

Poetry

NORTHWEST

SPRING 1962

VOLUME III, NUMBER I

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POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME THREE NUMBER ONE

SPRING, 1962

DONALD FINKEL	
Five Poems	3
W. S. MERWIN	
Three Poems	7
MARYA FIAMENGO	
Three Poems	9
ROBERT CONQUEST	
Two Poems	13
TIM REYNOLDS	
Two Poems	17
ANNE REYNOLDS	
Mica	18
CHARLES EDWARD EATON	
A Knowledge of Birds	19
RAFAEL PINEDA	
Tres Poemas; translated by Keith Ellis	20
MARK TOBEY	
Bamboo Shoot	insert
PATRICIA GOEDICKE	
Two Poems	32
ROSELLEN BROWN	
Two Poems	34
MARGARET NORDFORS	
Two Poems	36
WILLIAM WITHERUP	
Three Perspectives of San Francisco	38
RALPH J. SALISBURY	
Over Concrete, Against a Gray Sky	39
BERNICE AMES	
Living Stone	40
BROTHER ANTONINUS	
In All These Acts	41
JOHN M. RIDLAND	
Four Poems	43

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POETRY NORTHWEST

— SPRING 1962

Donald Finkel

Five Poems

THE SERPENT CHARMER

(after Jean Léon Gérôme)

This smooth stripling wears nothing but a snake,
festoons of the beast ripple along his back
and thighs; the head he holds aloft, it is
too somnolent to raise itself alone.

Gérôme has shown us all this elsewhere:
the Turkish lady who crouches at the bath;
over her head the black and harsh-clothed maid
begins to tip an urn of freezing water;
and in the market-place a buyer rubs
his hard forefinger on the slave-girl's teeth.

A violent story, beauty and the beast;
yet what a curious dryness in the telling.
Or is it meticulous love, that dotes as long
on the lovely inscrutable arabic on the wall
as on the sheikh who sprawls against it, among
his half-wild men. Yet finally, here is the source
of dryness, of beauty and beast, of love, of hate:
watching the naked boy and snake, this face
under the black tarboosh is a snarl of delight.

STILL LIFE

The truth is, a man has to go out of his way
to choose three apples, a cup, and a butter-knife
for company at the bottom of love's ladder.
It would have been so much more soothing to think,
as long as one began with illusion in any case,
that he might as well live out his novitiate
watching some wench offer between two fingers
'the strawberry of her breast.'

Or how moral one felt
lifting again that limp form down from the tree,
whose Death was so much less dead than these
impersonal groceries, motionless on the table.
These apples will neither save nor curse;
their only virtues are that they can be bought,
are edible till they rot, and will inform you,
if you choose to attend, that the world you move in
is round, palatable, composed, and incorrigibly itself.

A WALK IN THE COUNTRY

for R.B.

After two weeks I was sick with emotion,
a rash on my neck, here, and under my eyes;
in the morning the maid came and found me,
one look, and she screamed: *Indigestione!*
In a city so beautiful, beautiful! to be ugly,
red, a disease! I bought nothing but—scarves.
She runs her long tense fingers back from her throat
on both sides, letting them stay where they meet.
Beyond, a mole rustles under the leaves,
stiffens, wrinkling his fastidious nose;

a bluejay leaps like a clown on a fallen birch,
then crashes away, rattling the shadows.
To be ugly, he thinks, in that soft gray light,
where with her confident fingers beauty gestures
in the galleries, the shops, the market, row on row,
red, orange, yellow, miraculous fruit!

But beauty is not beauty that remains
unaltered in the face of further beauty;
brightness and darkness, marriage of sky and earth,
make of the soft gray light in the human city
something the flickering bluejay understands,
something the mole acknowledges, then slips,
at the first, faint tremble of her approach,
shyly, like a heart into silence, underground.

MYOPIC

If you come close enough to him
the corners of his mouth will twitch
as if by strings, since like a match
before him your familiar face
has flared a moment earlier.

There by his toe one blade of grass
suffices to inform him how
the blanket of his evening world
is discontinuous and coarse.
He treads a world he hardly sees,
you would not tread for fear to fall
through perilous interstices.
Under his stare the roadside stone
unbends its stubborn boundaries
as not to bruise him, and the trees

draw their vindictive fingers in.
He knows he cannot come to harm,
for like the infant what he sees
is part of him; until he puts
his bottle lenses on and lets
the world spring up and scratch at him.

Meanwhile, like summer clouds we blunder
along the verges of his view,
and take the shapes he thinks we do;
and all he hears when we collide
is reassuring distant thunder.



THE HYPOCHONDRIAC

Stretched out like a drunk in the dark he listens
to the wash of his insides and tries to catch the rhythm,
hoping by cautious breathing and the right thought
at the appropriate moment to keep from submitting,
not, not, at any cost, to be sick.

Now the tide sucks downward to his groin
beginning a duller but more controllable pain,
but it is only momentary, it will be back
lapping in frothy wavelets at his throat.

He would go to the mountains, but it is so far,
and the climbing, the strenuous games in the thin air
would distract him, shatter his concentration,
spewing among the startled sunburnt guests
all he has been saving, hidden, for years.

The commerce between mind and flesh is a trickle at best,
and who knows better than he what chaos awaits
the body gone unminded even a second.

W. S. Merwin

Three Poems

SONG OF EXILE

(Derived from a Greek Ballad)

Already the month
Of May and the spring,
Already it is summer,
The branches fatten, the flowers
Open; now he who is
Not at home
Longs to go to his country,
Saddles his horse at night,
Spends the night hours
Seeing to the horseshoes, makes
Shoes of silver for his horse,
And nails of gold, puts on
His spurs, his sword on his belt; the beauty
Who loves him
Is holding a candle
For him to see by, in one hand
The candle, in the other
The wineglass, and each time
She fills it again for him
She says again, "Master,
Take me, take me with you, take me
Along with you, I
Will cook so that you can eat, I will
Make the bed so that you can sleep, I will become
Earth so that you can walk on me,
A bridge so that you can cross,

I will become a goblet of silver
For you to drink your wine from,
For you to drink your
Wine from, and for me
To be reflected in." "Youth,
Where I am going
Is beyond women.
Wolves hold the mountains
And thieves the passes
To lay hands on you, my girl,
And to make me
A slave."

~

TO AYOCUAN

(Aztec, from the Spanish of Angel Garibay)

They weave themselves together, blue flowers and fire-
colored flowers:
your heart and your words, oh Chichimec prince Ayocuan.
Make them yours here on earth even though it is only for a
moment.

I am in tears because death destroys them;
I cry out; it destroys what we have made, the beautiful songs.
Make them yours on earth even though it is only for a moment.

~

A WINNOWER OF WHEAT, TO THE WIND

(Derived from DuBella)

Lightness bringing the gift
Of lightness, restless wing
Over the earth,

Rustling the shadowy foliage
Lightly, filling it
With whispers,

I offer these
Violets, lilies, blossoms,
These roses,
These scarlet
Roses, scarcely opened,
These carnations.

Fan with your sweet breath
This plain,
This place
Where I have come to work
Winnowing my wheat
In the heat of the day.

~

Marya Fiamengo

Three Poems

A CHOICE OF TEMPERAMENT

I often speculate on countries where they sleep
Behind green shutters on cool dappled beds
Lullabyed between the sheets
By the gratuitous dronings of the sea
And the gabble of cobbles in the street,

Where even my constant adversary
The harsh centurion sun,
Blazing with Roman purpose in the sky
Becomes a drowsy poppy, soporifically benign,
While I am for a moment tenderly resigned.

It's then the horns of puritan purpose blow,
But what they do not know,
My dear Oblomov, is that you and I
Are cousins and we love to lie
Continuously on sofas,

Making the cracked plaster walls grow wide
As a chasm-startled sky,
Those unfortunate marriages we made
Each with our pale puritan shade
Contributed little to this disease
And only robbed us of our splendid ease.

Neither the cold agitators of that other north
Who never understood our mouths
But urged a constant going forth
Nor the dedicated sensualists of the south
Praying for pleasure on the palazzo floor,

Brought up in mist and mountain snow
Implacable with the passion to define
We lie upon our sofas
Occasionally we sigh
For the clarity of the Mediterranean mind.

In vain as long as we can talk
We live in fortresses of sloth
And make occasion for our Ikon-measured walks,
Princely with words and pleased
While attendant trees

Spread canopies of thought to tease
Our murky skulls to further speech.
Oh sofa-saturated cousin mine
What impervious virtue we make of killing time!

Yet dear Kin I love you more
Than any bright-eyed glad seignior
For both of us can look past Rome
Somnolently Byzantine
Bedded and bold
As mimosa blooming in the northern cold.

~
AND AGE IS BEAUTIFUL

Out across the Russian snow
Tolstoy whispers to the trees
visions of a waspish God
and the pardon which we give
to this witless vision is
that he wintered, that he lived,
bold and bountiful as wood
in a Northern climate could.

To be always young and green
is cold as dotage and as sick.
Something whispers in this dream
memory moves beyond the quick.
This sun caressing us in May
gives us summer, lark song rich
but in the mountain frost of heights
it is the eagle that delights.

And what more awful beauty than,
sullen, towering in his rage,
intellect his strutting stage,
Yeats bestriding his old age?

LETTER TO BIANCA

Do you remember, Bianca, when we were young,
how various wimpled women came,
sat on our beds and played
counterpoint with the counterpane?
Their tongues, their tenderly disarming tongues
were witless with wonders yet to come.
Most distinctly, I remember how
elusive was the hum of hymns
murmured but never sung.

Yesterday, Bianca, as it snowed
I watched the frost of quiet grow
deep in the gulleys and the ruts
thinking, how much remains
of those muted mutterings
whose flakes precarious as snow
in a country of long rains
heaped certain devious drifts of mind
which jar your disposition
and mar mine?

What was the cadence of the speech
that fell penultimate like a becalming snow
the winter's seed of peace
slowly, solemnly in the street
a nuisance to motorists and the police?
What thimble witchcraft weathered in those coifs?

Bianca, do you remember if they said
how, when we crossed our palms with theirs
we'd grow marvellous in beauty
as the snow's implacable crystal fold;
how sorcery would drive our eyes

beyond the blanched gardens of the moon
into its unfathomable other side?

More, how enchanted there we would not grow cold
but hold at our right divining hand
terrible tenant white with pride
wimpled in light, sheathed in ice,
our fierce icon would light the sky
and starkly sing.

Yesterday, Bianca, when it snowed
certain hooded birds appeared about the door.
I stooped to feed them
hearing in the bleak cheep
cowled in their throats
an avian hum, that hymn of language
that we in those white yesterdays
once murmured and which now
in this bloom of snow
we plead our fealty to sing.

~

Robert Conquest

Two Poems

LOCALITY

Desert: to hundreds of suns
Acrid and sinister
In this bedraggled cadence
The empty hectares glow.
It filters the hoarse terrain
To kinaesthetic images.
And the lifeless strikes its blow
Again and again and again.

Sea scuffles its freight of corpses
Rowelled over blunt rocks,
And jetsam thumps the oil-drums
By the edge of the pebbles and piers.
Through curtains bulging tight
With glut of a queasy moon
It plucks at latent ears
Night after night after night.

Embedded in the city
As the last arcs sputter
And the sky is black and blank,
Only abstraction can face
The purged unsensuous flavour
And venom and sloth ride high
Through a timeless, imageless place
For ever and ever and ever.

~

ON THE MIDDLE THAMES

To translate life, the workings of pure chance
Induct consummate harmony for once:
With all components clear,
Shine, flow, think, feel
Assembled to a chord.
First, air: those hours' ambience,
Bright on steep woods, the reach of stream, the weir,
Raised to a higher power
—Astonishing, unseasonable
Weather that has to sing
Chanced adagios of
Luck that a time of love
Should meet, should be, the exceptional
Days of a Berkshire spring.

Everything becomes landscape, becomes love.
Love flows . . . But watch the ponded drifts above
The weir that change as they slip
Through sluice, down overflow.
Not formless: annealed
By the play of several forces
Ephemeral substance pours through steady shape.
Squeezed to metal, shattered to spray,
Chopped to breaking, thrown to surging,
Waters explicitly sing,
Not in bare metaphor
But belled beneath the weir
Where those whitely converging
Currents sweep and swing.

Bright differentiations! Though they go
Spun back to gleaming unities of flow,
Always light meshes tense
Stressing the frame of things
As it too fragmentates
In cruxes of devolution;
Blues from high dust, blurs bright from leaves and skins,
Fans rigour of the single radiance
Till all the air's one transfinite:
For light may be said to sing,
Even in its most discrete
Reduction the photon strikes
Through what all grand mathematics
Pure to the senses bring.

And transitory. Another night is blest,
And it is morning. Pull the curtains. West
Swans float on flux and form enough

Beyond our window. But here
More sensuous than all waters,
More abundant than all radiance,
Everything, even landscape, becomes love.

I need only burn in your breath
To hear the great tune woken:
Love is a way to sing
Various yet unbroken
A cool flow, no less flame,
That bell-like fire, its chime
With which the world-weirs ring.

But can we find essential metaphor?
We may go down to Marlow, in an hour
See the same water soar
Another arc . . . Though analysis
Be a high sweetness too,
Why must such correspondences
Sound clearer yet what life is structured for?
Streaming symbol, sparkling cypher
Stress more the pure original?
—Life finds its way to sing
Beyond all self, all sense:
This mere experience,
This chime of the most real.
Thank you. Thank everything.

Tim Reynolds

Two Poems

A WREATH FOR HANNO

Now in the silent dark the days uncoil,
Swift days and nights like tock and tick,
And you are timeless as the years run down.
Now blameless, sunk in beauty, grow to know
Yourself, this stainless world; feel free to feel.

Bones unlinked and bright nerve-skein in shreds,
You, child, once crouched beneath the lash,
Behind the golden brown that masked your eye,
Now peer down deeper, tearless eyes, and laugh
In faultless freedom, perfect, one with time.

Wholly in darkness, make your world at will
As you would have it, sane and sure.
What sea can rival your mind's fuller scope?
In your deep and inward eyes its waves unroll,
Divested of the torque of outward gaze.

All music now beats in your inward ear,
Thuds in your wrists, forgotten themes
And themes unheard; no keys unlock such doors.
All Fidelio moves behind your brow,
One momentary, rich and endless chord.

O wholly be with music and the sea,
And being so yourself be whole.
This is completion, that you sought in sleep,
As, holy in dark, Hanno, you constrain
Grave modulations of these classic waves.

ELEGY FOR THUMBLING

Thumbling my poppet, grubbed root, lanced inch of life,
hunched, bunched and folded on your twist of blood,
heart-whole get of wish and flesh, as white jade
carved cool and lambent, my dear, you are cut off;

Aristotle, potato-soul, blame masked Atropos, not me,
who with her keen bright alexandrian scalpel halved
the knot of you, so darkly, so intricately tied,
who snapped you from your frail stem as a child a daisy,

absently; but no, love: when like oilslicked trout from water
wrenched you dangled hooked and silent, as you endured
your going hence, never once your cold unfinished blind
sockets salted, my fry forfeited, my zombie, not living nor dead:

but I cried, remember, Thumbling: blame me, my son, my daughter.

Anne Reynolds

MICA

I remember finding mica as a child,
The bright shattered slivers
In clay dark red with rain—
Clear remnants of the first world,
The shining sphere
Before it broke.
And as children find mica in North Carolina
Men in old hats on Broadway
Step out of the rain and wind the peep-show—
Finding there glimpses
Of bright bedrooms, and kisses.

Charles Edward Eaton

A KNOWLEDGE OF BIRDS

Let us tower above our anxieties, let us be immense,
If only for a moment, in love or some such dedication.
Have we not spent the ages finding other ways of being overcharged
and tense?

Now young men bite off the heads of imagined hawks
That would tear at their entrails. There in the palm
The blood-ruby of an eye, like illicit money, sulks,

And a dwarf slinks toward the purchase of life—
Not one could bear the company of David who becomes Goliath
and gentles him

With stone from a slingshot like a hard eye stuck in the flesh
of strife.

And yet the torsion in the neck feels thrilling to the hand—
After hawks, seductive swans, and all the little birds,
The violent pleasure of the unopposed command:

This is what I am—You will not see me otherwise.
David himself must have spent long brooding stretches
of his youth

Looking at the figment-jewels of those strangled eyes

Until he knew that one giant killed was quite enough.
The hawk may pierce our thumb and bring a ruby out,
Or a swan-neck, stroked, make lyrical with love the hand
entangled in its ruff.

Rafael Pineda

Tres Poemas

¿A QUIEN LLEVAN AHI?

A Rafael Pineda

Las aguas se cruzan en el llano,
resoplando con la violencia de un potro
enceguecido por la tempestad.

Debo encontrar salida por el monte,
aunque me devoren las grandes hojas que hablan,
cuando la obscuridad sea completa.
Aparto la ramazón crujiente
y me hundo en la encenegada prisa de las hormigas
que buscan tierras altas.

El viento se doblega,
como la espalda de un condenado a muerte,
mientras dice:
"Pasarán por encima de mi cadáver".

Tres días de invierno,
corriendo detrás del grito de la venganza,
han ensombrecido el puñal en la cintura.

Hago un alto,
con una raíz en la mano,
para amordazar al aguacero;
pero, la lluvia tiene plumaje de gavián.

El alma, en ese momento, se incorpora.
Delante de mí,
cargando una hamaca sobre los hombros,

Rafael Pineda

Three Poems

Translated by Keith Ellis

WHOM DO YOU CARRY THERE?

To Rafael Pineda

The waters converge in the plain
snorting as violently as a colt
blinded by a storm.

I must find an exit through the mountain,
even though the great talking leaves devour me,
when darkness is complete.
I push aside the rustling branches
and fall into the muddy haste of ants
that seek for higher ground.

The wind bends
like the back of one condemned to death,
as he says:
"They will pass over my dead body."

Three winter days,
running behind the cry of vengeance,
have darkened the dagger in my belt.

I stop,
with a root in my hand,
to muzzle the heavy rainfall
but, the rain is feathered like a sparrow-hawk.

The soul, at that moment, rises up.
In front of me,
bearing a stretcher on their shoulders,

se mueven dos conocidos
con el pecho lleno de sangre.

“¿A quién llevan ahí?”,
pregunto,
saliendo a la llanura infinita.

“A Rafael Pineda”,
responden las voces familiares.



1926

Mi padre puso el oído en las costillas de mi madre
y, como si una orden de libertad firmara, dijo:
“Lo llamaremos Rafael Angel
para que no se pierda en la montaña”.

La madre se escondió detrás de sus cabellos,
tan pálida que daba miedo recogerla,
tomarla por la frente sin sentir el vaho de la tierra.

El padre hizo fuego en el bosque.
Pensó que ella necesitaría un poco de hierba,
un vaso de calma,
una flor en las manos
y una almohada donde las lágrimas
cayeran con el silencio de las plumas.

De cristal en una época,
de lluvia en la jofaina,
de enamoradiza pradera,
las costillas de la madre seguían crujiendo
muy adentro,
con el estupor de la maternidad
que empieza a desangrarse
en hilillos frescos, vivos, rugientes.

two acquaintances move,
their chests covered with blood.

“Whom do you carry there?”
I ask,
entering the infinite plain.

“Rafael Pineda,”
the familiar voices reply.



1926

My father put his ear against my mother's ribs
and, as if signing an order of liberty, he said:
“We'll call him Rafael Angel
so he'll not get lost in the mountain.”

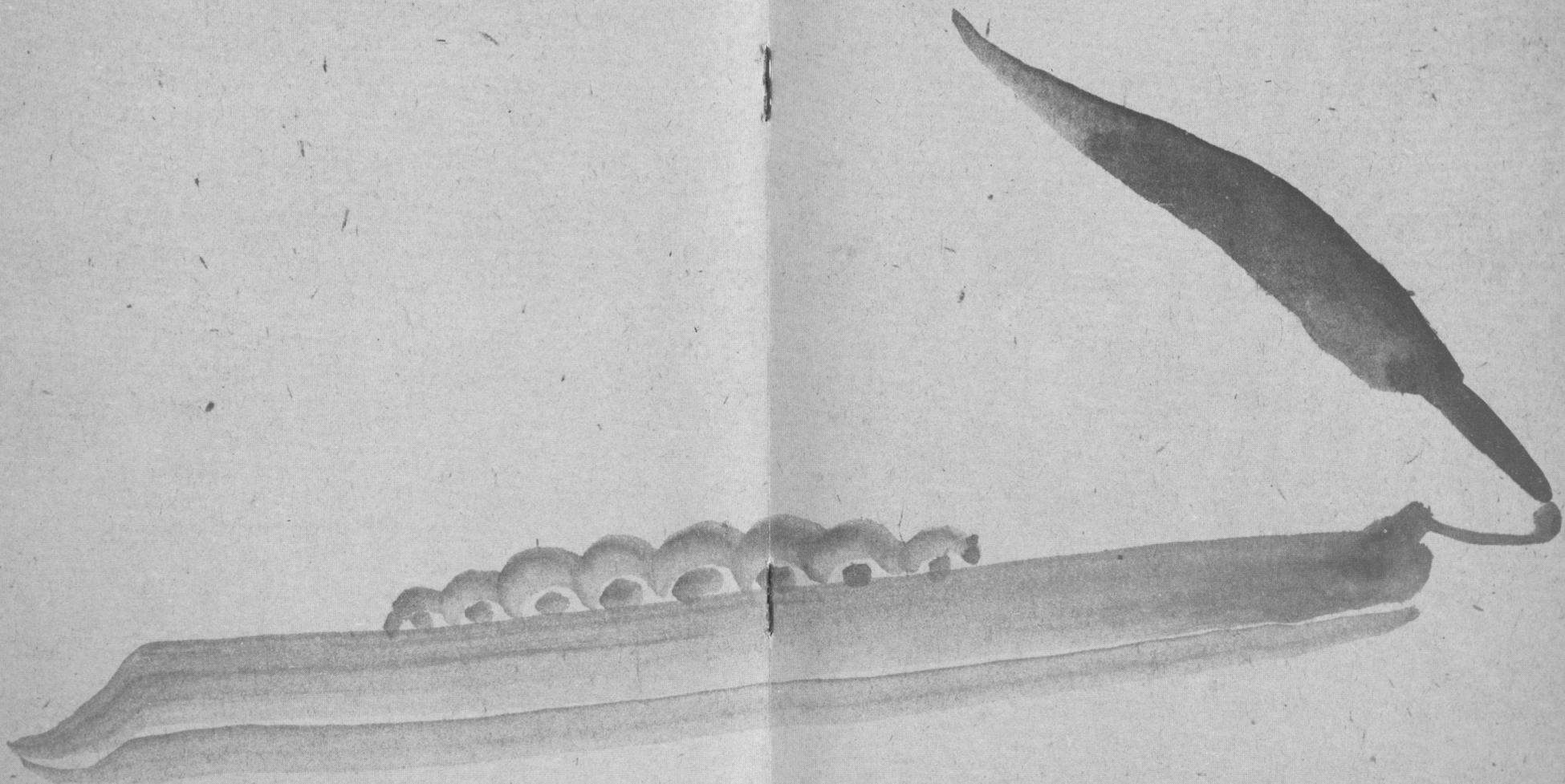
My mother hid herself behind her hair,
so pale she was, it was fearful to embrace her,
to take her by the forehead without feeling the steam of the
earth.

My father made a fire under the clustered trees.
He thought she would need some herb,
a calming vessel,
a flower in her hands
and a pillow so the tears
could fall with the silence of feathers.

Of glass at one stage,
of rain in the wash basin,
of meadowland inclined to love,
my mother's ribs continued creaking
deep within her,
with the stupor of maternity
beginning to lose blood
in fresh, alive, and roaring little threads.

“No me den agua sino en la palma de la mano”,
pedía mi madre,
a la diestra del crepúsculo sentada,
ensombrecida por el espanto.
“Escondan los retratos de juventud”,
ordenó a su prima.
Después se reclinó sobre su anchísima vida,
con el gesto de una campesina que busca las raíces,
y rezó por la asistencia de la gracia,
del santo abogado de los partos
y de la bienaventuranza.

Yo no había visto, hasta entonces, las nubes.
Escuchaba el alarido del fantasma
durante la noche.
Supe que el mundo giraba
alrededor del infinito,
porque mi madre daba vueltas equinocciales en el patio.
Mi desnudez formaba parte de esos mismos actos,
con huesos quebradizos
y carne de rodillas,
como pidiendo misericordia de antemano.
En la obscuridad incitaría a las fieras
a buscar el rastro de los cazadores.
De golpe crecería,
como el muro que se levanta a un héroe.
El tejido de estambre,
hora tras hora,
le iba dando sentido a mis huellas
en el regazo de la madre.
Conquistaba el derecho a perseguir la muerte,
a intimidarla con mi presencia,
a repartir sus plumas a los gavilanes.



Handwritten text, possibly a signature or date, located below the main object.

“Don’t give me water except in the palm of your hand,”
my mother pleaded,
seated on the right of the twilight,
shadowed by fear.
“Hide the portraits of youth,”
she ordered her cousin.
Then she bent down over her broad, broad life,
with the gesture of a peasant searching for roots,
and prayed for help from grace,
from the holy mediator of births
and from good fortune.

I hadn’t seen the clouds as yet.
I listened to the howling of the phantom
during the night.
I found out that the world spun
around infinity,
because my mother
took equinoctial strolls in the yard.
My nakedness formed part of those very acts,
with fragile bones
and flesh kneeling,
as if begging for pity in advance.
In the darkness I would incite the wild beasts
to seek out the footsteps of the hunters.
Suddenly I would grow,
like a column built up for a hero.
The fabric made from the thread of life,
hour by hour,
gave more meaning to the kicking
in my mother’s lap.
I was conquering the right to pursue death,
to frighten it with my presence,
distributing its plumage among sparrow-hawks.

Nadie me oía,
sin embargo,
cuando yo gritaba :
"Estoy en el fondo del aljibe".
Nadie me respondía,
ni siquiera mi hermano que me esperaba,
de un momento a otro,
cortándole el aliento a las hormigas.

"Enciendan palma bendita porque no veo",
rogó la madre.
La rama amarillenta silbó entre el fuego,
mordiéndose la cola como sierpe vencida,
derrotada por un intento de alabanza.
La ceniza se adueño de su presa.

El lecho tendió amarras en el amanecer,
con el ademán victorioso de la madre
que señalaba lugares desconocidos para todos.
"El domingo tocarás guitarra
y, como de costumbre, te morirás de risa",
aseguraba el padre,
recogiendo su llanto en una plama.
Ella no pudo resistir tantos gemidos ;
cerró los puños, eternizada, sobre el pecho
y cayó sin sentido, entre las sombras.

Ustedes me conocen.
Yo nací en ese instante.

No one heard me,
nevertheless,
when I cried :
"I am at the bottom of the cistern."
No one answered me,
not even my brother who awaited me,
from one moment to the next,
stopping the breathing of the ants.

"Light the holy palm because I cannot see,"
my mother begged.
The yellowish branch whistled in the fire,
biting its tail like a conquered serpent
worn out by the intent to praise.
The ashes took charge of their victim.

At dawn the bed threw out life lines
with the victorious gesture of my mother
who pointed out unknown places for everyone.
"On Sunday you will play the guitar
and, as usual, you will die of laughter,"
my father assured her,
gathering up her weeping in his palm.
She could not hold back so many moans ;
she tightened her fists, forever, on her bosom
and fell unconscious among the shadows.

You know me.
At that moment I was born.

LA MANDOLINA

*A mi madrina que se
quedó para vestir santos.*

Como si el paso de un leopardo las asustara,
del fondo de la mandolina
las torcaces volaban,
cuando aquella mano cerúlea
iba de una cuerda a otra,
afinando los tonos más oscuros de la nostalgia.

La mandolina rugía en el cuarto
aunque su dueña cerrara los ojos
para no ver las cenizas
que habían devorado su corona nupcial.

La mano se preguntaba:
“¿Soy parte de tanta amargura
o de la propia mandolina?
Las recordaciones me dejan yerta,
como el impulso de un vals a medianoche”.

Esa misma mano
se enlazó con la del viento en los corredores,
pintó trinitarias al margen de los versos,
tejió el suavísimo encaje de la muerte,
cerró el abanico en el crepúsculo,
dió aliento al quinqué en Viernes Santo.

La mandolina no necesitaba su ayuda.
Tocaba sola,
por el fuego del pecho alcanzada,
mientras los salobres labios
cantaban un aire enardecido,
tan vehemente como un sueño con los ojos despiertos.

THE MANDOLIN

*To my godmother who became
a devout old maid*

As if the footstep of a leopard frightened them,
from deep within the mandolin
the ring-doves flew,
when that cerulean hand
went from string to string,
drawing out the obscurest tones of nostalgia.

The mandolin cried out in the room
although its mistress closed her eyes
not to see the ashes
that had devoured her nuptial crown.

Her hand asked itself:
“Am I part of such sorrow
or of the mandolin itself?
Recollections leave me worn out,
like the rhythm of a midnight waltz.”

That same hand
interlaced with that of the wind in the corridors,
painted flowers to border verses,
wove the most delicate lace of death,
closed the fan at twilight,
gave life to the lamp on Holy Friday.

The mandolin did not need her help.
It played alone,
by the fire of the pleading bosom,
while the briny lips
sang a passionate tune,
as strong as a dream with wide-open eyes.

Las torcaces revoloteaban sobre la cabellera ;
pero, de repente, su murmullo
fallecía en las entrañas de la mandolina.
Era el ir y venir del ajusticiado
de un barrote a otro de la celda ;
la andaluza sobre la frente ardiente,
la zapatilla de raso en la ciénaga,
el pañuelo de batista herido,
la flor que pugna por brotar en el tallo,
la serenata que se quedó en veremos.

La mandolina fué colgada de la pared
como la cabeza del ahorcado.
La tristeza pasó otra cuenta del rosario.

Poetry Northwest tiene el honor de publicar las primeras traducciones al inglés del gran poeta venezolano, Rafael Pineda. Estas traducciones son de su libro *Poemas para recordar a Venezuela* (1951). De este libro el poeta, en una carta a su traductor, dice "Poemas es un libro que le debía a Venezuela, como la sed se debe al agua. El país me nutrió de mitos, y pronto los incorporé a mi formación, los benévolos como los terribles, porque en ellos encontraba la consistencia espiritual que me permitía definirme frente a la realidad. Algunos de esos mitos, como el tratado en '¿A Quién Llevan Ahí?' me pusieron inmediatamente en contacto con las más tremendas experiencias vitales."

LOS EDITORES

The ring-doves hovered over her hair ;
but their murmur suddenly
died in the entrails of the mandolin.
It was the going and coming of the condemned convict
from one bar of the cell to another ;
the mantilla on the burning forehead,
the satin slipper in the mud,
the torn cambric handkerchief,
the flower that struggles to bloom in the shoot,
the serenade that never came.

The mandolin was hung from the wall
like the head of the hanged man.
Sadness had passed another bead of the rosary.

Poetry Northwest is honored to publish the first English translations of the great Venezuelan poet, Rafael Pineda. These translations are from *Poemas para recordar a Venezuela* (1951). Of this book, the poet says, in a letter to his translator, "Poemas is a book which I needed to give to Venezuela like thirst needs to give itself to water. The country nurtured me with myths, and soon I incorporated them into my structure, both the gentle and the terrible ones; because in them I found the spiritual firmness that enabled me to define myself before reality. Some of those myths, like the one treated in the poem 'Whom do you carry there?' put me immediately in contact with the most tremendous and vital experiences."

THE EDITORS

Two Poems

PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN GLASS HOUSES

But ours is a greenhouse, I keep telling you.

We water the plants regularly, growing
as fast as we can under these difficult conditions.

Even in these southern winters
we keep our Patient Lucies pink
pouting their little tongues in the windows.

Why do you look at us like that?
We're coming as fast as we can
I keep telling you.

Our African violets may be small
but it takes a long time to grow up.
Still, we're coming

Not right now, maybe, but soon.
It's only that the strong sun
(when it appears)
frightens us.

Standing too close to the burning glass
it mangles our cellophane markers
melts our plastic plates

Now I ask you—
What would happen if we came outside?

Stop looking at us like that!
We never did anything to you
never threw a single stone.

See here, next door they're giving away bread crumbs
This is not a feeding station
I keep telling you.

You make us feel like misers.
What a bunch of bleeding hearts!
All those fat red birds sitting around staring at us.

We tiptoe by the windows
but everytime we look out a branch swings up and down
raindrops splash in the sun

And there you are
little round red-breasted hearts beating
button eyes staring, staring.

No, we haven't written to Mother yet
yes we remember our old friends
we're coming as fast as we can
I keep telling you.



FAMILY PORTRAIT

Nobody here but us birds
Nobody nobody
But Father (the old crow)
Sister my blue-jay
Mother my brown dove
And I
The ugly duckling with a feather
Gummed in its one weeping eye.

I screech like a rusty critic
Like an awkward spy
I inspect the warm house

I would snap up their hearts
But see, my confederate
Sister blue-jay
Even before I speak
Flashes bright blue away.

My crow condescends
But I shiver and shiver
Longing to share a feather,
To be framed, to flock
Together into the nest.
Yet ugly as sin,
Keeping my camera eye without,
Why should I be let in?

Only my dumpling dove
My mother my mother
She will move over
To give me cover,
And under her warm wing
I shall live on and on
I shall be white
And beautiful as a swan.

~

Rosellen Brown

Two Poems

SONNET TO A SOLITARY DRINKER, AGED TWENTY-ONE

Created in this solitary room, imaginings—
Those trundle-bed seductions after wine,
And you the dastardly, adored and brutal:

A wild Elvira, come to settle things,
Reminds you, snarling, of the Don's decline;
You take her measure, take her, and recline,
Assured that guilt and snarling are both futile.

This dream-world's full of sheep, the ewe for you—
Pick up the lambs and sup them, do the tuppung
And send them reeling back to boast their ruin.
This is your barnyard then, this brandy brew
To rut a mutton till she can do *you* in . . .
Well, dream away, black sheep. All will come true in
The sleep to which you fling yourself, hiccuping.

~

VISION

We, perverse in passion, clutch
A wary separateness that knows
Only the blind make friends by touch,
And lovers are the worst of those.

In unison of feeling, we
Will question, "Which the greater loss—
To keep a lone integrity,
Or know its bounds but slip across?"

Is this to understand too much,
This weakness in a will held fast?
For we are blinded at a touch
And fall together, strong at last.

Margaret Nordfors

Two Poems

WATER WITCHES

The grebe chicks, slough grass water witches
for Moussorgsky's hatching dance,
shaped to palms if hands could touch them,
were right to costume their emerging
with black and white striped heads and backs,
shells of plumage from their shells.
Hell-divers, their snakelike heads
held no stately

dreams of swans. They were what
they were, earthy even when
they shook their paddle feet to start
a witch's dance, peeped from sharp
reeds. Diminutive, misshapen,
their reward was being, if not
grace. They were that most important
part, three sprouting

seeds. What puzzled me was when
they lost that look. The marsh was losing
hand holds on the sun. They slipped
through cat-tails into water down
the nest, a stark Bald Mountain
from his witches' night. He would
have chased their tousled hunching with his
rising din.

Those three had looked too wise to be so
newly born. No ripples came.

Who taught them that? The marsh high gulls
were still. A distant bell doomed out
the spirits in a fantasy,
but doomed. The reeds held slippery sounds
that hinted of the comic in it,
and of oboes.

~

GERHARD MARCKS' MULE RIDER

The bronze figure
is both eased and tense,
becoming movement
but not being it as yet or being
Rilke's loved difficulty.

The mule says
to walk toward something
is an aspect
of having it. The rider says he guides,
a nature with a principle.

Slid hat, curled fist
but happy rider peak
a steady spine.
The distance has been planned, is not rushed into.
Seeing that has made me nearly

what I should be
and more cautious. Sitting
on a package
gracefully requires some leaning forward,
and donkeys have a slack smile.

William Witherup

THREE PERSPECTIVES OF SAN FRANCISCO

from Sausalito

Is San Francisco at noon,
bright and flat against
a cerulean sky, a fresco
by Piero della Francesca
or a projection of the Beautiful?
Sporting a florid shirt
the color of an infection,
a tourist is taking snapshots
from the boardwalk in Sausalito,
unaware his negatives are
of a sprawling white hospital.

from Oakland

Is San Francisco at noon
white as the walls of Jerusalem
or white as the bones of blacks
bleached bright in an African sun?
A stoned spade, stumbling from
a hotel doorway, knows
as the sun fires his silver
plated alto, he begins to blow:
white buildings are façades
concealing kennels
where white hounds
fatten on crates of doves.

from Alcatraz

San Francisco at noon
is Venus rising from the sea
in a rush of sexual foam
to taunt the caged
with her white beauty.
What these pariahs see,
their faces grotesque
against the wire mesh,
is missing in the vision
of Botticelli—
a nimbus of black light
surrounding her white flesh.

Ralph J. Salisbury

OVER CONCRETE, AGAINST A GRAY SKY

That impossible thing: to set foot to concrete,
the smile on my face of myself, not the world—
while birds singing simple songs
above intricately-scored
poles fencing the sky do not
take offense at my whistling and women do not
mind that I do not squeeze them
up among the wires and steeples so far
below the lowest grayblossoming hedgebanks,
but admire their dance about the may-
or-may-not pole of my being
in tapped-code touch with beginning and children
playing over concrete always
do what is most difficult,

smile—while the hard kernels of song
blossom into virgin snow (not blacken
into old maids) or send paper roots
between concrete blocks to launch
green to the moon and beyond (not sprout
on spring's sudden warming of concrete
only to wither in summer or curl
like frosted earthworms or the world's smile).

~

Bernice Ames

LIVING STONE

(a succulent)

One round living stone
gardened where others grow
holds the the temper of sun
moving so subtly slow
air weighs on leather skin.

One giving-in, one smile
yielding division or birth
accents the curve, the need
to push through husk of earth
a cycle driven from seed.

Node unshaped to shadow
smooth against all noise
holds the colors that gather.
Nowhere grows greater poise
than stone in every weather.

Brother Antoninus

IN ALL THESE ACTS

*Cleave the wood and thou shalt find Me,
lift the rock and I am there!*

—The Gospel According to Thomas

Dawn cried out: the brutal voice of a bird
Flattened the sea-glaze. Treading that surf
Hunch-headed fishers toed small agates,
Their delicate legs, iridescent, stiling the ripples.
Suddenly the cloud closed. They heard big wind
Boom back on the cliff, crunch timber over along the ridge.
They shook up their wings, crying; terror flustered their pinions.
Then hemlock, tall, torn by the roots, went crazily down,
The staggering gyrations of splintered kindling.
Flung out of bracken fleet mule-deer bolted;
But the great elk, caught midway between two scissoring logs,
Arched belly-up and died, the snapped spine
Half torn out of his peeled back, his hind legs
Jerking that gasped convulsion, the kick of spasmed life,
Paunch ploughed open, purple entrails,
Disgorged from the basketwork ribs,
Erupting out, splashed sideways, wrapping him,
Gouted in blood, flecked with the brittle sliver of bone.
Frenzied, the terrible head
Thrashed off its antlered fuzz in that rubble
And then fell still, the great tongue
That had bugled in rut, calling the cow-elk up from the glades,
Thrust agonized out, the maimed member
Bloodily stiff in the stone-smashed teeth . . .

Far down below,

The mountain torrent, that once having started
 Could never be stopped, scooped up that avalanchial wrack
 And strung it along, a riddle of bubble and littered duff
 Spun down its thread. At the gorged river-mouth
 The sea plunged violently in, gasping its pot-holes,
 Sucked and panted, answering itself in its spume.
 The river, spent at last, beating driftwood up and down
 In a frenzy of capitulation, pumped out its life,
 Destroying itself in the mother sea,
 There where the mammoth sea-grown salmon
 Lurk immemorial, roe in their hulls, about to begin.
 They will beat that barbarous beauty out
 On those high-stacked shallows, those headwater claims,
 Back where they were born. Along that upward-racing trek
 Time springs through all its loops and flanges,
 The many-faced splendor and the music of the leaf,
 The copulation of beasts and the watery laughter of drakes,
 Too few the grave witnesses, the wakeful, vengeful beauty,
 Devolving itself of its whole constraint,
 Erupting as it goes.

In all these acts

Christ crouches and seethes, pitched forward
 On the crucifying stroke, juvescent, that will spring Him
 Out of the germ, out of the belly of the dying buck,
 Out of the father-phallos and the torn-up root.
 These are the modes of His forth-showing,
 His serene agonization. In the clicking teeth of otters
 Over and over He dies and is born,
 Shaping the weasel's jaw in His leap
 And the staggering rush of the bass.

John M. Ridland

Four Poems

NOCTURNAL

Early evening

but you have gone off already
 into the somber lands where we are never together :
 the dog is disturbed by the silence in the house.

I read by one lamp, uncoiling
 an old spool of worn wire from my intestines,
 humming the dropping air to myself from the complication
 of the *Marriage of Figaro*.

My mind is an Estate.

With ponds, palms, a Japanese garden
 (remembered places),
 picture galleries open to the public
 (except Mondays).

And a few books
 stolen from Europe.



THE AWFUL WHITENESS

Not your old nemesis do we go chasing, Ahab,
 at 30,000 feet—
 still tossing up his tempest in the teacup
 of your Pacific,

but the grim
 white cancer of the crab,
 crawling claw over claw up the knotted spine.
 We drag a different Pacific with a sieve.

Compared to him,
your mania's a blunt instrument—no torture,
but the sweet taste of seawater: and
your plummeted ship may rewind
clear to the top, and follow your track
right back to Nantucket, all tight, all hands sound
(*Sir, he may live:*
I saw him beat the surges under him
and ride upon their backs),
rolling the ocean up after you like a mat,
—before we come upon him and pry him loose.
The whale was your torment only: this
drives every watcher mad.



THE FIRE-LOCKED MOUNTAINS

Mutiny of the senses—my very hands
tying themselves behind me. Hills of my heart
in the immense sierra above me, burn.
I am under the sun. To my long
hairs, threads of defeat are tied.
Fill up my eyes, O sun, with your hands. I see
the huge hills are afire and will fall.
I feel my eyes enlarge, and I am
taller even than mountains:
I strike my head against the starry
sun. My hair takes fire, and flame
frees me. O, all your cables char
and snap and I step free, put down
the insurrection of my members.
I walk clear as the wintry morning hills.

THE DIVERS

Awkwardly clambering into my pajama suit
And the pillow waiting like a knobby helmet,
I am a diver clad in a complete outfit,
And set to sink, and swim silently into sleep.

I am a diver, and the bathroom is my compression-
chamber. When I switch the light off, night
Floods in on me swiftly to fill the chamber up.
Holding my breath under the dark pressure,

I open the bedroom door and plunge downward,
My feet no more lead-weighted than my eyelids,
And past dim phosphorescent glimmers of all sexes,
To the sandy bottom that bounces, which is our bed,

Where you have set off already in exploration
Of the black reaches that stretch to all sides.
I will not catch you I expect in this survey,
Though when morning breaks above us, bringing its light

Glimmer through the gloom, we will probably wake
Together, and turn to stalk slowly up to the sub
Waiting above us at the bottom edge of the air
And the men waiting to see what we carry up.

Surface slowly your perilous cargo, love,
Your hands dripping crusted coins from that hidden
Craft we pillage together, your breath more precious,
And your blood, vulnerable to the bends.



About the Contributors

This is DONALD FINKEL's first appearance in *Poetry Northwest*. Scribner's published his book, *The Clothing's New Emperor*, a couple of years ago, and his poetry has appeared in *Poetry*, *Hudson*, *Paris Review* and elsewhere. With his wife, the poet Constance Urdang, he is poetry editor of a new magazine called *MSS*.

W. S. MERWIN appears here for the first time as well. He is presently living in New York, where he is active in the Peace Movement, along with his editor at Macmillan who published *The Drunk in the Furnace* last year. Indiana (here we go again) has just brought out his translation of *The Satires of Persius*.

MARYA FIAMENGO has published in many Canadian magazines; her book *The Quality of Halves*, was printed by the Klanak Press in Vancouver, B.C., in 1958. She is well known in the Northwest for her generous assistance to poets and poetry.

ROBERT CONQUEST was in our first issue. He writes prolifically on poetry and politics, and combinations and permutations of these, such as his latest book, *Courage of Genius: The Pasternak Affair* (Lippincott). Last year, St. Martin's Press published *Power and Policy in the U.S.S.R.*, and they will publish his *Poems* this May. He is bringing his authoritative *New Lines* anthology up to date for Macmillan (British).

TIM REYNOLDS suggests that we say something along the lines of, "Tim Reynolds has published widely." So, always eager to receive instructions from our contributors, we do. He says further, "I have a wife and baby since the last time around. The baby's name is, according to the hospital, Boy Reynolds. They hung it on his cage."

ANNE REYNOLDS was raised in North Carolina and now lives in South Dakota with her husband (not Tim), who is a poet and a free-lance geologist.

We are printing CHARLES EDWARD EATON for the first time. He lives in Woodbury, Connecticut, and has published in many magazines.

RAFAEL PINEDA at the age of 36 is the most distinguished living Venezuelan poet. In addition to a number of books of poems, he has written two plays, *Los conjurados* and *La inmortalidad del cangrejo*, and a novel, *El gano a los ojos*. He is living in Rome this year.

KEITH ELLIS makes his debut as a translator and poet with these versions of Señor Pineda's poems. He was born in Jamaica in 1935, took his B.A. at the University of Toronto, and is presently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Washington.

PATRICIA GOEDICKE has published in *Kenyon*, *Antioch* and the *Saturday Review*, and is married to a professor of mathematics and astronomy at Ohio University.

ROSELLEN BROWN is a New Yorker now doing graduate work at Brandeis, and has been published in *Poetry*, *Beloit* and *Mademoiselle*.

MARGARET NORDFORS was born in Alaska and is a graduate of the University of Washington and its Poetry Workshop. She has been published in the *Nation*, the *Northwest Review* and the *Massachusetts Review*.

WILLIAM WITHERUP, who attended this University for a while, was recently married in the Soto Zen Temple in San Francisco and has an eighteen-month-old stepdaughter. He is supporting his family by being a dishwasher. We hope that one of our readers in the Bay Area will be able to think of a better job for him. Communications cheerfully forwarded.

RALPH J. SALISBURY has been published in the *Northwest Review*, the *New Yorker* and many small magazines. He lives in Eugene and teaches in University of Oregon's Department of English.

BERNICE AMES has published two books of poetry, the last being *In Syllables of Stars*, and her work has appeared in many small magazines. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband, three children, two families of white rats, a parakeet and a dog.

BROTHER ANTONINUS has published a number of books, the latest of which is *The Crooked Lines of God* (1959). His new book will be called *Hazards of Holiness*.

JOHN M. RIDLAND, who appeared in our last issue, spent what are known as "the formative years" of his life in Spokane, where his father was the British Consul. He lived practically next door to the house where an editor of this magazine spent her formative years. Bronze plaques will be installed at some future date.

We welcome MARK TOBEX, the illustrious painter, back to the Northwest. He has been living in Basle, has had a retrospective at the Louvre, has won the latest Carnegie International; and his one-man show opens at the Museum of Modern Art this fall.

ALMA

Poetry Northwest was invited to send an observer to the second conference of the newly formed Association of Literary Magazines of America, held in New York City, March 16-18, 1962. One of our editors attended the conference, at which thirty-four magazines were represented. Membership criteria were adopted, and common problems concerning distribution, promotion, and Foundation aid were discussed.

Allen Tate was elected honorary chairman of ALMA. The Executive Committee, consisting of Reed Whittemore (*Carleton Miscellany*), Henry Rago (*Poetry Magazine*) and Robert Bly (*The Sixties*), was elected. It was noted—with pleasure by some (like us), with disgruntlement by others—that all the members of the Executive Committee were (a) poets and (b) non-Eastern Seaboarders. Like we say, us poets are the unacknowledged Administrators of Mankind. A Membership Committee and a Distribution & Promotions Committee also were elected.

Following the meeting, which had empowered the Executive Committee to set up a central office for ALMA and appoint a director, the Committee met with David McDowell and asked him to serve as temporary Executive Director of the Association. *Poetry Northwest*, believing in the aims and activities of ALMA, has made formal application for membership.

C.K.



Poetry Readings

A number of contributors to this magazine, including Josephine Miles, Thom Gunn, Harold Witt and Robert Peterson, will take part in a four-day Poetry Festival at the San Francisco Museum of Art commencing June 21, 1962. The festival is dedicated to the memory of Dag Hammarskjöld and the cause of World Peace. It is sponsored by the Poetry Center of San Francisco State College, directed by James Schevill. Under the same sponsorship, a Contemporary Arts Festival will present a reading by Theodore Roethke on May 4.

Pacific Northwest Poets and the Seattle Public Library present Vi Gale, Friday, May 18, 8 p.m., Seattle Public Library Auditorium. Mrs. Gale lives in Portland, Oregon. Her book, *Several Houses*, was published in 1959 by Alan Swallow.

To Our Peripatetic Subscribers

All Fulbrights, Guggenheims and Summer scholars take note: Please tell us as soon as possible of any change in your mailing address. Include both old and new address (zone number, too). Your undelivered copies usually are destroyed. If copies are returned to us, we pay vast sums to retrieve them.

Still Available:

***Poetry Northwest*, Double Issue, Winter, 1960-1961**

(The four issues of Volume One are sold out.)

This double issue, with cover by Morris Graves, contains five poems of Vladimir Mayakovsky (the original in Russian) with translations by Victor Erlich and Jack Hirschman; and groups of poems by William Stafford, Harold Witt, Eve Triem, Joseph Langland, Earle Birney, Robert Peterson, Donald Hall, John Tagliabue, Sister Mary Gilbert and others; Thom Gunn's "Modes of Pleasure" and James B. Hall's "Memorial Day."

Copies of this extraordinary issue can still be obtained for \$1.25.

Poetry Northwest
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