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Address all correspondence to Martha Christina, CALLIOPE, Creative Writing Program, Roger Williams College, Bristol, RI 02809.

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MELISSA CANNON

WITCHES' RONDELET

all full of moon  
we swell our flesh is a cradle  
all full of moon  
and fire and pool and breathy song  
we rock glowing until we spill  
our lips still bright from the ladle  
all full of moon
JOAN COLBY

MORNING

Mist unswaddles the sea.
I am looking out
into a widening view,
sun slicing
itself like an orange,
one segment
rays out to me
I drink that good juice.

Now debris
from the night's tide
is visible.
Pale stones, empty shells
and a stranded ray fluting
its dressing gown
on the damp sand
helplessly, helplessly.

The pilings stride out
on giant legs
to the breaker's touch.

I hold my right hand
in my left hand.
There is this much.
The sun mints its new coin
in a blue vat.
THE BODY AS METAPHOR--POETRY IN THE SCHOOLS

David says the heart is in a jail.
Melody says eyes
are mirrors in which a person sees
the colors of the self.
Emilee says hair
is a mutiny. Paul tells how bones
keep us from falling apart.
Robert wants to know
if the spleen is a blood factory.
Jodie raises her hand which is a claw.
Philip says knees allow
a man to bend. Jennifer
says veins are tracks on which
the blue trains race crammed with
bloodshot eyes. Susan remembers tears
are rain that salts the earth
until nothing more can thrive.
Derrick says his fist
is the animal on the cave wall
bristling with spears.
Cara says her skin
keeps everything, everything
within. Linda thinks her lungs
are giant ears of eavesdroppers.
Brian who is blind
says the tongue is a prisoner. Teach it
to be kind.
LAKE HARRIET: WIND

The coots are awash, heads to the wind like the tarp-covered boats at their moorings. Water sucks at the beach, dead leaves scuttle over the footpath.

Along that path I come in my hooded sweatshirt. North and South desert the sky. East and West lie numb. The wind usurps all direction; my lungs must wrestle for each bit of air torn from my mouth in a long grey plume.

The lake flexes on its thick root. Birds and boats ride anchor. Bushes, trees, weeds, bend and bend in the same places still. This wind scorns my bones running like leaves before it, cares nothing for the flicker of my warmth.
GLUING CHAIRS

With one joint clamped the next won't fit. Gluey tears drip down the legs. The rungs go skewed.

A feast is spread. No one can sit down.

I've done jigsaws, I should know there shouldn't be one bit left over. But here's a piece of chair I can't place.

It's a face out of the past jarring the day awry. A face from the future: everything stops.

And who invited it? Pound it in somewhere, trap it with string. Dinner's getting cold.
MOVING TOGETHER

Under the old linoleum we find old linoleum: we let the bottom layer lie. The living room is littered like a tinker's until the painting dries. You take a minute to add my name to your name on the doorplate, gingerly careful not to smear the woodwork. You and I agree, the kitchen comes first though plaster-flakes are falling in the bathroom like the heavy snow that locks us in, though old letters have drifted in the bedroom and every step we take that way is tripped up by the weight of letting lie.
every night i see the dead in dreams

* in Altman's shoe department
i see her sitting
my mother waiting
for me she smiles & waves
we have lunch in Charleston Gardens

* in the park
my mother in law
walks by mouth drawn
lips sealed
ignoring me everyone
ignoring me

* in my apartment
i visit with my brother's
wife who died last year
the apartment has more rooms
than i remember

* along a New York street
striped with shadow
my father ushers me
men slump in doorways
elbow us
the glint of bottles
narrowed eyes

* in an open coffin
the man who was
my husband stirs moans
stares at me
from heavy lids
asks why i managed
his death so poorly

* some days i wake with screams chalk grey
some days i wake with summer in my veins
every night i see the dead in dreams
grief

snails corkscrew the spine
snails skewer the tongue
the eyes of the owl are trapdoors for snails
dog mouth wide as an owl
banshee wails like a hound
volcano the face of a banshee
deep in the earth the fiery coals
LAPSED SONNET

After the first frost, the air is burdened
with light. The wings of gnats and bees thicken.
They hover, now, in the spaces between green
blades of grass, between the brown ribs of dead
Queen Anne's lace, in small red caves in the clover.
Listen: if we could stay the moment when the bent
maple and its reflection meet, when water is leaf
and both... As it is we can't breathe
or touch. In the hand the plucked dandelion
is luminous—then, with one lilt of wind,
the bright galaxy collapses, and we, I confess, breathe
more freely watching the last dull gray filament
drift across the surface of our palm.

Listen—

if we could admit last night we both drew equal
sustenance from the cold night air, the distance
between us, between us and the stars—
if we could admit we choose to chart
our way by fixed constellations, who
would blame us? Orion? The Bear?
Light, your hand on your collar, turning into light, turning
away. A moment, I confess, I thought of those tremulous
planets, Venus and Mars.
ACTIVE CONTEMPLATIVE READING MERTON
IN THE LEAVES

We invent our own
Cloisters, often
Identifying someone's breaking
From loose chains
With twinge of agoraphobia:
Nettles, convincing enough
To leave hurtful
And invisible traces
In the skin,
Of lives that were
Or might have been
Lived outside

Whenever the rough
Edge of martyrdom
Rises from the page
I'm willing to smooth it,
Sacrifice still bleating
Somewhere in the distance

And it is autumn
Again and again.
SHEILA E. MURPHY

JOB INTERVIEW

My horoscope says don't try
To second guess them. Answer
Honestly. Be yourself.

I'm wearing a wetsuit to the interview.
I don't want to be out
Of my element, or lose my own
Warmth. Just in case
One of them is deaf, I'm learning
Sign language.

I've rehearsed all the answers
To all the questions I know.
In the middle of the dress rehearsal
I needed a new oxygen tank.
And for a whole week
I've had the hiccups.
CRAIG WEEDEN

PUG DOG GOES DEAF

Mr. Brooks is baffled by Oscar's plight. Self-abuse? Moon rocks? Tight collar? Mr. Brooks buys hearing aids, but the plugs drop from his pug's flopped ears. One of God's secrets, Mr. Brooks says to the room grown huge as the space of unanswered calls.
THE WATERS OF TITICACA

You seem to be complaining a lot about this falling sensation, not to say it isn't serious—on the contrary!—but you seem to have lost contact with things, the feeling for real things, bridges, artichokes, the sex act, you know what I mean. You should really try to establish a base. You might try to imagine some absolutely flat surface, like the waters of Titicaca in December; those utterly flat waters in the December heat, imagine, that great depth contained at that great height, and all you feel is the smooth gong of the water, resounding softly, never hotter, never colder, all year long; imagine that and the falling will surely end. Never imagine what has no counterpart in things; don't imagine, say, a tidal swamp of magnesium sheeting, or the idea of Kansas in the mind of Homer, or Yggdrasil reduced to a xylophone—on which you, untrained as you are, could in any case never hope to play. You need some utterly real flat surface, not necessarily Titicaca, which doesn't seem to be working; try a landscape instead, not around here, something in Iowa. Make it all rich black earth and a dark horizon. Keep it dark; don't let the sun slash through it now, almost before it exists. But now I see it doesn't exist, you aren't imagining at all, are you. Or rather you're doing something completely different: you're imagining someone imagining. Well, I suppose it will have to do. It's not as good; but I think it may be inevitable in cases like yours. The problem is that in an imagining of the second degree, as this phenomenon is called, it's so easy to project the unreal (I mean the unthinglike); it's impossible for us to conceive of an eagle of infinite wingspread, but there's nothing easier, or more facile, than to imagine a man imagining such a bird.

But let's get back to the problem at hand. You were asked for an image of something flat; instead
you've imagined the face of a man imagining the sea. We'll make do. It's a good face, full of pleasure in the horizontal; the eyebrows are thin-haired and bushy all at once, the mouth is as if pursed against fraud, the eyes have something touching in them, as if they had felt pain a long time ago but ever since had thought: it doesn't matter, my supposed sufferings are no greater than the troubles of those poor bastards working out there on the...that's no sea, it's a field full of machines (what can you possibly be thinking of?), machines growing horribly like vegetables, long flat belts, gears rotating slowly on their sides, little versions of large harvesters lying next to the grown ones, as if suckling... this image is unacceptable; you have to redo the face. Make it a woman's. That's better. Now the field is a field of force, a great flat magnet, and we are at the positive pole. Everything, from these eyes, will be swept forth and stunned by the horizontal positive, meaning life, if my theory is correct—and I have reason to believe that it is.

But in the midst of all this the clouds are undeniably high over your head, this storm about to break (are you imagining this too?), this storm is no horizontal counterpoint but a flash from the family of harmonies, the vertical, the dead; no wonder it seems to be made of metal, like the future! When the lightning strikes it will be unavoidable, you know that; but you must imagine a man imagining his own death, or I suppose you'll wander the earth forever. And now it really does strike you, but it isn't lightning, it's a waterfall of faces; they keep plunging down over the cloudfront and soaking through you like rain through an old stone tower. You are surrounded by a flowing, expanding surface, like a field of butterflies resounding in your astonished eye; you seem to be imagining your children, that's all; don't be afraid, son, and don't stop because of me. You aren't falling any
more; they are. They flow from the sky like Ganges; they drift away from your body like new snow. I was wrong; everything you have ever thought about them is true; everything I thought they could not be, they are. They fill the world, land and sea alike, with their tiny cries.
MY AUNT FROM NORWAY

Born of Olivia
of Alesund
she sits ancient,
a hammered silver pendant
nearly a breastplate;
wrists sliding in bracelets
heavy as oarlocks.
She uses old words
like "enemy"
and laughing
our fingers have grown
into one fist
exposed like the roots
of a fallen tree.
DREAMING OF A CARAVAN

for my stepson

I wanted to ride the elephant
but got the camel instead

In this journey even the camel is thirsty
walking through the streets of the city
alongside a body of water

The camel lurches and grins
a cigarette hanging from his lips
sniffing out a drink
humping towards the steep bank

I pull in the reigns and yell
we can't leave the caravan wait

The camel turns his head and spits
drinks from a puddle on the pavement
and lunges through the crowd
after the elephant's tail

I'm the only one upset
about the way this dream is going
no one even stops to stare
at the strange beast in their midst

He knows I'm mad
and vows to pay me back
hunching his hump
to throw me out of step

I know all about spiteful children
at the far edge of the platform
he carries I hold him back
locked in a foul temper

Everywhere people go about their business
as if nothing is wrong
MIGRAINE

The head has a pulse of its own. A dazzling flare ignites the brain and light locates its core where the nerves converge.

Silvers and blues scintillate ruthlessly. Certain mystics have mistaken these colors for God.

There is a purity in this fault, a single crack in the mirror. Veins swell, contract; a black bird beats its wings into flame.
SPONTANEOUS GENERATION

Between the faucet's drippings
a reed voice creaks, hesitant to sing.
It's the same voice I once searched for
among cattails as a black bird landed
and folded blood-red patches into body.

More days than I can remember
the garbage disposal has grated chicken skin,
orange peels and bread crust.
Something more than mold
has germinated in this trapped pond.

That evening the mat of broken reeds
floating along shore sang
to the rusty moon lighting the pond's green
skin. Listening until I knew where,
I grabbed for the creature of uneven song
and found only water and silence.

Listening for the voice of chicken
skin, orange peel and bread crust,
I crouch over the sink with my flashlight--
its beam shines like a stainless steel moon
any frog would sing for.
night and fog
(december 7, 1941)

all day i lifted stones and cut the wood
and saw no one:
the cold air fit me
like another skin;
the sky remained a dull silver,
the color of razor blades.
a leaf may have fallen,
but i didn't notice it.

i cut and lifted
until the absolute darkness of caves
clustered in the heart.
returning home
i must have died along the way;
in the kitchen i felt
as if i had merely walked
across a room and back
and found my starting place the same
but a different person in it.

later
(the cat a puddle of fur and bones
in my lap)
the wood stretches and yawns
floating in the fire.
shadows whisper at the walls,
but now i see no need
for any conversation.
prime time

in another age giotto might have used her face as the model of angel's---a liquid halo of blonde hair surrounding the pale eyes, the full lips pouting for the glory of god.

in these days of modern times her face is used by other men whose point of view alters like a finger in water. instead of the angels dancing in a human head,

her eyes reflect a hangnail moon that precedes the night rain---the storm of words dividing a man from his own darkness. tonight her face is talking from a fresco damp with electric dots. her smile's beatitude could sell me anything, even myself.
SALES MEN

have surrounded your home.  
They sleep in shifts,  
handcuffed to black satchels.  
They demand one of your party hostage,  
but you are alone,  
you send them a message:  
No Deals.

Tonight your attempted escape  
was anticipated.  
As they gather around the car,  
you turn up the volume,  
wheels spinning  
tirelessly.
SNOWSHOEING

Your water-blue eyes are suddenly hard. On ice like this I expect to fall. My feet turn inward and I fall toward myself. You are better at this. I can't catch up.

Once you told me how to backpack on snowshoes. Your eyes widened, reliving the risk, daring me, daring the snow underfoot not to give way.

I wish I could join you there, accept the surface pleasure, learn to carry my body now heavy with interests over crests and deep drifts without falling in.
MARILYN BASEL

TO A MAROONED FRIEND

Imagine you are happy
with the lover who calls you
Silly, Baby, Houseboy
in front of everyone.
She shows us a glyph
that pictures your union:
she is a rose, you a salmon
nosing toward her dark center.

It is a trick.
A rose has no throat,
but she wants the part of you
she can swallow, the blunt part
that lunges and whips like a fish.
Even if her corolla were large as a room,
walls athrob with hypnotic perfume,
do not think any fish could survive
in the powdery lap of the rose.
My mother is

the child in half-light at the piano,
the young woman who married the soldier
for the morning light in his hair.

My mother is Lena
who left the whisper of Leah
by some stream in Minsk.
Her shadow guided her steps
and kept her dreams waving
high among the new leaves in America

until she was bare
as a winter tree rocking
her name in the wind.
Her dream fell brittle as a leaf.

My mother is drifting
back to gently lead me
into winds murmuring,
"The wrong way, the wrong way,"
as she used to go
dazed by the blunt end of the wand
to walk right instead of left
left instead of right.

She drifts back
but I push her
into the fields
where tall grasses carried
her name near the stream
in the first spill of morning light.
As evening falls...

a boy waits
long after his cat
drops away
in search of worn
and warmer places.

He waits to see the stars
so he can murmur wishes.

He watches shadows
wing his house
and windows blow
like candles before
a ceremony. He watches

until a door opens
where legs scissor
a wedge of light.

He cannot see the dark
for the glare.
A LETTER/SONG FROM AN UNBORNE DAUGHTER
TO HER FATHER

1
Even though I have not yet
been born I feel my six brothers
move about the rooms
my mother some desert falcon hung in her eyes
winters in the gatehouse
overgrown with gooseberry grass
strung with white bats in camphor vines

Her hands hard
abrasive as peasant's window paper
take down the croaking words
of Galway as he rides through the islands
on his fine red mare

She wants us home to the bright horn
where she can put asterlilies
on our cribs cover our beds
with green shirts

Nightmares come to her
of a girl dancing with yellow combs
under her hat I feel her upon
the leaky floorboards at night walking
a blind primadonna from an old opera
that never opened
her stage had no rehearsals
she let the pepper trees of the Sonora
seduce her into believing
fish built fires in canyon streams

When I am born I want to see that desert
now as I swim unformed in Nara
kneel on tiny spines of cactus
they uncoil in my long watery bones
the wind hauls me out
in its headress of acid and cold mornings
wants me to move
through seven angels of crucifixion
wearing its slippery place
I will watch the seasons' breaststrokes
as I go up down
suck on hanging roads
to your bed half pierced only to
tell eclipses can fill a house
on Palm Sunday

I find a nation in my father
a country of hoarfrost old scaffoldings
radiant footprints alabaster notaries
coastliners a cathedral of small roosters
gospels for a pale body seven scriptures
for seven children a Damascus
an acolyte stands in
he pulls the needle and thread
through me until I am the wafer unrooted
springs me anticoronal into his guardian seed

I am him though I am
unconceived voiceless sightless
he pulls this land through my skin
and I am alone in a sea of veins
with no hair no fists to push
against his heart where nails rattle

2
It is like this I take you
for a walk under my mother's dress
without a cup at my lips
but skyhooked burned over
with your face my father

Like your eyes I climb
in my brother's clothes
mummied in my own jail
knucklebone and nameless
having only one syllable
from the spoon's mouth
The roar of my six brothers 
come first but name me 
bring my body out into the trees 
for I come of bark chalk and asphodel 
leaking in tunnels of she-wodwo spells 
but altered then by the pull of your 
throbbing for I am not a gypsy's brush 
thick with whitewash 
but a snap a drift 
your sigh out of the deathsheet 
your reedflow 
your tongue that strips everything 
to brilliance brilliance

You and my mother on some bank 
in Nice against gated lenses of 18th century 
lampposts with a dead straw Christ 
on a streetsign you crosshairs scalding 
in a European rain found my face 
on an Austrian napkin opened it 
as you pulled back the head 
trying to interpret me 
a train came blackened us 
and the map you were going to make 
to take me home

You tied my throat in an oily 
dishcloth and bought a mirror 
through your glossy cells 
I saw my hum unroll grace my 
untitled skull 
shoeless I have followed you 
everywhere

3
In my Nara a turtle swims 
an incendiary fused flesh 
we go down through diurnal darkness 
like twice eaten rice in his 
rapids I breathe the blood of
M.R. DOTY

you father whose lungs
explode us as a blue sulphur match
and we see a ram without bones
lighting cold biestlings
my first brother who was notched
into your wrists who spread his hair
like bandages over your arms
out of this river whole
I will peel the moths
from my mother's eyes
take the terrible vowels
from your forehead
and you with my grandmother's tablecloth
will wipe away the sealash

My mother at night when owls
banter in caves over the hills
drops blue flowers like electrodes
throughout the rooms
inside her belly I hear their stems crack
splinters of odd names you will give me
I shall come high collared
sit in a voile dress
in a Hitchcock chair
even the mayor will want to show me off
Already a widdershin he'll say
and two good thumbnails and two teeth
let me give her the silver knife
she's a catseye cloud a buttonhole
a gum tree with armpits of ice

No says my mother she is
a cradle of leaflight and tar porcelain
and we don't like your paint Mr. Drues
we will take our child through the corridors
her ears are like nothing I know
so you can't have her for your parades
she's a pulse a way of remembering
you've got your colors and your timing
mixed up she's my marchflare our landshead
she's her father's pines so take the margins
of your white hawthorn dreams and go back
to your canterbury

4
She dresses us for mass
father would you have me go
what songs would I sing
what would I do with the wax
the priests poured down me
your shoes are glaciers
I slide on now in Nara
though I roll
some inarticulate crochet ball
in my mother
I know what they're doing
the landfill man keeps making passes
at my mother she says he has the white eye
and so keeps away she wears your clothes
to church like a bowl of sparks
the old midwives keep throwing lots
whispering what child will it be next
inside you inside her
how far does a midwife go
beyond her omens
the priests bless us reluctantly

Galway's horse canters
in my blood
don't make me the serfchild to my brothers
I will have eyes a voice
I will hear gatherings
will be dust in its fiery dry circumference
become feet and face and lie down
with you when I am older
now I'm nondescript but continuing
contracting scattering
I have my raft
my bowl of ash
My mother misses your gravel hair
hazy the way the sun does when it
cuts us in two
instar bankweed and mud
she takes wings from you
rises each night over steeples to find you
the aldermen think her mad
she is your image forced between the bells
only she doesn't land
she goes on
through pines of a little country
you once knew rising out of herself
slant winged and many eyed
she reads your letters thinks
this flight will bring you home in the village
old mace-shelling women tell
her to swallow appleblooms green
so that she might vomit demons
who will save us

My mother has the laugh of a crisp hibiscus
only cold will kill it
and so she does not listen
not to priests the mayor the sisters
midwives not 'even the gypsies
she has her earth her bloodlines
the father of seven children
she has her laundry her fish her bees
her glue her sons her daughter

Because like you she loves
animals who cannot sleep
because they wait for a country
will you take them

She sings animal songs long into
the night all your sons have gone
to sleep with animals' songs
from unawaking I have seen her
put footprints in limp cheese before dinner
telling my brothers this is the work of the gazelle
the bear the wolf the marmadot
the lizard do not kill anything
we are the meal catching fire

5
I am your daughter
give me a country
the land of your body
to hold green plums in
let me entwine kiles between
your poems I am not
a child of misery
I am a child of gospels
without clothes wrapped around
a chimney fresh with new moon
three steps down from a fullhouse

I missed the black cherry festival
the milk that comes from a croaker bag
but I cut well
must be the anchorite
coffin of 38 years of clay
in my grandfather's good eye
squeeze the stars together
smell the carbon as they graze
to repeat their alphabet
that slow code you promised me
breathing quick unbroken
I steal then back off
with my wire lullabies

Give me a name
you drank me
see me first know
my birth
I who was made between you
and my mother in a liquid dambar
find my coming glorious
my sounds visions I want
M.R. DOTY

my mother to iron my clothes
my father to read his books to me

Please tell me when you're coming
write a letter I cannot walk
but I will come to meet you
in new dark my hand a window
that has always seen the wedge
of light that will shake you home
exact with boughs clumsy with joy
M.R. DOTY

IT ISN'T GOOD

to mistrust the largesse of angels,
 isn't good to smoke too much
 or wear tight shoes.
 Hats too small for you
 blow off in the street.

Cafes, conversations under awnings, green canals,
cupolas, the trolleyman who watches crows
return every night across the river: all forgotten,
and it isn't good.

It isn't good to be too far
from a packed suitcase,
to lie too long in the snow,
 wake up not knowing where you are.

The shadow leans sadly against mailboxes, bored,
but what will you do, after all,
send it little presents?

Boulevards and facades,
the clock on the tower: all forgotten.
God holds his breath,
and it isn't good.

Green dresses languish in disreputable hotels,
rowboats smother face down on water.
The stars have been expecting us so long;
it isn't good to keep them waiting.

In a world as small as this
it isn't good to make broad gestures.
You have to move carefully,
as though the air were fragile,
so as not to break anything.
REVIEWS
(The opinions expressed are those of individual editors. The editor's initials follow review.)

CIRCUS MAXIMUS (P.O. Box 3251, York, PA 17402) March 78. A handsome collection of contemporary poems and graphics. All contributors to this issue show talent in their field and deliver their work well. A collection of poems by featured poet, Scott Johnson, adds to the overall quality of the magazine. EAI

JEOPARDY (Western Washington University, Humanities 350, Bellingham, WA 98225) Spring 79. Address supplied by reviewer; it appears nowhere in the magazine. A good balance of excellent contemporary art and photography. The poetry tends to be down to earth and, while definitely contemporary, is not too far out to be understood by the average reader. The fiction, with the exception of The Lion and the Dolphin, a fable, bored this reader. BM

THE LAUREL REVIEW (Dept. of English, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WVA 26201) Summer 79. A regional magazine by writers living in or writing about Appalachia. This simple yet complex magazine offers a variety of poetry such as Absence by A.L. Briggs and Appalachian Mist by Lisa Belcher. There is a message in its fiction which leaves a reader begging for more. Strong quality work, simply expressed. RJF

THE PIKESTAFF REVIEW (P.O. Box 127, Normal, IL 61761) Summer 79. Published "whenever there is sufficient quality material to warrant." This first issue substantially devoted to poetry of average quality and pickup from several chapbooks of other presses. One long fiction piece offers slightly better calibre work. Omits contributors' notes. Except for photography and length (70pp) is not arresting. MMJ
TAR RIVER POETRY (Dept. of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834) Fall 79. Published twice yearly this magazine is a 50 page volume of enjoyable, mostly above average poems. Simple line drawings accompany some poems and the publication itself is finely crafted with an earthy look and feel. Also included are several rather extensive reviews of recently published collections of poetry. GM

SUN DOG (330 Williams Building, Florida State U., Tallahassee, FL 32306) Spring 79. An imaginative, full-spectrumed issue with thought provoking poetry, strong and satirical prose, and original graphics throughout. Bringing Back the Ball by Skip Parvin and Rhonda Pike's Runner are two of the pieces which stand out in this issue. Published annually, Sun Dog is well worth the wait. MLF
CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Basel is a student at Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio. Her poems have appeared in Calliope, Invitation and Seed and Stamen.

Melissa Cannon teaches in Tennessee. Other of her work has appeared recently in Tendril.

Joan Colby has published widely in little magazines. Her third book, Blue Woman Dancing in the Nerve, was published by Alembic Press in December.

Philip B. Crosby was raised and educated in San Francisco. His poems have appeared in South Dakota Review, Rocky Mountain Review, North Country and other publications.


Mike Finley has worked at several jobs, from zoo-keeper to talk-show host. He has six books to his credit and has published in Calliope, Ironwood, Northeast and other magazines.

William Ferguson teaches at Clark College. He and his wife, Raquel, own and operate the Ferguson Press and Halty Ferguson Publishing Co. in Cambridge, Mass.

Jon Hansen is currently completing an M.A. in Creative Writing at Ohio University and has poems appearing in Ironwood, Poetry Now, and Thistle.

Peggy Heinrich teaches poetry at the Westport, Conn. YMCA. She has previously published in Calliope, Small Pond and Dragonfly.

J. Kates lives in New Jersey and is the US editor of Stand.
Janet Krauss has had poems in *Red Fox Review*, *Kudzu* and *13th Moon*. In the summer of 1979 she received one of the first prizes in Triton College's All Nations Poetry Contest.


Gudrun Mouw has had poetry and poetry translations published in *Blue Buildings*, *The Cape Rock Journal*, *Bitteroot* and others.

Sheila Murphy has published in several little magazines including *Paintbrush* and *Salt Lick*. She lives in Phoenix where she divides her time between writing and teaching.

Heather Tosteson Reich lives in San Francisco.

Laurie Taylor has published in *The Cape Rock*, *North Country* and other magazines. She was raised in southern New York and now lives in Minnesota.

Craig Weeden is currently working on his M.A. and M.F.A. degrees at the University of Arkansas. He is a former Navy officer and building contractor who has published in *Southern Poetry Review*, *Chowder Review* and *The Smith*.

A.J. Wright has published two collections of poetry with the duBois Zone Press. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Poem*, *Kansas Quarterly* and *Mississippi Review*.
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