

A Boundless Field

Stephen Yenser

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AMERICAN POETRY
AT LARGE

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Approaching thus the momentous spaces, and considering with reference to a new and greater personalism, the needs and possibilities of American imaginative literature, through the medium-light of what we have already broach'd, it will at once be appreciated that a vast gulf of difference separates the present accepted conditions of these spaces, inclusive of what is floating in them, from any condition adjusted to, or fit for, the world, the America, there sought to be indicated, and the copious races of complete men and women, along these Vistas crudely outlined. It is, in some sort, no less a difference than lies between that long-continued nebular state and vagueness of the astronomical worlds, compared with the subsequent state, the definitely-formed worlds themselves, duly compacted, clustering in systems, hung up there, chandeliers of the universe, beholding and mutually lit by each other's lights, serving for ground of all substantial foothold, all vulgar uses—yet serving still more as an undying chain and echelon of spiritual proofs and shows. A boundless field to fill! A new creation, with needed orbic works launched forth, to revolve in free and lawful circuits—to move, self-poised, through the ether and shine like heaven's own suns!

—Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (1868)

Contents

Elizabeth Bishop's Stove	1
Some Poets' Criticism and the Age <i>Dana Gioia, Mary Kinzie, Allen Grossman with Mark Halliday, Stephen Dunn, Mary Karr</i>	9
A Range of Affirmation <i>Philip Levine, Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky, Galway Kinnell</i>	34
Fables of Purity <i>Louise Glück, Linda Gregg, David St. John, John Ashbery</i>	59
Bright Sources <i>John Hollander, Donald Justice, Alice Fulton, Sharon Olds</i>	84
Versions of Maximalism <i>Susan Mitchell, Judith Hall, Susan Prospere, Gjertrud Schnackenberg</i>	119
Wild Plots <i>Harryette Mullen, Ann Lauterbach, Louise Glück, Michael Palmer</i>	145
Sensuous and Particular <i>Sherod Santos, Rosanna Warren, Richard Kenney</i>	160
A Boundless Field <i>Frank Bidart and C. K. Williams</i>	176

The Poetics of Plash and Speed <i>Susan Wheeler and Frederick Seidel</i>	193
Breaking and Making <i>Heather McHugh, Lynne McMahon, Jorie Graham</i>	216