



# POETRY

## LOVE AFFAIR WITH A WAITRESS

She pours coffee.  
I drink it.

~MORRIS MCGARRY

## BARN SWALLOW

Metal-still on the shed-roof tin  
until it cocks its head  
to eye the world  
which has begun to crack  
its own black shell

until its claws pull  
its body in  
with soft trigger-pressures it's up  
and up higher  
all up in an arc wheeling down swooping  
and screaming smoothly down dead  
on the twisting trail  
of a dragonfly which turns  
quickly in the silver  
signals of its wings  
until the swallow takes that silver  
for treasure in its beak  
and the beak's blunt scissor  
shuts down hard  
and harder then the bird pitches down  
the sheer cliffs of air  
slipstreaming God  
to the shed-roof where it sits  
and eats

and is  
out again spinning  
a thin blade turning  
on a dotty moth dazed from every side by light  
and stoneblinded surely by  
this cataract of black

and is an air-ace barnstorming  
stealing the stomachs of the watchers  
with its dolphin's bounce from an air to an air  
and twists tricks turnings for the joy of it

and flies butterfly-fluttery  
at all edges of the sky

and there turns as quickly  
as a liar in a lie

~MICHAEL HARRIS

## BIKER

Pulling away from a stoplight  
with a tire's sharp bark,  
he lifts his scuffed boot and kicks at the air,  
and the old dog of inertia gets up with a growl  
and shrinks out of the way.

~TED KOOSER

## SUNFLOWERS

Nine sunflowers against a wall,  
heavy with the load of summer,  
their stems thick but leaning  
like telephone poles, their heads  
over-large, once jammed with seeds like teeth.  
Life ran up, now runs down, the leaves  
pock holes of missing seeds,  
swelling at the rims, peeling  
underneath. Summer was a fist.  
Still, their obedient crippled heads search  
for the sun, which is moving south.

~STANLEY RADHUBER

## FLOWERING PRIVET

Left to itself, the hedge gradually rises  
past roses, delphiniums, higher than doors and windows  
till it reaches the trees and becomes a green train,  
bearing sparrows and warblers into summer.

Already the iris have lowered their sails.  
Petals litter the grass and then sink into it.  
And robins, which tumbled so lately from the nest  
to tremble under the hemlocks are floating, drifting,  
learning to track the worm's slow exodus.

Already the sun approaches its zenith. Soon  
each day will again be less than the last.  
Finally the hedge itself enters into the glory,  
grows milky with stars whose fragrance thrills  
the bees. Butterflies flicker like signal lights.

At night the opossum mounts a billowy frond  
and sways as if bewitched. Voles twitter and  
twitch at its base, nibbling crisp shoots.  
And someone stepping out on the porch for a moment  
into the scented shade, feels a gust of wind  
on her face, as if she has just plunged into the wake  
of something rushing past in the dark.

~JANE FLANDERS

## DARK CIRCLE

My little one,  
they roasted pigs in Nevada  
as a test  
in the 50s  
and on the film you can see  
people with suits on  
in the confused pen  
and then on the vast  
stretching desert floor  
they slip the pigs into  
aluminum clothes  
holes cut in the sides  
and then they are placed  
into boxes on stilts  
all in a row  
and blasted with a nuclear  
blast to see how well their  
skin survives  
a plutonium wind.

So like human skin.  
So like suede on my shoes.  
So like the split in the  
avocado pit I keep above  
water to save,  
seeing the knotted thing  
inside that takes forever  
to grow,  
seeing my hair in braids,  
they wrap around my neck  
owning me.

I am a pyromaniac and  
my silken strands,  
ties for a Coleman  
lantern mantel.

~SUSAN ANDERSON

## CONTINUITY

The moths will continue  
to commit suicide  
and I will continue  
to paint my fingernails red

Until there is a change.

~DAWN DeSYLVIA

## FOLKSONG FOR WHOEVER DREAMED UP THE CHILDPROOF PILL BOTTLE

Daddy read what it said.  
Daddy sweated and swore.  
Daddy punched the bottle  
To the bathroom floor.

Sonny grabbed the bottle.  
Sonny couldn't read.  
But he sized up the problem  
With child-like speed:

Sonny chopped the top off.  
The pills scattered wide.  
He picked them up, ate them,  
And promptly died.

~SEAN MCGIFFERT

## TURNING TO WOMEN

My friends are men. They think their heart  
a river they can ford. They take no deep breath  
to go for the bottom, to grab muck. To turn to women  
I must float my heart on a kindling raft,  
wade into greasy water, yell and try to cry.  
This is wind in dead trees.

Women tell me kindly, We are everywhere you go  
like light reaching around to morning.  
Forget success. Blow it from a mountain.  
What you're after is how to move along your spine,  
not on the land. There is nothing out there  
you're coming to. You wait to come to your skin  
like spring water rising. You will touch  
things that become and die in days,  
insects, flowers, hundreds.

Only touch makes sense. Strange  
to touch things underwater. Turning to women  
makes my stomach feather. I want high ground.  
The black rock must be obsidian. I scratch my name.  
Rain can cut it in so deep the rock must crumble  
to wear it out. I tell men that turning to women  
may be as simple as water through land.

No, they say, your fear talks, not some white  
cloud calling. You want to hold your gone mother,  
kiss away her cunning tears. This slop  
we barrel to fatten pigs. We take your pouch,  
notebook and trapping string. Scatter like birds.

You men who move to have children, eat, kill or die  
— keep your shoulders huge in bear skins.  
Dance around your lightning tree, go hounding  
and back to your big room of heads of cats.  
You won't feel why your chests are marked with breasts.  
I leave my sex in river mud  
rolling in spring, curl in high trees  
in the nervousness of small animals,  
and see how loons and deer live by a different light.

The night comes down floor by floor. My skin  
is the scared boy of my memory, but I will wait  
and let all I was go  
as deep grass lets go light when a wind rushes.

~PETER SEARS

## INTO THE WIND

Sitting again on the front porch of the first cabin.  
Grind of the deerfly, hone of the bee.  
Someone is mourning inconsolably somewhere else.  
Yellow of goldenrod, bronze of the grass.  
By the creek bridge, the aspen leaves are waving goodbye, goodbye.  
Silence of paint brush and cow pink.  
Take the dirt from the old trail up in your hand, Pilgrim,  
and throw it into the wind.

~CHARLES WRIGHT

## dead red sun grow again I am young

~MPMc

## FUTURE FOREST

GOODBYE MONOCULTURE  
HELLO GENOCULTURE

Our father was a birch,  
Our mother was a spruce.  
We all have just one name;  
They call us Bruce.

Once, various this wood.  
Now we're all the same;  
That's why we trees  
All have my name.

Not only that, but when  
I see another tree,  
The bough to whom I bow  
Is really me.

You see, a clever beast  
From chromosomes took genes,  
And mixed them with ideas  
To make a seed.

It split that single seed  
Into a multitude,  
And grew myself all here  
For only its own good.

Oh yes, we're happy here.  
The problem is — we know  
'Twould take but one good trick  
To lay us all me low.

~LARRY BARROWS