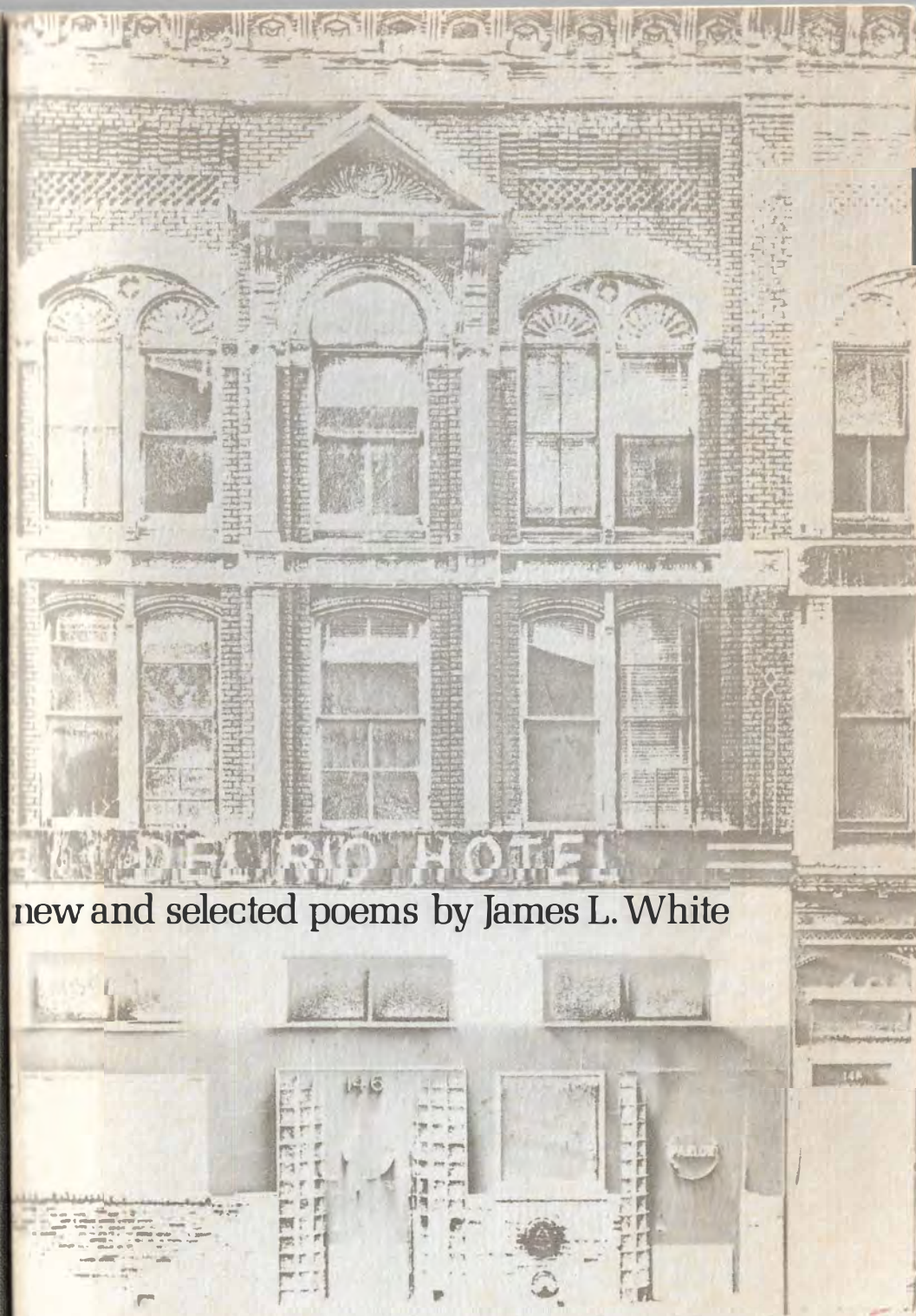




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new and selected poems by James L. White

Jim White's book spans/makes arc from the most primitive sense of cedar smoke rising on mesas in winter, to the harsh & shifting scenarios of city loves (the baths, Rose Richart's funeral)—that loneliness. It is a healing & wholeness that makes of these worlds not two, not one.

The Poet himself is bridge; & common ground he bares for us is the human one of pain & love: process, the spiraling out is itself the core we recognize. It "wears us like rain."

Diane di Prima

The Del Rio Hotel

new and selected poems
by James L. White

The Territorial Press, Mark Vinz, editor, P.O. Box 775, Moorhead, MN
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Also by James L. White
Divorce Proceedings 1972
A Crow's Story of Deer 1974

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To J. T. Johnson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following poems appeared in *Divorce Proceedings*, published by the University of South Dakota Press, 1972: "The Fox," "Hosteen Coffee-Chili," "Maria Concepcion's Child," "On the death of D.H. Lawrence," "The Night Singer," "The Last Summer of My Father's Mind," and "Frisbee."

The following poems appeared in *A Crow's Story of Deer*, published by Yes! Capra Chapbook Series (number 26), Capra Press, 1974: "Coyote's Wife," "Witching," "Litany," and "An Eagle at the St. Paul Zoo."

The following poems have appeared in these magazines: "Maria Concepcion's Child," "Divorce Proceedings," and "Frisbee" in *Prairie Schooner*; "The Blind Woman" in *Nimrod*; "Gray" in *Pembroke Magazine*; "Chimayo, New Mexico" in *The Sun Stone Review*; "Voyeur" and "The White Horse" in *Dacotah Territory*; "My Father" in *South Dakota Review*; "A Requiem Mass for the Poet, Rose Richart" in *Kansas Quarterly*. "Mover," "A Day Sleeper," "Minneapolis White Castle," and "Anderson, Indiana" appear in *Heartland II: Poets of the Midwest*, ed. Lucien Stryk (Northern Illinois University Press, 1975).

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Part I. Fireproof rooms

*Lust is the misuse of sex for
personal gratification, debasing
it from holy purpose for which
God has given it to us.*

Saint Augustine

SUMMER NEWS

He smiles as if I know him
near the fountain's beads
in his center of light
with faded shirt like summer news.

His body invites conversation
to cease my hunt of
transients posed in downtown parks
with the stillness of foxes.

They threaten tornados through the city
as hunters and prey agree on common shelter.
The gathering storm enters our skin too
as we commence the familiar gestures.

In his room I speak of death and its promise of ending.
He undresses me, telling me how tired I am,
that friends have brought me their truths all day.
He seems as beautiful as I wish my life was
in the boiling light of our slight sweating.

Now the old blues
before the bad gin and storm.
We vow total selfishness
and we begin to touch
and we begin to rain . . .

THE FOX

In the night
a male fox ignites the ice field,
an incendiary in winter,
like passions alive in a condemned house.
My hen screams
spilling herself on the snow.
He, a safe distance, drops her carcass.
Across the highway his red signal eyes acknowledge me.
I too know the hunt is sometimes enough.

VOYEUR

Summer hangs in still light
as I rise in cylinders of air
to join hunters and lovers by their river beds
gliding over the levee with a definite swiftness
of hands on a stranger's thighs.
I amble here among the river roots
as they present breasts, dresses and hair to the sun.
A car sings completely of love
while they press into the shore.
I remember something
amid the mimosa and dead fish,
amid the slap of waves and thighs,
and hum my degenerate's song
to their consummating shadows.

BUTCHER'S DANCE

He hunts the gouged house of foxes.
Hones the gutting knife for deer.
Gets a hard-on at the mating of horses,
leaving her under their filthy quilts.
Always the road house drunks before her
waiting among the grease soaked meat
for his loins
to stop the silence between her breath.
He comes and dies falling to the canyon floor
where sage and stone give him council
to leave her as sleepers often will
through pores, nostrils, and hair.
She didn't know when he'd gone,
trembling alone with begging womb.
The cock crowed twice to say her life was spent
frying jowl and soaping clothes into night.
Now he opens the sow's throat,
smearing her design on the snow,
before the slow dance in butcher's apron
amid the bloods of his first creation.

25 CENT MOVIES

He came to me able as any dream
with hands making me remember a boyhood beach
as we changed the fleshy darkness into pebbled shore.
Our touching so fine
that I spoke to him like a father
of sun and how night would follow.
After our way in the curtain booth
I walk through the park calm as Librium
while other sharks seek the night.

WOLF WAITING

We're not genteel here
so lift your skin and enter
this shameless dream.

Here's how it'll be:
I'll smear our walls daily with urine
so they'll leave us alone.
Sleep during the light hours
so we can use you up at night.

Remember,
stay near the motel,
grow your hair all over,
go to market and read.

They'll call you when his lock breaks.
By then we'll be on our way
to your throat and thighs.

AGING FLOWERS OF THE DEL RIO STREET BATHS

We are the final jokes of longevity
waiting in cubicles beneath the street level,
remembering years of carnal bliss.

Some of us fumble down the hall to pee,
revealing our defunct blooms,
while others pretend youth beneath our make-up,
like second sheets of ourselves.

Sometimes a stranger enters near dawn.
We become electric and tap on empty rooms:
"I'm here, are you still there?"
confusing this moment with another man
gone into time.

Then we enter steam,
reacting the forbidden gestures,
and our blooms rise like aged miracles.

Finally the wilted sleep till morning
and each snoring is a single prayer
to dream fiery young flowers of God.

THE CLAY DANCER

1.

They report you missing for years
after dragging the lake falls into winters.
But you are buried in so many places
like the scattering of diseased ivory.
The infamous hotels of quick nights,
the way you like it and do it best.

The *Morning Star* says you didn't sleep well into spring
and finally gave everything away on blue paper:
"Charles, take the hunter's bow and ashes."

*He wakes, touches himself there, looks at the skin
magazine and can't sleep.*

2.

Towards the last
they said voices summoned you to write two or three poems a day.
Did you mention the white rooms near Clairmont
or the black roses by the Stone?

No.

Then what did you write of?

The manner of summer suns.

A walker to spring.

A flat land hearer of my people's myths.

Then what did you write of?

How I failed as a man

through the long silent distance
dreaming wrong.

Then what did you write of?

Trains under my sleep to Dearborn and beyond.

Then what did you write of?

My first time

in that hot room.

The guilt and shame making it perfect.

Then what did you write of?

Only what I chased.

Dust in a hundred cities and the blind swaying just right.

Mother hanging sheets by the steaming tub.

The blueing smell for my father's shirts.

His white Sunday strolling suit.

His never being dead enough.

But did you mention the white rooms near Clairmont
or the black roses by the stone?

No, only the first bus to Demming, Texas.

Then it must be time for you to go.

His heels click against the street as he searches.

3.

Do you like it this way?

Do you do it often?

Do you like the blind swaying

and the wash stand and the cough

in the halls before night?

Do you like the lice-ridden pigeons

cooing their terrible vision of the wino's city?

Do you like the trembling Sunday streets and one cafe?

Do you like my fat body catching breath?

Do you like our sleep filling the room?

Can you stay this way a little longer before your bus to L.A.?

He looks in the dirty movie but you're not there.

4.

That Sunday brunch
you released yellow birds through the snow
to violate our minds.
At the theatre,
their feathers in our hair,
about our forms,
turned black before the comedy.
We screamed into the park
amid winos and queens
to find the birds you'd painted yellow
strangling in the sculpture court,
failing about the gallery windows.
Your newest regional poem,
you said,
but your Sundays were always difficult.

He calls at your latest hour and hangs up when you answer.

5.

The cause of death:
These white rooms await the writing of your life,
well worn and empty.
You enter the echos
and begin notes on the highway,
an old pick-up towards Burntwater
carrying the battered suitcase.
And the poem stops there finally and forever
in the long shadows of the chair
amid the faucets and kitchen smells
where silence is larger than the room in which you write your life.

It no longer matters that he knows your address.

6.

After the well-saved valium you do not remember
forgiving yourself amid the vomit and urine
but tried to focus on the spreading dahlias above the bed.
Dial-a-prayer wouldn't answer.
Your priest was with a choir boy.
Your therapist did something filthy with your baby picture.

And you were so cold

the street names of youth failed you,
the bone's sorrow,
the hunter's ivory,
the Yei-bet-chi chants,
the yellow lights of Aberdeen,
the bars,
the tricks,
the parks,

only the cancered dahlias above you.

7.

The man in leather is finally at your bed.
He strips down to your mother
who wanders through your cold boyhood house
giving blankets to empty rooms.

A wheel in you forgets to breathe,
and you are dead,
and you know you are dead.

8.

Coroner's report:
An insulted brain.

9.

Embalmer's report:

He was against the porcelain as corroded alabaster.

His old body,

the cracked and desert roads,
older than the court house square,
older than farmers spitting their phlegm filled days,
older than the dirty magazines in the dirty shops
in the dirty cities he so revered.

His opened arteries discharged two white colts.

His childless loins repaid the turquoise, the amber and agate.

His yellow body finished with flutes,

finished with the miacins of regret,

finished with the vaporizers and failures,

canceled the bromides and small dreams.

But his eyes wouldn't close

wouldn't film.

saw further than they should.

Only the colts remained,

eyes toward still water,

the blue grass and bean blossom.

10.

Eulogy:

He was a clay dancer.

11.

What goes with you so perfectly prepared on the pillow
like a murdered satyr?

Lights about the remembering colts

or the cold cafes of November near your turquoise hands?

The faceless loins?

The rotted coyotes?

The aged owl?

Agate temple?

Corn fire?

None.

You go without streets, songs, or hair.

12.

Here at the Del Rio honey

your shaken steps are voided.

An anonymous patron has picked up your tab.

Your room's off the veranda.

It's quiet here except for week-ends

when Reba brings the girls down for the sailors.

You look quite young in your famous blue button down.

A sax and piano begin the waltz.

Sweet Chocolate laughs behind the shutters.

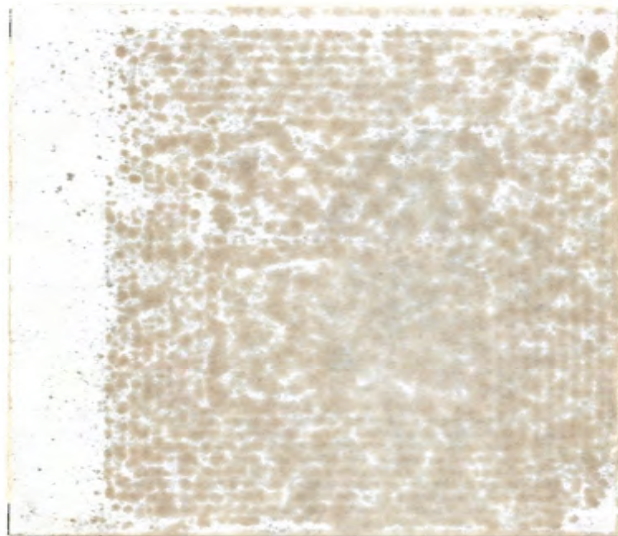
Miss Delicious sends you your first drink.

The neon lights up tit pink:

and the night,

and the night,

and the night!



Part II. Jimmy Marie's Chili Parlor

Let's take that last train to Gallup.
49'er song

DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS

We have cut from the gods
and have lost the holy place.

Our women are empty as shells
and corn withers in fields below the mesa.

We do not hunt for the sun,
nor see our fathers dance the universe
in the proper season.

And what now
that we have no fire?
and what now. . .

To the reader:

*The coyote stories may
be told only in the winter
months while snow is on the mountains,
else spiders climb down from
the sky and spin
webs around your children's eyes.*

COYOTE'S WIFE

to Diane di Prima

Her coat is matted with blood.
Eyes terrible and still she sings traveling songs.
The new litter with wrong colors. . . sick.
One she ate and growls constantly when I near.

Soon she will leave them by the arroyo,
then sleep with every dog.
Her packs are half-bloods and have been for years.

Last night she moved with the wind in that personal way.
Tied her swollen tits with silver cords.
Stole a dead child's turquoise.
Returned near dawn from Gallup,
dancing she said and sick from sweet wine,
and I fear her more this winter than others.

WITCHING

The darker parts of caves
where land is sick
or living in old bodies thumbing to Chuska.
Never really there
like an owl's cry in a story.

Too the dust of dead twin children
thrown in stranger's eyes
till they are no more than hogan smoke.

Large dogs are suspect!
The wind stopping to stillness
or even a black goat.
Sometimes a stare or brushing against you.

Even turquoise
in wrong color
found by the road.
Its paleness makes you sick
till that's all.

Under my childhood these wolves run
with fire and the terror of cut hair
over our sleeping skin
by silent dorms.

We awake to the horrible caw of crows
with news of drunken pick-ups flying into canyons.

LITANY

Forgive the time busses,
sun line and canyon rim to El Paso
where we never spoke again.

Forgive spring winds by the arroyo,
my falling hair,
that I sleep away from you,
my energy given to dreams of the deserts.

Forgive the First Street bars Maria Sevilla,
your hair of devil heart and drunken roads
where fields spread their pregnant legs
beneath blue rooms.

Forgive the chilis and corn
Trujillo, your horses sing of white summer
through this memory as sad as clay plates!

The little boy who pees by the corral.

Forgive the Sandias at peace upon my eyes,
your gods upon my sleeping skin.

Navajos thumbing to Grants,
army coats and taped up boots
that have the pity of children's hair.

Forgive the eagles I have not seen
in their long line of air,
that I will never join them,
but remain in the sand without their love.

HUNTING SONG

I want a desert man named Gallup.
Lovely denim asses at Eddie's Bar.
Twister at the Delmore Hotel
where we drunk dream of winter chants
and my black pony with silver,
following harder, harder after you
into that canyon.

CHIMAYO, NEW MEXICO

I will touch these poems like my guitar
to sing the sadness
of doves about the plaza,
and songs of geraniums in coffee cans
which have the redness of Christ's torn side.

I will sing of the little rain
while empanaditas bake,
while old moustached Maria withdraws for prayers,
while silent corn mothers hang on walls,
while Trujillo's pregnant mare
is a full white moon in late day.

Romo's pick-up collapses by my broken wall.
As we walk to the cafe
Maria lops off a chicken's head
and something spills before me to the sand. . .
something long before me,
like a coyote laughing in sleep.

HOSTEEN COFFEE-CHILI

The horses you broke.
The Spanish-American War
with Chavis and Begay,
now silent plots in New Mexico sand.

It is lost to you Coffee-Chili:
there are none of you left,
not your daughter somewhere old on relocation,
or your sons gone to nameless wars,
returned in metal
"General Delivery, c/o Trading Post"

And the Coal Avenue whores,
the Delmore Hotel graces,
now fat laughing in sweet wine.
Toothless hags snoring in gutters by Eddie's Club.

But you saw what we could not know or understand.
Blue horses and lightning shooting the sky.
The Mountain Around Which Was First Moving,
all in you.

You are a prayer plume.
There is corn pollen in you.
You are turquoise and silver.
You are your last song.

In winter I see you
with your bag of trader's supplies.
Old man, old man, how like your kind you are,
poking holes in the snow to your hogan.

MARIA CONCEPCION'S CHILD

*"Even as she was falling asleep, head bowed over the child,
she was still aware of a strange, wakeful happiness."*

Katherine Anne Porter

Brightwood cracked the trees at night to the birth.
The snow powdered from the pines to starred nights,
gentle, falling, silent into blackness beyond our vision.

The darkly regal Maria Concepcion,
secret in line and grace,
fragile, dark and silent she,
more soft than moths wandering the earth.

He, strong enough to bear the earth's boredom.

She saw his head turn from women behind their secret screens.
They tossed him flowers, they say, for his great beauty,
but he wanted only himself.

In youth he lay naked on hilltops,
feeling the sun awaken
and watched the ram's pleasure,
but remained separate.

As a man he suffocated in the whitening sun.

That final night in the back corner of her world,
boiling the burial oils,
old Maria Concepcion mumbled on her mat
and poked at her fires.

But the lead ram bleated.
The wind changed suddenly,
and all heard his great laughter echo through the mesas,
and saw his massive form dance naked before the moon,
as all womanly things of the world blushed
for his terrible male beauty.

ON THE DEATH OF D.H. LAWRENCE

(to the memory of John Z. Bennet)

You will not die in the swaddled white of Italy,
or the grace mothering women.
We took you beyond the hills of Taos,
naked against the sun.

You saw our bulls in evening
and you were the bulls, black and eternal,
yet remained a flute of grass.

You had our nights
with candle gossip against the abode.
Winds touched your lover's crow hair
and the moment went out.

Your hands knew our damp loins in sleep.
Then dawn came with pinon logs popping cold
and you were alone.

When your death came, it rattled fitfully
as wind in the pueblo.

Fighting cocks flew at the moon.
Stallions ran till dawn in Chimayo
and our great bulls wept like women.

Now the kiva ladder reaches against the sky.
The winter dance is finished and you are with us,
in the fox tails and pines we wear.
You are smoke that lifts above the plaza.

Nothing remains of you but the Apache boy,
lean blue in thin morning
turning his horse and silence towards Santa Fe.

THE NIGHT SINGER

(Sometimes the chant turns against the singer)

The erring chant brought my purgation.
Its power shrank my eyes into sockets
because things were not sung in the right order.
Something forgotten or owl perhaps
took my voice to sing Yei-be-chai.
Then my patient ran blue lipped back into madness.
There is nothing left but salt like pain
and if I'm restored the world will seem a gift.

AN EAGLE AT THE SAINT PAUL ZOO

Medicine bag beneath long feathers.
His arrow eyes look beyond us
to the sun.

He recognizes my necklace and screams.
I knew him once before:
old Joe Loloma along the road
back to Third Mesa.

Part III. "They will come to say...
all I own is worthless."

Roberta Hill

A DAY SLEEPER

Under a seconal
my apartment diminishes in shafts of dusty light.

Nearly there
something hangs unforgiving above this bed,
towards me,
my people,
and theirs into the hills.

A day sleeper now,
I shatter neon into morning stars,
above the arms of bridges,
the blasted rock,
smoke and time.

MOVER

Each fall I move
past a summer burning.
Remember the roans in Billy Red's field.
Always the wine skies.

Rent's higher in town.
The borrowed chair
and Navajo stuff where I used to live.
Jim Polston's picture with John Wesley
and David's toy of tumbling man.

Everything's on shelves just right:
Lorca,
my jeans
and straw angels from Juarez.

Just found a 24 hour diner
and scratch paper to say hello,
that I made it back fine
with enough left
for a new winter coat.

ANDERSON, INDIANA

It all fails now:
porch gliders begin
as he takes the last rim shot into dusk,
as moths rise in suicide against the reading lamp,
as the locust cries forever,
as the weather cock rusts forever,
as heat lightning reveals the blue bike.

I drink to the town's death
by a grainery of broken windows
screaming into the night,
where our last drunk Indian
was run visionless to the town's edge.

I'm drunk now from the window fan,
mystery magazines and diner food,
sitting in darkness by the depot
where once cried the great trains
extinct by my boyhood's end.

MINNEAPOLIS WHITE CASTLE, WINTER '72

Old and longhairs in chrome light.
Coffee drinkers, bus waiters.
Holy tumblers of time. . .

. . .who once from earth rooms
or painted bird ships
nodding in coves as elders at noon.

A freak plays the Stones. . .

. . .who danced bulls then,
or painted warring blue
in Northern white fur and iron.

What wino's ancient father. . .

. . .lifted prayer doves,
followed the entrail's direction
towards a foreign drop of bright earth?

Some Memphis dung beetle loses time
falling dead to the White Castle floor.

Our 6-A pushes dimly through the snow.
We board with a Crete mother's sea song forged under our
common skin.

THE WHITE HORSE

The white horse is again by Polston's farm.
standing solemnly as ocean or early stone
though I have buried my father many times above these hills.

The stallion's head dips to sweet grass
and I feel pain at the beauty of his arched neck.
Moon blue he walks to me and exhales at my feet:
I am absolved for the corners of my rooms,
the thousand hallways at dusk,
the silent evening meals.

I hang a wreath of lilacs and ashwood
about the white horse's neck.
Lightning near the oak grove
as he runs to Black Mountain.

I bury my father again tonight.

GRAY

for Susan Margoles

After market, its stillness,
near four, close to dinner, something like death
appears by the cooking food, or guilt or sorrow.

The postcards of quiet failures:

"It rained and was cold most of the time here.

Paul drank and I stayed in the motel. Maybe next year."

We could go fishing
or forgive this silence.

Forget your children by their new mother's beach.

It's this color that smothers us:

your dismissed dreams of sailing by Clairmont,
or mine of the spring cotillion.

Not just too many drinks before dinner,
the boiling snow peas
or overdone bird.

THE BLIND WOMAN

Her hands were enough eyes
to unearth the great flowers of summer.
In white cotton for Sunday callers
she embraces my mother.
They seem to waltz in the August breeze.
They seem to hold all the flowers of the earth together.

Hands of corn touch the sky behind the barn.
I am suddenly lost though my people's voices are near.
You know how it happens without reason:
the june bug and screen door in their unalterable way?

Now we sit on cane rockers
singing the songs of our race. . .
of who I was then.

I am five and wad my mother's dress
because there is unanswerable sorrow in us
and what we were became bits of shacks
near the Logansport turn-off.

MY FATHER

Alone at General with his last song.
I am told it is terrible before they die:
full of first years remembering his mother's hair
and cadence from his only war. The blue flame of
his welding arch life grown thin. Coldness though
the sun forgave. They said he feared hunger from
his father's earth farmed whiter than an Irish
ankle. I saw him last with his paramour through
the park, speaking of battles, their old shopping
bags filled with headlines, towards the iron hero
statues against the deathly sun like chained curlews.

TRAVELING

for Jack Copeland

This week I teach pregnant girls
who sway about their words with heavy smiles.
Because I am male they are each so.
I want to feel their little cargo
like the sun on small ships.
and with their somnolent motion
I am drawn back to my mother's bedroom.
It is dusk.
I am small and want to touch her breasts,
the belladonna, henna, and rouge.
There were trees then.
A railroad by the cafe
draws its lonely steel from my boy navel
far past the lime pit and lumber yard
to a place where I would dance
in her old dress and broken shoes.

THE LAST SUMMER OF MY FATHER'S MIND

The last summer of my father's mind
was spent painting wicker chairs white against the sun.
"Things rust away," he said.

He knew his loins were done
but wanted some rending last song,
so he painted and planted roses
like a mad old bull.

He planted and smashed and bellowed
at the ambiguities and trailing ends of his life.

Then the operation at General for total change.
His shadow survived like a thin rain in winter.
Sitting in the rusting chairs by the dead roses
he lost time.

I loved what the doctors took:
the firing calliope of his life.
And clawed the sky like him
pursuing some lovely dimension.

FRISBEE

Across the street they play
the deaf students, a boy and girl,
poised in late evening,
stretched, balancing, delicate,
as the blue disk glides
cleanly in their silent worlds.

The girl throws too high.
The boy leaps
long and singly in the darkening night,
reaching upward towards the
almost imperceptible fading blue.

Part IV. A Requiem Mass for the Poet,
Rose Richart

A REQUIEM MASS FOR THE POET, ROSE RICHART

KYRIE ELEISON

Steadily (a moderate four-time) mp

The light, pale and wet, opens in April. . . flowers soft, lilacs
perhaps in one's mind, around the cathedral. . . a French mass is
being worked for Spring. . . Jene Langlaie, two million miles
away, sits blind on the balcony of his Paris apartment listening
to his mother clatter china cups. . . while the carillon at
5:00 in Indianapolis reaches through the downtown streets. . .

GOD IS WORKING HIS PURPOSE OUT. . .

touches the hustlers standing by Hooks on the Circle. . .
the bells ring through the Greyhound Bus Station

AS THE WATER COVERS THE SEA. . .

and old men in tropic shirts dart below to the urinals before
continuing their trip to L.A.

Craig, golden haired from another century. . .

"Lord have mercy. . ." falls to the sacristy, the walls, the flitting
choir master. . . then the duet. . . "Christ have mercy. . ." We hold
each other lightly in our minds. . . our voices touch. . . "upon
us." falls on the altar. . .

—Rest two then come in. Damn it, read. . .

rose is dead in spring

—18th and Meridian. . .

i know that hustler miss o shanacie says it's like a baby's
arm holding an apple why do the spades always play their damn
radios on the bus when i'm supposed to be out flat with grief

DUPE, DUPE, DUPE, DUPE, OH YEAH. . .

the park's empty bad night will she be done up in pink curls
and swathed in singing robes miss johnson will of course not
be there death's not a part of her reality syndrome i was so
young why was it always spring and john tricking

The room is abandoned save for John Sullivan who stands like a medieval statue and Rose who is bedded for her tenth year from various occasional lingering cancers which left her body in all directions like Mexican paper dolls. . . we have about us the feeling of dust at the nave of the Worms Cathedral. . . Rose is elevated as the poet must be. . . John is drunk as he must be and Stephan is intensely aware of himself for he is young and sought after. . .

mf: organ improvisation in the style of Howells at the Coronation

—And my precious, why are we on the streets these late hours. . . angels at night must venture with caution. . .

GUARD US FROM ALL PERILS AND DANGERS OF THIS NIGHT

—I walk the streets to bring the needy the solace of my youth. . .

—My darling, are your charms given, or do you exact a toll from our lonely Indianapolis hopefuls. . .

The carolina club's dark furniture for the simple and tasteful put a little fun in your life dance there's that ugly redhead faggot trottin' all those horny old women around his greased floor bet he's never gotten it up for any of 'em

her voice was small and cupped from the disease like a girl's

—I have no navel you know my dear. . . none of us do. . .

—And whose testes were thrown you in the sea. . . John tells me he can't swim a stroke. . .

—Why John, this is the first one you've brought home, whose subjects and verbs come out right. . . from your name are you the last Christian to suffer. . . I'm the only one allowed to suffer in this room. . . it's used as blackmail on John's emotions, to keep him more or less faithful as I see he is by bringing you home. . .

—Rose, gin makes your real eye as glazed as your glass cosmetic improvement. . .

if you're out of a job let us place you in the right position

—John, as you see, keeps me quick. . . I hope my contorted face and body caused you no discomfort Stephan. . . It causes me very little. . . In this life or plain as the Rosicrucians would have it, there are small colorful pills and needles to soften the realities of my bed pans and the crank of my hospital bed. . .

squeak, squeak, went the wheels of her casket up the aisle of Saint Peter and Paul's

—John, perhaps a record would be nice. . . Play "Tramp Tramp Tramp the Boys are Marching". . .

—Don't look to Rose for mercy Stephan. . .

SANCTUS

With a slow swing. 6/4 mf

—John says you're Anglican my dear. . . We claim to Rome in this household, but Anglicans are such nice chatty folks except when they make house calls like that fat little priest from All Saints who talks about the existential Christian and I must increase my dosage of morphine for fear of an early death of boredom. . . they tell me you sing wrapped in Anglican robes on Sunday. . .

—Saturday night permitting, I chant the Mass on Sundays. . .

—It is said that you sing "Once in Royal David's City" at The Famous Door and other public houses. Perhaps you would grace this room or are you vaporish and elusive like the choirs of Kings's College. . .

you can buy it now come in and talk to us

—I'm more real than this room Miss Richart. . . Your disease has left you with little charity and my mission on Saturday nights is to be kind. . .

—John, perhaps the night calls Stephan more than the silly prattle of my bedded chamber. . . if so my dear, you may withdraw without the slightest pain of leaving us aged in Spring. . .

phillips 66 the man in the green was at the varsity white fronts
dash SSSSSSS the wheels on the damp pavement

The room where Saudie lives is mostly linoleum. The house is
called The Carolina Club for some unknown reason. About her room
are hung pictures of the Virgin. The room is wetted with the smell
of incense and candles dripping to the floor. The place is strewn
with Catholic News Letters. The night is late and French doors
clatter. . .

—Miss Rose is dead baby and I'm so spooked. . .

She looks fatted and oiled like a pig ready for roasting how
many has she turned tonight she looked glutton eyes painted
scarletine lips older than the first whore of the world

—Steve, how do you think they'll put her in the box. . . Baby
that hump weighs more than she does. . .

how does her bellie hang so

THOU WILT KEEP (HER) IN PERFECT PEACE

she'll be right and all fixed up like a squat mid-westerner when she
enters the heavenly towers

I DREAMT I DWELT IN IVORY TOWERS

i screwed in sherland towers

—Baby, they'll have to put a false bottom in the casket for
that hump to go in. . .

is this a comedy we must be byron's fallen angels
fallen to meridian street to work out our fate and rose folded up her
and left us to eat each other alive.

—Steve, it must be the night 'cause I feel old Miss Rose all
around. . . Rose's goin' to hex me baby, I know it. . . We parted less
than chums. . . You know I went over to Talbolt to live with her
last year 'cause old John Sullivan embezzled all her money for
hooch and she couldn't pay a day nurse. . . Everything was goin'
along just dandy, then my Russian comes around to see me and things
were bad baby, we didn't even have food and I have to keep up my
strength for the late hours, so I thought Rose was asleep on the
morphine. . .

WHILE ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST

and I told the Russian he could have a little French fun out
on the back porch. . . (laugh)

i love her simpering laugh like all the tents of all the war
camps before battle

—I had to whimper like a dog and call the Russian my puppy before
he could get it up and I guess Rose heard us 'cause baby
her head lolls up like old Medusa and that one eye was just glowin'
baby and George has me over the Maytag and I thought Rose was goin'
to get up out of that bed and walk she was so mad. . . I tried to tell
her I was being raped by the handy man

I NEED MY HANDY MAN

and she says she never heard a woman say 'come on puppy, get it
up there', while she was being raped. . . So Baby, Rose has me out of
there in ten minutes flat. . . but she treated me good too. . .
Last winter I was out with my back. . . I couldn't even turn 'em for
a pack of cigarettes and I had that baby to feed. . . and Rose takes
her pill money and sets me up with food and a months rent at the
Carolina Club. . .

Steve, do you think I could go see Miss Rose enter
glory. . . 'course I'd have to be high on pills. . . 'cause baby that
farm family of hers would stone me when I walked in the parlor. . .
-I'll escort you Miss O'Shanacie. . .

BENEDICTUS

Slow and sustained. 4/4. p. espress.

In winter talbot looks blue snow the hillbillies stare
from behind plastic curtains at my crunch crunch steps freezing
cracking snow tom's house i bet it's cold up there the
car lights make cold designs on the street must tell rose about
ruthie givin' me that big bowl of stew at gillands for a quarter
why are we so much poorer in the winter coats thin goes right
through they fell away no one's there anymore even john
guess they smell death dogs always know that's them alright
dogs

AND THE OLD GRIM REAPER DONE CAMPED ON OUR DGOR STEP

what will it be like for rose 'there will come soft lights
my dear and in the end I will see the Van Gogh wheat fields
and be able to have coffee with my mother' damn her soul
for those things takes the juice right out of me with that
talk rose you needn't die for me or john or your poetry
none of it's worth that much it's not that good funny i
always look to see if the light's on like she might be goin'
someplace i'll pack snowballs and we'll pour syrup on 'em for
dessert that'll make her laugh i can't let my face tell her
about the smell that awful stink not right for a poet to go
out that way rose should die of some lingering refrain ailing
refrain people don't die of refrains

indianapolis business machines a complete office for the
smallest room

-Rose it's me. . .
-It's who darlin'. . .
-The one with it swingin'. . .
-Well enter then. . .
-Get up and open the door like you're supposed to
damn you rose for all you are
-But Stephan, the cold on my alabaster shoulders. . .
-Then you'll be entered upon. . . How'd you like to be entered
upon Rose "who ain't got much of a future but oh what a past". . .
-Darlin' I haven't been entered upon in years. . . how divine
and in my condition, shocking. . . Do close the door Stephan or
I'll die of a cold. . .
let it air out a little place smells like all the johns of
the world wonder if she knows it stinks
-Cold. . . it's Spring outside. . . If you'd get up and wash those
dirty windows you could see them lilacs slappin' at your face. . .
-I'm a Portrait of a Lady you said once. . . How kind of you to
remember sir. . .

THERE IS NO ROSE OF SUCH VIRTUE AS IS THE ROSE

why do i want to cry at her doesn't she know she's up
it's sentiment
-You ain't no Portrait of a Lady. . . I've seen yuh all hussied
up with your dyed red hair, playin' cards in the back of Kate
McKann's place. . .
-Just to make you jealous Stephan. . .
(slower tempo) pp. 6/8 sustained

WITH RUE MY HEART IS LADEN

—Rose, tell me about winter. . . Let's play that you're young and I'll be your brother and we'll ride a great sleigh over the plains of Russia. . .

slop from top to bottom she'll have me sentiment up to my ass, stinkin' as bad as her cancer

—Stephan, no poetry tonight. . . We need to talk of daily things. . . why does the bus have to wait so long at 16th i can walk to the funeral parlour from here saudie won't show she'll blow it she must god, i don't want to be seen with her we're using' rose's death for a parade of our devotion

—Rose you've never been daily in your life. . .
I'm a facade darling, like an old ballet set for Swan Lake, full of holes and lights covered over with blue gels. . . Don't you know by now I'm a little girl from a small town in Indiana who saved her money for Butler College and graduated in English and makes her way in the world by writing flaps for the lyric writers of Indiana. . .
—It's a lie Rose. . . you were born a Greek monk and a Slavic peasant, conceived through stars and God, under a cypress tree and raised on olives and lemon rinds bathed in *Retcina* to make you a woman of passion. . .

GOD LOVE YOU FOR A LIAR

—My dear tonight's not right for your Greek monks and cypress trees. . . Can you rub my back and oil my bed sores. . .

i bet i have more luck than ten men i've rubbed that damn hunchback so much the smell disgusts me she's dead through and through no breasts now just two festering headlights you're a disgust rose and i hate your disgust

—Stephan you're blessed. . . This isn't the part we talk about in poetry class. . .

her body's dead and her mind won't die

—Rose, I used to have a sow I washed down with a hose in the summer. . .

—Darlin' this has all made you dim witted. . . That's better dear, thank you. . .

i'll let her have it now she's been waitin' to let go

Rose, what do you think about. . . not the poetry or the art but this room and the season. . .

—The season. . . is it different than any other season. . . We must assume there will be Spring. . . Mostly I think I'm tired of the pretense of being Rose. . .

IS IT UP HILL ALL THE WAY

—Do you know my dear, I've held court in this bed for ten years. . . I've been kept alive by donations. . . Gypsie dancers slap the floors with their hands when they finish their whirlings and are thrown coins. . . My dances have been my wit. . . Put together I've had ten years of boredom in this room. . . I've listened to everyone from priests to whores talk of their lives then pay me that little reward to help get over the rough spots, such as being without morphine. . . I'm very tired of the well meaning others whose spirits are rewarded by their five dollar donations. . . I've been on dole for ten years and it wearies me as they have bored me. . .

YES MY DEAR IT'S UP HILL ALL THE WAY

—I've played a very dangerous game of deception and I'm found out a bit relieved but mostly I'm tired of this small struggle. . .

I'M GETTING OLDER NOW AND I CAN'T TURN
THE TRICK ANY LONGER

—Do you have any choice Rose but to keep on keepin' on. . .
 —Oh yes my dear, at long last I now have a choice. . .Please
 believe me when I say I'm tired of the role of the poet. . .In
 the end, our poetry's as useless as yesterday's birthday party. . .
 Especially our posies Stephan, mine and yours. . .The only thing
 that seems of great importance are the doctors who have eased
 my pain. . .odd that it should be reduced to that. . .It is those
 strong young men with straight white teeth who bring children
 into the world and cut growths and straighten smashed appendages
 that count darlin'. . .not us with our cheap hooch and dusty rooms
 and paper flowers like a million Blanches. . .we're so like the
 little Chekhov people whom we love, the nobility who didn't
 survive the boots progress. . .
 —I know we're not worth much Rose, but that doesn't stop us. . .
 —The girl's here Stephan. . .Tell her to give me my shot and run
 on. . .I think I can sleep tonight. . .and if you see Mr. Sullivan,
 please tell him I want to borrow several books. . .
 you're beggin rose and you know it you've not seen john in
 two months and you're afraid of dyin' without seein' him that's
 a laugh, you'll outlive all of us
 —Rose, you and John have been out of court with each other
 a hundred times before and you always end up thick. . .Wait and
 see, he'll be back before Spring. . .
 —I think he must dearest. . .Do tell him to come for my sake
 and I'll be blessed. . .

AGNUS DEI

(very slow and expressive) 2/2. p.p.

god, saudie made it

—Off please. . .

in a black veil at night she looks like a cheap lamp

—How do I look Steve. . .I want to look just war torn baby,
 like I can't stand it. . .I turned five tricks so-as-I could
 send old Miss Rose some potted plants. . .I thought it'd be nice
 so the family could keep 'em. . .You know, "To Rose and the
 family from her chum Saud". . .not that she ever did a thing for
 me, throwing' my ass out in the winter. . .She's out of it now
 so I says to hell with it all. . .Take one of these little green
 pills Steve. . .It'll bring you up and help you pass the spooks. . .
 which room do we go in no one around he must work here all
 business good black suit how do i ask

—Miss Elizabeth Richart please. . .

first to the right thought so, the damn place looks like a
 farm convention on the right and a brothel on the left i'll
 say my prayers quick in front of the casket don't make a big
 thing of it rose you look like a little girl all got up in
 pink no teeth and boy eyes closed for the first time in your
 life an idiot smile you never had that when you were alive
 you almost look giddy ready for one of your May Day parties

The room is Spring. It is early evening. For the first time
 there sits a registered nurse. The place is clean beyond all
 reality. By Miss Richart's bed there sits a coffee can full of
 lilacs. John Sullivan sits on the sofa, terrible in his calm,
 thumbing through a magazine. He shows no emotion
 and does not look at Stephan. Miss Richart is barely conscious
 and perhaps does not recognize the boy

—Miss Rose, are you sleeping. . .

—Not quite my dear, but soon. . .

—How do you feel Rose. . .

—I am adequate my dear. . .

—Let me kiss you like a little girl and I'll go. . .

THE ROSE-LIPPED GIRLS ARE SLEEPING IN FIELDS WHERE ROSES FADE

give to her the peace the world could not give

The room undulates with various degrees of humanity: farmers, students, wheel-chairs, patients, those recently returned from shock treatment, prostitutes, decorators, analysts, priests. None of them mix.

Anthem: full choir. S.A.T.B. Bright Tempe. 6/8 ff.

—Rose had the best after hours place on 16th. . .

—Well you know I offered to do her place for nothing. . .it could have been soooo well appointed but she'd have nothing to do with it.

—Amazing resistance. Staggeringly sound psyche. . .

—It's a blessin' she's gone. . .No one knows like her own folks how she suffered. . .

—You know they stole my brain at the hospital. . .I don't even know who's in that casket. . .

—The glass eye was the one with the kind expression. . .

—I thought her things were a little too Frostian. . .They had that pastoral quality rather. . .

the pill's blowin' my head off got to get out, mary wheelin.
wonder if she's straight get a drink looks like a million

—Mary, let's go

—Steve, this place is so dreary. . .Old Miss Rose'd throw a fit if she came here

the place stinks with all those flowers be good to get out in the air

Mary, look in there.

The room is quite empty except for a casket, a kneeler, and four candles, and the hum of a heating unit. The casket contains an old man with his head pulled deeply into his neck. The head is swathed in bandages.

—Mary, let's say our prayers for him. . .

funny old man all alone not one daisy who is he i'll ask that spiffy guy in the black suit

—He was a circus performer, an acrobat traveling through Indianapolis. . .car crash. . .his people are in the hospital. . .

an acrobat i can't stand it rose in the other room both of 'em goin' out together my head's rockin' off can't stop shakin'

—Come on Mary. . .Let's drink hooch at The Heavenly Bar as Rose would say. . .

—In the name of God, let's blow this dump. . .

GLORIA

4/4. Broadly, with fire. ffff.

The bar clamors with various types. It is Friday night and everyone is hopeful. Juke box songs of the early sixties. There is a continual passage of whores, queens, painters and hustlers, from table to table. The air is fantastic, as before an electrical storm.

my mind is blowin' out rose with all the dead around her mary's headlights are crooked lots of class

—Black Russians. . .Two. . .

—Well if I'm not, who IS the grandest lady here. . .

—You're an alley queen like the rest of us. . .

—I've tried for something really organic. . .Something beyond Pollock, but how can you expect them to understand in Indianapolis. . .

—Steve, all checks are bad right now. . .Don't Mary have no cash. . .

my spine's breaking my head'll fall off and lay there on the floor singin' an AGNUS DEI and they'll sweep it up with the napkins that faggot flyin' around like a furry

—Mary, give me a pop-off. . .I've got to go out and join Rose. . .

breathe in deep I'M GOING UP rose are you out there

Dorie, in her wheelchair, drives doggedly into the Varsity. Her legs are one foot long and on the stumps she hangs Betty Brown patent leather shoes. In her hand she carries the glass eye of Rose Richart. It burns brightly. She throws it to the ceiling and the ceiling shatters exposing the sky. The eye now revolves around slowly, its light reveals each person. There is laughter, mouths, laughter, hair, beads. Black Russians, beer, doors, urinals, piss, bottles, perfume, queens, phones, bar maids, Black Russians, pop-offs, Black Russians, pop-offs, Black Russians. there's Rose hunchback knockers back she's climbin' a rope ladder out of the varsity she's posed on a tiny pedestal that ugly body slammed into a pink *tutu*

—Darlings, whores, bores, faggots, friends, family, for my final selection I will do a triple somersault through the air while singing The Italian Street Song. . .

wait rose what about me

—It's cold up here Rose. . .I'm afraid. . .Our pedestal's so damn small. .

—When wasn't our ground space small Stephan. . .

—Rose, let's get on with it. . .The Varsity's packed and they all want to get back to their urinals. . .

There is the old man swathed in bandages, wearing pink tights. He is dead except for his arms, and he swings back and forth slowly in space.

—Rose, what about me. . .Let me go too. . .

—Stephan, it's Friday night at the Varsity. . .Look down there, all those bodies waiting for a little French fun. . .Stay on Stephan. . .Your mission is to salvage everything we couldn't. . .Hock us Stephan, we're your silver tea service. . .Remember darlin' convert us. . .

POSTLUDE

WIDOR:

TOCATA

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rose's flying burning brightly iced nightly soaring racing higher
splitting spinning flying whirling dancing nearer always shining brightly
The skies now change into yellow wheat fields. Above them burn
myriad stars and whirling clouds. Rose Richart, straight and young
walks through the fields. The air is filled with the smell of
strong black coffee and the clatter of her mother's cups," and a far
away voice calls: "Rose, it's a fresh pot, let's sit a spell."

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