



## Right Hand Pointing 9

### Cold Front

Dale Wisely, Editor

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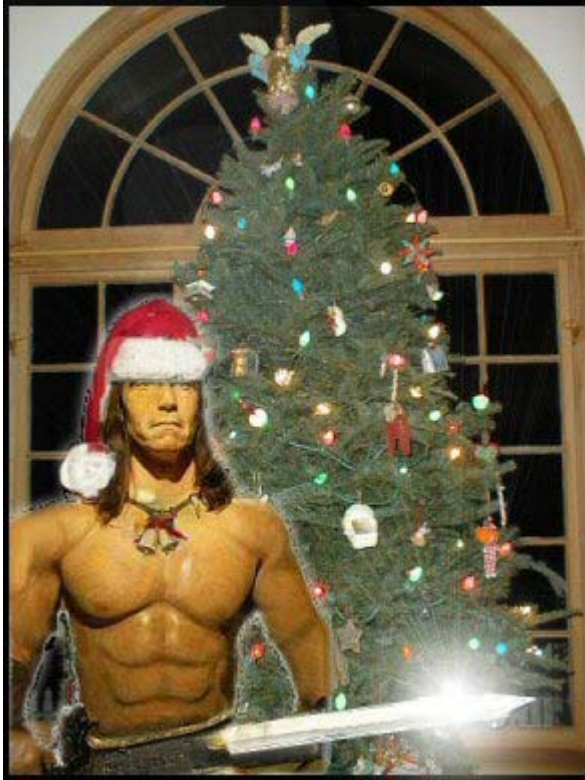
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### The 9 Note

by your Editor

I don't know about you guys, but I'll be glad to see 2005 go. And, if we get through December 31 without a plague of crazed, bird-flu infected, radioactive, fanged toads falling out of the skies and biting us on our necks, I'm thinking we'll be lucky. What a year. And now this whole War on Christmas thing. Yo I can't even sleep up in here. But, listen, I will settle for nothing less than a completely victorious Christmas. What is Christmas after all?



*To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of their women.*

So, here's issue number 9 and if you count web chapbooks by Allan Peterson and Susan Case, which you certainly should count, that's eleven issues of Little Orange. This issue includes contributions by veteran poets Jordan Smith, R T Castleberry, Ed Pavlic, Lynn Strongin, and Charles P. Ries. No fiction this time, although we continue to read for a future flash fiction issue.

Some philistine wrote and suggested I abandon orange for 2006. It's not going to happen. We're staying the course. Our enemies hate our orange.

I do hope you enjoy the reading the issue as much as I enjoyed slapping it together. See you in 2006. If the toad thing doesn't happen.

*Dale Wisely*

**The Dream of the Wheel**

Not fate's, in the lady's hand, and not the great  
Mandala of gods and demons, not Kerouac's "spinning  
Wheel of meat conception" nor Pinsky's figurations, nor some  
Other praise of radical continuities, but bright, unblemished,  
Honed to an edge of utter impersonality, a sort  
Of reverse god, whose circumference was everywhere,  
Whose center, unimaginable point of zero friction,  
Was hope's nowhere, was the end of Dante's funnel,  
Was also everywhere. I'd been dreaming of my family,  
Parents and children, after a long evening's vigil  
Waiting for the snow to start, a nor'easter's revolving  
Progression up the weather radar, after an afternoon  
Stocking gas for the car and food, and there it was  
In the gloved hands of the guy at the deli, the wheel  
Slicing as thin as I cared it to what I needed to live.

*Jordan Smith*

**As Needed**

Xanax, 1 mg, as needed, which is up to me,  
I guess, who needs or doesn't that cold white  
Flower at the brain's stem. And what am I trading:  
Skeptical irony for spiking adrenalin, even, a wash,  
I think, when I talk to my wife, in the hospital  
For her second pulmonary embolism in two weekends.  
Oh, I was clearer-headed than that winter's day, as sharp,  
As numb, knowing the road to the ER, the routine  
Of triage and waiting, good at pretending it wasn't,  
Nothing was happening. Are you taking care,  
The good wishers all ask, and yes I say, meaning  
I've got my mechanisms of defense all in place,  
Got one foot moving ahead of the next, and  
That's all folks, until the pills wear off, and what's  
Left is what I started with, minus whatever this new  
Need is I've learned now that I know what's needed.

*Jordan Smith*

**Homage to William Stafford**

I just wasn't paying attention, epitaph to consciousness  
At an unquiet edge of sleep. What else? A hawk  
Dreamt circling over a snow-stranded field in early spring  
Has what I haven't: a point of view.  
I was just the trance I was in, repeating that jig,  
Banish Misfortune, in my head, all three parts,  
A mantra. Though it is too late for such good wishes,  
If it is ever too late, even to want what should be next,  
A meal, a thaw, a change of heart or season, even  
To wish the dream over, this fretwork border  
So elaborate no one can read the words it frames.  
I'll take intricacy as the world's apology for everything  
It takes away, though it might as well be a warning:  
Watch your step, in six-eight time, or common, slow-  
Foot stumbling out of sleep, when the notes you've made  
To yourself say more than you meant and less than enough.

*Jordan Smith*

**Just a Shout Away**

Death is in the air, is on our tongues and ashen lips.  
It ranges in timbre— high and dark and stern:  
voices of church chimes, EMS sirens,  
the carjacker bellowing into an open window.  
It modulates to riot, evacuation, insurgency,  
embraces the Bloomsbury wit, the burn victim.  
It lays beneath the map of a storming moon,  
the uncertainties of surges, percentages, landfall.  
It's caustic and commemorative, celebratory  
as the final breath of the chronically ill.  
Death is on our lips, ashen, corrosive,  
caked in the corners of our mouths like meat, like mud.

*R. T. Castleberry*

### **Sleeping Through**

Drowsy,  
murmurous as a summer river,  
heat rising from the rippling surface,  
I rest in bed, wasting a morning.  
A ceiling fan blades the air.  
A starling skitters along the wisteria and the window sill.  
The room is redolent with scents of gardenia, pot, port wine.  
My wife coughs quietly in her sleep,  
back and bare shoulders striped by light through the blinds.  
I set the Seagram's bottle aside, fit myself to her.  
Telephone off,  
Monday and the working week will have to wait.

*R. T. Castleberry*

### **The Storm Road**

Pick any icy day:  
note the adversarial weather watch  
muddy melting patches, the sinister glisten of the grass  
a careful half-step at a crosswalk, the braking sliding driver  
echoed crackle of children's voices  
arid glaze of light pooling between house, tree and yard  
layers of creaking leaves in gutters  
beeches stained by bladed sleeting winds  
a crumpled sky angled at steeple, tenement, factory  
Pick any icy day

*R. T. Castleberry*

**Blackbird**

– after Rene Marie

It's sunk if it's no slow-stone  
in the stream. Bolt-blind  
thumb if not string  
from a stolen set of wing bones.

Crashes burn down his arms  
& bleed baths  
into ripe peels from a blaze.  
A blizzard buckled

the sky & the wind's palm  
nests a newborn calf  
aside abandoned north-bound  
rails. The night dyes its skin

& whistles thru veins of hair  
in clear teeth. Stones fall  
slower & slower &  
red hooks drift into white beaks.

If it's a sky full of threes  
it's on its way down.  
The warmth of real sickness, a ring  
of mud around the flame.

***Ed Pavlic***

**Character Witness: As Told To Indigo Wink & Silken Mask**

could have told you all along  
said even I could have told  
you all along he'd shut his eyes  
& the light stayed on rock broke  
scissors & he sent hot strings  
thru blasted bands said new-found  
& old-town ghosts told him : be hard

be hard his first arrest charge:  
suggestive contortion said  
his body so-placed lude  
echo to sidelong thoughts said  
he couldn't just watch listen  
said his brain was a basket  
with a wet snake inside songs

takeover sight sound peels  
from an orange corks popped in  
b flat said : first person stops  
talking deals with me be hard  
to the clouded spirits be  
hard be clouded spirits said it twice  
snow falls too slow said it slow

***Ed Pavlic***

**Deposition of the Corn-Toed E.R. Intern**

If I'm half a man on percodan I was there  
 the night they brought him in ankles  
 broken high & empty lowdown  
 with four pages torn from "Chaos  
 in Poetry" tranquil & tight  
 lipped as Lawrence painting his umbrella :  
 sky blue & mirror image of an empty  
 seat in Falchetto's Bugatti

repeated man knows there's something  
 wrong man knows there is something wrong  
 said he stalked the park with the damned  
 nickel colored trumpet said a  
 b-flat in Dorian sails thru  
 winter trees eighth rest caught the break  
 in a limb branch to fork fork to  
 sprout elm to the neural heart oak

to open vein-trees in the brain  
 fools boxed-in red corners in each  
 eye bled pale & dry from inside  
 cursed the snare lick : that drum machine's  
 white! said if he could just go fix  
 his own Ferrari & not crack  
 it up he'd live on a desert  
 island pave him one snake-hipped road

***Ed Pavlic*****In a Sentimental Mood**

I yank back the curtains  
 & snatch the badman around the neck.  
 Upturn a flagstone in the brush  
 & expose the egg-mad ant scurry. Eyes avert  
 & wash over me like cold water thru frosted glass.  
 I read hair-thin tendrils & hands hold  
 it, whatever in hell this is, up by the greens

like a trophy turnip. Mind paints the tune  
 with the ruby wig of an unearthly dandelion.  
 I take a fist with open eyes. Wait  
 at the bottom of the pool & see the plunge  
 implode the roof. Eyes burn limbs  
 that gush in surface breath. Mind cheats  
 & freezes it all exact. Fingers

trace the diver's trail & touch its vermilion  
 throat. Little boys love  
 what they kill. You stay. Dry lips scratch along  
 the silent belly of the shore. Eyes closed  
 to steam risen from the basement basin  
 of your soap-stone karma. Mind runs itself down  
 thru deep sand in the windblown dawn.

***Ed Pavlic***



**One Bare Ruined Choir  
& the next & the next**

like the savior  
mis-timed rises.

The invisible listener  
is next to my breast.

Climbing  
to stir the pool of fire with an iron rod

At stroke of midday  
God:

Whether one speaks to the Lord  
a reader in the future or a writer in the past

the nun  
stirs

committed to tones of winter gray,  
touch of text.

*Lynn Strongin*

**Ordinary Battles / Extraordinary**

Late night above the 49th parallel O Canada! North:  
usual battles

extraordinary ones:  
too much work too little won:  
looking at newsreels of Sarajevo, Beslan. . .  
a friend's daughter with metastasized cancer phones:  
lungfulls.  
The Broken Man coming.

Stars so bright they hurt the eyes:  
can you imagine baroque  
lace covering night? Metastasis.

The extraordinary battle-challenges & the  
common one:  
Here comes Peter Wise tall as a stalk  
he will balk the broken man both hands tied behind his  
back with thin  
whipcord will not talk.

*Lynn Strongin*

**Second Notification**

You could be in the ward:      you could be in the morgue:  
you could be on the same      page with death.  
    Sounds & furious stars rolling overhead spilling with apple-  
thunder.  
We haven't heard.  
But we're second notification.

If the broken man caught you,  
you forgot your promise  
to cling to the brass bedpost in extremity.

First will be brother, beloved, doctors  
friends  
frost telling loss to the garden in syllables lost in translation.

*Lynn Strongin*

**The Villain in the Dock    after all these years:**

The Villain in the Dock                      after all these years:

Thin. Dark.                      No hidden tears.  
A neural darkness.  
A show-trial with foreign occupiers pulling strings.

O Marionette  
the hurricane has a small eye  
but landfall could be horrendous  
    when it occurs  
    at 3 a.m.                      Nunavut. Cape Breton. No gymnast  
boy memorialized in  
bronze: suddenly crucial from the way one slows down:  
    A vertical verdict:  
    foetal fibronet test:  
    I don't want to be around.

*Lynn Strongin*

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*Bruce New*

Cold Front



*Bruce New*

Right Hand Pointing 9



*Bruce New*

Cold Front



*Bruce New*

**3**

Need walks out the door, leaves Girlie lying  
in a puddle on the sofa, pushes Ray-Bans over

his eyes and concentrates on not stumbling  
down the stairs he can't see. Need farts quietly

when he's in his car, drives fast through the light  
with his windows down. Need lets all things pass.

***C L Bledsoe***

**Open**

Open the door! Open the door!  
Jo Jo yelled holding the smoking pan  
in front of him,  
like a fart white-knuckle gripping ass cheeks  
in the wind.

Jimmy flung it open as Jo Jo dumped the pan,  
flinging hot grease at the sky, only to see Jillie standing  
in the doorway shrieking in agony  
as the burning grease scorched her skin.

Jimmy looked at Jo Jo who looked right back,  
and they both burst into laughter  
as the theme music rolled  
and Jillie just shook her dripping head.

***C L Bledsoe***

**Shaman**

When he spoke  
it came from a great distance  
across frozen wastes,  
its strength the kind of quiet  
when you hear a soaring cliff  
breathe frost down your neck,  
or when a gray bird  
changes everything in the valley,  
feathers the color of rain.

*Douglas Barricklow*

**Today, the Rain**

Yesterday,  
a lone gull.  
Gray cloud  
across the sky.

Today,  
the rain.  
Wet children  
in soggy coats.

*Douglas Barricklow*

**False Positive**

that son of a bitch, my heart,  
smashed in the street  
like a halloween pumpkin,  
tire tracks arrowing through it,  
stray cats from the orchard  
consult the sodden debris,  
so now everything that occurs  
occurs at point-blank range,  
the cold coffee of fate,  
my thoughts engulfed in smoke,  
as if by order of the hemophilic king  
of some unfortunate kingdom,  
fists of rain hammer on the glass  
while inside the baby screams  
and i gather whatever will burn.

**Howard Good**

**Desire**

Water running down  
Rushing  
Earthward

The stream of least resistance  
Let me  
Down

Flowing past your skin  
My desire  
Hold it

Cup your hands

***Manfred Gabriel***

**Third Week in Poetry Class**

The administrator announces his new initiative;  
the sheep graze half asleep.

Bush orders another round for the house;  
the drug of war intoxicates Americans.

My old house cries in pain as  
the jack operator adjusts its spine.

The old crow wears Columbo's rumpled coat,  
his young partner, a shiny black sheath.

My Yankee in-laws feast on  
my Southern fried family.

*Jane K. Kretschmann*

**What You Can See By Starlight**

rocks white like tombstones among the weeds  
stumps--animals frozen forever by an awful spell  
the dregs of a day ground down by cares  
the silhouette of your fears

*Jane K. Kretschmann*



### Hermit Poems

#### Time and the Hermit

You never lose the clock

Oh, I left it  
partly for mystery

but wanted time for real—  
evening, autumn

Evening, autumn

But when the wind dies quick  
says seven-thirty

and the light at four in winter  
says four

when I say winter.

#### The Hermit's Call

There's always been

Someone  
in these woods

Look for what  
I am

You always have.

### The Hermit's Parents

I left them where  
I wasn't

needed  
to follow

a hat  
by railroad tracks

an old man  
in a stolen boat.

### The Hermit's Son

The line ends  
here

My broken hat  
a sign.

*Bernard Quetchenbach*

**Below the Floor**

I live in the basement  
beneath the footsteps.  
The furnace whistles to me on cold days.  
The washing machine hums to me at night.

My ex-wife lives one floor above,  
10,000 miles away.  
My daughters with wings  
sail between heaven and earth.  
Getting honey from the clouds  
and iron from the brown soil.

My possessions are ideas.  
My lovers names all rhyme.  
My conquests are fictionalized.

The shadow side of home sweet home,  
where a giant prowls naked  
beneath the floor and ideas  
grow during intercourse.

***Charles P. Ries***

**Plaza de Toros**

The Matador handed me the bull's severed ear,  
a trophy of his victory and the bull's predictable defeat.  
He was called El Tiempo Grande.  
They'd saved the biggest for last.

His ear filled my hand.  
I raised it to the sky and the to the crowd  
saluting El Toro's rage and defeat  
at the hands of Pablo Hermoso de Mendoza.

Pressing the bull's ear to my own, I heard:  
*the morning of his birth*  
*the pastures of Southern Mexico*  
*the blood as it seeped into the ground*  
*the last glimpse of the sun*  
*the tears as they cut his throat*

As they dragged his carcass out of Plaza de Toros,  
I saluted him again,  
he who symbolized the burden of rage  
and the insanity of being born a male.

***Charles P. Ries***

### **Influences of Light**

It happens each early summer.  
She backs off her anti-depressants,  
thinking more UV rays can substitute  
for her drugs. She comes out swinging,  
determined to reclaim what is  
rightfully hers.

For a day or a week she's a warrior,  
but quickly fades into a humble,  
tumble, pile of bewilderment. (It's  
hard to sustain determination on  
just sunlight. Warmth alone isn't  
enough to help you think straight.)

Following her short freedom flight,  
she becomes earth bound, a cloud  
that hovers low against a county trunk  
road - a vaporous curtain that flattens  
and abducts you.

***Charles P. Ries***

### **Untitled**

Okay.

I can't remember your name, but your wife  
(Sara? Tara?) calls you Bleshashuga when  
you sneeze in front of company.

Her hair looks to have been lovingly  
scavenged from a drainpipe.

Your smallest child isn't as small as you'd  
like, and so you do the only thing you  
know—you call your mother to ask how  
she is and hang up.

A strong chin is your best quality, and you  
are always on time to work.  
You always come late to dinner with friends.

***Jared Sinclair***

**Son**

With the world the way it is, I don't understand how anyone with a sports page and three dollars can have two cents. It's a damn shame, I'd say, that more people don't carry their selves along like a sensible American. A damn shame. Especially with all of this god-blessed land moving out and forsaking everything they can lay their hands on. Nothing is sacred, but more important, it's sacred that nothing is sacred. The whole world's ass-backward, and think they're on the straight-and-narrow. Son, your face doesn't say a thing your tattoos don't say already. But it's so very important in this life that everyone live, and that's what's killing every last one of us. Damn. A purple truck ain't no way to go through life, Son.

*Jared Sinclair*

**Cold Front**

The young maple outside my window's contorting  
 In the wind. Oh, it's a dance—disfiguring and anguished  
 In the way of nature imitating art, which imitates  
 What we believe's our nature, or I don't know what else. A tree  
 Grows resilience so it can suffer this, but suffering  
 Should have its ends, and this is just a change  
 In local weather: storm warnings until noon, partial  
 Clearing then, a night's first frost. Left to its own  
 Devices, a tree's a beautiful thing, not this riven  
 Splayed creature, and of course sympathy like this  
 Is recursive, sentimental. You know  
 What I'm going to say next. It's almost Fall.

*Jordan Smith*



**Bruce New** writes: "I was born in 1970. I currently reside in the wilds of northern Kentucky, on a mountaintop, next to the sun, where I create my artwork high on butterfly wine."

**CL Bledsoe** is an editor for *Ghoti Magazine*. [www.ghotimag.com](http://www.ghotimag.com) He has work in *Nimrod*, *Thunder Sandwich*, *Margie*, *Natural Bridge*, and *Diner*, among other places. His work appeared in [Issue 8](#) of *Right Hand Pointing*.

**Douglas Barricklow** won first prize for fiction in *Willamette Week* newspaper's writing contest. He has poems in or forthcoming in *The Bellowing Ark*, *The Blind Man's Rainbow*, *West Wind Review*, *The Suisun Valley Review*, *Plazm*, *Fireweed*, *Potpourri*, *Cutting Teeth*, *The Jefferson Monthly*, and the on-line poetry journal, *Mastodon Dentist*.

**Howard Good**, a journalism professor at SUNY New Paltz, is the author of the poetry chapbook, *Death of the Frog Prince* (FootHills Publishing, 2004). His poems have appeared in numerous journals and e-zines, including *2River View*, *Stirring*, *Lily*, *Plum Ruby Review*, *Wilmington Blues*, and *Rose & Thorn*. This is his second appearance in *Right Hand Pointing*.

**Manfred Gabriel** moved to the U.S. in 1997. He divides his time between Western Massachusetts and New York City, where he works as a lawyer. His first published piece of fiction, "[Driving North](#)," was in Issue 4 of *Right Hand Pointing*.

**Jane K. Kretschmann** teaches English, writes poetry, and walks her retriever, Belle. She has poems in *Fresh Boiled Peanuts*, *Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream*, and the online journals *Artistry of Life* and *Muscadine Lines: a Southern Journal*.

**Bernard Quetchenbach's** poems and essays have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *The Worcester Review*, *Ascent*, *HazMat Review*, and *Isotope*. His "Hermit" poems are part of a series; other poems in the series have appeared in magazines including *Rosebud*, *Blueline*, *Pleiades*, and *The Bridge*, and in a chapbook, *The Hermit's Act*, from Finishing Line Press. He lives in Lakeland, Florida.



**Jordan Smith** is the author of five collections of poetry. The most recent, *The Names of Things Are Leaving*, will be published this coming year by the University of Tampa Press. He lives, teaches, and writes in upstate New York.

**R.T. Castleberry** is an editor, writer, wit, is co-editor of *Curbside Review* ([www.curbsidereview.org](http://www.curbsidereview.org)). His work has been published in *Right Hand Pointing*, *Borderlands*, *Caveat Lector*, *Pacific Review* and many other magazines.

**Ed Pavlic** is author of *Paraph of Bone & Other Kinds of Blue* which Adrienne Rich selected to win the The American Poetry Review / Honickman First Book Prize in 2001 and a book of literary essays, *Crossroads Modernism* (U. Minn. P, 2002). He teaches in the English Department and directs the Africana Studies Program at Union College in Schenectady, NY.

**Lynn Strongin** was born in NYC(2939) and raised in and around the Big Apple as well as traveling thru various parts of the South during the war when her father was an Army psychologist. Early studies in musical composition branched out into writing. Lynn worked for Denise Levertov during the politically active Sixties in Berkeley. She authored seven published books, poems in thirty anthologies, fifty-five journals, national & international, both on-line and in print. Her anthology *The Sorrow Psalms: A Book of Twentieth Century Elegy* will be published in June, 2006 by the University of Iowa Press. Lynn was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has made British Columbia, Canada, her home for the past twenty-five years.

## Right Hand Pointing 9

**Charles P. Ries** lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His narrative poems, short stories, interviews and poetry reviews have appeared in over one hundred print and electronic publications. He has received three Pushcart Prize nominations for his writing and most recently he read his poetry on National Public Radio's *Theme and Variations*, a program that is broadcast over seventy NPR affiliates. He is the author of *The Fathers We Find*, a novel based on memory. Ries is also the author of five books of poetry — the most recent entitled, *The Last Time* which was just released by The Moon Press in Tucson, Arizona. He is the poetry editor for *Word Riot* ([www.wordriot.org](http://www.wordriot.org)). His website is at <http://www.literati.net/Ries>

**Jared Sinclair** lives in Charleston, SC where he is studying English. He always wears two shirts--a condition which does not lend itself to the Charleston weather. Jared has and has had many loves in life, but it is macaroni and cheese which fills the great void. In his spare time, Jared reads children's novels and avoids cooking.

