Sand River Journal

Sand River Journal is a collection of poems gathered from the newsgroup rec.arts.poems. Current and archive issues may be retrieved by anonymous ftp from etext.archive.umich.edu in /pub/Poetry. This archive includes PostScript versions of the formatted journal, which can be printed on many standard laser printers.

The primary selection process is blind to authorship, but I can make no claim that the Journal is comprehensive or objective. The volume posted to r.a.p. now exceeds my capacity to read it all, and dozens of poems per week are lost to me. Furthermore, the standards for selection, however uniformly applied, reflect my own perception of our craft. Alert me to glaring omissions and biases. Send comments, suggestions and finished contributions (please reference SRJ) to asphaug@lpl.arizona.edu. Enjoy!

Erik Asphaug, Editor

Issue 10, June 1994

Summer Solstice

☉ ♎ ☾

Winter

I raise my hands to the white hush-kiss
of the snow. It's light as parachutes,
cold as river water. Downhill
a rabbit crashes, tumbles through heavy juniper
looking for safe haven. She sees a falcon
or the falcon sees her; both are lost to me
in the early thin sun.

Karen Krebser
krebser@erg.sri.com

Spring

Dead feather skeletons
Bud cautious yellow-green, rust,
The dove wails welcome.

David Goldberger
goldberg@riker.neoucom.edu

Those are the days

Those were the days
and my heart belongs to my mamma

but today
I need something that I can't understand

those are the days
we walk together to our Odysseia.

Jari Suuronen
4jari@adpser2.gsf.fi

ecstasy

you should not be watching me like that
your gaze is a climbing rose — twining
you and me in fragrance and thorns

the iceland poppies are shedding
their green cloaks like timid novitiates
shyly flirting with the dawn-sun

the air is like sangria — each flower
bleeds among the swords of grass
singing chords of music

do not weep over the scent of jasmine
fresh crushed rosemarys — hold me
and heal the stigmata of my hands

zita maria evensen
bu016@kanga.ins.cwru.edu

Don Quixote

he wandered the dark
shrouded streets
murmuring memories
that were never
his own

nights spent sifting
through the garbage
of the world
only seeking out
the odd photograph
or tattered letters
abandoned to the past

when the days came
he'd meet sleep
clinging to every line
every time worn smile
stolen in the night

yet each word
of separation
would coil raging
beneath his
heavy lids
as they fluttered
into red
then darkness

Jody Upshaw
jupshaw@hfm.com

Lake View

The wind walks the waters
Rippling the sky into a mosaic
    of tiny blue tiles

The breezy fingers
    caress the grasses
Making them whisper
    hissy secrets

William C. Burns, Jr.
burnswcb@gvltec.gvltec.edu

In the Armenian Theater Company

I.

A desultory summer: I had nothing left to do.
I offered to do the lights. Why?
Admiration of her morroccan pantaloons?
Nonsense! the answer is simple: Loneliness!
I spent an evening at an old gentleman's house:
he served us tea from ornate pitcher in the boggy dark
a citrus-sweet yard, we built sets...
turkish doorways and a dais.

II.

I didn't do the lights.
I said, "I am sorry: it is too much for a neophyte"
She said, "we are all neophytes here"
I said, "Yes, but it is your play, and besides,
    we only just met... in a cafe"
She said, "I understand. I will do the lights myself!"
However, she made me spinach pie after a Saturday hike.
And told me, two hours too late:
"There is no possibility, Ron, of romance."

Ronald Bloom
rbloom@netcom.com

she bends

she bends
to kiss
me.
her hair
falls on my
face like a
warm breeze
and
shuts out
the world
like a
fragrant
summer
night.

zazu pitts
daemon@anon.penet.fi

Joanna, on Parting

She lives not closer than the sun
      across whose tarnished Realm
sharp-fangled moment fears to run
      and love, to overwhelm —

she changes faster than the Sky
      beneath whose pallid arch
delirious fury gushes by
      and blazing footprints parch —

she speaks like springtime nightingale
      resplendent and estranged
in passion strong, in lifetime frail,
      and in deceit avenged —

An apparition come and gone,
A rainbow in the desert Sun.

Ilya Shambat
ibs4s@uva.pcmail.virginia.edu

Lilies

once upon a cliff
in lily scented air
I found the face of god

at eight, the universe
was green
and juicy sweet

I threw my body
in rapture
into a heaven

of crunch and scent
flawless communion
of yellow and pink

my falling unbound
in me the glimmer
of a ravishing joy

which being born
in me that day
has never died

Judy Stanley
powell@ingres.com

Isabelle Brasseur

l'ombre blanc de son père
danse dans ce requiem
elle tombe du lancement
sur une vive arète tout en gravant
un arc qui atténue sa détente profonde

the white shadow of her father
dances in this requiem
she drops from the toss
on a sharp edge scribing
an arc that eases her deep recoil

E. Russell Smith
ab297@freenet.carleton.ca

Pastoral Escapade

You mutilate language to see how it works,
if it can still escape your maze.
You boil it down to poetry, the bones into glue.
The only proof's a broken-down confession;
shelter for the night.

To say that trees are silent is to say that the wind
whispered to you with her eyes. If it were love,
she'd hide the broken crockery. Lost for words,
the sky seeps through cracks in glued porcelain,
or more simply, dead, brittle elm branches
that would love to sway in storms
just one more time but as daylight drains
away through the swirling moonhole
they know it's too late. What's left is just an island;
were it a lakeside, it wouldn't curve away so.

A swig of blue and suddenly things are back
the way they were before — abandoned haywains
of desire, a distant cockerel, then rain delaying dawn —
but part of the night remains: the black, wrinkles;
the brown, blood; the pink, whatever you like —
after all, you paid. Its flowers will hunt you down.

Tim Love
tpl@eng.cam.ac.uk

Connections

That was no miracle, no mere coincidence,
my friend — you with the raised eyebrows —
when you answered the telephone and knew
before a word was spoken;
who thinks to put a letter in the box,
to raise the flag, and one is there.
The mind will muse when no one watches.
Like Phaedo, we make our case
with other selves and turn the page
before they answer —a case that smiles
with teeth only when it is caught.
You will swear like a don you were not there,
or like a witness who was and saw nothing,
but they will out as surely as a bell sounds
or a parallel thought is spoken —
as surely as dreams are found by sunrise.

Larry Whatley
larryw@lsid.hp.com

Albumen and the Myth of the Walking Women

Your legs stretched so far that you
recalled the Barberini nude locked
up as you were
in that Noho garret in '65
with the torturous beeping noises
and mysteriously contracting lenses

Her breast were a pert template
for rayon
make-overs in steel as you
dropped her hard as cardboard outside
the Mary Boone praying that death
would not skulk in the guise of
a yellow taxi.

Now she stumbles in straw filled heels
again past the Royal Bank on Spadina
with huge Chinese characters
– a black profile with no armholes
seething with the remembrance of
ogling stares.

Kate Armstrong
kmarmstr@uoguelph.ca

Bears

She found finally
that she loved him
but he was too expensive
as bears usually are
to keep around her heart
he had rough ways which injured
and his claw-marks on her life damaged and wounded.

There is this about bears
a near-sighted obliviousness
so large they simply do not notice what is in their way
and they have no familial feeling
the males
and no protectiveness neither
and he went through her life like the ravager he was
in one end
tearing through the other.

She visited a zoo years later
she recognized that look
and squeezed the soft hand of the man she had chosen
and felt sorrowful anger
towards the large brown form
alone in the passing cage.

Ralph Cherubini
ralph@bga.com

Recitation Day

I have never seen anything
clean manhatten's twilight
like this stormy apocalypse of rain

through the coolness and blur
of the water-lens window
a light green odor of leaves

while I memorize and recite and
recite in rainy gusts of voice
the poetry of Robert Lowell

Kelly Anne Berkell
kab29@columbia.edu

Mark Antony, from Home, to Cleopatra

Octavia came to me this morning bearing fruit
from the orchards: sweet pears and persimmons,
figs thick with the scent of earth
— for our trees and vines are overflowing now —
and sat near me while I ate, her look hard to divine.
Could she know that even now you are in the fruit,
that the taste of figs is the taste of your tongue
crossing mine by night, long ago but remembered,
at dawn, that the scent of orchards swept
by the wind off the Tiber before the morning rain
is your sweet musk, and that I cleave
to this orchard, to this house,
even to Octavia, because all things are you
and you are in all things?

I have grown old, my love, sitting here
by my wife's orchards, sending my dreams
outward toward you over the sea.
You would not know me now.
I am going gray and too often I feel
the morning mist seep into my muscles.
The figs revolt my stomach, the persimmons erupt my bowels,
but I cannot tell Octavia. I drink too much.
I fear that if I cross the seas again
as you have bid me a hundred times,
come to you again, you will see me
and cry out to think I am a ghost,
Julius Caesar, returned.
I could not endure that.

We are draped in our ghosts, love,
we wear them like tatty gowns.
When they blow aside, lifted by the winds
that drive us, we are exposed,
our bared private flesh, held out to aging
and the scorn we have engendered
in two worlds at once.
We are damaged goods, love: tired rags
that have lost their shape and color, hanging
on dressmaker's forms in separate rooms.
We have learned everything except how to dress our lives.
Octavia, Caesar, a hundred camp followers,
hang from us in disarray. Their smells overwhelm
even the redolence of this orchard,
even the memory of your scent.

You are the fruit, at last, my love.
Musk and roses, the taste of persimmons
on your tongue, your sweetened breath against my ear

in your cry of passion released.
That first night long ago, on the barge,
then there was no Caesar, no Octavia,
no bought and paid for love,
only the motion of the Nile
and the motion of your hips
as you drank me into you.
In the morning we stood on the deck and you laughed
at the pair of hippos copulating on the riverbank.
“They are vile to everyone but themselves,” you said,
and held my arm. And so they were, and so we are become.
I will come to you again, with this letter,
on the next tide, and let the river itself beware.

Kenneth Wolman
woldoc@woldoc.jvnc.net

homesick

home is where
the heart is
is where
you can’t go back to.
is when it is august
& the days stretch
like shadows   or cats
& fold in by degrees
too small to measure out.
before you realize it,
(eyes closed, cup to lips,)
twilight pours into night
& you are racing
thru backstreets
as the crow flies
the smell of ocean
breeze & seaweed
fly away home

Jamie Jamison
copijmj@mvs.oac.ucla.edu

metallic highway

barreling down the metallic highway
streaking a smear of moods and hours
lithium patient, yes, lithium patient, please
please don't wander off too far.

but the cars, they are turning their wheels towards me
i know, i saw them do that, the parked
unoccupied ones.

and the people, they are sending thoughts to me,
and they're reading mine, i know, i can
tell from their gestures and still backs.

nothing is as it seemed. there is more to
reality than the old reality.

this is a little like watching tv
with the color knob turned up.
this is a little like putting roses in stainless steel vases.
this is like no trip i have ever done.

barreling down the metallic highway
i am the shining
i am the whirling
i am the connected one.

Marek Lugowski
marek@mcs.com

mourning nixon

so we oh god
we oh oh godded
our way through the night. twice.

then he said *i always wanted*
to be a gigolo. you know.
make women happy then go away. though
it never seems to work out that way.

after that the flags were at half-mast.
it happened weeks after the president's death.

JJHemphill
jjh54139@uxa.cso.uiuc.edu

beginning

I don't want to think or sing tonight,
I don't want to do anything but place your face
into my hands like a gift I could stare at for hours.
I want to slip you into my fearless arms
and tell you that I love you until I run out of breath.

As background clocks whir loudly in this aging night,
I want to brush your hair softly and study your pupils,
wet in their overwhelming honesty
and fuller than the dark we sit in.
I want to fingertip your sentient lips
and feel the start of a sigh deep in my belly.
I want to be as old as I am right now,
embodying what your eyes say,
and believing with unflinching certainty
that the soul exists.

And though it's nearly summer
with its towel of heat blanketing us.
Holding you as our skin forms a human seam
is as right as the smell of the air before it rains,
pristine and almost intoxicating.

Let me hear your voice speak one more time
before we sleep,
for the motion of air climbing your langorous neck
rings like a fragile chorus,
while seductive and exotic as the shape
of your eyes.

You have struck me like a thunderbolt,
saturated me with life brimming
and bathed me in the delicate knowledge that petals know
when they eat the morning dew.

Today I am wholly breathing this love
and it fills my lungs
like my first taste of chocolate.

ivan garcia
stersrch@leland.stanford.edu

come tuesday

looking opening up at your star face
shine as water reflecting my imagination
wash me into a breaking heartache

i knew knew knew you were here

gena ram
ram@bms.com

sand cranes

sand cranes in flight
with fingers of hard teak
touch   light
like a steely gentle brush
from a butterfly's wing
on white sewn skin riding
a taut high wire
like an undecided
marionnette

unforgiving gray grains
flying under take-off
as sun burns rivers of sweat
from sand-weathered skin
sand cranes with butterfly kisses
and wingtips sending bullets
through burning summer
no one   no one   no one
point   point
sideout

zita maria evensen
bu016@kanga.ins.cwru.edu

The Fairytale Game

a thimble and a hatpin
were all she'd given
in a trembling whisper
two common objects
to act as fodder
for the fairytale

our favorite game

closing eyes
i saw the forest
the daughter, the darkman
and the dying father
felt the cool thimble
filled by healing water
carried down
the high mountain's
side

i felt that poison prick
biting into skin
heard the beast howl
from the shadowed trees
heard her breathing
under me
and let the story flow

Jody Upshaw
jupshaw@hfm.com

our bodies

our bodies,
backs arched,
are like the petals of a flower.
a humming bird rises
burning brighter and brighter.
the petals wilt
leaving behind
the sweet smell of
decay.

zazu pitts
daemon@anon.penet.fi

beauty

there are moments
which make them stop
speechless and opened
reminded of something
long hidden
something supple and green
beyond hill or horizon
beyond reward or retribution
something lost in frenzied
avarice or desperation
something so lithe and yielding
so whirling, trembling, born of bliss
lines and light of unfathomable joy
colors which enfold and resurrect
their deadened souls
and make them weep

Judy Powell
powell@ingres.com

On Paper

shouldn't it be

that that which can't be said
remains most beautiful?

dreams
shouldn't all be remembered.

what we remember,
    the abstraction that sifts through time,

    waves that chop against the shore now and then
    the wind gets rough,

what we remember
gets locked,

distilled and distinct,
put down on paper.

Erik Asphaug
asphaug@lpl.arizona.edu

Full Jug

Summer trembles in a breeze
    like Li Po stooping for a hand of white grapes
    and these grapes are white rooms of summertime
    jiggling in the eye.

                Here is a clue
to antelope eyes and to my hands anchored
to this yoke which is my collarbone
laid brittle and bare.

                    And I see
    a man to his thighs in the current
    scooped at and torn as a secret.

                    This
fruit is wine and never stagnant,
it tumbles into gorges like blown silk
pitched into summer and round.

mike finley
mfinley@skypoint.com

a common language

every beginning contains its end
lacking common language
we barter w/ words
a form of exchange

he is still able to believe
in a sense of progression
of intelligent/rational decisions which lead
to improved opportunities
like manifest destiny
stretching to some distant certain future

& I on the other hand

Jamie Jamison
copijmj@mvs.oac.ucla.edu