

1975

# The Wild Cherry Tree out Back

Marvin Bell

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for bark chips!  
Then we both laughed.

I don't think she ever did  
any tree chewing though.  
I didn't ask her.

*Translated by Howard Norman*

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POETRY / HALPERIN, BELL

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Spring Morels / Mark Halperin

The light stripes, flecked with a red  
like the cheekplates, longed to fill  
the nearest hole. Tendril  
and tongue—what swayed was a stalk  
and flowerhead, a snakehead  
and flowing, a slip of scales, muscle  
laying itself over itself in coils.

I stood in myself and kept quiet.  
I inched back, making room  
as it wound around a stone,  
curves sharper, as it brushed  
a stick and seemed to announce: this visit  
is over, thinner, half memory, lost  
in the distance, when I noticed the first,

the last thing its tail had flicked then  
left, a spring morel, one  
mushroom in a field of mushrooms.

On the mornings I come  
to scatter last year's leaves and pick them  
I wonder how I missed them in the past,  
knowing, in the night light, they can't last.

The Wild Cherry Tree Out Back /  
Marvin Bell

The leaves are kites.  
What are their goals?

In snow and sun  
it files upwards—to where?  
It more than fills  
the painting one might have made.  
It shadows and shrinks  
the person who might have stood  
beneath its reaching.  
It seems to make its own light.  
Let me be like that tree,  
one might have said,  
before the carving  
had come far from the wood,  
before the map was a shoe  
and the branches were made oars.  
That was before  
we could piss in a drawer,  
when snow and sun were tact,  
the tree too personal for words.  
Let me be like that tree,  
putting to rest  
the spring  
and wandering.

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FIELDS OF ACTION / CRITICISM AND POETRY

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### Introduction / Thomas R. Whitaker

Two issues ago we brought together under this heading essays on Joyce's *Ulysses*, Pound's *Cantos*, and Olson's *Maximus Poems*, a review of Eshleman's *Coils*, and new work by Denise Levertov and W. S. Merwin. In this issue, too, we emphasize the variety of movement that is possible within an understanding of the poem as a field of action.

Sherman Paul here traces further the continually renewed activity that impels *The Maximus Poems* toward a "familiarity difficultly won"—but a "security never attained." Charles Molesworth assesses the equally "American" but quite different improvisatory art of Frank O'Hara. Ronald Johnson's *Wor(l)ds*—from which we excerpt two sections—shows how a poet whose