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## Three Poets

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joel meyerowitz: *bay, late afternoon*

Gerald Locklin

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yes, women, wild or mild,  
can walk on water,  
especially when sky and bay  
are flat, low, magritte surfaces,  
layers of a mystic parallelogram  
that seem to meet—although of  
course they don't—at the horizon  
of our mid-day consolations:  
seven women, limned in diverse  
aspirations of the emerald and  
ruby states of sky, who of tonal  
necessity must be arranged  
as trio and quartet in the  
unlimited ekstasis of the moment.

they are walking straight as sticks,  
back-jointed as the bluest heron,  
curlicued like curlews  
towards the four imaginary corners  
of the several uncharted continents,  
as the shadows of their solid, solitary  
citizenship stand upon the sandy crust  
that we and they call home.

record their efforts to record this  
micro-second of exposure for our  
always putative though palpable  
posterity. adopt the undulations of  
the optative. smile at the smiling  
ambiance of atmosphere. breathe the  
amphibious inhalation of the h2o. and  
having filled your finite lungs with  
the directionless infinity of time,

come to our troubled beds.

## bebop

is always downhill,  
like a poem  
in trochaic meter,  
like a landslide or an avalanche,  
like a sisyphus condemned eternally  
to chase that damn rock *down*  
an endless mirage of declines towards  
what might be hell  
or might, ironically,  
be heaven.

and as happy as br'er rabbit  
to be flung into the freedom  
of the briar patch  
of history.

**can't live with `em;  
can't live without `em**

my cat thought it wanted  
me and the house  
to itself.

it always hissed and clawed at and  
was pestered by our other cat,  
and it was jealous of my wife's  
favoritism towards that cat  
and of the necessary care  
i had to expend on the dog.  
also that, unlike the dog,  
it could not fetch a rubber ball  
or go for walks with me  
about the neighborhood.

then my wife took the dog  
and the other cat  
to the mountain cabin with her  
for a week.

my cat became immediately bulimic,  
gorging without competition  
and throwing up the still-warm food  
within a foot of the food-dish.  
it took a few trips across the dog's yard,  
then grew bored with it.  
it quit going out much at all,  
slept on my wife's sofa  
and her pillow.  
at the sound of approaching cars  
it would jump up to the window,  
peering hopefully towards our driveway.  
it was afraid, in general,  
to let me out of its sight.

on the day that the dog, the other cat,  
and my wife returned,  
my cat perked up momentarily,  
then went into hiding  
in a cabinet

## the triumph of the real

an exhibition at LACMA demonstrates  
through a series of 28 drawings  
how stuart davis gradually  
reduced and compressed  
the packaging of a selection  
of commercial products  
into the abstraction of his early  
pop-art painting *premiere*.

and he was successful in one sense:  
his colorful embedding of the words  
“large,” “bag,” “pad,” “cow,” “free,”  
“new,” “cat,” “100%,” “juice,” and  
“any” into irregular geometrical fragments  
of white, black, red, green, and blue,  
all set upon a background of yellow,  
has a flair, excitement, energy, and  
difference—a simple, democratic, visual  
attractiveness—an americanness—  
that many other such attempts at the style,  
then and since,  
have simply not achieved.

but it also fails when held against  
the unselfconscious grounding of these qualities  
in the beauty of  
a bottle of heinz ketchup,  
a pack of lucky strikes or camels,  
a can of campbell’s tomato soup,  
the arm and hammer of baking soda,  
the promise of a can of beans,  
the comfort of a long-necked beer,  
the multi-tasking pragmatism of scotch tape,  
the wholesomeness of a full milk bottle,  
the instant therapy of a band-aid,  
the reinvigoration of a tootsie roll,  
the social grace of juicy fruit,  
and the new lease on life of a package of life savers.

that was andy warhol’s secret:  
he was not a satirist.

## road apples

how often do you hear the phrase,  
“a hard road to hoe”?  
it’s wrong, of course:  
it’s supposed to be  
“a hard *row* to hoe.”  
how do you hoe a goddam road?  
*why* would you want to hoe a road?  
You might do something with a back-hoe  
in the course of building a road,  
but back-hoes weren’t around  
when the phrase was coined anyway,  
which was probably shortly after the fall.

and incidentally, you don’t hoe *roe* either,  
not unless you’re as rich as scrooge mc duck.

and please save any *ho* puns  
for an eminent *hommage*.

—California State University, Long Beach, CA

# Sprint

Tricia Cherin

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I can hardly wait for the inevitabilities  
to drop, bang, explode  
or just quietly  
be done with

on the way: the mustbedone  
so many household sortings  
carrots scraped  
cut steamed

making up the bed  
AGAIN  
tucking in last night's —  
was it love?

desire wants efficiency  
tasks crossed off lists  
item by item dismissed  
DONE DONE DONE

laundry folded one last time  
graduations catalogued  
decades stilled in neat, closed albums  
meticulous composings

the many dyings are yet to be done  
they hover over us  
like blackbirds  
practicing their perfect arc

waiting takes its own good time  
taunting us with carnivals  
and crystal balls  
that there is reprieve

in me something wants to hurry  
the lucid human project  
foil the stillto come  
perched and fickle

but something baser, stronger  
BOSSIER rolls out the carpet  
chants oh yes oh yes oh yes  
parades the going on

## Role models

I've started to notice them lately  
even though my husband's quit smoking  
their instruction may be needed

I am grateful for these mentors  
old women who travel in packs  
what a price to pay for freedom

I do not like to sleep alone  
I crave men's campfire  
the proximity of bodies

when it happens to me  
there will be no need to meet twice a month  
I have lived in grief groups all my life

but I am grateful for the lessons  
offered to me now  
I am learning

even last week's widows have newly washed hair  
knowing already that fresh love  
is their only hope



(with thanks to the Beatles for the  
intertextuality and sass)

I get by with a little help

from myth  
chronicle  
landmark

from brewed stories  
the play of textures and layers  
the ferment of years in one body  
from riffs and recapitulations on the primal  
and the process

but most of all  
and quite extraordinary  
given the wraths and compelling of the beast

from the beneficence of the human animal

## Historical Daddy

Daddy, tomorrow they will take you  
out of the history books  
and place you hands folded  
in your Doric columned coffin

it might as well be King Edgar  
in the stone sarcophagus  
at Salisbury  
you died so long ago

your death is the same distance  
as all the others  
out and over the gloaming hills  
right here next to us

my elegies are at the ready  
templates for my familiars  
I rehearse them over oatmeal  
all the dear ones there

they and I move around  
but really never on  
all the losses resurrect each time  
gather to size up the new one

the crowds in that place  
jockey for position  
know the prime spot  
steer for the same good seat

grief

## **The tintinnabulation (my father's bell)**

My stepmother gave me the brass bell  
that would call her to his side  
for the perfect cup of tea

today I make a serviceable pot of darjeeling  
and in an inversion of object relations theory  
ring now for my dead father

hearing is the last to go  
all the nurses said  
and I trust them

that it hangs around a bit  
the tympanum still receiving  
the clear unequivocal cry of sense

—*California State University, Long Beach, CA*

## three taps

Christopher Mulrooney

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and now I get the story from the critics  
that it were a somber tale of self-affliction  
and none of ours what he said he said of him  
and then he went and did what did her wrong

the correct reading  
oh that  
were the one that makes you  
one with him

the doctor translates it back to plain prose  
not a courteous deferential slight with one bold slur  
but just a list of symptoms  
butt of course  
and joust  
Liszt and  
simpletons  
simps and toms

Punch and Judy had a flair  
for puncheon  
at the ball  
what he said he said with glee  
and afterwards  
with mystery  
he told me jokes were made for air  
not at all  
for truncheon

## *from I'm the king of the castle*

### **I. get down you dirty rascal**

bowlegged nights we've had  
and the trade and all the  
my oh my the business  
hot steaming sex as the catchphrase is  
and free booze hey it's all my  
behind can do not to turn turtle  
when my name is called  
to take my poll and my  
subscription to the  
office pool  
those indeed are my satisfactions  
simple and sophisticated enough  
thus I please my underlings  
and those I serve

### **II. N.Y. for sale**

it must have seemed like a good idea  
at the time I should have thought  
like a ride in a hansom cab  
round the great park  
beside the fire hydrants  
something of the city stands  
not carried off nor bolted down

and that's it really matters it's the part  
I really love about this city  
you can't buy this particular part  
no Sir it's just considered too valuable  
to go down on Wall Street or the market stalls  
or anyplace else where men do dirty business  
oh no because it's clean business a clean business  
worthy of the name  
no hands gloved or no do this business  
put your hands up

#### **IV. American patrols**

whiskers of my tin bank  
Uncle Sam

with a slot in his head

he goes with me wherever  
I go

a pink lady at the bar  
and me and Uncle Sam  
with a slot in his head

#### **V. slambang**

you put my monies  
down on my counter  
so I bid you my  
goodbye and walk out with my  
prize that's my style  
whoops I almost never forget to tell you  
my other story  
I scoop up all the winnings  
into my pocket  
slam and scoop  
that's me

## *from the variable cavalcade*

### **1. flash**

there's gold at the end  
of the rainbow

idle leprechauns  
tend it

yawning

because it's there

glamorously yaller  
as the hijinks  
of jaundice

the starfish with  
all five arms  
clamping

the gamboge in the wood  
the fragrant wood

no particular thing  
does it say  
but a ting is imparted  
unto it  
with a thin fillip

### **2. columns**

I presume says the  
manifold oblivion  
says the discourse  
unbelievable says  
the other way around  
you're not my physician

why no replies the void  
not hardly I'm the other guy  
the wind in entrails  
long after death the  
cucumber salad left in the fridge  
the apple of my eye pigmouthed

### **3. clipboard**

have it right there  
what's it say  
look at that  
you see my finger  
what's that say  
plain as day  
you go no further  
that's the roster  
those are the acts  
any questions maybe  
right let's move on  
I lift my page over so

### **4. the aquifer's revolt**

here comes my guide  
lad he says  
lad says he  
here's brackish water for you  
pugh it smells awful aye  
but cup your hand just so  
be swift to drink  
and here's the thirst  
that's quenched outright

## 5. quiet

here's my flat she says  
be here by nine don't come  
half-past leave my dinner  
beside my double doors  
don't hit my garage  
or bother my cats  
I'll be sitting at my parlor window  
don't sit breathing on my porch  
the stoop's off limits  
stare at my veranda all you like  
any hour night or day  
don't look at my chimney  
even if it's smoking  
come down here on my sunporch  
with my bare feet on Astroturf  
those holes really are for putting  
watch me

## 7. bouncer

I'm sitting in the bar  
it's late I'm having the drink  
and pretzels whoa hey now  
the pfeffernüsse  
with a flaming bowl  
I couldn't go better  
than any that  
ask for better  
than a raging bowl of punch  
and biscuits and a cold night  
with no any much trouble  
see the mistletoe berries  
over any hearth  
and the blood-red holly berries  
over my heart



## 8. kicker

what's that in any back pocket  
red paisley  
oh ache it  
make me hanky-panky  
it's a reserve concision  
it's the nicety of wit  
bone dry

I have a few dry days  
to bone up with  
here's the peccadillo  
can we feature that

jelly jars with a dried residue  
round the rounded rim  
you lick at that  
curiouser than a  
cat unsatisfied till  
Broadway comes down  
to Battery Park

and sings to the sea  
with a jack up its ass

o sea in the ocean  
o veritable sealegs  
here is the blessedness  
that never is all wet  
and for good reason  
salt is the succor of the soil

—*Los Angeles, CA*