EDITOR
Kathleen Armour

THE GANG
Ted Wallace, Mary Dean Scott,
John Dolan, Betty Hutchins,
Philippe Hamel

This issue is dedicated to Dr. Kathleen Harper
Dear reader—
From the editors, myself
and the contributors—
from all who put time and effort into this issue—
Enjoy!

Thank you Kirk and Ian for your time and advice.

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Contributors to this issue

Ralph Gustafson vii, 39, 40
Christopher Thomas 1, 7, 10, 16, 24, 30, 36, 37, 38, 43
Christopher Shipton 3, 5
Marshall Button 8
John Glassco 9
Michelle Paulin 11, 13, 14, 15
Nelson Gonyer 17
Bill Lydiatt 18
Ian Stephens 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
Janet Badger 25
David O’Rourke 27
Douglas M. Armour 29
John Dolan 31
Robin Heilig 32, 33, 34
John Olsthoorn 35
H. van C. Bailey 41
Ronnie R. Brown 42
Elizabeth Beattie vi, 30
Brian Chamberlain 2, 35
Perry Beaton 26
Kirk Kelly cover
FOR KATHLEEN HARPER

Whan that Aprille came to Bishop’s U,
The month when halls their hope of hoods renew
And all that students gleaned and teachers taught
Once written down is instantly forgot,
Across the brow and numb collective brain
The awful news sank in that not again,
No more—it was official, signed and sealed
From far Victoria to local rut and field—
Would Doctor Harper come! She had retired!
No alarm had rung, she was not fired,
The fifteen years of grind grads knew about,
The hopeful years of frosh, were cancelled out;
Committees wilted, crucial lectures shunned,
Alike was egghead crushed, the ignorant stunned.
What kink, what twist would future learning take,
Grendel left unglossed, Grimm’s Law at stake?
Newcomers wonder at their hollow choice,
Upended scholars flounder; foes rejoice.
What turmoil one small negative can make!
What status quo can one small person shake!

But shades begone! Lugubrious rhymes disperse!
Hypotheses and shambles the truth rehearse:
One brief presence Ignorance reproved,
True devotion Bishop’s mountain moved.

As thanks must finally be left unsaid
And just deserts have metaphor instead,
Yet know, though verses strive in vain above,
The Mitre, readers, students send their love.

-Ralph Gustafson
(UNTITLED)

...cat got'cher tongue mister?

....uhhhhhhhhh/h

...kick'em in the gut.
Christopher Shipton

'ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION' T.R.

When we lived here
Rosebushes ate tennis balls and boney hands;
Radio shows stayed home,
Waited 'til we turned them on;
Beautiful babes were daddy's toy
And feet got wet in the rain.

Sand forts spat out firecrackers,
and we admonished them
With fat hands full of mortar,
Slapping walls back together
While kneeling in our puddle
Beside drowning plastic soldiers.
We let them drown,
Sand forts and firecrackers,
Evenings ending with mother.

We started wearing rubber boots,
Hating rain;
We loved dusting,
Flying down dirt roads
In a father's car,
Making our own clouds;
Scaring cows,
Following the sun down,
Kissing hard at twilight,
Getting home by midnight:
Thinking of love,
The look of a pharmacist,
The cost of condoms,
And having our own home.

The next time the sun came up
It created a tomorrow.
And we were supposed to marry it:
Save money, buy bread
For starving souls,
Swear at Hitler,
Feed a famished junkie
Who collapsed on the road,
Reinforce other's doubt
And subjugate our own:
Be big and beautiful,
Tough, at a hundred and forty pounds.

But then came our 'enlightenment':
Hiding secret thoughts in 'poetry',
Exercising ‘daimon’,
Being alone, and ‘definitive’;
Aping with the sexual being,
Filling up glasses,
Building up bravado,
Being literate,
Defying a dying spirit
By saying he's right with all our might,
Politicizing pinkertons
By making them report,
Publicizing triumph,
Hiding failure in retort, wit,
Informal logic, and
A crossroads consciousness
Of coffee and cigarettes.

This we called experience.
As its participants we
Professed to know its reason,
So we stopped, called it treason;
Called Eternity ours,
Called ourselves God,
Called authority 'pig',
And called ourselves God,
Laughed loud and long at
Life's waning enthusiasts, whom we had
Trapped with our cynical demon.

We died together, tragically.
Leaving behind a roadside attraction
In the hands of a hired drunken driver.
He was the one who kissed the pole,
Who screamed as the car rolled:
'Jesus, they're dying!'
And Jesus said:
'But that's what they've been waiting for.'

JEBORIAH

He had loved
A liar baby lying to the world,
Which was herself. Back when,
All her scolding nannies
Tried to put her on the shelf,
And now every drug Morocco sells
Can only quiet her noisy hell in Time,
But not Eternity:
Not the ever-dreaded abyss,
The fast pursuing madness
Of her all too rational mind.

She was a fierce dog master
Of a much too patient dog, who'd been
Driven from his home, told to
Sit on a dingy back woods road,
And watch her car pull away.
Back crept each night
To watch her shadow in the light
Extinguish, hailing sleep.
Fled he fast this sunrise, though,
Wailing strange laments:
'Power gone,'
'Wasted, spent...'
'Laugh at it,'
'A man's lament.'

Laugh and sing to the pain of this glorious uprising!

The baritone's marriage to the falsetto,
And the mahogany heart of their player-piano,
Will drive a man to drink, and think.

With glasses fogged from winter frost
And smokey warmth of tavern froth:
Stumble-ing in, stunk with gin-drunk
But this I can say I could see
It was Jeboriah's birthday,
His forehead passionately kissed
The table wet with mug-piss
And jugginess. Maidens with flaring nostrils
Smoked with compassion for Jeb's unconsciousness;
But we, with egos in hand,
Pretended to be better men than Jeboriah.
They whispered in his ear:
‘That’s the way it is, Jeb’
‘That’s the way it is, Jeb’
‘That’s the way it is, Jeb.’
He didn’t hear. He only saw
That the Butterfly, who chases the crooked path
Of its holy imagination,
Feels particularly ‘alonely’,
And quite often very lonely.

The dragon soundly sleeping
As the winter went on creeping by:
Jeboriah woke, walked away
From those buildings built with books
And broken draught-glass windows;
Where grass and bushes coughed up blood,
And shrubs, shrunk by the atomic sun,
Grew wet with the sweat of oxygen.
He parted the morning mists
As he seasoned his hungering fancy.

Jeboriah walked endlessly, breathlessly,
Desperately trying to destroy this myth:
The social myth of ‘create me.’
He was no prodigal seeking his origin
Of father, a brother, and fatted calf;
Nor the lost child sick for own safety,
Craving the sight of a welcoming light
In the windows of gingerbread homes.
He was alone. He was eruptive.
He was feeling a little destructive.
He was angry, amazed,
At the thought that most would stay,
Safe, in the triumph and treason of reason.

Christopher Thomas

(UNTITLED)
on being fraught
with the exactness of nothing
we must tilt our heads,
some for pride
some for philosophy
and some, for that last elusive drop of ale.
CAUGHT UP

Caught up a'top a rocky cliff,
O'erlooking the ceaseless sea.
Why bother to ask the question,
'To be or not to be'—
—Caught up in this (still) hamlet?
The waves digesting, churn.
I no longer envy lovers,
time-locked, fixt on an Urn.

Caught up within a Crucible;
Why live if in remorse?
To let, forget; and to receive,
Sweet Nature's timeless force.

TRUE LOVE

The tender bride turned to her loving groom:
'Please let our love live past this brash bedroom;
To kitchens, parlors, baths and even hallways!'
Smiled he:
'I'll love you all ways!'

ON TWO CANADIAN CATS

Layton's is dying, Pratt's is prize,
Both are larger than life size
In the best anthologies.
Let's compare this pair of cats...
One is real, one ersatz;
Look at Layton's, look at Pratt's,
In their retributive strife
One with death and one with life:
See how we were all misled!
For when all is done and said,
Layton's cat's living, Pratt's cat's dead.

John Glassco
(UNTITLED)

sometimes they all get

    snowballing
down the same damn hill

and somebody has to take things

    in hand

and go break it up

    with a spade

now, who's to say

    a good quick thaw

wouldn't work just as well?

Hey down there
guess what?
I don't live
in an igloo
and Montreal
isn't in Ontario.
Hey guess what else?
I don't have a pet beaver
or even a beaver coat.
Hey down there:
there's more
but let me remove
my snowshoes,
first of all
we may not be
prejudiced against
blacks but... look,
we've got our own
little racisms.

Le Bloke vs The Grenouille (rivet)
and again at me,
Halfway,
A chilled frog.
Pattes de grenouilles sur glace?
Have you ever been to
St. Jean de Rubberboot, in the Laurentians.
Lots of them, up there, skiers.
Also thousands of little
tadpoles.
Those French-Canadians!
Fertile as hell.
Too dumb to know
any better.
And all those little tadpoles
cut their first teeth
on NHL approved pucks,
and learned to
skate before they could
walk.
(Blades guaranteed by Jean Beliveau.)
The female child was taught the art of making ‘Tante Irene’ style tourtieres, des bines et la soupe aux pois. (if that didn’t win her a husband she’d switch to a reasonable facsimile.) The bloke was taught about money, baseball, hockey (or reasonable facsimiles) and money while the female of this species took ballet lessons and fell in love with horses (what else?) But then an exciting event changed the course of history. The frogs dropped their canned beans and the blokes spilled their pennies. English and French were united screaming, yelling, pelting each other with mini Maple Leaves (autographed by Pierre Trudeau) silk-screened on mini diapers. (autographed, in his cute way, by bebe Justin.) Drum roll, please. Canada vs Russia, a new and improved hockey series, introducing those suave TV stars: Hair just so, (and the spray, dat duz everything but goes psht.) contre those (supposedly) fumbling, bumbling Communists (dirty words) They were so serious about it too. Poor things. What else could they do but lose?

Democracy shall overcome. Why else would we bother with all that beaver and maple leaf B.S. It’s our image, Cheri!

Finis

BAR-ROOM BLAHS

Here we are, again, suffering From the bar-room blahs. Pick a chair, or better still, pick up a chair. Hustle a telephone number. Doesn’t matter. It’ll all be the same, in the end. The same voice will answer. And you’ll ask the same old questions. Work? Where? Husband? Wife? (Who me?) Address? Conventional? No? Let’s screw. Oh to be fascinating again.
LA PIERRE LAIDE

Que m'as-tu dit, et répété.
Me blesser, me faire voir.
Mais déjà il ne me reste plus de larmes.

Et je suis froide,
maintenant.
On touche mon corps,
je m'en fiche puisque personne
ne touchera mon esprit.
Je ne laisse approcher que les mains
impersonelles
les mains qui me flattent
mais elles ne me touchent pas.
Je suis inanimée, laide.
Je suis la pierre grise
au fond de cette rivièrera
sale et je suis froide
maintenant.
Me blesser.

Une bouche, des levres
qui m'embrassent, je
ne sens rien.
Je suis dramaturge
et je joue
je joue
sur la scène. Une vedette,
que même son art
n'inspire. Et je ne veux
pas être soulévée.
C'est tellement agréable
ici, d'exister
sans l'acte.
Aucun désir me ronge
et c'est tellement agréable.

Le destin m'a atteint,
je m'offre à lui,
il s'infiltrera dans ma tête solide.
Je m'offre enfin
à lui.

THE VERY MARRIED MAN
ou la chanson de la maîtresse

Now you see him.
Now you don't.
It's the very married man.
How can you tell?
Oh Monsieur Married
I can see you, walking along
eyeballing every female
within range. I can see you,
acting very 'chalantly' nonchalant.
The real coy McCoy, with the
sleight of voice remarks,
Mr. Subtle, always ready with
rebuttal. Let's play,
Turn it into a sex game.
Winking while wife
stands by blind.
And then the copyright,
patented married man lines.
Never before
heard by my virgin ears
and yet sounding so suspiciously
stereotype.
We're in pictures.
Or was it Another World?
Someone must have taught me to
know better.
So young to be so cynical,
but too young to be someone's
mistress.

La Fin
Christopher Thomas

(UNTITLED)

I never claimed sainthood
or celibacy
or marriage to the church
but from the look in your eyes, Loretta,
it wouldn't have made much difference
if I had.

Nelson Gonyer

WAIKIKI

Prostrate here
on this runty piece
of tropical shore
the sun is sponging
on the Mai-Tai
we had for breakfast
Up against the wall
that segregates beach
from RESTRICTED POOL
AREA FOR SHERATON
GUESTS ONLY a milk-white
tourist from New York
is haggling with
a young Hawaiian over
a chunk of coral
The palm trees
we pointed to in
the brochure
offer no relief
And I am squint-weary
from wrangling with Helios
for a glimpse of
Don Ho's horde
Bill Lydiatt

SPRING RIVER BED

If you love me the way you loved me
The last time I saw you
I know a place
By the spring river bed
Where the moss
And the corn snow
Slowly grow
Out of one another

And if you touch me the way you touched me
The last time I saw you
I know a place
By the deep ocean bed
Where the motion of tides
Slowly glides
And abides in a horseshoe of stone

I know a place
On the deep
Bed of space
Where our bodies can move
Quite removed
From the pressures of time
Where all gravity kneels
The universe yields
And your needs can be realized in mine

Spring '74

Ian Stephens

the yellow door

The crooked guitarist
in a room of sharp contrasts
plays the lines on his face,
his eyes full of tortured vision.

He sings of crows and prays for rainbows,
picking his way through mud and ribboned rock,
Ignoring the girls sucking rags from cans
and the manager seizing strangers
who made a mistake.

The final message lies like a scalpel
on the floor,

the sweat and antique sincerity
rise and bow, his mouth stiff as a
line among the butterfly
patter of applause.

Bravo.
MIRAGE

Did it ever occur to you
that this semen of ultimate joy
is a lie,
that passion
melts to steam
under the unceasing sun;
that we are no one.

Know this—
the wheel of the dunes
rolls on someone's scarf,
that—
you give me a kiss
and roll over, that is all.

Know this—
the scarf is only an image,
blown into the waves,
dissolving like a day's fever;
the wheel is buried by sand.

London '77

A DIFFERENT SORT OF LOVESONG

Unbalanced days sooth the dying
with frosted talons; the punctured leaf,
the clotted vein,
the soothing and final; a cold yellow rain.
The legerdemain transforms in the night
the cold, black rain into a curtain of white.

He cloaks the bitter blood with a
quilt of snow.

Winter trains complain; crashing through
the country of blizzards,
tin and tin platoons follow through
the ditch,
spaying a blue lace curtain
with the iron eye's vision of white,
screaming freight songs, a different sort of lovesong,
for crowds hung over the driving wheel.

Spring birds swing,
sway and tango on a lake.
On a field, winterstones pulled in a day like a
sore by the gaze of a flaming clown.
Scrolls regrow on languid birch,
leaves rejoice and breath warm air.
The sun's machete eyes; laughing through
chains of cold yellow rain,
old lace curtains around his waist;
the Old Man's fandango—
He laughs now and then
above rising fields,
above forgotten men.

1976
The comfort of little rituals
disturbs the anarchist
as he tugs and meows
on the edge of another.

At the dawn,
    nothing but music
and familiar lines
curling and posing
    for a momentary
    repartee.
The bow strokes the lines
and he demands
exclamation,
the motions of slow lips
and saxophone...

Winter '78

A girl running through the
snow
    only vaguely like a
horse running through
waves
more like a duck
she quacks her lover’s
name
    and falls down.

'72

JACK
He lounges in cheap restaurants
eating sweetbreads, sherbet
putting an arm around the chair and
going crazy over that
man’s hair and the posters
listening to bells and waiters, holding
the fingers of someone he knows,
whispering signatures in smoke.

He yawns,
good at conversation,
seducing the blush from a lush
in the back of a barcar,
making a crack and looking out
a window at the prairie,
staring at a reflection of another
sweet thing in the sweet thing, wiping
lipstick all over a mouth, he’d rather
sweat but bending the back
to someone for money:
his bed’s the place for that.

The pale-red balloon lies half-deflated
in an alley
in this wrinkled land.

1978
Christopher Thomas

(UNTITLED)
do all your luscious pinups
indicate thwarted desire
or successful adventure
in a place I’ve never travelled?

Janet Badger

(UNTITLED)

Don’t tell me how to swirl my cape:
Don’t tell me how to swing with the times.
Tell me how to unravel my brain
That you said would unwind with age.

Don’t sandbag my rising ideas;
Don’t stuff my pores with leaden moralities.
Tell me to skip over the growing
And be there with no weighty past.

I know how to swirl my cape;
I know how to swing with the times.
Just tell me I’ve tasted the vintage wines
and let me intoxicate myself.
They come in to see her, bringing English Department problems like empty guitar cases. The old couch is there, used to be yellow, elbowed into a kind of soggy sandwich. They crowd onto it, wiggle until they’re all comfortable, then they start to bleed. First the English Department, then the unhappy marriages, the kids, the novels they were going to write, the potential they once had, down the drain, down the toilet, flushed out to sea.

When it comes to the part they all came for, they get uncomfortable and wonder why they have company. How can they come on to her with so many around? They talk about other things, cross their legs and lean back, hoping the others will go. They see her eyes, blue like the colour in a fire. And they search for lines Byron might have used.

There are patches of red that look like bloodstains on that yellow couch. From the sky, from the blue sky, pale rash on its face, it resembles a map. You dive a few hundred feet and you can make out a tiny traffic jam at the crucifix of two country roads. You take one last plunge and you can make out the people, the real selves coming out of Volkswagens to shout profanities at each other. You peel, roll into blue, tumble like a somersaulting sky-diver, and land in fire.

She suddenly realizes that they are all staring at her, waiting for an answer. She takes cotton-clouds from her ears and says, ‘I’m sorry, I must have been listening to something else.’

Some are affronted and others are hurt. They chorus the question, putting their cigarettes into ashtrays: ‘Now that you’ve heard our hard-luck stories, will you sleep with us?’

She feels her body floating again. They are in the bedroom, her bedroom, taking off their clothes, talking about James Joyce and how much they want to fuck her. They believe sex is poetry and are anxious to write poems on her tender breasts. They want to punctuate her body, they want to puncture her body with love sonnets they taught their classes today. They roll her over, make her into a compass on white paper.

The pillow is in an envelope that looks like a virgin’s slip. Her face
is buried in it. They turn her over, see the imprint of her face on the
pillow slip. They go outside and look for a mailbox. They have
trouble finding one so they walk up and down streets looking at
intersections. They get tired, sit down on a curb, and write
a message to their teenage selves:

Wish you were here. Had a good time tonight, but feel empty
now that it’s over. Raped a girl. We should be so lucky.
Actually, begged a girl to sleep with us. In the outer room,
testicles hung in gun holsters, bras, from coatracks that looked
like trees...

She lays wrapped in sheets, white molasses, and feels herself
drifting again. Patrolling pastures. Fire and sky.
The English teachers find a mailbox. They check to see when
the next pick-up is. They ask themselves questions like, Is this
Local? Regional? or National? They look at the pillow slip and her
face is gone. They say ‘Damn it!’ loudly and look for the stamp on
the sidewalk. They notice their little message is gone too, and look
at their pens for invisible ink. They try to write again but nothing
comes out. Nothing.

---

Douglas M. Armour

'SPUN SILK WINGS
  SIFTING SILENTLY
ABOVE ME'

Once, one evening when I had wasted
my way through a too dry drink
and bartered over the price of a tip,
an Asian wonder walked into my eyes
with a silk kimono smoothness
which rivalled water for its willingness to mold.

Sparking an odd fascination
in the East meets West tradition,
she wrapped herself around my imagination
until all I could see were her sombre eyes.
Christopher Thomas

YOUR HUSBAND IS LIKE A FENCE.

10 feet high
25 strand barbed wire
250,000 volts

pretty damned effective
at keeping us apart.

John Dolan

THE LANGUAGE FAMILY

A loss of words; an indistinguishable thought,
lost to the love of the sweet true tale.

THE evasion of words; prettily abandoned,
abducted by their wooden rages...

THOSE mechanical words; mathematical and calculated,
destroying the magic of compromise...

THOSE understanding words; designed and poetic,
writing a smile on the brow of the ripe
yet aging man.

WORDS unraveling the affection;
unveiling the interest;
claiming responsibility for the listening... Father
and the emotionally sincere... Son.
Robin Hellig

(UNTITLED)

Pieces of broken pain embedded in the folds of Wings once flown by ethereal sprites and wind-born birds who lifted earth-bound songs to celestial heights, spreading magical mist on clouds so bright with sunshine wash and robin’s light, Wings now die in corners of dust murkined from sight —‘an unfortunate plight’, Splinters of pain remain ever so tight, —an unfortunate flight an unfortunate flight

THEODORE

In the early hours you enter my room, a stalking bandit come to steal my sleep, you leap up onto the bed, paw-by-paw making your way along the hills and valleys of my blanket, You have succeeded cat, you have your victim with one clever brush of your warm fur against my cheek, I pull you close and together we purr early morning music

OSCIILATIONS

languid night summer’s stoppage opaque sky cellophane sea dark as one but for a beige beach bumped and scalloped soft corrugate beneath the feet who saunter down to the sounds of swelling billows deflated waves awaiting to be rolled back upon the dubious lover of a shore
LULLABY 342

When all the world is hushed at night
I think of winds and gulls in flight,
of storms and rainbows, and pots of gold
and all my wishes, young and old.
These all pass through a mind so clear
untinctured by the world so near,
And so at night when all repose
Fantasies bloom and magic grows.

INTERPOSE

flakes fall
  upon
me
who
  falls
 upon
flakes
weee!

John Olsthoorn

A THOUGHT ON SEPTEMBER—A DATE

And he lives on
Through years of pain
He does not complain
He has no tongue to speak
And no ears to hear
The eyes cannot see
A beggar, a bum
A street monger
Fighting for a penny
Living off a halfpence
Above a rat, below a man
A degraded human, if dared.
Christopher Thomas

POEM FOR TEX

always wanted to be a cowpoke
eatin' dust
riding the range
whip thin
iron hard
loving and tough

Dear Tex
This poem is for you.

(UNTITLED)

walking after rain
in gentle rain soaked forest
musty smells wafting misty from the earth
gentle orange and crimson autumn
it had the serene
within its grasp
we were alone
the forest and me
and you could have made it
for all of us

the forest, serene in years
and me
we were walking
lonely and damp
and only you, could have made it
for all of us.

(UNTITLED)

I was just a young man
driving a grey September-windswept
highway
in passing I saw two old men
the main men
grey, hunched
almost; it seemed—hobbled by their years
just crossing a grey September-windswept
highway
I saw their wrinkles
I saw their warts
I saw lost dreams in old faded eyes
a snotty old hankie
in a gnarled old hand
‘Bought it back in ’47 at Al’s...
    uh, old Al’s gone now.’

And I saw them off
just me...
just passing?
or maybe just two old men
fading
about a million miles away.
HOW SHE MOVED

she moved like smoke
in an old silent sitting room
swollen chairs
sorry sota sadly overstuffed
wafting gently skyward
the smoke
faded furniture lethargic light
easy dust
sifting sands of time
that's how she moved

NARZISS AND GOLDMUND REVISITED

we're all a little whore
but Goldmund you epitome of whores
why didn't you turn back
sans pride, sans horse, sans whoredom,
and finish up what you started.

Ralph Gustafson

150 YEARS OF BYRON AT THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Byron's shirt!
Coronet and monogram
Between the tails. And hair! hair
All over the place—Lady Caroline's
And Guiccioli's and the famous
Maids of Athens' all under
The age of fourteen,
How to achieve immortality!
Locks from his own corpse
Cut from what was left of him at Missilonghi,
The handsome forehead stuck with leeches.
Hair and nympholets,
Silver toothpicks, pistols, canes and nibs.

Pow, wham.
Catch a fever.

AWARD NIGHT ON TV

Handing out accolades to each other,
Their product junk. How
The tastebuds bud! how
The corn germinates! In frilly
Shirt and humble mien the elected
Take it, the emblem of worse, the token
Of truck, the oscar of yuk, the tony
of gunk, how they take it—helpless
With genius, repentant for grace,
Forgiving our folly who praise
Them their wheaties, suppositories,
Suds. May God rinse their reeking,
Gag up their larynx, plug up their drain.
Joe in *Bleak House*. To be read, reverends
Right and wrong, if you have compassion.
Joe dies around us every day.
Not in a book. It’s goodness that’s worth,
That tears from paper, from pages, judges
Permanently, Joe who doesn’t pass
The buck, *tu quoque*, to society:
The package in the subway by itself,
The innocent held, the feeble mugged,
The crud never having had the chance,
The punk: green and purple hair
For virtue. Thumbs down. Little Joe
Who knows nothink, never did
Nothink to nobody, who dies, his ‘cart’
So hard to draw, near its journey’s
End. How many times can the sun
Rise, the cart still on its weary road?

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**H. van C. Bailey**

**AUVERS (VII – ’90)**

Wrestling with a gale
paths sank weary
in a melting sea of wheat.

A shadow-speckled hand
bred a swarm of hungry carrion,
swallowing the yellow tongues
of an oil sun.

The brush raved on a clouded canvas
performing last rites
in the bulging eye of a storm.
Ronnie R. Brown

PHYSICIAN

Clinically
you insert your tongue into my mouth,
smooth, cold instrument
you assume will warm
in me: Internal heat reacting on
the external
you. Expansion of liquid
metal spiking, shooting up the narrow tube
registering passion on you—
your body a diagnostic device.

For you
this growth,
gross and ripe,
stands cabuncular
plaguing unwilling flesh
and you patient
and surgeon
attend to the business of healing
squeezing out passion like pus,
excising with professional, detached dexterity.

Sterile,
sheathed from sensation,
safe from contamination,
you probe the flesh
then scalpel raised
you prepare to plunge—
with precise steel strokes
lance
the desire.

Christopher Thomas

(UNTITLED)

I hate feeling
like I’ve got the future of the world
and all of it

in the pen of my hand

and some old war wound
acts up
and paralyses
the fucking hand