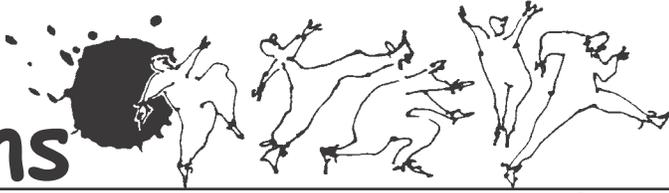


Deanotations

Issue 109

January 2004



Dear Reader,

I mentioned last issue my plan to stop Deanoting after issue 110. Many have asked me why. I just thought I would. That'll make 20 years of Deanotations, lots of work for a lazy poet. I send out a daily poem by e-mail now to several hundred (you, too, if you send me your email address) and am loading www.blehert.com with poetry. Also, I'll reply to letters and include a poem or two. And to those I still owe issues, I'll send you one of my books (if you don't have all of them) or other poems. The size of issue 110 will make up for some of the owed issues — it'll be big.

This issue has no poems about Iraq. As usual, I find it hard to have a recognizable position, because, though I think this war is a bad idea, I'm not sure it is, and I wonder at the certainty of those who attack it. My position on the war is, I'm in favor of everybody being happy forever. Except for bad people, who should suffer terribly for what they've done. Unless they are basically good and just got confused. Also some animals can get killed and eaten, but only if they don't mind too much.

Will you join my march? I'm going to take to the streets with signs that demand happiness for everyone forever, free. Is that too much to ask? We deserve no less. I mean look at how well-meaning we are, how basically right! How special, how loved, what good sports, what ideals we have! How could anyone even think of hurting anyone else when people as obviously nice as we are oppose it? Such people must be monsters.

To those who call it a senseless war, let me point out that at least we've had a chance to try out the new weapons systems that will soon be used against us. Really, war is the most rational thing there is. Every soldier carries his/her own rations. Unfortunately, too many rations makes a mess.

I hate to hear Islam defamed, for any poet is a Moslem: The word means "one who submits." Of course, poets submit to editors, who are perhaps not God. (When we apply for Heaven, will we receive notes that say, "Good luck elsewhere"?)

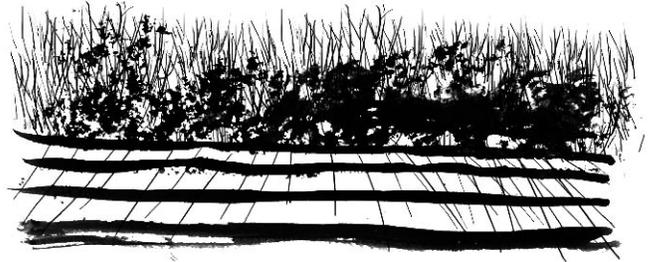
We become whatever we resist unsuccessfully, so I expect Islam to become as popular with our teens as apple pie Allah mode (pardon my Koraniness).

I try to respond to things as me and get you to do so as you, not as part of the solid "masses." A poem can become a weapon for the destruction of massy masses in the cold ground.

*Dean Blehert
abetted by Pam*

A leaf falls
straight down fast — no drift.
Remembered leaves fall slower.

Sparrows dive, spear the big chunks. Just crumbs
for slow-poke pigeons.



Winter — smoky haze where trees unravel into sky.

First car on new snow:
White ribbons of Navajo rug patterns.

On the floor, my blue bag for dirty clothes —
something to throw them at.

Poem — Use Only As Directed, For Sooth

All right, I know the sound of wind in leaves
is no soothing whisper. Why should leaves whisper?
What do they care about my moods?
But this autumnal sound soothes me as I would
soothe you if I could, if you wanted soothing.

But I can't, because I'm far away from you,
writing this poem or (later) reading, sleeping,
eating, who knows? Or I'm long dead and gone, or
dead and reborn, now I'm eleven years old some
other autumn, noticing how it seems I've known
this wind sound forever.

So if you can let that sound (if you still have
trees and wind) say to you what I would say to you
if I could, just as you create the voice
(not mine, probably deeper, more resonant than mine)
that right now is saying these words to you —
that will have to do.

Firefly lights are green, flashing, oblong
 GO signs, though, being mating signals,
 the flashes mean COME TO ME or “What’s a bug
 like you doing in a burg like this?” or
 “Delighted to see you,” or perhaps they are
 broadcasting (like ads in a singles magazine):
 SMF (single male firefly) loves summer nights
 over lush green lawns, fireworks, humans who
 admire, but don’t touch....

As night deepens, their flashes define
 the only space there is, a new space each instant,
 just like always, but with less help from us,
 the fireflies serving as ambassadors
 of our admiration to the starry night.



Our bodies become heavier, more lumpy,
 like loosely clenched fists from which,
 our gentle light intact,
 we shall soon be released.

Too Too Red Leaf

Where the late October sun strokes the leaves
 of our sugar maple, their redness opens up, lush,
 velvety, as rich as rose petals in a liquor ad,

like the ripple of a gown over revealed, concealed
 curves of the unattainable, our minds merging
 perfect static form with what takes any shape
 the pressure of a loving hand gives it,
 snowflake delicacy with musky envelopment, softness
 with blue-veined marble;

our hands despairing of ever possessing
 all in a single touch, our eyes unwilling
 (despite our good manners) to detach themselves
 from the promise...

but, oh! the maple tree
 has let one go!

[Or more simply:]

Sugar maple leaves sun-touched, redder than
 the idea of red.

Carmen’s red dress, just a rag now,
 unRaveled.



Intersection

Across the intersection, where my car
 waits for green, slouches a teen with long,
 Bozo-red-orange hair, I mean blazing, neon red.
 Grotesque, I think. Then, as the car beside mine
 hides him, lets him reappear in the corner
 of my eye, a thought too quick to be tackled
 by my lines of bulky words flits past,

something...crepe paper? a hanging decoration?
 Gift-wrap? No, something spherical, something...

anyway, something just that vivid color
 that stirred a child, made him want to know
 what wonders were inside that sphere,

wonders, that, like my adult thought,
 rushed into and out of view too fast
 for the child to realize he had created them
 to suit that red red redness, that now contains
 some teen-ager’s head.

We Need a New Concept

We’re getting old, We’re becoming clichés
 in our own universes. Dean? Pam? Can’t we
 come up with something fresher? Dean and Pam
 have been done to death. They’re too easy,
 push-buttons. I say “Pam” and you look up.
 You say “Dean” and I look up. We say “Dean
 and Pam” and all is well with the world,
 pat as a pretty sunset with a quiet ballad
 in the background. How do we put some life
 into Dean And Pam, Pam and Dean?

Maybe if we each weigh 300 pounds? Or if we get
 feeble, bent double, ancient? Or if, at 60-plus,
 we have a baby? Or drive our car off the rim
 of the Grand Canyon? Or to hell with art —

we just keep coming out with more episodes
 of the Dean and Pam series, good summer fun
 for the lumpish consumers who are immune
 to triteness, who can eat cardboard-crust
 apple pie for decades without noticing that
 long ago they ceased to taste it, much less
 enjoy it, and aren’t Dean and Pam as much fun
 as apple pie?

Stick With the Formula

We'll each be someone else soon enough.
No hurry — the world needs warm fuzzy clichés.
Originality is overrated. We need to sleep
on occasion. Eccentrically wrinkled sheets won't do.
There is nothing we cannot create or be,
but surprisingly little we MUST create or be
to keep ourselves and others entertained.
Each night I turn on my side and touch you
and hope you won't announce that you've decided
to discontinue our show and replace us
with Reality TV.

NEW! ULTRA-REAL TV!

You turn on your TV, and there's a picture
of you, watching TV. After watching yourself
on TV watching TV for an hour, you are given
a 1-800 number to call (without leaving
your seat!), where you can cast your vote,
to keep watching yourself watching TV
for as long as you wish or, if you vote no,
the floor opens beneath you and...

To Allow Us (to get all the girls)

[Apologies to Robert Burns, author of "To a Louse"]

O would some cable Network the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as five gay men can see us.



Just Say Yes

Whenever we go out to eat —
My wife and I — our favorite treat,
The greeter smiles and queries, "Two?"
And we smile back and never do
De Niro menacing his mirror
With "I don't see anyone else here,
Do you?" Nor do we try for pathos:
"Nay, Sir, we are seven." Math is
Not the point, but getting seated
In a clean, well-lit and heated,
Comfortable, smoke-free region,

So I don't say, "We are legion,"
Just "Yes." Then they know what we need:
A place — for to it us they lead,
And, truly, how fortuitous! —
For two it is; for, to wit: us!



Whee

The waitress asks, "A party of one?"
Some party.
But I, to make the evening fun,
Eat hearty.
I'm not good company for me,
But unbowed,
Eat two desserts and try to be
A crowd.

You Light Up My Cell

Getting old, fat, the joy in each other —
even in bodies rumped, cellulited —
is no less; no less my pleasure to find
in every plump cell, you, delighted.

Don't Worry, I'm 'Armless

Love-making makes me envy many-armed Hindu Gods,
for I haven't nearly the number you deserve,
one to embrace you, one to stroke you,
but so many places to stroke! I feel I am missing
a squiddity of arms. No wonder love's great icon
is armless Venus.

Talk to the Stone...But Don't Laugh!

The penis is a very serious organ:
It shrinks from any slightest mocking tone,
Whereas a rapt gaze, fixed, intense as Gorgon
Turns it to stone.

A Hand-on Approach

My L.A. friend is horny, but hesitates.
I ask him, why such qualms?
Why can you not find plenty of handy dates,
Surrounded, thus, by palms?

Many dated her, until all that dating dated her.

A Dip in the Deep

Must poems save lives, right wrongs,
Get down to nitty-gritties?
What's wrong with fun and songs?
Enjoy my pro-fun ditties!

Poets are fighters: We DO want to make something out of it.

A La Lujah de Lulu Perdu

[a tongue twister: must be read aloud]

Lou and Lulu set the date.

Lou arrives — to wait...and wait...

“Lou,” says Yul, “she won’t show up. She’ll Never come. Ten bucks — no nuptial!”

“A hundred says that Lulu’s late,

But on her way!” “HA! Lulu late!?”

And all Lou’s friends chime, “Lulu, late?!”

HA! Lulu late!” they ululate,

“Oh no. Pay Yul, Lou — you’ll lose, mate!”

“No! Yul, you’ll lose, for Lulu’s late!”

“Three hours late, I calculate —

You’re ill-used, Lou...and celibate!

“You fool, you, Yul, you’ll rue this date!”

“Oh yeah! We’ll soon see who’ll boohoo, Lou —

Your hand you’ll woo in lieu of Lulu!”

Then...LO! “It’s Lulu! Lulu, late!

You, Yul, you lose!” they ululate.

“I’m sorry to have made you wait.

I got locked in the loo, Lou, late,

Where oft I’m wont to lucubrate,”

Cood Lulu — “sitting on the potty,

Sipping latte — I’m so naughty!”

“Pay up,” says Lou to Yul — “You lose, mate!

For, Lo! Here’s Lulu, though Lulu’s late.”

And soon Lou says, “I do, Lulu,”

And Lulu says, “I do” to Lou...

Loud, lewdly, Lou and Lulu late

Into the morning ululate,

Hosanna, Hallelujah late

(Create! inflate! Felate! Abate),

Come right on time — while you, Yul, eat

Crow, feel the darkness pullulate...

But there is none to woo you, mate,

For Lulu’s lost — Ah, Yul, you’re late!



These people so desperately seeking themselves —
do they seek the same self that others
are as desperately trying to lose?

You ask, where did I spend my childhood?
But I didn’t spend all of it. What I saved,
I invested at high interest, so that now I have
more childhood than ever.



Holding The Easy Chair Up To Nature

Scholars tell us that 18th Century poets
viewed their art as a mirror held up
to reflect nature, while 19th Century poets
were lamps, not reflecting, but creating
their own light to reveal a world.

Mirror, lamp — what item of furniture
characterizes 20th Century poems —
black drapes? an empty hanger in a closet?
a TV? Personally, I am a fat dull pinky-gray
armchair with piled texture flattened to a shine,
like the velveteed duckings in a story book. My arms
are frayed nearly to baldness, my depths concealing
5 million cookie crumbs. Once, a child,

listening to one of those huge ornate floor-model
radios (wooden console, painted yellow — chipped —
with fluted borders and a tiny orange-lit dial
in the middle), would sit on the chair or
more often, on the floor, resting his head
against the chair, each afternoon

(“This case is solved, thanks to you, King!”
“Sky KIIING!” “The GREEEEEEEN HORNET!!!”
“KANAWAH, FURY!” “Out of the days of yesteryear...”)

gently tugging at any loose threads, nibbling
peanut butter cookies he’d hidden in his pockets.

Nude Cornucopia Descending a Staircase (Viewed From Behind: A Bun Dance)

Young and avid, our poems are cornily copious.
Hormones surging, we clinch, hornily gropious.
Age-prickly, trembling, we thornily grow pious.
Old eyes, opaque, get grafts to copy corneas,
Until at last we join the corps necropious.

New Age Ritual

“...’til death do us provide
a period of free agency...”

Why Are Nursing Homes Always “Sunset...”

We approach the sunrise of our lives,
one by one our stars going out,
the moon but a ghost of itself,
soon a blue blaze bathing all,
only our deepest faith assuring us
that beyond a thin skin of blue,
the star-tickled dark goes on and on forever.



The Dating Game

Browsing through an encyclopedia — distinguished lives, starting and ending (1533 to 1587, circa 1213-1254, 1838-1906...), nothing sinister about it: what begins should end. “1485 -” would be a loose end, as annoying as an itch. Yet here I am, passing through 2003 (reaching my Dad’s age when he died), a year likely to close many biographies (written or never-to-be-written or written, but never-to-be-read), and though, so far, I persist in being “1942-”, I don’t feel like a loose end. I have no nervous need (like one who can’t keep from straightening a crookedly-hung painting) to fill in the missing date.

Except when I browse through encyclopedias, dreaming of distinction and authoritative statements that I was the somethingest of the somethings and a great influence on generations of something-else-ists (supported as I browse in bed

by my left elbow, my body protesting in spots, telling me to go back to sleep or get the hell up) — except at such times,

it seems odd that distinction should be so hard on bodies, as if fame supplies the final bracket, the *coup de grace*; as if biographies should exude a charnel stench. I read, “He was an advocate of currency inflation for the sake of labor and the farmers,” and “He [another he; there are so many!] was also renowned for his translations of English, French, German and Italian classics,” (and one day in the year noted, his sharp educated eyes went glassy and still),

[Continued]

and I wonder, did Assistant Professor so-and-so, writing these words with the use of his incomplete body (missing its final date), tremble to condemn so many lives to wasness?

This encyclopedia came out in 1975, 28 years before now-I-write, how many years from now-you-read (if you do)? The calendar insists that so-and-so taught at somewhere University and wrote many entries in the such-and-such Encyclopedia. And I wrote all this way back when this body could nag me to get out of bed (if I’m distinguished enough for these words to have found their way to the now-future-and-soon-to-be-past you).

Incredible, the things we do to tell ourselves our stories, starting “Once” and, we hope, never running out of “...and then...”.

The new penalty for overdue DVDs: Death!
Disc return or discrete urn.

What to Wear in the North? Chino, OK?

When is a lady a hooker?
When she likes to ho’, OK?
What’s a man say to a real good looker?
“Lo! OK!”

Two chefs agree on a recipe —
A co-OK.
The warrantless cop wants to search each cranny,
but gets no OK.



Wings and Shackles

Pinions are wings and pinions are shackles — both the means to escape and the trap. No mystery to this double meaning: Pinions began as feathers (Latin “pinna”), hence, wings, but to cut or bind these feathers to prevent flight was “to pinion” the wings, much as we fish to hook fish. Thus our means of escape becomes our trap, as when a being, stuck in a child’s weak body, escapes into adulthood. In my dreams and poems I sometimes fly, but more often amuse: even a broken feather can tickle you.

Coming to Mountains

Poetry seems bound to come, always, eventually to sunsets, oceans, trees, sky and especially mountains. They are froth, yellowing spume cast on the beach, looking so solid, these mountains (what a mouth-filling resonance, how mountainously sturdy the sound of mountain!), like lumps of protean protein powder heaving up out of apple juice before I turn on the blender.

I used to make mountains in the sandbox (you have to get the sand real wet) and dig tunnels through them. Fun to imagine sand become solid, tiny become huge, what can't be touched with more than gentlest pat of a child's palm become what boulders can bounce down.

Starting from the other direction (the top), how odd that these vast permanences can blow up, erupt, return to molten, revealing themselves as hesitant bubbles in a drying crust — hot cherry pie! There's a mountain in Mexico that, only 80 years ago, was a corn field.

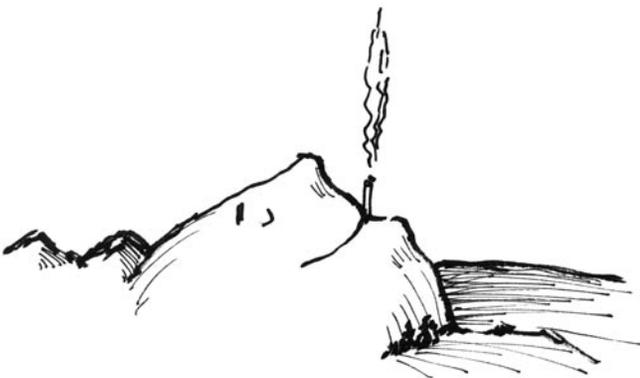
But why must poetry come to mountains? Because we'd like to last, we'd like to see forever and we'd like to erupt (people screaming as they flee hot streams of language).

Well, if the mountainous won't come to my poetry, my poetry will become mountainous, papers piled to the ceiling, bursting the room, the house, paper-cutting the sky, Mount Never-rest.

The Frailty of Mountains

Yesterday Public TV harped on the fragility of Mt. Rainier, its porous, flaky crust (sounds delicious, lava lovers), what it will do not long from now when it lets off steam and rock and ash. Mountains are young, vigorous and unstable, the earth's erections stirred to peak experiences, not yet exhausted, only briefly flaccid, peacefully smoking afterwards.

[Continued]



Mountains are young, but the hills are as old as the hills. Old enough for wind and water and fire to wear down a mountain range, smooth all its edges to rounded green velvet. And when the hills wear down, and when the desert wears down — nothing is older than nothing at all. But while the mountain stands tall, and I, atop it (in body or thought) looking out over the nothing that is everything, I almost fall into myself.



The Mountain Diet

My poet friend speaks of eating mountains — PTUI! PTUI! PTUI! She is SO behind the times. Sure, it was a fad, Dr. Jurassicovitch's High Mineral Himalayan Diet (big with poets in the 1820s), but new research has demolished that, as well as the foolishness about munching on pine forests for roughage, though they are useful for absorbing excessive buttery grease in sunsets.

But now we know that mountains aren't good for us: They are polluted by tons of moonlight — you can smell it, and it's hard to wash out. Moonlight is full of radical freedoms that break down our cell walls. Besides, it's unnatural to eat the mountains alone. You don't see just mountains all by themselves in nature; no, mountains always come attached to something, usually planets, and, really, only an entire planet can provide the whole-food, balanced diet you need. Eating a planet will give you a great deal of salty water to help dissolve all those heavy mountain minerals. If God had wanted us to eat just the mountains, He wouldn't have attached them to planets. So if you must eat mountains, eat them as part of a complete balanced diet of rich, live, sea-girt worlds.

Over-Eating

Li Po said, "We sit together, the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains."

Unlike Li Po, I don't suck up to mountains; any mountains that sit with me (a peak experience for them) vanish, as I swell up with them, having sucked them up by Li Po suction.



Mountain/Top

Pam: Ah!
 the loss
 of a day, a week
 or an entire lifetime
 will seem such a paltry thing
 when centuries have passed. Why
 so pressing now? Have I constructed
 this insurmountable mountain of conflict?

Dean: When centuries pass I'll remember these days
 when, because you were part of my life,
 the balance-point of all my motion,
 the loss of a week or a day
 meant everything, as
 to a spinning top
 the point
 !

Everything INCLUDING the Kitsch in Sync

Sing: make one's own music.
 Co: together.
 Pate: head.
 Sing co pate: Let our heads sing together.

Sin: evil.
 Cop: one who tries to stop evil.
 Ate: consumed, made part of self.
 Sin cop ate: He who resists evil, failing,
 makes it part of self. Or he who would walk a beat
 must learn to skip a beat.)

Sink: submerge.
 "O pate!": Ah, head! Oh Rationality!
 "Sink, O pate!": lower the head, let the reason
 dinned into us by chalk-dusted teachers yield.

Syn: together.
 Copate: From the Greek for "to cut".
 Syncopate: Let us cut classes together
 and make our heads hollow with singing
 until we can hear the finer beats
 in and among reason's coarse rhythms.

Sink, O pate! Sin cop ate. Sing co pate.
 Syncopate.

Penniless poet attempts to coin words.

Attention, natives: This is an alien mind speaking.
 I am not you. I am taking over. Resistance
 is futile; Already, by using your language,
 I have entered your mind.

Monsters in our Houses

The song doesn't say what became of the spider
 that the old lady swallowed. Spiders seldom star
 in human songs. The little ones that live among us
 are alien enough to our eyes to be feared. We model
 monstrous machines after them. How odd that so many
 of our monsters are tiny things we magnify.

They are sprightly, these monsters,
 dancing on threads that stick to all but them.
 One could bungee down over the dinner table
 and land in your mouth and get swallowed,
 probably the worst thing it might do to you.

Watched for a time, they are elegant,
 moving with the grace and caution of cats,
 seeming to know (as the voracious house cat knows)
 not to try to eat us, for we, with our penchant
 for insect-luring warmth and web-anchoring
 nooks and corners (living in squared rooms
 like little else in curvaceous nature) —
 we are their allies,

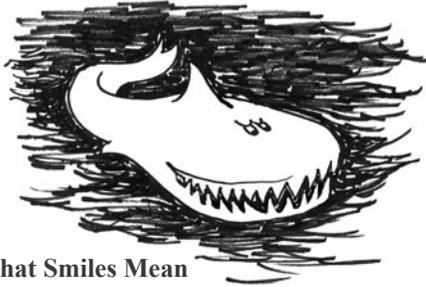
and they are ours, sparing us the killing
 of many tiny pests, eating the moth,
 but sparing its opalescent wings.

When, with broom or arm, we shatter their webs,
 they scurry off to make new ones — automaticity?
 Hunger? Or the urgency of art? For they transform
 space into a delicately trembling instrument for
 capturing and recording the movements of life.

The spider's captives, partially paralyzed,
 are perhaps comfortable while waiting
 (as we wait before our TVs?) to be eaten.

The cat is so precisely so,
 white forepaws primly together,
 tail lifted, every part of her
 precisely where it should be,
 face raised slightly, tiny mouth
 posing a perfect tiny piercing question.





What Smiles Mean

When the dog smiles, he's scared, propitiating. The shark's perpetual smile means no more than the toothy grin of an old Buick grill. A baby's smiles are open to gassy interpretations. And I used to watch my aunt chew food, because as part of the process she seemed to smile, but didn't.

Knowing this and worse about smiles (how murderous grown-up smiles can be), yet I find them magic when they break like dawn upon a room. Silly:

It's only the showing of teeth held in loosened jaws: See my weaponry, relaxed for you? But real smiles flood the eyes, fill up the face with creases — stream beds — along which the smile nectar flows from eyes to lips and back.

And the eyes shine with it, though not as bright as tears. But the light of smiles dances. In tears it flickers like a guttering candle flame.

And smiling through tears? Like when half the sky is dark, drizzly, about to spit lightning, yet opalescent with the promise of rainbows, while the other half is blue-gold sunlight, trees turned into emeralds against the dark half of the sky (a jeweler's black velvet).

A smile means what we want it to mean. Its magic, like a child's gift, is in knowing someone could mean this for us.

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When I tried to speak of my early encounters with vastness, what was hardest to say was how, when the whole sky ambushed me one day (looking up a spirally maze of spruce), both the tininess I felt and the vastness I felt were my own.

Some symbolize the infinite as ∞ , warning us to take it figure-eight-ively; Others say the ocean etches it on the rocks, so take it littorally.

Pop goes beauty, pop goes iridescent youth, as our immortality bubbles up from the bottom of time to burst into its own element.

You don't go free by clinging to the bars, squabbling with the other prisoners, hating the guards, despising the laws, deciding that you are your cell, deciding the prison isn't there, deciding that someday you'll think of something, trying to please the warden, agreeing with the other prisoners, blaming yourself, dying (changing cells), suffering solitary confinement, attacking your cell, or loving it.

You go free by...
but you never asked how to go free.
You don't go free by never asking.

