THE PROSE POEM:
AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Volume 1 | 1992

Blues

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BLUES

"Forms seek subjects." -
Frank Bidart

The first line must be about heartbreak: "Oh, she stomped my heart / give me the stompin' blues." The second must be the first sung with increasing rage and despair: "Yeah, she STOMPED my heart / gi' me the STOMPin' blues." The third must add detail and complete the breakage: "She stomped it with my best friend / wore my favorite shoes." At this point the guitar may complain or cry. At this point, the singer may moan, "Oh, baby." At this point, a white boy, a construction laborer in work boots and flannel shirt may, having been overcome by the poignancy of the occasion and several draught beers, begin to sway and shout "Amen!" thrusting his plastic cup into the air. Which may or may or may not signal the coming of the avant garde. Say the next time he shouts "Radiator!" Say the next time he shouts "Come unto the Lord." Say the next time he shouts "I'm on fire" or "Stuff the turkey. The kids are in the car and I can't stay long." Say he talks over the bridge, saying, "The cake flopped. The cake flopped. We gave it to the cousin who eats such things." Say he begins rocking vigorously and continues: "The linoleum's cracking by the fridge. When the welfare lady comes be neat, be clean, but don't be happy. Tell her we never have enough. Tell her we behave anyway. After dark, if we lean the brick palette against the back wall and climb it like a ladder and pull ourselves onto the back porch where the door is always open, we can go inside." At this point the guitarist may attack a single note and hold it. "We'll bring a flashlight—a small one—and we'll eat ice cream and cheese and steal the records—Love, Steppenwolf, *The Soft Parade, Dr. Byrd and Mr Hyde.* When I call your brand of cigarettes,

the brand you're thinking of, you run around the yard and I'll try to catch you. Darkness. Toads along the porch. Katydids creaking. Bats. One night we shined a flashlight into the maple and watched small animals hurl themselves onto the roof of the house. Flying squirrels." He might also mention the way those bats flew—the veering, the way they swooped at the stones he tossed. The stones he gathered from the driveway where the Dugan man parked his bread truck. It would be nearly dark, and he'd climb in the open door with his brothers and eat cherry pies while the Dugan man drank coffee with his grandmother. Then they'd slip out the side door and the bats would be veering above. Attraction and avoidance. This is the blues. It keeps repeating itself. Keeps repeating its lonesome self. The object is purgation. Catharsis. The object is triumph. Endurance. Humor. At this point, the singer may shout, "Hurt me!" And the guitar may answer, *Pain, pain, pain. Pain, pain, pain.*