

**JAMES WELCH** studied writing at the University of Montana. His poems have appeared in many magazines and anthologies, and his first book, *Riding the Earthboy* 40, was published in 1971 by World. After a year in Greece, he has returned to Missoula, Montana.

### BIRTHDAY IN SARONIS

To come this far a man  
wants light, maps, figures  
carved in stone the width  
of a dwarf. Who needs women  
quick and bucking, whistling  
slogans, autumn in its mink?

That moth flutters in my ear.  
He knows a brave time.  
A radio speaks in Greek  
to ships aground. Why have  
you come here, poor dark dog,  
why leave those places  
panting in your chest?

The blind bouzouki knows  
another song. Pain begins  
to whisper peptic answers  
to its strings. Two drinks more  
I'll leave this town. I know  
these children wish me well.

Well now, well enough, goodbye.  
Don't give me that . . .  
Sing to me, dark frog. Behind  
those marble lids you see  
a future rich with fat.

In dreams I see the two roads meet  
cross each other, on and on.  
November, another birthday—  
ouzo man, where is your lover gone?