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Memo & Tables

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Memo & Tables

AS WE APPEAR THIS SPRING, we follow closely into print our retrospective anthology, *Hard Choices*, covering the first quarter century of *The Iowa Review*. The University of Iowa Press has been kind enough to publish that volume, which is just off the press, and which you can order by calling 1-800-235-2665 or writing:

Publications Order Department
The University of Iowa
100 Oakdale Campus, #M105 OH
Iowa City, IA 52242-5000

It is a “trade paperback original” of 490 pages for \$19.95. With my whole heart, I recommend it to you.

Such an anthology is a pleasure and a celebration, and rare is the editor, I suspect, who has not dreamed of distilling prior distillations to pure gold destined to survive the ages. Certainly my steady companion while making one hard choice after another was the thought of how much I admired those 90 works that have come to represent almost as many separate issues. Nevertheless an equal companion was the rival thought of “Oh, no, how can I leave this or that out?” One early decision was to eliminate from consideration all critical prose since the *Review*, under my direction of it, which is over two thirds of its history, has emphasized stories and poems. At the same time, our interviews have added up as have other essays, documents, and miscellaneous pieces, occasionally quite idiosyncratic. From these as much as from anything else, I remember moments and passages. “My tables—meet it is I set it down,” said Hamlet. So these few pages of cuttings, of tables, form a sort of day-to-day book that I have been keeping. May they draw you back to favorites of your own.

I cite passages by Volume and Issue. The *Review* began in 1970, and volume numbers run ahead of the year by one through Volume 13 though they are on the year thereafter. Volume 14=1984. If you need an explanation, see my postscript to 13/3-4.

With this present issue, also, you may notice one further change as it is marked “Spring” rather than “Winter.” For a dozen years, our rhythm has been Winter, Spring-Summer, and Fall. Now let it be Spring, Fall, and Winter. Thus we will launch each issue into the season of its shelf life rather than into the season through which we have just passed. We will also suppress one season so as to imply no longer that one issue is larger. The suppressed season may as well be summer, through which you can catch up on whatever.

Our next issue, 26/2, the third in a series of single-genre issues, will be an all-poetry issue. Next year at the same time we will have an international issue, drawn from former participants in the International Writing Program and guest edited by Carolyn Brown. But to my Tables.

—DH

Charles Wright, 7/1

Sleep, in its burning garden, sets out the small plants.

Allison Funk, 9/1

Men running in the streets,
their buttocks glistening
like stolen purses.

William Carlos Williams, 9/3

it has to be
it has to be
written

Marianne—without a reader, ticking the sleeping rain.

Joseph Brodsky, 9/4

“In comparison with Mandelstam and Tzvetayeva,” Akhmatova said, “I am just a little cow. I am a cow,” that’s what she used to say. . . .

She used to say that metaphysics and gossip are the only interesting things.

Jorie Graham, 10/2

There is a feeling the body gives the mind
of having missed something.

Donald Justice, 11/2-3

Q: Williams is the one of that generation you read the most?

A: If I'm looking to learn something, yes.

R.H.W. Dillard, 11/4

A drowning man, I am not reliving my life. No need. It's done. And the world is still here. The trees are buzzing with life, insects sawing the rhythm of the spheres. Mayflies skimming the damp air, the moving light.

Marvin Bell, 12/1

Poetry is mostly about what life feels like.

Ezra Pound, 12/1

Out, spear, lie not in, spear!
If herein be any iron at all
By witch work it to melting shall.

Ai Qing, 12/1

The Hunter explained: "What I want you to do is just shoot at the piece of paper till you've put some holes in it. When you're done, you draw a bird around every hole you've made. You draw as many birds as you have holes. If you do it this way, you're bound to be a success."

Naomi Wolf, 12/2-3

"Dear Henry,
I shall be arriving soon in Paris
to be an albatross round your neck."

Henri Coulette, 12/4

[Here teething moths have passed.]

Hugo de Hasenberg, 12/4

Lust, as I have learned and relearned since then, is a truer guide to the soul, the tribute of a heart uninhibited. Unspontaneous, love makes allowances, but lust does not. . . .

Jim Simmerman, 13/1

I will / peel my orange as the door hinge / locks with rust. . . .

Valerie Trueblood, 13/2

As early as 1954, R.P. Blackmur was describing an academic proletariat, with multitudes of degree-holders having to get somewhere in their fields. When art, too, gets taken up into the workings of an economic mechanism, we can expect textiles to emerge.

James Tate, 13/3-4

My cuticles are a mess. Oh honey, by the way,
did you like my new negligee? It's a replica
of one Kim Novak wore in some movie or other.
I wish I had a footlong chili dog right now.

More Justice, 13/3-4

One day in the early sixties, calling on my friend Mark Strand, I noticed in his typewriter a piece of paper on which a poem was apparently being revised. Other people's revisions always have a mysterious look about them, and I asked exactly what he was trying to do. The reply was that he was trying to get the lines to come out "even," all about the same length, so that they would look right.

However obvious this notion may seem to others it had never occurred to me before. In any case, I immediately saw the point and considered that I had learned something.

Seven or eight years later, calling again on the same poet, I noticed in the same typewriter a new poem, also apparently being revised, but with quite a different look about it even so. I found myself asking the same question as before, but this time the reply was not the same. It seems he was trying to keep the lines from coming out even!

Sena Jeter Naslund, 13/3-4

After the corn was cut in Iowa, when the game was fat, I stopped at a provincial courthouse to get my hunting license. I signed the license *Diana* and shoved the form across the golden-oak casement to the clerk.

"You'll have to put down both names, Miss," she said.

"In some locales," I replied, "for some personages, a single name is sufficient. For poets."

“What name?”

“Homer, for example.”

She quickly inscribed an *H* in the blank space.

“Wait,” I said. “Not Homer, *Hunter*.”

“Even poets got last names here,” she said. She lifted her eyes and nodded toward the open window at my back.

Through the courthouse window, in the distance, I saw hordes of brightly dressed college students jostling each other on the sidewalks of the town. As though every student were a poet.

Robley Wilson, Jr., 14/1

She dreamed she weighed the same number of pounds as the number of her lover’s post office box. That number was 388.

.....
“By the way,” he said, “I persuaded the post office to change my box number.”

“To what?” she said.

“A hundred-six.”

She shrieked. “Did you say six or sixty?”

“Six.”

“Oh, you darling.”

Sherman Paul, 14/3

Much that makes Iowa distinctive does go back: to what was small and coherent and self-directed, to what in many ways was a *polis*. . . . The movements with which the university was involved at this time were current, and members of the university actively led them. Consider only those I was acquainted with: the New Humanism and the New Criticism, logical positivism, Mabie’s theatre, the academic acceptance of the creative arts. These movements, needless to say, were not doctrinally congenial. How could New Humanists and New Critics live with logical positivists, even with a theatre whose vigor, in part, was the result of the Federal Theatre which Mabie had helped initiate? How was it that followers of Irving Babbitt, whose *On Being Creative* is sarcastically titled, pressed for the creative arts, so much so that Iowa might have been mistaken for Black Mt. College?

Allan D. Vestal, 14/3

When great teachers—challenging teachers—are discussed, it is like a group of stone age hunters sitting around a fire describing an animal they had glimpsed at various times and under different circumstances.

Marilyn Krysl, 14/3

You never see no flirty eyes let fly
a dazzle.

Donald Hall, 15/1

I was stimulated by Robert Graves visiting Ann Arbor. I remember sitting with him, having a cup of coffee in the Michigan Union, and telling him that I admired the way he earned his living by writing prose books; I wish I could do that I told him. “Have you ever tried?”

C. P. Cavafy, trans., Stavros Deligiorgis, 15/2

Alas is us
and wellaway . . .
Byzance is ta'en.

Ben D. Kimpel and T. C. Duncan Eaves, 15/2

We cannot feel much sympathy with those, however justly irritated by Pound's political views or his Modernist methods, who have gloated over his confession in the last “Drafts and Fragments” that he has not made it cohere. Who has?

James Laughlin, 15/2

You would call to the cats, “Micci, micci, micci, vieni qua, c'è da mangiare.”

Ezra Pound, quoted by W.S. Merwin, 15/2

Read seeds, not twigs.

Tribes Known to the Talon Brothers in the Louisiana Region (1698),
15/2

the *Clamcoet* who live along the shore and scarcely ever leave it.
the *Temerlouan* a bit further inland.
the *Toho* still a little further inland.

the *Ceni* even further inland.
the *Ayenni* yet a bit further inland. . . .

Question to the Talon Brothers:

In advancing into the interior, what sort of country was found?

Everywhere flat and diversified . . . composed of forests, woods, and prairies, and in brief the most beautiful in the world, laced with several large streams or small rivers, some of which are deep enough to carry boats.

Elmer Suderman, 15/3

He was totally involved. He kept his audience in mind and spoke directly to its condition. Because our condition was not his fault, he could speak from a superior position both in height and in rank and knowledge. Had he been driving the tractor, he wouldn't have gotten stuck, at least not in this mudhole, though, if pressed, he'd admit that he too on occasion ventured too far into the muddy land.

William Stafford, 16/1

that day—
a storm coming, but in the lee
of an island in a cover with friends—
oh, little bright cup of sun.

George Starbuck, 16/1

And when John Keats looked at you in a collection of pots
it was poetry at first sight: quotable beautiful
teleological concatenations of thoughts.

Margaret Walker, 16/1

*Ask my mama
For fifteen cents
To see the elephant
Jump that fence.*

Marvin Bell, 16/1

You out there have giants among you, mountains and skyscrapers to point to heaven. We have a flower in the moonlight, a river that goes

black, a park's worth of trees that form-up like a herd of cows, a silence that high winds pass without disturbing. . . .

Jane Cooper, 16/1

(I was ashamed, I couldn't speak, they voted me out of the shelter.)

W.S. Merwin, 17/1

Not to be
but to be seen
like a magazine

John Ridland, 17/2

And then they danced, a one-two-three,
One-two. She showed him how to do
The Samba. . . . He taught her how to box
Like Hemingway, who'd said her Fish
Was so well caught it made him wish
He'd caught one just as well.

Marilyn Krysl on Marianne Moore, 17/3

She proceeds as though the world agrees with her.

Richard Kostelanetz, quoting John Cage on Joyce, Duchamp, and Satie
17/3

[They] made works that "resisted the march of understanding and so are as fresh now as when they first were made."

Hooper Thorne, 18/2

My uncle . . .
always looked as if
he had just walked through
a patch of sunlight
and enjoyed it.

Laurence Goldstein, 18/2

"Intelligent life" we fondly call it,

meaning, smart enough to welcome us
their destiny.

Selections from George Oppen's *Daybook*, 18/3

Neruda: I cannot accept so broad a figure of the poet—and yet I feel strongly that it would be an excellent occurrence if Neruda should replace Pound—not to mention Eliot and his symbolists—as the center of the canon of “modern” poetry.

WHAT ONE MUST ADD TO ‘THE TRADITION’ IS CONVICTION. ONE’S OWN.

LOVE OF THE WORLD: IT IS NOT MERELY A SUNNY DAY
IN THE COUNTRY: IT IS THE LOVE OF FATE

Somewhere half-way between the fact of being singular and the fact of being numerous is the fact of being Jewish.

From an interview with Mary Oppen, 18/3

I went up to Corvallis. And there was this teacher from Berkeley, who loved poetry, and there we were sitting . . . George sitting right in the front row ahead of me. He introduced us to poetry of this moment. It was a Conrad Aiken anthology. He was just . . . his eyes, he had beautiful, big blue eyes. Otherwise, he was a very ugly man. But he was *young* and he was just out of Berkeley. He didn't have a Ph.D., he just had a Masters, but he'd gone up there on his first job. And he was just *electric* with all his excitement about poetry, and he got us all writing poetry and he asked several of us doing best to come to his house. Oh my goodness, it was just wonderful!

Leslie Pietrzyk, 20/2

I looked down and the man's hand was on my leg, his thumb rhythmically rubbing against the side seam of my jeans. I remember thinking, So this is how to grow up.

Fredrick Woodard, 21/1

Were you here to take the walk with me
I wouldn't see you. . . .
I'll gather the shy sweet flowers,
Stand in the doorway and, seeing nothing, say nothing.

Robert Hass, 21/3

Once, I showed something I wrote to a woman who had been studying Charles Olson and Ezra Pound with Hayden Carruth, and she said, "I kind of like that. I kind of like the male ecstatic knowledge trip."

Stavros Deligiorgis, 21/3

For I will consider Harold. . . .

Marilynne Robinson, 22/1

It's an odd thing, but I've probably thought of Poe at least once a day every day since I was ten years old.

Norman Sage, 23/2

The reason she called was she thinks she has lost her virtue somewhere and did I see it around the place and if so send it back. I found it under the bed and sent it to her by special messenger. Well, it looked like hers. It was pale pink.

Joseph Edward Mullin, 24/1

In the files of *The American Farmer*, published in the 1820s, I have come across a John Wilson, renowned as a walker, who twice a year traveled by foot from his home in Mason County, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, to New Orleans, about sixteen hundred miles round trip. I have not been able to discover Wilson's mission, but he moved along briskly, generally beating the mails.

Matthew Rohrer, 25/1

Famous Raindrops:

The lucky raindrop who fell down the open neck of Helen's dress . . .

The drop that tried to save the library at Alexandria . . .

The last drop that Beethoven ever heard.

Russell Fraser, 25/1

"This isn't written, as the French say," said Plekhanov, turning back young Lenin's slapdash polemic.

Rochelle Nameroff, 25/3

But over the roof will soon come the angel of sunset
with its lovely bruised trombone.