

## Getting the check

We don't travel  
like other folks.  
We tour the world,  
from one Chinatown  
to the next.

Today, we're upstairs  
in a dim sum joint in Toronto,  
eating the parts of animals  
no one else will eat.  
Trolleys rumble  
in the street below.

The corner of Dundas and Spadina,  
once the Glasgow of the New World,  
is now a Hong Kong, so crowded,  
sometimes you have to stop  
and let life stream around you.

From the restaurant window,  
I can see the world's tallest  
freestanding structure,  
eighteen hundred fifteen feet  
of poured concrete  
rising above the squalor.

We ask for our check.  
There is nothing left  
on the table before us,  
but empty plates  
and piles of bones.

Virgil Hervey  
Yellow Springs, OH

1968

Roger, I remember walking  
through Prospect Park that winter  
with no coat because you said  
it builds resistance and I believed you  
because I always believed you,  
even when you voted for Nixon.

It was a year of perfect smiles,  
lost cherries,  
friends in Vietnam,  
and you, the bad boy in Madras shirt  
and penny loafers.

Me? I was so in love  
I forgave anything.  
Slept with betrayal, woke up  
with a bad taste in my mouth  
and just brushed it away.

Because you wanted  
The American Dream  
and I had not yet redefined it  
in 1968,  
the year I got pneumonia.

Janet Bernichon  
Shirley, NY

## anywhere

i could be in a ghost town or somewhere close to  
paradise & little would change. home is in my head.  
i figured that out after years on the run. this isn't the  
same as who i happen to be spending time with—i'm  
not talking about individuals. i'm speaking strictly  
about location. some might say they're inseparable.  
maybe they are. when i feel something about to  
happen, i look quickly around to see who's close  
to me, then i look for a chair. if i think trouble  
might go down, i find the nearest door & count  
the obstacles. what goes on in my mind is the  
one constant, relatively speaking. the locale can  
be spruced up or turned over. the furniture can be  
moved around & i only notice in the dark. the  
building can come crumbling down & the ground  
can implode. it might turn into every man for  
himself or a rapturous jubilee. i could be anywhere  
right now—writing this down.

mark hartenbach  
Liverpool, OH

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of  
Michael McNeille, 1945 - 2000,  
poet, friend, muse.

# POULTRY BROADSIDE



Poetry in small doses

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Wherever chickens  
are outlawed,  
only outlaws  
will have chickens.

## ROOTING FOR THE ROOSTER

4 A.M. and  
Somebody woke  
The neighbor's rooster up  
I stepped outside just now  
To feed my death  
And listened while he  
Tried to conjure up  
A bright  
December sun

No word  
From the coyote  
Down the ridge

This time of day  
He's curled up warm  
Or  
Running loose and easy  
As he tracks  
His breakfast down

It's that middle part  
Of the nightmare  
Where the broken edges  
Go grinding off  
Between the disappearing  
Darkness  
And a day too new for naming

The clocks have stopped and  
Almost everyone's afraid  
But they'll get up  
To cheer that rooster on  
And listen for better song.

Ben L. Hiatt  
Mt. Aukum, CA

### someday, my son, all this

as a child my mother's story  
how the scorpion crawled into her shoe  
one cool summer evening  
and the next morning stung her  
worse than 100 bees  
filled me with dread  
but also with anger

and finding a scorpion  
under a rock one day  
white and waxy and waiting  
I trapped it in a bottle  
which I turned over and filled  
all the way to the top with water  
screwed on tight the lid  
and after I grew tired of watching it  
sit there on the bottom  
left it in the sun  
to drown

where I found it the next day  
and poured it out  
onto dry driveway gravel  
and when it moved its pincers  
then ran toward me tail whipping  
I screamed and fell and scrambled  
and ran faster  
than I have run since  
kicking up dust into  
a Texas sunset

I understand the scorpion  
would be just the sort of animal  
to survive us  
to live out the nuclear war  
the nuclear summer the nuclear winter  
that is so sure to come  
that waits now white and waxy  
as near as the button  
at the hand of a maniac  
and every day there are  
more maniacs

and from what I know of scorpions  
this seems to me both likely  
and appropriate  
our world given over  
to armored monsters  
crawling past the remains  
of our dead blasted culture  
ruined buildings monuments abandoned  
inheritors of the hot wind  
a consummate succession  
stinging weapons held high  
laughing across plains of sand  
their alien wrath unto the last  
of our sad shallow  
footprints

Michael McNeilley  
Olympia, WA

### Inventory Control

Jack was not an educated man,  
but he longed to write.  
He searched for words, asking friends

to write down the good ones  
they came across,  
and he collected them on cards,  
the word on one side,

the definition on the back,  
and hung them on lines with clothespins  
all around his room.

And as he wrote, he would run across  
the room, check a word, run down the  
line to an intersection

of thought or meaning,  
turn and grab up  
syncratic, or quotidian,

or benevolent, pull it off,  
read it, and follow it  
right on in.

Michael McNeilley  
Olympia, WA