education. Four out of seven of my brothers married school teachers.

Q. — Did you ever help run the lighthouse?

I started haulin’ traps when I was 10 years old. Nothin’ to it really. Bait the traps with heads, put a pot in the water, mark it, and haul it up. My sister and father would go out in one boat one way around the island, and I would go in another boat the other way.

I once got caught in a squall at age 13. The winds and chop was so rough that you could see air underneath lobster boats where the trough of the wave was. The whole keels were exposed. I kap’ wonderin’ if my strength was goin’ to hold up long enough for me to row ashore. And it was tricky rowin’ into high breakers. I’d have to time it and coast in between breakers. There were three big waves and then a fourth which flattened out. Then it would all repeat. I had just a split second to catch that fourth wave and coast into the slip. But I never missed. The same thing went on when I went out. We used peapods which were double-ended. When a sea came astern of it, it would lift, unlike a square sterned boat which would go in another direction. It had three prongs on it. Everytime a prong hit a lever, the bell would right out.

I told her up to a buoy and started to haul some traps. My mother never let go of the bell, and she’d be tapping. She never asked me to take her a-fishin’. I was tired from beltin’ the wind all day, but she says, “No body ever takes me fishing.”

We were always busy doin’ something on the island. We either made toy boats, or sleds, or traps. Never a dull moment, really.

We had a brother who was always bettin’ me in a mess. He’s always bettin’ me things, and I’m foolish when it comes to bettin’. One time, we had just gotten a bow and some arrows. “I bet you can’t hit that window in the house...”

Well, I knew it the minute that I heard the casin’ and I said, “Okay, go ahead and start right in.” I was petrified up there and yells, “My hands won’t let go!”

“Don’t be foolish,” he says.

“I tell ya, my hands won’t let go!”

Well, that was it. My father let go the rope and let me drop 10 feet down the side of the tower. I was about 18 years old. After that, my hands did let go and I went to work.
en and Now

My sister was always gettin' into messes, too. One day, she decided to hook up the bull to the cart. So she hitched this big fellin' on and everything was alright until the cart started to rub up against the bull's hind legs. That bull started to bellow and run from the cart, but my sister hung right on in the cart. The cow by this time heard the distressed bull, and jumped the fence to come to his rescue. The only thing that stopped him, and saved my sister's life, was that the bull ran right into the boat house wall. His horn became embedded and he couldn't continue on through, which would have been — with my sister.

I left the island at age 21 in 1933. I came to the mainland. We had bought an old car to use to go to the movies and the circus with. It was an old 1918 hummobile we got for about $8.00. My brother and his wife and me and my sister would go to the movies in it in the summer. We'd take a boat over and start out real early, after haulin' traps. We had to start early to go to the movies 'cause the car would always break down, and get as many as 10 flat tires. These were the thin bicycle-like tires, and we couldn't get new ones so easy.

The routine was that a tire would be punctured, and my brother would get out and light a fire to keep the mosquitoes away. Then I would blow the tire up and patch it. Sometimes we had to put on 10 patches on the way to Milbridge. Half an hour per patch. We'd get back from the movies just in time for the next day's lobsterin'.

One day, father wanted some gasoline to sell down at the wharf. My future husband wheeled it down for him and we soon got to talkin'. Since then, Stan and I have mostly lobstered here and raised sheep.

Sheep have always been my favorites. We had them on the island before I came over. One February, we had a huge storm. The wind was so great, it shook some of the pictures off the wall. The big tree on the island was uprooted and washed out across the sand bar. It separated the bar, and since then, our island consists of Big Nash, and Little Nash. So the cattle and sheep have to swim across from one to the other.

Sheep don't like to swim, but they will if they have to. It's alright if they don't have too much wool on, but if they're heavy with wool, they'll sink right down and drown. You can tell they're in trouble when they start to swim in circles. You have to get to 'em fast or it's all over.

We had four islands and kept as many as 300 sheep on them. Let's see — there was Nash's Island, Pond Island, Jordon's Delight, and Flat Island. And we knew them all by name and character.

Now, there's Carmen, Silly, Virginia, Ester, Perfect, Gerty, Aunt Jemima, Velvet, and Hurricane Tim for example. Hurricane Tim we named after my nephew's son Tim who was born in a hurricane. And then there was Disaster who was found under a snow drift on one of the islands.

You see, in winter, when we have big blizzards, sometimes the sheep are covered right over with snow. All you see is a little bank. The whole island looks deserted. And if you go over to one of these banks and dig around it, you'll find them all huddled together in a self-made cave. They sleep that way. This year, some were under snow from the 24th of December till the 18th of January. And Disaster had a bar of ice across her back and couldn't get up. I found her and took her home and saved her.

Spring is the worst time of the year for sheep. On our island, there's so many sheep that they make foot paths and knolls develop between. The frost kills the grass on top, but down below in the knoll it's all green. So they get in the knolls in winter to feed.

Now, when sheep feed in the knoll, they often stretch themselves out to get some sun and roll over. And if they roll over, with their feet stickin' up in the air, they can't get up and they're helpless. It's part of my job to put them rightside up again or else they're gosers.

You wouldn't believe how hungry the sheepyas are now. They're starvin' 'cause it's against the law to shoot them, and it's against the law to feed them. So they're overpopulated without enough food to go around. Gullys are scavengers and fishermen should be allowed to throw their unused bait out for them to eat. But that's also against the law. So they're so starvin', fisherman baiting their traps are attacked by gullys who want the bait. Some have to ward them away with a stick, or shoot one to keep the others away. They're always out lookin' for clam worms and herring, and have gone as far as 15 miles inland to eat our blueberries. If this continues, they may go after very small children soon.

Anyway, the gullys, especially the black-back gullys, will set up right close to our sheep and watch for one to be cast on his back. Or, if a sheep's short hind legs are lower than the fore legs, and he can't get up off a hill or hole, they'll be in trouble.

There's usually one gull who sees this and lets out the funniest squeak-like sound. Then the whole flock comes down. They'll attack the sheep and eat 'em alive.

These gullys start by cutting off the sheep's tail. Then they peel the sheep's hide off his head from the rear forward like you'd peel off a sock from your foot. That's the way they work. Not a hole in the hide — they just skin him and then eat him. And his ribs inside the hide and bones. They're messy and horrid.

And these gullys, as well as some eagles, will often pick out a straw lamb and carry him off for dinner. They've almost ruined us in the last 5 years! The blackback gullies even attack and kill the smaller gray ones, and drive them herring gulls from their nests. They've taken over our island over there across the cove.

So that's how we make our livin', Sheep raisin' and lobsterin'. And it's great to live here in Addison. I'd never live in a city.

Although my grandfather died when I was very young, he is still larger than life to me because of the stories we heard about him. In America, the national folklore has been to read Mother Goose stories at bedtime. For us, the incredible things my grandfather did on the frontier became our folklore and the substance of our bedtime stories. Every night, we'd say, "Papa, let's hear about Grandpa!" And off he would go...

Grandpa was an eccentric until the end, absent minded, and only 5 foot 4 inches tall. Still, he had a habit of doing amazing things.

Let's take clearing the land. Our soil on this homestead is glacial and there are a lot of boulders and stones that were dragged and left here. So it was up to my Grandpa to clear the land to prevent hidden rocks from breaking plow blades and so on.

Well, the early settlers were all self taught with dynamite and explosives, which they used to blow out huge boulders. I don't know why most of them didn't kill themselves in the process of trial by error, but they didn't. And my grandfather was one of them. He took these two sticks of dynamite and dug a little hole under a boulder that he wanted to remove. Then he lit the fuse and ran away. Well, it didn't go off so he waited for what he thought was a reasonable amount of time and then figured that the fuse had just burned up. He walked back to the rock, leaned right down over it to see, and then... KABAAAM! Little pieces of rock just flew through the air and cut his face and clothes up. His eyes were filled with mud and pebbles and he was blinded — temporarily. He was a quarter of a mile away from the houses when the explosive went off and crumpled homes on his hands and knees, feeling along the farm road that he must have known literally like the back of his hand.

(Continued on page 10)

JOHN HEDMAN

My family came over from Sweden in the second or third group of immigrants in 1871 on my father's side, and in 1880 on my mother's side. So a logical beginning is to tell you about my grandfather, Eric Hedman.

Eric was born in 1864 and died here in New Sweden in 1954 at age 90. He settled the land this farm is on. His father died when Eric was just 13, so he became the man of the farm at an early age.
Maine: Then and Now (continued)

Once again, he had to crawl home on all fours, badly bruised, but he again survived. He was laid up outdoors all winter, and had a times came to auction on Saturday afternoons. The auctions were held 15 miles away, and he'd go to town — on cross country skis and after and cut berries and a garden. We also did a bit of lumbering out in the woods. This has supposed daily, a little bit wiser for the experience.

So continued for about over heels off the loft and he fell three stories into the soft seat of an old sleigh beneath him! Then and Now (continued)

It’s the kind of folklore that I grew up around.

My father got the homestead here from Grandpa and things continued on.

We have always been a self-sufficient type farm with potatoes, cattle, sheep, pigs, berries and a garden. We also did a bit of lumbering out in the woods. This has continued for over 100 years here with myself the latest in line.

There was the whole business of primegeniture where the oldest son inherits the farm. My older brother hated farming and he must have hurt my father when he let him do that. I think that father was happy that I’m here in this time to be farming, but I’d love being near the city.

After graduating from the University of Maine in Orono in English, I did return to take over the farm. Part of the reason was to continue being a part of the living myth which my grandfather had started. But also, my father quit the farm and left me a few beat up old pieces of machinery. I had traveled and had experienced a bit of city life which I detested. I had a perspective on what I had here, and so after a stint teaching and coaching in Vassalboro, I returned to take over the farm.

Well, I found that I was just as stubborn and individualistic as all the rest, even though I thought that I wouldn’t make the same mistakes my father and others made. Once I had an education, I overestimated myself, but perhaps needed that kind of overestimation to get myself back into the farming scene. I may have been a little bit young, dumb, and stupid — but I wanted to do it my way and take the hard jumps — as well as the credit. The first year, I pulled myself out of debt and got a few thousand dollars ahead. Then, I got hooked into the farm syndrome.

I’m only 27 and single, but already I have the responsibility of many 55 year olds who are married and in the middle-class "rut." — But I’m my own boss, I’m constantly making decisions. You can’t second-guess yourself in this business, or you’ll take to drink or give up. Most farmers are this way. They have to be stubborn a little bit. Then everybody’s convinced that it’s going to go up this year. But it’s just a dream.

People, potato blight is devastating and can sober you up at an early age. After a bad year, farmers sometimes break down and have their little cell meetings and get together to try to help each other. But it’s just a wild business.

For example, potato blight is devastating and can sober you up at an early age. After a bad year, farmers sometimes break down and have their little cell meetings and get together to try to help each other. But it’s just a wild business.

And one of the worst things to happen to a farmer is to have the price of potatoes go up just a little bit. Then everybody’s convinced that it’s going to go up more that they’ll hang on to their crop too long. This inevitably leads to a fall and hurts everyone. So we’re our own worst enemies.

You may have noticed that Aroostook is referred to as "The County" as if no other county. We’re all so attached to this place. Every family has a story. Some of these families came to the county to get away from French that was imported by Longshore, wrote about in Van Buren, the French Canadians in St. Francis, and the WASPS in Caribou and Presque Isle. The County is really the ethnic section of Maine.

On the other hand, there is a certain fraternity among us in the County. I’m a Thursday for Follansbee and have gone to work the Woodbury Park in Presque Isle. Sometimes I recognize people by face from here and we naturally think, “Oh, you’re from here!”

Living in the Frontier has made us too independent and individualistic to be manipulated by city life.
Boat People

Doug Rawlings
Mt. Vernon

1. lambs descendant from the latest slaughter come ashore tugging the war behind them and we ponder: can a sapper really hot-wire our daughters?

2. no need to worry though: we’re in america where we’ve weathered napalmed faces and apple-cheeked junkies before. we know we are secure. the six o’clock news will lose them too.

Learning to Kill:
Bainbridge AFB, Georgia

Captain Howard was what we call a hard ass. Few passed their checkrides with Captain Howard. My flight with Captain Howard, although a bad ride even by my own abysmal standards, had its satisfactions. I fell out of a barrel roll, for example, and hung from the straps, blood pounding past my ears, as I wondered what to do. But I knew that Captain Howard was likewise helpless, unhappy and in pain. On landing, I savored the yelp, like a panic screech of tires, as I banged Captain Howard down hard on top of his hemorrhoids.

H. R. Coursen Bowdoin College

From Montville Poems:

Arthur

Arthur
Makes ax handles
When he’s not drunk

Upwind
He can sneak
Behind you and laugh
Wet brown teeth
Out of his stubble

Gliding
Effortless over fallen leaves
When you’re away
He will burn down your house

Annette Bradley
Unity
Although Louise had been ever so quiet after she discovered that the children had apparently locked themselves in the bathroom, all she saw when she looked in were two faces sweet and smiling gazing up at her.

"Hello, Mother," said Jessica.

"Hello, Mrs. Mann," said Franklin Neuss.

"What are you doing in the bathroom?" asked Louise.

"Nothing," Jessica said quickly. "We're not doing anything."

Franklin Neuss Zimmerman didn't say a word. He just kept on smiling.

"Why are you in the bathroom?" Louise asked. To the children she looked something like the Cheshire cat she read to them about the day before. All they could see of her was her head strangely disembodied and such two-thirds of the way into the bathroom. But the window was just a very, very real set. "Why did you lock the door?" the head continued.

Franklin Neuss pulled Jessica's hand and said, "Did you lock the door?"

She had worried about this for days, whittling it down in her mind from hundreds to 15. It was 1939 and the midst of an exuberant family quarrel. Jessica's puppet was beating Franklin Neuss Zimmerman's with a long yellow pencil.

"You're a naughty boy to eat all the cookies! So take that!" shrieked Franklin Neuss.

"Don't hit me! Don't hit me, please! Please!" screamed Franklin Neuss.

His puppet covered the arms protecting its head from a rain of pencil blows.

Louise hesitated. They seemed so innocent. "Franklin Neuss Zimmerman," she said, "it's time for you to go home now.

"Yes, m'am," said Franklin Neuss. He dropped his puppet on the bed.

"And I think you best not come back any more."

"Yes, m'am."

That was the end of Franklin Neuss Zimmerman in Jessica's life. As soon as he was out the door Louise took Jessica on her lap and said, "I want you to tell me what you didn't do in the bathroom.

"We didn't do anything," said Jessica.

"Then why did you go in the bathroom together?"

"Franklin Neuss wanted us to see it."

"And what did you do in there?"

"Nothing."

"Well you are never to do it again," said Louise.

This conversation with Franklin Neuss and Jessica had been repeated often in the next few months. Jessica always maintained she had done nothing in the bathroom and Louise continued to admonish her not to ever again.

One night there was an awesome storm. Terrific flashes of lightning in blazing sheets of flame consumed the sky, fusing in its motion light Jessica and the intimacy of her room to the wild tumult of the out-of-doors. A branch of the mango tree spilled its leaves and34

Jessica's voice was resonant with anguish. How was it not always easy for Jessica to match the wrongs she had done.

"And then, more frankly, for she really didn't know what to say, she asked, "What do you mean?"

Jessica took one of Mother's hands in a confidential clasp and said, "The nuns told us that if we prayed properly like they told us then Jesus will hear our prayers and answer them. They said, 'If you pray correctly, it will please be Jesus.'"

Jessica had worried about this for days, whittling it down in her mind from hundreds to 15. Finally from the ten general categories of the Decalogue, Jessica with Mother's help compiled a list of sins. It was not always easy for Jessica to match the wrongs she had committed with the language of the Commandments. Certain ones, though, were simple, like the Fourth.

"Mother, it is OK. If I say I talked back to you 15 times?" Jessica asked. She had worried about this for days, whittling it down in her mind from hundreds to 15.

"Fifteen!" Mother said. "A hundred and fifty is more like it!"

"Mother's voice was resonant with anguish. How could she confess to so much badness? She had meant so little of it. And Mother was so very....

...And Sin No More
...And Sin No More (continued)

"Well, thirty," Mother finally conceded. She sounded when she said it very final, the way she did in the bazaar when she gave her last price and turned as if she intended to leave.

"Twenty," Jessica wheedled.

"I said thirty." "Mother! That's too much! Way too much! It's not fair!"

"It's going to be thirty-one in about half a minute! Jessica was checked. She felt cornered. "Mother, please!"

"Well, twenty-five. Don't you say another word," she added as Jessica began to protest.

And so the list was made: two masses missed, and late for mass, oh, say twenty times. Jessica didn't steal, and she didn't lie, and she was quite free from envy.

And she worried day and night what to tell the priest about Franklin Neuss Zimmerman. After the night of the storm it had never come up again with her mother. Finally one night after her prayers were said she asked, "Mother, what is adultery?"

"Adultery? Why do you want to know that?"

"It's the Sixth Commandment."

"Oh. Well, Um, what did the nuns say?"

"They said it was fornication."

"Fornication."

"No. Fornication," Jessica repeated with a French 't' and an extra vowel. "Mmm. Well, O.K."

"But, what's that?"

"Well," said Louise and paused. "It's... Well, if a man and a woman are together and they aren't married..."

"Together. You mean naked?"

"Yes. Together naked."

"You mean like Franklin Neuss Zimmerman and me."

"Well, not exactly."

But Jessica knew where her duty lay. Her finished confession which she rehearsed several times a day the last week was, "Bless me Father for I have sinned. This is my first confession. I talked back to my mother twenty-five times; I missed Mass twice and was late eight times and I committed--you know what I mean."

"Sure."

"Daddy when he heard her chanting it said, "My god, Louise, she can't express that!"

Louise's face was all corners like a shoe box, and she said, "Yes she can."

And Jessica did.

First Communion Day was in February. Trade Winds tossed the long curved hundred of the Royal Palms and juggled at the white lace mantillas of the little girls. All the little children were dressed in white and inside the altar was covered with lilies. Everything was white and delicate. Sunshine poured in the open windows of the nave and glimmered off the gold ciborium and the shining moons floating in the clouds of incense. The bells of the mass seemed to tinkles under silver than ever they did on ordiday. Even Daddy went to Mass that day.

Afterwards they had ice cream and candy and Daddy took moving pictures of Jessica with his new camera.

"So, honey," he said when it was all over, "what sins did you tell the priest?"

Jessica related her confession to him. She was lying on the dragon in the Chinese rug and Max, the terrier, was trying to lick the ice cream off her face. When she got to the last of her list of three sins her father cried out, "Louise, why did you let her do that?" He pulled Jessica to her feet. He said, "And what in God's name did the priest say?"

Jessica answered with a thick Irish brogue, for Father Murphy was from County Cork and hadn't been in Panama long, "Go my child and sin no more and for your penance say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys. That's what he said to everyone," she confided.

Karen Saum
York

The Timing of a Sacrifice is All-Important

1. Glow

Anyone can fall in love. Even middle-aged women in church fall in love. Someone you have never seen walks towards you, surrounded by a strange glow, a halo. You wait to hear what message the angel has for you, you stand there stuttering while the angel massages your tongue with light. Everyone else walks by and they realize the angel is visiting you, only you, no one else sees it, it's an ordinary person to everyone else. What do you want from me? you ask. You want to kiss its feet but of course you are in the middle of a passageway, people must think you are exchanging recipes. You freeze, so the angel will look at you and see its own reflection and think it has found a mate.

2. Preferences

Sometimes an avocado plant will turn into an angel. A shopping bag lady will stop you and you see she is on fire, a policeman, a motorcycle, Mona Lisa, a hundred dollar bill, the Mets, Guru Maharaji, Nixon, whiskey, this Japanese beetle which switches colors like a Zoroastrian gem — colors you see when your eyes are closed. Someone body even loves you.

3. Who, for instance?

Your mother, Jesus. Isn't that enough? Some magical evening you will cross the room like a sleepwalker. You say that has already happened, but it in one, you are assigned to lesser passions. Don't you know that love is lovelier with both feet?

4. Is love eternal, or transitory?

Yes.

5. Home study

Here are some bibliographies. Some people advocate LSD, others say you should let God into your heart; certain authorities say you should find a new mate. Stay at home and make a list of wonderful things. You are wonderful to believe in them. Look at yourself in the mirror, gaze deeply into your own eyes. You have a great heart. How full of love you are for all beings. To get love, give love. Someone will see your melting dark eyes and think there is a halo around you. Bring the muscles that dilate your pupils under voluntary control. Dilated pupils are a sign of deep emotion. You will begin to see haloes everywhere. You will look like an angel.

6. Frankincense

Did you notice the angel smells sweet? Even its bad breath is a kind of spioke. If you turn your head fast, you catch bits of perfume smoking out of the corner of your eyes. When it lights a cigarette you think of taking up smoking.

He smelled like nutmeg. You laugh — nutmeg? — thinking I am talking about hallucinogens. Nutmeg. He smelled sweet and my heart shook. It was nutmeg, I think. His body smelled like that, it was his inside smell. I could tell when he'd been in a room. After­wards I smelled like nutmeg myself for a year. Butterflies, you say, moths. No, I know sex smell too, a little like shrimp. Certain man have that smell, I follow them in crowds. This was personal, it was nutmeg.

I love you. I tell you about the angel. You are thinking about the time it happened to you. When you pick up the camera it happens over and over again. He had a camera. He took pictures of light. You reminded me of him the moment I met you. Not any more. What do you mean when you send a letter that says I love you? When you send it to three people? To five? After all, you're not really my type. It took a while, but now I realize. You're really not my type at all.

Kaa Lidenheim
Ashville

Porcelain plate from angel series by Josh Nadel
At the End of the Road,
Waiting on the Porch

I am down at the end of the road,
waiting for you. The house has been abandoned for years, wildflowers
have taken over the meadows.
I am sitting on the porch,
nervous, knowing that you are coming.
And for hours I wait. I am looking
at an apple tree transformed by
insects, at the vines that are about
to take this house with it.
And then I see myself walking down
the road. Walking down the road to
meet me. And I look on myself like a
long lost lover, like a familiar story
retold with great sorrow. Waiting for
myself in an abandoned house, O with
what pity, with what forgiveness I
walk forward, speechless, needing no
introduction.

Stuart Kestenbaum
Portland

Contradance

passive solar heated
Goosepecker Ridge museum curators
sneak down to the grange
in manure trucks and unlicensed
ramblers
Montville earth people
unhitch themselves from plows
mud boots in unison
sledge hammer rhythm
swing your partners
Allemande . . .

Annette Bradley
Unity

Hiking at Night

Moving carefully into the dark, I touch
The rough immediate bark, the vacant path.
I dust off the senses of the mole,
Familiar of roots and stones, varicose shade,
Things that have been buried a long time
In the depths of light. They surface now —
A fern brittle under the foot, a scent.
A finger of wind on the back of the neck,
The cry of an undefined bird.

My hands go before me like antennae of a beetle.
My nerves spin out like spider-silk around me.
I move like water in eroded stone,
Gathering the interrupted silence
Like a skin of shed leaves on water.

Later my hands drop back and my feet
Hold onto the earth by themselves,
Learning it, junction by junction.
As every cell of the blood in its capillary miles
Learns the distance it must go
So I continue,
The forest breathing in and out around me;
A planetary lung.

Beverly Greenspan
Brunswick
Erebus

I wake early now. Perhaps it is because daylight comes sooner now as winter recedes. It begins to thaw. It is not that the nights are shorter, but the chill light of mornings through. In the arid gulleys of the city streets there is little evidence of spring's approach.

The slow tightening of my room makes returning to consciousness easier and I no longer shrink from opening my eyes when I realize where I am. It is not a bad room. Not like some furnished rooms with their cracked brown linoleum and exposed water pipes painted the same chalky blue as the walls.

The linoleum of this room is a deep maroon with grandiose swirls of pink fern and is quite new. The bed is new, too, the landlady informs me proudly when I rent the room. Yet when I hand her the rent, she does not invite me in. She is a small gray woman who reveals an unsteady, rotund shrewdness. I sense she would like to have a bed like mine. She canes her glancing veneer lovingly, then slants about the room, seeming to sniff at the squat overstuffed chair, the ancient, zinc-lined icebox, the gas plate and miniscule sink wedged into a curtained closet.

On a shelf over the sink there are three dinner plates that match and some odd dishes arranged nearly in piles. The gas plate sits on a small cabinet stuffed with nondescript pots and pans. The aluminum coffee pot is new. I fill it and turn the flame down carefully so it will not boil over while I am gone.

I gather up toothbrush and washcloth, a pink bar of soap in its plastic case, slipping my toothbrush and toothpaste into the pocket of my frayed robe. In the hall stale cooking odors, leaked from behind closed doors, mingle with the necrotic stink of fumes, like old gas, in the room where the shades watch my passing. Being able to sleep late is only aggravation when one has formed the habit of waking up early now. Perhaps it is because daylight comes sooner now as winter recedes, but the chill light of mornings through.

I am gone.

Barbara Barrette
Brunswick

Autopsy
(for my brother Stephen)

The knife cuts into still-warm flesh. Cathode, stethoscope say this is death. You saw licebug, delicate debris of bone bound with muscle. Organs bloom a vegetable garden. You search for jewel-weed, disease treasure. Wonder what made heart pulse, blood flow, lungs swell, wonder why neurons leaped Synapse only an hour ago.

Once nightly we dreamed dragons Beneath our beds, closed closets where Clothes hung astray, wondered if we should die. Before we woke. Our father tucked us in bed. Gave us his kiss, and shaped our hands into wedges of prayer with his hands that knew Daily death; Sundays he dressed you in a black cassock, sent you to the altar to assist. Training now to doctor as he did, You harvest heart, liver, kidney, search cause — Cleaving the nerves. Your hands remember his.

Jan Johnston
Winthrop

Marginal Datsun

Red with egg heater engine pulling chrome and rust over hills. You are a seeing-eye car in dangerous, blinding traffic.

"Sure-tried," you careen tur and patches of sand with a grace that bespeaks a maturity beyond your fenders (which keep falling off on country roads).

Gas fumes, like old sour breath curl around plastic black seats making our eyes boil over with tears unasked for, unearned.
Erebus (continued)

But this morning, as I approach, a hunching figure shambles furtively from an alley opposite the lot. He is intent upon crossing the street and does not see me. Something about him compels me to slacken my pace to a mere semblance of motion, held by an anticipation that he is the key to the mystery.

I am close enough to see the pallor and hollowness of his grey-stubbled cheeks. His head is bare, a long flaxen lock of thin, colorless hair ragged in the chill wind. He clutches the labels of a faded tweed jacket. Shapeless chinos flop grotesquely against the chicken-bone thinness of his legs. His shoes are mashed down at the back and holes in his socks expose the dirty whiteness of his heels. The flesh looks soft and vulnerable.

He is lame, combining a slide and a hop into a queer sort of gait as he mounting the curb with an awkward, eagar hobble. It is then that I see the cats. A dozen or more are skulking in, hostile and wary, through the crumbling fence.

The man (I see now how old he is) bends shakily to retrieve a battered pie-plate from a tangle of refuse and weeds. He scrapes at a patch of gravel with his foot to level it from inside his jacket he extracts a flat-joint bottle that shows oddly white through the green glass. He unscrews the cap awkwardly, fingers stiff, stoops to pour milk into the plate. Then he pulls a grease-stained brown paper bag from his pocket and scatters its contents on the ground.

The cats, still wary, crouch toward him, then suddenly rush, fighting for the scraps. Some are circled around the plate, heads rammed together in the elbow, lights stuf tor the barrens. Why you burn back the land, will bloom in their acres of charred barrens, I remember my fear of fire, why the acres of charred barrens.

After sundown near the Maine border, the smoke is out again tonight, everywhere leaving trails, and riding down rivers of flame.

Women watching from windows, men in sleeveless, rolled to the elbow, light stub torches on the barens.

I stand in the open field, remember my fear of fire, knowing it takes what it can of the night.

Don't ask why they gather in the body of a smoldering bush, move close to this flame that feeds itself in the month when earth swells, all of us heavy with the tug of new growth.

Dead bushes, dead fruit, the moon is void, and I want to ask you why you burn back the land, why the acres of charred barrens will bloom in their own good time, and why fire draws back into itself, restoring clusters of taut dark berries to earth.

Kathleen Lignell
Hulls Cove

Kennebec: A Portfolio of Maine Writing

Kennebec, a yearly publication, has the express purpose of offering to as wide an audience as possible a sampling of contemporary Maine writing by both new and established Maine writers. It is hoped that our selection of material not only reveals the professional competence of Maine writers, but also their diversity of interests and talent. Our newsprint folio format is a unique departure for Maine literary magazines, which enables us to print over four thousand copies and see they are delivered, mailed, or made available to educational institutions, libraries and individual readers. We believe that, more than anything, Maine writers wish to be read. The rest sometimes follows.

The staff of the Kennebec wish to acknowledge the interest and support extended to them by the University of Maine at Augusta, its Division of Arts and Humanities, and Forum A.

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Lawyer Riley

My first case? Well, my first years were such a jumble of divorces and bankruptcies, uncouplings smooth and bitter, that only one client really stands out. One Saturday evening, when my office was still above the Milo Western Auto, I could hear him climbing the sixty odd steps. He stood for a moment in front of the door, a shadow on the pane, and finally came in. He seemed about my age. We were alone. No introductions. "Ginny threw me out. I was to be married Tuesday. The reason we was together was the first night I asked to stay. She said, 'Oh no. We can't do that. We're not married.' But I wanted her bad and, without thinking, said, 'Then we'll get married.' "Oh, that's different," she says and she lets me stay. But now I'm out. Has she broke any laws?" Well, she hadn't, of course. Except perhaps a law of love but you won't find those in any law library. It was past dinner time and rather than just send him away, I asked him out for a beer. One thing led to another and before I knew it I'd taken his case. "Breach of Promise" was the only grounds I could think of and we took it to the Dover District Court. He took the stand and told his story. His voice was low but clear and he turned in his seat and faced the judge. His short, slow sentences seemed to isolate each event, holding it up for inspection. — "She let me stay. We were lovers. But now I'm out." —

I knew we'd never get by a 41-b dismissal but when her lawyer so motioned, the judge sat looking at my client for a long, long moment. He denied the motion and tried the case. We lost, of course. Shouldn't have come through the court house door. But if I've ever made a better speech...when?"