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Watershed is a literary magazine that enables a student editorial staff, from Ellen Walker’s Literary Editing class, to experience the production of a literary magazine. Watershed also enables local writers to publish their works.

The submissions for this eighth issue of Watershed numbered over 400. For a staff of eleven people to come to an agreement is not easy. It involved long hours of debate, defense, and disagreement. There were pieces passionately supported by a few, which did not make the final selection. We received many pieces of fine fiction but were unable to publish them all due to lack of space.

We feel this issue of Watershed is inclusive with poetry, prose poetry, fiction, and translations. We would like to thank all of those who submitted their works and would like to encourage future submissions.

The Editors
Contents  Fall 1981

Cathleen Micheaels
Walla Walla, Washington 1927:
What She Remembered .................................................. 1

Chris Howry
Three-quarter Beat ....................................................... 4

Cathleen Micheaels
Postcard: Stockholm 1919 ............................................... 5

Katie Hulbert
Of Hippolyte and the Moor .............................................. 6

Thetis A. Tanner
Nubieber Bridge .......................................................... 7

Gary Will
Hop Harvest, Oregon, c. 1900 ........................................... 8

Edward Ernest Aust
imagine in your heart .................................................... 10

Candice Favilla
Changing Signs ............................................................ 11

Susan Brown
Coyote is forever inside you ........................................... 16

Chris Howry
in california ............................................................... 18

Edward Ernest Aust
vision ................................................................. 19
Elena Jayred
The Fisherman .............................................. 20

Cathleen Micheaels
The Color of Pomegranates .................................. 21

Gary Will
On Cunningham’s Portrait of Roethke (1959) .............. 22

Byron Fountain
The Measurements ........................................... 24

Pamela Thomas
After dinner she reads from the orange book ............. 25

Gail Peterson
Summer .......................................................... 26

Barbara Kimball
Memory in Oils .................................................. 28

Clark Brown
Quintus Horatius Flaccus and the Disco Age ............. 29
It was cold; the air was icy, burned her cheeks. She remembered this and the snow falling. Her mother stood by the stove, poking each piece of wood to a red glow. She never turned. She spoke as if the door had already been slammed, as if her daughter had been gone years or she was someone else’s daughter. Her mother said it was sinful, at sixteen, it was just sinful, and that she had no right to leave, no right to be dressed like that. Her mother said not once in all those years did I leave, and now two weeks after her sixteenth birthday she thinks she can up and leave, she thinks she doesn’t owe me a damned thing, just like her father.

From where she stood at the door, she could see the snow, the way it crusted at the river’s edge. Clean banks of snow that looked like huge feather pillows. She thought if she stood here long enough she’d forget the way her feet felt against the floor. She remembered when her father had stood here, how it had been the same: that he seemed to stand there for hours. The snow falling; the way he kept shaking his head. The way her brother held the hunting knife her father had just given him. And late that night hearing a frantic yelping and then nothing—except the blackness and snow melting (she always seemed to hear the snow). She remembered waking early the next morning, how still the snow seemed, walking out to where her father
and brother had stacked wood at least two feet above her arm's reach: it was there she found her father's favorite hunting dog, belly slashed, the knife buried deep in the soft, thick fur at her chest.

She stood at the door, listening to the snow falling. She remembered how the first time she danced it was like snow falling: spinning and twirling, her body dizzy and light. It was this way, too, when she cut her waist-length hair, tight curls brushing against her neck, the silky way satin felt against her legs. She remembered seeing her father and mother dancing: how he could lift and spin her mother, how his huge hands covered her mother's small, round shoulders. How his hands had seemed so small and frail when he had stood here, at the door. How her mother had sat, her lap full with photographs: her father, at fifteen, standing by a train, her father with his arm around her mother's tiny waist (the way her mother's smile seemed never to end), her father with his hand on her brother's shoulder, the two hunting dogs curled at their feet, and her father holding her at three months (the way she seemed to fit there like a puzzle piece between his arm and chest). She remembered how her mother had burned them, one by one, in the stove while her father had stood at the door.

She listened to pieces of ash whirl from the stovepipe and melt against the snow. She listened to her mother sitting quiet behind her. It was the same when her grandmother had sat there, that tired heaviness of someone who'd never known the lightness of snow falling. That is what she felt.
behind her, but in front—crystal shapes were spinning. She was sixteen, her coppery hair was pin-curl tight, her lips were bright red, in her new high-heeled shoes she was almost 5' 2''—she cut into the glassy snow like diamond.

—Cathleen Micheaels
She became herself
once. The graceful spiders
danced at her feet, and a
low storm was coming in.
The mountain was bare and
in its prime: a purple blanket.
She became a heartbeat
pumping slow jazz. The earth
almost trembled. Flowers
slipped from her hair,
catching the air with their landing.
The sun burned a hole
through the sky.
When silence clapped its transient hands, she
bent herself and called to gods,
asking them to become her.
There was no obvious answer. Her heart
was still counting time.
Postcard: Stockholm 1919

Sometimes I want to be that woman, sitting: soft skin and loose braids. Her shoulders, leaning. Her even curves. On the cherrywood table scatters pieces of paper and flowers, garden flowers, in green glass.

A window. Because sometimes I want to be that still. A portrait. Nothing except the window open.

— Cathleen Micheaels
Of Hippolyte and the Moor

God came down last night.
I heard the frothy breathing of the horses,
the clanking bronze ankle bracelets
and then — straight backed
in my mahogany and tapestry chair,
nostrils flared — gold earrings shining
in the dusky midnight light
against her dark brown skin —
she told me of my former life:

God said I was Hippolyte and you, my loyal moor.
She said I returned one twilight lusty from battle
my mouth oozing warm blood after the slaughter.
You came dutifully to care for my tired stallion
and — my flesh still passionate from the victus,
sweat still soaking my leather armor,
I cast you to the ground and raped you.
There in the dusty courtyard — the geldings shying,
dogs whimpering, my eunuchs laughing,
I held your hair with one hand and satisfied my body.
My lust, she said, reverberated to the black sea.
Standing then above you, sword still strapped to my waist,
I helped you up and allowed you to bathe me in the river —
to anoint my body with sweet oil and cover my bruises
with my whitest tunic.
In my chamber I lay on feather pillows
while you brought me red wine and sweetbreads.
When you left to mend my leather thongs,
polish my silver breast plate and sword
for the next day’s battle —
when, at dawn, I mounted my black steed
and led my sisters to the plunder.

God came down last night and told me why you seem —
so familiar.

— Katie Hulbert
Nubieber Bridge

It was my thought and your telepathy
that stopped us after crossing Nubieber bridge.
Wild geese were flying
stitching lake to sky
and I wanted to hold that sound of wind through feathers
to wear like perfume
because your head came up
and your eyes went blank
and I saw you flying over water
with the wild geese.

— Thetis A. Tanner
Hop Harvest, Oregon, c. 1900

The photographer’s weapon is planted on three broomsticks, steadied by his steady Jersey hand.

Why have they assembled here? Sullen-faced harvesters with children, infants and the single obligatory dog.

The daylight they’ve swindled is wasting, and the work barely begun . . .

Still,

two hold sprigs of berries, a woman braids twigs into a heavy crown.
It is not yet noon, already hunger weighs on every face, even the young ones.

A stout old dame presides, hands folded, over a choir of boys. One dances like a monkey on an upturned crate, one holds aloft a formless bundle (flowers?) while another seems to be shouldering a ghost.

No one smiles, except the man whose fingers slowly press the bulb, and fireworks!
explode to send them scattering the rest of their days.

—Gary Will
imagine in your heart

imagine in your heart

gray clay walls
a straw thatched roof
the sun shooting through
in prison-bar streams

and on the walls
scratched and chiseled
the catch-phrases of your life.

—Edward Ernest Aust
Changing Signs
— Candice Favilla

July 9th diary entry
I worked all afternoon in the garden, weeding the tomatoes and squash. I find genuine pleasure in such work. Mother used to claim a parallel between gardening and cultivating the psyche. After I left my husband, during that period of nervous seizures, Mother silenced me by asking, “Where do the roots of your mind grow strongest?” The next day, I began to plan my own garden.

That volunteer squash—the one that defies classification through any of my catalogues—is growing so rapidly, so curiously. It looks as though it may consume the entire yard. The fruit are great white pendulums. They seem to glow with interior light. I had my back turned on the plant while I bent over the peppers, and when I began to straighten I caught a glimpse of the squash’s fruit under the foliage. It has an inscrutable eye.

My father knows everything there is to know about vegetable gardening. I would like to ask him about this squash. I spotted him in his garden beyond my back fence, and I was tempted to call out to him, but I hesitated. It has been a long time since we last spoke. I was not sure how to phrase the question. I thought that he might fumble for some immediate solution. His confusion always did become my own. I always had a compulsion to retrieve his blunders. A suggestion from him might throw us both into an uncomfortable situation. With a solution one must act. No, an act is too binding. An act demands commitment. Then too, I was afraid that he might not answer me at all, but merely put his hand up to his ear and search the near trees for jays, as he so often does.

The jays are my father’s biggest worry. He watches for them every morning, sitting propped against the cellar door of his house, broom stretched out beside him like a skinny wife who shares the bottle he keeps cradled in his lap. When a jay flies into his yard, my father rises, very craftily, to his feet and slowly drags the broom up to his side. Then, he tosses his bottle down and makes one crazy rush at the bird, waving his broom as though it bore the ragged flag of some historical war. The sequence is the same every time. He waits for those damn jays
like they are the only threat—as though old age and the diseases which gratefully attend alcohol were inconsequential. Every day it’s the birds. And every day they come.

July 10th

The moon is making her way back with broad increase, pulling her slow-footed child, Earth, who meets the embrace—they are metamorphosed, becoming lovers. Growth is a voiceless phenomenon.

I have noticed the air thickening. A new energy is forming, tumbling around the yard. I had dreams, last night, of transformations—hot clouds with sharp points rolling over the sky. The sky became a creature and the creature flew.

That squash—it is something not to be labeled. It watches with a leafy, easy smile. I don’t find the smile in the least bit threatening, even though it does come from a plant. Mother used to say, “Take amusement where you find it. And don’t hesitate.”

July 11th

My mad father—the old back-door bandit—did battle, today, with windmills. Don Quixote, himself, could not have been more grand nor futile against those raucous jays.

Four of the birds clamored into his yard—it’s odd that they seldom come over here—He was especially ferocious in his attack, and the birds were jubilant. They performed maneuvers, cutting through angles and drafts, turning with precision on points, pursuing aeronautical improbabilities. My father screeched and shook his broom, and the jays dove with delight from four directions. In one skirmish the old man was off his feet—broom, arm, and body making a forty-five degree angle with the ground. He regained his balance like a warrior and cursed the jays with his fist and open, graceless mouth.

He didn’t look this way. He seldom does.

July 12th

I really need to ask someone about this squash. It is entering my dreams at night. It is pushing up through the floorboards of the house. It has fingers and makes rumblings.

I telephoned Ellen, an old friend of Mother’s. Ellen knows a good deal about gardening. All of Mother’s friends shared her interests. They used to meet every other Thursday to discuss the growth of some pet vegetable, treating each project with equal attention. It made me chuckle at their assumed knowledge—those combed-cotton matrons discussing the best fertilizers, pruning techniques, cross-pollination. They sat around the table in Mother’s back yard and judiciously weighed each testimonial
of progress. They would lick their wise little mouths, salty as fading coral, cracking at their own words. Occasionally, one of them would bark, throwing back her head in an unrestrained, lusty laugh—laughter so unpleasant in ancient women—it has the odor of mildew and Calvinism—the stench of dual mysteries and truths that are kept secret.

Ellen didn’t want to let me tell her about the squash. Even on the phone, I felt her curl into herself, turning from my questions before they were out and at her.

July 13th

I am not sleeping well. Each time I fall off, I can feel the squash nudging under the crown of my skull. I’ve tried to decipher the bits of dreams I do have, struggling for some combination of the plausible and the ludicrous. Nothing takes. The dreams are not even dreams. There is no action. There are no faces, only images. Last night, for a few minutes, I slid into sleep and entered a matrix—white lines on black charting a constant space. Then, the flower of the squash, yellow-gold, moved towards me from beyond the matrix. This image returned throughout the day. This morning, after coffee, I walked out onto the back-porch, and, placing my hands on either side of the screen-door, I peered out to see the squash, stately in the sun, reflecting the negative of the dream image. From beyond the screen and the squash and the garden fence, my father was patiently hoeing.

July 15th

Father took a spill today. He must be drinking heavily, for he lost his footing when the jays climbed down the sky to clamor in the air around his shoulders. He landed hard—I could see that, clearly—I had been rebuilding a trench near the back fence, and was standing only sixty yards from him. His face turned into soggy, beaten wood. He groaned, a long, low sound that came from his interior, as he pulled himself up. I dropped my hoe and started towards him. I meant to help him, but the back gate was stuck. It has rusted and is held, firmly, by sweet-pea vines that tangle around the bolt. I called out to him. At least, I think I called out. Yes, I remember that I called out. But, he didn’t turn to look. He made no answer.

The jays were triumphant, darting in and out of his reach, as he absentely shrugged his left arm at them, in an effort to wipe them from his yard. He slowly made his way into the house.

Perhaps he’ll cut down on his drinking. Mother always hated his drinking. Mother used to send him out of the house when the ladies came. She was so ashamed of his drinking. After she died,
he must have been joyous—he could drink all he wanted with nobody to answer to. That’s been twelve years, now. Mother gone twelve years.

July 16th
I’m writing this in excitement. Such energy here. I woke up a few minutes ago and felt drawn to the back yard. I crept through the house in my bare feet—no robe—the black and silent rooms were thick as iron.

Outside, the moon was a giant. Everything it touched was lifted up. I felt lighter, lighter as I neared the squash—and the squash! God—it took the yard into its mouth and it ate its way up the spine of the yard, towards the moon. And I began to think of that time after Mother’s death, so I backed into the house to consider, and I have to write it down.

Mother died in her sleep. She went peacefully—Doctor Wills told me—but I don’t believe it. Mother never went peacefully, anywhere. She always fought hard—not in any way that was obvious—not striking out or with fits and worry and tears—but in a way that made you feel her churning when you sat next to her, or stood beside her at the sink. Her mind was always examining each particle of an idea, always picking up nuance and labeling motives and she was so right. She made sense. She’d begin talking (Oh, say, about some incident or something one of the ladies had told her) and she’d pick at every angle, scrubbing away at a subject as she scrubbed the eyes from potatoes, until your brain was nearly seething from just trying to keep up. Sometimes, she made these leaps in her thinking—not always a sequential process, but straight to the matter by means of random, intuitive dives through expansive areas. I used to think she flew when she’d talk to me like that. She used to say, “Learn to hover, Mary. You are too massive.” (Yes. She used to say that my marriage failed because I am too massive. She used to say that living is like learning to speak in tongues or like reading a lost language. She used to say that lovers decipher with their fingers—that she and the old man had decoded volumes—that a heart too massive is incapable of fluency.) So, why would she ever go easy? No.

I handled the burial arrangements. Father was useless. The bastard was drunk at the funeral. We sat inside the chapel with all of Mother’s friends sobbing and sniffing, while the pastor of her church said things about her—vague things—things as in calculably stupid as those terrible plastic flowers hung from the walls—those flowers depressed me. They were dusty and unreal. Mother would have snorted at them. The old man was motionless. He sat with his bleary eyes and his ton-heavy hands—
God-awful hands—he sat with his shoulders drawn in and his crumpled, dissipated arms hanging down between his legs and I hated him just then for all the shame of alcohol and the light at 3:00 A.M. turned on in her kitchen when I knew she was there waiting up for him. When he wouldn’t come. And that old bastard, in the middle of the pastor’s tribute, listened to a jay outside the chapel window and followed it out of himself and out of Mother. And at the cemetery, he stood off by himself, under a pine tree, watching the sky—disinterested—craving his bottle, no doubt. We didn’t speak after that. Mother going sadly, easily to death.

July 18th

I haven’t seen the old man for two days. He didn’t have lights on, last night. He always sits up late, slouched in his stuffed chair, reading as he sips from his bottle. I can see straight from my kitchen window into his room. But he didn’t read last night. I wonder what it is that he reads, anyway.

July 19th

The moon is starting to close. I suppose that’s why the squash looks so placated, almost shrinking. The whole yard seems to be resting. After the static energy of these last few days, I welcome this quiet breathing. Even the jays seem sedated.

Still no sign of the old man. I suppose I should go holler at him. If he doesn’t show up in a couple of days, I’ll go over to check on him.
Coyote is forever inside you

I was fishing
not catching anything
just liking the pull of the line
the casting and leaning
back to the sun
climbing through green light
and cool pines
rock to rock
resting a while in a calm spot
where the creek dropped deep
into shaded pools.

A strange plant grew
along the sides of the water.
Elephant ears I thought.
My thoughts were few and elusive
easily lost in the sudden flight of a bird
red and yellow and black
skimming the water almost knocking me
off my slippery stance.
I regained my balance and looked up
the slope of the canyon to see
a young buck between trees
carefully watching.
It seemed he shyly nodded to me
and stepping softly
over rocks and small flowers
disappeared in the forest shadows.

I spent the night listening
to the brilliant silence
of the moon rising shining
a narrow avenue of light
through dark trees.
My heart was filled
with an absence
of need.
Everything I wanted
was lying before me
like so many glittering stones
I'd picked up that day
and skipped across long gleams of water.

Some kind of howling
started in me then
from a place darker
than the spaces
between stars.
A beautiful crying
like being alive
for the first time.
It was the coyote that is forever inside me.

—Susan Brown
in california

she's standing in the garden now.
you see her long
and careful fingers
clip the stems.
you watch her move,
a full sky in april,
no careless breeze takes her
far or close enough
to the rose.

and she will come
into your home, arms full
and languid. she will ask
for a vase
with the voice of a child
who wants the day
to be longer.

and if you are quiet enough,
if you catch your breath
between two moments,
you can hear the rain move
through her eyes.

— Chris Howry
hand in hand, we walk through the oily dusk
while the trench-coated dwarf sings hymns and spits.
we do not see him but we feel his wetness.

black mamba night, full of slush,
drip this path with mercy,
for we are sinners passing.

the slave girl, swollen, trembles at the gate,
her reptile tongue entangled in the bars,
and we, two zealots of the night,
caress her with dusty solace.

black mamba night, full of slush,
panther this pale child.
neck full of worms, she dies.

now a goat, the dwarf has stopped his joking.
he puffs serious rings of ashen smoke
the slave girl’s soul rolled tight between his lips.

black mamba night, full of slush,
pluck out our hearts that offend.
this world dies, we feel nothing.

—Edward Ernest Aust
The Fisherman

You push your red-grey hair away from your face, tucking loose strands in your hat; its band accented by fishing flies hooked in their places of honor. Grey hackle peacocks, browns and yellows; you’ve made them all, your nimble fingers securing the threads to the hook. Each day in that boat, you’ve watched the glare on the water, the trees in the wind—and you’ve watched whole summers pass by, your children straying further away from you, your husband getting older, painting on the shore.

Now, while you stand over the stove, the cast-iron skillet massive against your tiny frame, your face is drawn and old. Long afternoons in the boat have taken their toll; the sun and memories burning, wind wearing lines in your cheeks, and each fish, struggling to take more of your lonely days away.

—Elena Jayred
The Color of Pomegranates

"Think of the kitchen table then," he told her, "when you're not there."
Virginia Woolf
To The Lighthouse

Think of the half open venetian blind, the thick glass, behind which stands only the suggestion of a woman. Fields spiced with lupin. And at night, a violet sky, a window open, the woman's hands as she unbraids her hair thick with the faint scent of pepper. The silky black raven at her sill. Think of her hands, the pomegranate necklace she strings for her lover. Behind her, old women in veils, full of shame. Such subtle beauty! Even her eyes, cast always at her feet, her dark eyelids. Only the suggestion of a death.

—Cathleen Micheaels
On Cunningham's Portrait of Roethke (1959)

Here at some desperate hour
you sat with the last slanting light,
suit ruffled, inevitable frown
unbalancing your brow, and the dark
behind your back.

You were a giant, a bear and a man,
but here seem almost gentle,
almost a small thing.

Could you really be the lost son
Papa waltzed off to bed?

Behind you, on the damp wall
studded with moss and the carnage of snails,
an irregular crack widens
to enter your skull.

Why this large initial of your heritage,
and above, the vague hand
pointing in an opposite direction?

Perhaps you remember another summer
or a wonderful ship,
its immense hull full of roses,
to carry you in the night.

Crazy as a bat,
you must have loved it!
And though you held such meekness
in your bones, to me
you were always the heron.

Playing awkward against uncommon grace,
you could soar and swoop
then become suddenly quiet,
refusing to stir.

—Gary Will
The Measurements

All summer we have lived in our bodies. Mixing our magic numbers. One combination rises like bread. And we are left on some other shore. The promised land rises and falls with each breath. Above the shared sea of our bed my fingers are five sails measuring the zenith. Each night past solstice the globes spin a cold song. But this is our song, our planet born of us again: the fluid earth, the waiting earth, the mortal earth turning in darkness.

—Byron Fountain
After dinner she reads from the orange book

After dinner she reads from the orange book, her voice rises with the smell of butane and strong coffee, rises to where we three sit in the bed my father made.
The night lamps glow and sputter. Her voice, smooth and strong, tells us the moon forms a bowl on the other side of the forest, tells us the night will be calm.

— Pamela Thomas
Summer

Tonight the air
hangs heavy and close
nothing moving through it
but that cricket sound
clicking out a code
that can only mean summer.

Everything is waiting
suspended in mid-air
to happen.

That screen door is
about to bang shut.

A perfectly ripe plum
will drop to the ground.

Some rocking chair is stalled
an instant above its familiar creak
and that uneasy moment holds

all the years ahead
vacant without her
afraid of growing old alone.

Suppose a small boy across town on his porch
his pet dog crossing the street
and a fast car held
just barely at the corner.

And I am on the verge
of something

a word, a warning
a well-placed prayer.
When it all stops spinning
and the moment hesitates
like a proud and thankful lover
you can afford anything.

—Gail Peterson
Memory in Oils

In the lamplight she stands
by the iron cook stove;
stirs up hungry scents;
fried potatoes and cornbread.
Her hands still warm
and red with supper
smoothes back the hair
from a small upturned face.
An auburn curl falls
down onto her forehead:
blue eyes smile and veil
a deeper beauty
above the tapping feet
that keep time to a tune
no one hears.
Unknowing, she pulls
a memory
into tomorrow.

—Barbara Kimball
Quintus Horatius Flaccus and the Disco Age

— Clark Brown

... no poet has given me the same artistic delight as I derived from the very first from an Horatian ode. In certain languages what is achieved here is not even desirable. This mosaic of words in which every word, as sound, as locus, as concept, pours forth its power to left and right and over the whole, this minimum in the range and number of signs which achieves a maximum of energy of these signs—all this is Roman, and, if one will believe me, noble par excellence. All other poetry becomes by comparison somewhat too popular—a mere emotional garrulousness.

— Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols

Begin with certain data chosen almost at random from The San Francisco Chronicle:

1) Two women walk nude up Market Street. Walking with them, also nude, is a dwarf with a peg leg.

2) Outside Bakersfield the CHP stops a San Francisco Muni Railway bus whose driver has tired of the usual run. Previously (it develops) he attempted to run for mayor, listing his profession for the ballot as “asskicking motherfucker.”

3) The stripper for Jesus.

4) A headless body found in Golden Gate Park (half column, page eight.)

5) For nineteen dollars men may now purchase phone numbers of women who would like to receive obscene calls. (No charge to the women.)

Each item is worth a poem, but that is not the point. With such items who is going to read a poem? As Phillip Roth says, “the actuality is continually outdoing our talents, and the culture tosses up figures almost daily that are the envy of any novelist.” Above all, who is going to read an old fool of a poet whose profundity seems to consist in telling his servant to put more wood on the fire and open another bottle of wine, and who tediously
reminds us to (a) avoid extremes and (b) enjoy ourselves since life is short—something we already know from the beer commercials ("You only go around once, so you gotta grab for all the gusto you can!")?

We read Horace—if we read him at all—as antidote to the junk in our lives. Looking through a newspaper, watching television or driving to Safeway, we feel as Graham Greene did contemplating bombed out London: contemporary civilization seems to demand blowing up. Something inside us flees it even as we exist within it. We seek a cure. Thus, anyone who has ever regarded with delight the fresh sunlit snow on Lassen or Shasta can respond to *Vides ut alta* ("See how bright Soracte shines"), and whoever has rejoiced in the almond blossoms—that popcorn blizzard all over town—and the warm spring breath can relish *Solvitur acris hiems* ("Sharp winter goes"). Of course we don't—most of us—do any such thing, but that is because we don't really know the poems or the poet. We only think we do.

Horace hates what *The New Yorker* calls "wretched excess," preferring plain myrtle to "Persian" chaplets. A good Roman, he can't stomach Cleopatra's oriental luxury and kinky followers (grege turpium/morbo virorum), and such restraint and plain dullness don't recommend themselves in *L'Age de Discotheque*. (What would he have made of the Rolling Stones? Or the designated hitter?) Besides, it all seems so predictable.

It isn't. What saves the poetry and charges the lines are the twists and turns beneath the apparent simplicity as the verse curls back upon itself and leaves the reader someplace he never expected to be. Horace hates and fears Cleopatra and tells us to celebrate her demise with our best wine and ecstatic dancing, but as he considers her death his sadistic enjoyment of Octavian's pursuit drops away. The poet is awed in spite of himself. ("Serenely she dared visit/the ruined palace, bravely/fondling the rough snakes . . ."), and finishes with a cry of admiration (*non humilis mulier*). So in the great spring poem (I, iv) the celebration of earth's renewal slips before we're aware into a vision of death and the gloomy afterlife ("Once there/you will not/run the dice and/wine . . ."). So too, after the brilliant evocation of freezing winter in *Vides ut alta*, the poem curves into thoughts about the unknowable future and the exploitation of ripe opportunity, and from there (in a single line) to the delights of love and flirtation ("Even now in fields and plazas—/soft whispers at night . . ."), and we're far away from the sharp air, the frozen river, the snow piled trees and shining mountain.

All this is easy to miss. As everyone who has ever struggled at the task confesses, Horace does not translate. There is no way in English to capture both the tautness of the poetry and its
sensuousness and elegance—as though you could simultaneously enjoy a fine dry Chablis and a rich port, no way to catch the heartbreaking spare statement and the lovely music of vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam, no way either to get across the suspense and sudden resolution when the verb flashes at the end of a line and everything clicks into place, or when meaning it abruptly reversed, the kind of thing E. E. Cummings does (but clumsily in comparison):

pity this busy monster, manunkind, not.

We have to face it: Latin is an inflected language and English is not—or hardly so—and requires more rigid word order. Latin Poetry—classical Latin anyway—depends for its rhythm on the relative length of syllables. Some things done in one language can’t be done in the other. My own approach is to sacrifice elegance and even music, restraining and frustrating momentum, so that—with luck—words can operate and meaning emerge as in the original, with that energy that so delighted Nietzsche. The result is a poetry that seems to trip and stammer at times (something the Latin never does), but better this than that jingly elegance where everything slops together into some cheap commonplace. Horace seems dull because translators have sanded and buffed out all the surprises, turning the poems into wall samplers.

Whatever day your fortune grants,
That day mark up for gain;
And in your youthful bloom do not
The sweet amours disdain.

(Roswell Martin Field)

Above all, it is necessary to try for that vitality so easily lost shifting Latin into English. Virtus est ordo amoris, St. Augustine cried, and somehow “Virtue is the right ordering of love” loses the snap. Even “one out of many” drops the punch from e pluribus unum, and “All Gaul is divided into three parts” sounds simply dumb. Translation, though, like politics is the art of the possible.

Is that possible worth it, all that labor to trick words into some ingenious and satisfying arrangement? Is it even worth the effort to read old Horatius? I think so, for there is a real sense in which such battles tell us more about ourselves and the world than do reading newspapers and watching television. It may be that,
ultimately, the only interesting struggle is that of the mind
desperately shaping the world (through language in this case)
while the world insidiously shapes the mind, because it is from
this endless tension that the headlines come in the first place.
Moslem "fundamentalists" killed Sadat—so the newspapers tell
us, but do not tell us if they killed him because in their eyes he
betrayed Islam or Egypt. Is this (we want to know) one more
murder in the centuries old battle of Islam and the West, or the
final infection of Islam with western nationalism? Journalism—
our Tacitus and Suetonius, our Caesar, Vergil, Horace and
Lucretius—doesn't ask such questions. Journalism doesn't know
and doesn't care. Such inquiries make its head ache. Journalism,
diverting us with nude dwarfs and headless corpses, tells us, as
Chesterton observed, that Admiral Jones is dead—never having
told us he was alive in the first place. It is, as Henry James said,
"the great new science of beating the sense out of words," and
poetry is its mortal enemy, as Horace is the enemy of our time.
For which we should welcome him.

Nunc est bibendum (I, xxxvii)

Now comes the drinking,
the dancing,
the free foot
pounding the earth.
Now friends.
let's furnish
sumptuous banquets
to the couches
of gods.
Before,
it would have been
unthinkable!
(choice cabernet
from the moldy cellars
and all Rome threatened
by a crazed queen's
Egyptian sopranos
soused on their
last great
chance?)
One ship only
saved from the
flames scarcely
eased her fit,
and Caesar,
oars beating from Italy
after the flying queen
(hawk after soft
dove, hunter
tracking the poor
hare in frozen
Thessaly),
forced to her mad and
desperate mind the
grim truth.
(He brought chains
for fate’s monster.)

She sought death
nobly, neither womanlike
fled the sword,
nor with her swift fleet
made for hidden shores.
Serenely she dared visit
the ruined palace, bravely
fondling the rough snakes,
her flesh drinking the
black venom, she
fixed on a bold end,
scorning the savage ships
and Caesar’s proud unqueenly
triumph.

No mean woman
She!

Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero
pulsanda tellus, nunc Saliaribus
ornare pulvinar deorum
tempus erat dapibus, sodales.
Antehac nefas depromere Caecubum
cellis avitis, dum Capitolio
regina dementis ruinas
funus et imperio parabat
contaminato cum grege turpium
morbo virorum, quidlibet impotens
sperare fortunaque dulci
ebria. Sed minuit furorem
vix una sospes navis ab ignibus,
mentemque lymphatam Mareotico
redegit in veros timores
Caesar, ab Italia volantem
remis adurgens, accipiter velut
mollis columbas aut leporem citus
venator in campis nivalis
Haemoniae, daret ut catenis
fatale monstrum. Quae generosius
perire quarerens nec muliebriter
expavit ensem nec latentis
classe cita reparavit oras;
ausa et iacentem visere regiam
voltu sereno, fortis et asperas
tractare serpentes, ut atrum
corpore comibiberet venenum,
deliberata morte ferocior,
saevis Liburnis scilicet invidens
privata deduci superbo
non humilis mulier triumpho.

Vides ut alta (I, ix)

See how bright Soracte shines,
piled with fresh snow,
how the trees
strain with their load
and the rivers
freeze in the sharp air.
Dissolve the cold,
Thaliarchus!
Logs on the hearth!
Wine in the two-eared jug!
And plenty of both!
All else to the gods.
Laying low the screaming winds
and tumbling seas,
they still the shaking
cypresses and
ancient ash.
What tomorrow brings
leave off seeking
and take as gain
what chance provides.
And don’t neglect sweet love,
boy, or the dance
while grim old age holds off.
Even now in fields and plazas—
soft whispers at night
(the appointed hour)
Even now
the girl lurking
(the dark corner)
her quick laugh,
the token
snatched from her arm
or teasing finger . . .

Vides ut alta sted nive candidum
Soracte, nec iam sustineant onus
   silvae laborantes, geluque
flumina constiterint acuto.
Dissolve frigus ligna super foco
large reponens, atque benignius
deprome quadrimum Sabina,
o Thaliarche, merum diota.
Permitte divis cetera; qui simul
stravere ventos aequore fervido
deproeliantis, nec cupressi
nec veteres agitantur orni.
Quid sit futurum cras fuge quaerere, et
quem fors dierum cumque dabit lucro
adpone, nec dulcis amores
sperne puer neque tu choreas,
donec virenti canities abest
morosa. Nunc et campus et areae
lenesque sub noctem susurri
composita repetantur hora;
nunc et latentis proditor intimo
gratus puellae risus ab angulo
pignusque dereptum lacertis
aut digito male pertinaci.
Edward Ernest Aust says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of creativity, celebration, and self worth, not to mention the courage needed to live in the nuclear age." He is working on graduate studies in Communications.

Clark Brown is a Creative Writing instructor at CSUC, and author of the novel The Disciple (Viking).

Susan Brown received her M.A. in English from CSUC. She is presently teaching composition at Butte College.

Candice Favilla says that "creative writing is the derivative of beastly lies, mathematics, and religion. I am a beastly liar."

Byron Fountain's poem, "The Measurements," was inspired by the youngest of his two children, six-month-old Cyrus. He is presently doing graduate work along with developing the discipline of poetry.

Chris Howry is a graduate student in English who is presently working on a teaching credential.

Katie Hulbert worked on the East coast as an actress, singer, script writer, and teacher. She decided it was time to get serious, and so, she came to Chico.

Elena Jayred is an English major at CSUC with an emphasis in Creative Writing. She hopes to land a job at a small publishing company, and her big ambition is to write a book on Northwestern wildlife with her father's illustrations.
Barbara Kimball was born and raised in a small rural town in southern Kansas. An English major at Chico State, she states that her big dream in life is “just to write.”

Cathleen Micheaels will graduate this spring with a B.A. in English.

Gail Peterson is a ten-year resident of Chico who says, “Usually, I only write poetry when I have a broken heart, but I’m trying to become more independent.”

Thetis A. Tanner was born in Florida and is now pursuing her Communications degree and hopes to publish a collection of poetry this year.

Pamela Thomas lives in Chico with her husband and her two cats.

Gary Will grew up in western Michigan and every January turns into a fish. He is currently teaching composition at Butte College.
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