

“We are discontinuous beings,” observed Georges Bataille, “[...] but we yearn for our lost continuity.” It is the future tense that expresses that yearning: “A witlessness / that will be come April what?” For Mary Jo Bang’s Ophelia, the future will at the very least transcend self-knowledge; though for us as readers with the foreknowledge granted by long familiarity with Ophelia’s text, there is the dark thought that transcendence is granted through death, not delivery. So be it: eroticism (as Bataille put it) is “assenting to life up to the point of death”—and (as a far older text observed) “love is strong as death”. The paradox that self-knowledge is lost in the very moment that knowledge of the other is found provides the great link between Eros and the wild dark. The poor princess of the tenth burial mound waits to surrender her enigma, two people without reason flare matchlight into each other’s eyes, the stuff of conception seeps away into the shingle, and even in the existence of a snail, his entire body kissing the nurturing earth, there comes the moment when a progress through life can be reviewed for its small but magnificent sum: “If only until the next rain shower, our drivel can *shine*.”

Hell, Sartre tells us in *Huis Clos*, is other people: the story of Ruth Ellis, cheated of “love and a good time” once too often, shows one discontinuous being thwarted in her quest for continuity making the descent into that hell with a wayward, uncomprehending speed that stops the breath. This “other” is any and everyone—a comedian in a tearroom, relatives after a funeral, even (if an ironic Jane Stevenson can be believed) the academic at work on a critical edition. These are the bearers of anti-life; and it is a relief to have the reassurance that Adam Gent, Jeet Thayil or Anna Adams offer, as they return us to the knowledge that our lost continuity can be found in many everyday ways. The larger architecture of the attempt is apparent in two remarkable essays by David Lynn and Gray Kochhar-Lindgren in this number’s American feature, and in the fourth and fifth prizewinning stories in last year’s fiction competition, by Maile Diane Chapman and Jane Eaton Hamilton.

With this issue, *Stand* enters its second year under its new editors, and this is a good moment to extend heartfelt thanks to those many who have given support in the first twelvemonth—the writers established and new who have chosen to publish in our pages; the magazine’s trustees, our contributing editors, and most particularly Jon Glover and Rodney Pybus; our printers and our production and distribution teams; our advertisers; and most especially Helen Richman, for whom this is the last issue of *Stand* as editorial assistant, a designation that has concealed more forms of tribulation, endurance and sheer hard graft than we can suggest in a brief editorial. All at *Stand* wish her

well in her new professional life. Our thanks are due also to the many who have written approving the new *Stand*, and to those (mercifully few) who have been disaffected we extend our rueful but undaunted regrets.

In this second year of the New Series we mean to continue our commitment to new writers as well as those of recognised excellence. It has been a pleasure over the past year to publish—alongside distinguished veterans from many countries—relative newcomers of the arresting quality of Neil Addison, Andrea Brady, Stephanos Papadopoulos and Paul Rayson. In this number we are proud to publish first-rate stories by Bill Broady and Neil Grimmett, names to watch in British fiction, and excellent poems by two rising U.K. talents, Ros Barber and R. G. Binns. In this issue *Stand* runs the second of a three-part focus on current writing from the U.S., to coincide with the Cambridge University/*Stand* Festival of American Writing (in Cambridge, March 17 to 19), a celebration of the life and work of Tony Tanner, and in the third part in June we shall be printing work by some of the writers attending the festival. Later in the year 2000 we have new writing from New Zealand and from Turkey, as well as features on the spirit of place, on poetry and music, and much more; and a year from now, in conjunction with the Nobel Foundation and *Kenyon Review*, we publish a major issue celebrating the first century of the Nobel Prize. Every number of *Stand* will provide reading of quality, variety and vitality; and our one regret is that we are forced to announce an increase in subscription rates.

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