



© 11-23-05  
Easel  
© Capparell  
Lorraine Capparell © 2007 All Rights Reserved

## Featured Poet

Gerald Locklin

Winslow Homer: right and left, 1909  
(with yet another nod to Peter Schjeldahl)

The two ducks, penguin-colored,  
Have been caught in their ascent  
By the insensitivity of buckshot.  
One stands upright on the air,  
Its eye wide with astonishment  
At our mortality,  
The other bird already capsizing  
In shamed abandonment  
Toward the indifferent waves,  
So recently its fishing grounds.

As in Pinter's *Dumbwaiter*,  
All living things are hit men waiting  
For the table's turning.

\* \* \*

### Cézanne: Still Life with Bread and Eggs, 1865

Sure, we see the long loaf of bread  
(longer than that line)  
And the two imperfect eggs,

But where is the mention of the two onions?  
Where is the mention of the knife?  
What is in the pewter stein?

Onions have mystical qualities.  
Everyone knows that.  
Hemingway knew that.  
Maybe he learned it from this painting.  
I'm sure he—an admirer of Cézanne's deep structures—  
Would have viewed that pair of onions  
As a nice set of balls,  
Just as the vernacular Spanish  
Unites eggs and balls as *huevos*.  
And notice how they are situated at the base  
Of that thick, elongated stick of bread,  
From which even the blade of the knife  
Averts itself. Look at the crystal chalice,  
About to welcome its wine/water/beer.  
Bread, wine, water, onions, eggs:  
What a communion, eucharist, consummation,  
Everlasting lightning of conception,  
Transubstantiation.

\* \* \*

### Pierre-Auguste Renoir: Luncheon of the Boating Party, 1880-81

The collector, Duncan Phillips, said of his lone Renoir,  
“It’s the only one I need.”

A study of inconspicuous balance,  
Contrasts, harmonies:

The two young men in unidentified straw hats,  
One standing and athletic,  
The other seated, slender, aesthetic.  
The latter faces a beauty of round cheeks  
And florid chapeau, who stands her terrier  
On the table, smooches it.  
A ladies’ man crowds a paler, more withdrawn,  
Less usual lovely.

The background portions alternately  
Group, gulp, gab, or listen,  
And lean, gaze, dispute. They possess,  
In differentiated headwear, personalities.

The gaiety and luxury are both nature and society.  
The river, foliage, and bourgeoisie  
Are youthful, flourishing, and at their leisure.

The brushstrokes, pigments, and their living subjects  
All agree the day is perfect;  
The *tableau is vivant*;  
The bottles, glassware, and light fare  
Are plentiful, a cornucopia of delights.  
The light is that of the Parisian suburbs,  
And the people: *Les Parisiens*.

\* \* \*

Paul Klee

Only Klee could flatten a cathedral  
Onto a quilted parchment.

Only Klee could render  
Volumetrics musical.

Only Klee understood that veiled eyes  
Are an Arabian song,  
A tree is a nose  
And a heart is a spade.

Also, her lap is burlap.

He flat-mapped the cobblestone ascent  
To the abandoned citadel.

He played with interlocking blocks  
Like an infant architect.

Stenographer of structure,  
He internalized the shorthand of design.

The father is the mother of the child.  
Pharaohs, dolls, and deer  
(Prehistoric, subhistoric)  
Crowd a picture album  
On a single sheet, synchronically,  
Metaphorically, hieroglyphically:  
A collage of our collective imagery.

Klee drew what Yeats imagined.

Gerald Locklin has taught English at California State University, Long Beach, since 1965. His most recent full-length collection is *New Orleans, Chicago, and Points Elsewhere*, Rjv Press. Previous titles include *Charles Bukowski: A Sure Bet; Go West, Young Toad: Selected Writings; The Life Force Poems; Candy Bars: Selected Stories*; and *The Pocket Book: A Novella and Nineteen Short Fictions*, all from Water Row Press. A series of annual dos-a-dos jazz chapbooks with Mark Weber is available from Zerx Press. He has a website-in-progress at [www.geraldlocklin.com](http://www.geraldlocklin.com).

## from Poet's Bookshelf: Contemporary Poets On Books That Shaped Their Art

*poet Gerald Locklin*

Edward Field, *Stand Up, Friend, With Me*

Edward Field, *Variety Photoplays*

Charles Bukowski, *The Days Run Away like Wild Horses Over the Hills*

Frank O'Hara, *Meditations in an Emergency*

Sylvia Plath, *Ariel*

Norman Mailer, *Deaths for the Ladies*

Richard Brautigan, *The Pill Versus the Spring Hill Mine Disaster*

Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time*

*The Wormwood Review* and *Poetry/L.A.*

*The New American Poetry*, ed. Donald Allen

*Geography of Poets*, ed. Edward Field

I'm limiting my selections to books since 1950 and presupposing that the reader will be concurrently pursuing a grounding in all the "greats" of the English language and in translation (or the originals) from other languages: Catullus, Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Li Po, Whitman, Dickinson, just to give an idea. My own consciousness is drenched with echoes from the poets I've taught for years in 20th Century British and American classes: Hopkins, Yeats, Auden, Dylan Thomas, Housman, Hardy, Robinson, Frost, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Crane, Cummings, Jeffers, Roethke, W. C. Williams, Langston Hughes (and Ted), Gertrude Stein, etc. My list is also quite personal: poets and books which meant the most to me in my formative years, the 1950s and 1960s in particular.

*Stand Up, Friend, With Me* established, for me, absolute honesty and personal revelation as a source of power in poetry. *Variety Photoplays* established popular culture as a new mythology. In 1969, Charles Stetler and I published an article in the *Minnesota Review*, "Edward Field: Stand-Up Poet," that described what would come to be called the "Stand-Up" branch of postmodern American poetry (see the outstanding *Stand-Up Poetry Anthologies* edited by my colleague Charles Webb, most recently from University of Iowa Press). Selections from *Stand Up, Friend, With Me* and *Variety Photoplays* are, of course, included in *Field's Selected Poems* from Black Sparrow Press.

Actually I could have named any and all books of Buk's from Black Sparrow Press but *The Days Run Away like Wild Horses Over the Hills* was the one that had the first major effect on me around 1970, although I already knew his work from the *Wormwood Review* and other little mags in which we were both publishing, he of course more prolifically than I. He was the quintessential poet of the spoken American language, especially as employed by the working (or unemployed) class. We became good friends and I have a book of memoirs, reviews, poems, and such: *Charles Bukowski: A Sure Bet*, from Water Row Press. Over 50 of his letters to me are housed in our library's Special Collections.

O'Hara, especially in *Meditations in an Emergency*, was the spontaneous, gestural poet with close links to Abstract Expressionism, the poet of the moment, the poet of free association (and Freud was rampant in the Village of those days). His *Collected Poems* has now been published, but I prefer my poetry in digestible portions.

I came to Plath's work through a poem, "Lesbos," in the *New York Review of Books* (I came to Field's "The Bride of Frankenstein" in the same tabloid). Plath was, by far, the best academic, confessional poet. She was freed by madness and impending suicide from her Ivy League training (with Lowell, especially). Her earlier work is conventional and labored, but she is also, if we must regard gender, the best American woman poet of her century. (I am not a great fan of Bishop, H.D., Amy Lowell, and such, although I'll admit to a weakness for Edna St. Vincent Millay.) Today excellent women poets abound. Lisa Glatt, Denise Duhamel, and Patricia Cherin are among my favorites.

Mailer's *Deaths for the Ladies* is a nearly unnoticed book from which I learned a lot about writing short poems.

*The Pill Versus the Spring Hill Mine Disaster* showcases Brautigan's troubled, but brilliantly tangential mind. Since the narrative and dramatic modes have resumed their places alongside lyric poetry, a lot can be learned from Brautigan's fiction too. My favorite of his novels is *A Confederate General from Big Sur*, about which Stetler and I published an unconventional article in *Critique* back in the day.

Hemingway remains my literary god. His best poetry was his prose (not his dadaistic early little-mag poems, although those exercise a certain fascination). My favorite novel of his, and perhaps of all novels, is *The Sun Also Rises*. Stetler and I published widely on his work in the *Hemingway Review* and elsewhere.

If they may be considered "books," I would add the bound, archived copies of the *Wormwood Review* (the best poetry magazine of the second half of the 20th century) and *Poetry/L.A.* (the best magazine of Southern California poetry during the same period, although with a much shorter run during the 1980s and early 1990s). As poetry editor of the *Chiron Review*, I aspire (along with my editor, Michael Hathaway) to approximate the eclectic excellence of those periodicals which were absolutely invaluable hosts to my own development.

If I were to select the two most influential anthologies of the period they would be Donald Allen's *New American Poetry* and Edward Field's *Geography of Poets* and—its sequel, *A New Geography of Poets*, co-edited (truth in advertising) by Charles Stetler and myself.

All of these poets were liberating influences on my work, as were “Howl” and the other early poems of Ginsberg.

