

# Poetry

## NORTHWEST

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SIX POETS:

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FINKEL

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POETRY  NORTHWEST

VOLUME FOUR

NUMBER ONE

SPRING, 1963

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## About the Illustrators

WILLIAM CUMMING is a well-known Northwest painter. He was born in Kalispell, Montana, 1917, and, like all the gifted and mature painters of this area, he is a graduate of the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration. He had a one-man show at the Seattle Art Museum in 1961, a year after winning the Northwest Annual Purchase Award from that institution. The cover and four drawings in this issue are from the collection of one of the editors of this magazine.

BERKELEY CHAPPELL is twenty-nine, was born in Pueblo, Colorado, and studied art at the University of Colorado. He was one of four Washington painters in *Pacific Profile*, a traveling show of the work of West Coast painters under thirty-five sponsored by the Western Association of Art Museums. He won a purchase prize at the San Francisco Annual in 1962. He lives in Tacoma. The four drawings reproduced here are from a series illustrating Mr. Finkel's poem, "Simeon."

# POETRY NORTHWEST

SPRING 1963

SIMEON

OR

THE DEATH OF GOD

*Donald Finkel*

THE LAST (AND ONLY) LETTER FROM SIMEON'S  
HAND, ON HIS EJECTION FROM THE MONASTERY

*It occurred to me today that God is subhuman.*

*Why does that shock you so? If we cannot  
do what He thinks we ought, or acts as if,  
then what is the earthly difference whether our failure  
lie at the door behind us or the one before?*

*Locked in the cell of manhood, behold the man!  
He yearns for childhood with every child he sees,  
though his own had been unspeakable. And God  
knows what he thinks when he sees a cat, or a bird.*

*I embrace him, the beast in me: he is my past.  
My future also. Try not to worry.*

S.

## APOLOGY

I had to have something to lift me from the garbage of my days.  
The Arab has his hashish, the soldier his danger,  
the codger his childhood, children their tears, the rich  
their gold, visits, masquerades; the poor  
have their hunger and children, merchants their losses,  
and wives their vegetables and chatter. It all  
drifts up to me where I sit, like burning garbage,  
the cries, laughter, wagons, animals, ashes.

The old, as I said, have their childhood. Up from the gnarled  
ailing feet, the ropy veins, the long  
slack scrotum, the fallen belly, the breasts  
like paper lanterns hung too long in the weather;  
up from the bedpans and hernias, the hacking, hawking,  
rotten, or false, or no, teeth, rheumy  
eyes, from yellowy hair, rises the faint  
odorless dream of what they were; or what  
they were not, who can be sure? They remember childhood  
as a monk remembers women: something attainable,  
had or not had, what matter? in another life,  
by the man one could have been, if one had not  
been saddled from the very beginning with being oneself.

So I remember Simeon, my brother.  
I turn to his image as to a glimmer of childhood,  
or a photograph of some naked untouchable woman.  
As if, out of this scrabbling, screaming, screwing,  
eating, sweating, I might drift up to him,  
incinerated, white, weightless, nothing.  
Is it strange such rotten flesh as his should seem  
a haven from my own decay? His garbage  
is not my garbage; his wound, remembered,  
is clean as chiselled stone, his fetor rises  
metaphysical as wind, his handkerchief

takes on the perfection of laundry: spit as he will,  
it is no less perfect.

Can you wonder then why I need him?  
why I hate him, as the codger hates the child?  
as the cold priest hates the lover? I sit in the dark  
stall of my flesh and wait for his confession.  
He comes, he is the man: how can I forgive him?

## THE PILLAR

Stone. Kernel of solitude. Indifferent  
to pain, pleasure, climate, place, emotion.  
Stone. Concentration of forces, center of balance,  
inward and outward the same, condition of rest.

Erect. Proud as a phallos. As innocent,  
free of deception, of the gnarled indecent fig.  
Erect. Human, male, arrogant, absolute,  
raised like a mailed fist against the sky.

## THE PROVENANCE OF THE STONE

Taller than he by half, heavier by ten,  
surely he couldn't have managed it alone.  
Friends? He had none, it was against his religion.  
Samaritans? To judge from the legends, they stopped  
for nothing less than a god, of course in disguise.  
Mockers? Certainly not, mockers never carry  
anything heavier than a feather, a needle, a pen.  
Shrewd hardheaded men, these would have expected  
some fair return, the Word, a cut of the profits.  
Who were these strangers then, who was it bore  
his stone like a gift to the place of his sacrifice?

Of course it is always possible he found it waiting;  
for a saint all circumstances are propitious,  
if only after the fact. But the question remains:  
whose was it first? And what had they propped it under  
to keep from falling on their heads, a temple? a tomb?  
Surely in all the accounts there is one word  
concerning the fate of these men, whose sweat and science  
raised the tower he shinnied to consummation.

#### FOOTNOTE

*The pillar was actually the middle finger  
of the left hand of the Colossus of Rhodes.  
With it Simeon contrived, before an assemblage  
of 1000 Arabs, the Emperor Theodosius, and his mother,  
in the firmest, most unambiguous manner possible,  
to suggest to man what he could do with his life.*

#### THE ANGEL

1

Some, soldiers of fortune, go forth to slay  
the dimwitted monster Will with the pebble Whim.  
Feeble, unprepossessing Simeon applies  
jiu-jitsu, lifts him up; cut from his sources,  
limp as a newborn child, he waits to be killed.

2

He fattens us in his house, against our will.  
We ripen in his eaves while he watches, we dangle in his face  
our radiant tempting cheeks. We shall let go.  
We shall poison him with our sweetness: as we fall, so shall he.

3

Is it the angel he wrestles to a draw? Some pleasure  
in giving, this one in taking. No blame. How else  
keep justice alive in the world, balance and beauty,  
the sea against the land, lover against lover,  
pressing the halves till they fuse? How keep the world whole?  
Though the gift be missent, or unwitting, is this to be scorned?  
Does the virtuous giver distinguish the grateful from the proud?  
The angel cares nothing for gratitude; he pays  
Abel, screws Cain, screws Abel: it is all one.  
Throw him the flank or the entrails; he devours, he devours.  
Stay. Wrestle with him at the fording; breast to breast,  
all night you shall sway in the moonlight, grunting and sighing  
like lovers and dying men: there is nothing to lose.

4

Or is it himself he wrestles, his feet he tips  
in the air? Rebel against nature: himself: he suffers;  
enjoys the suffering of others. He is a god  
wrestling with flesh, his brother. Reeling, high  
in no man's country, the rules of the game are his.

#### SIMEON'S WIFE GRANTS AN INTERVIEW

He was never much of what you would call a husband;  
an animal maybe, a cat. Or a child; when I think  
of the mothering he took, and the holding my peace, how many  
mornings he found me, when he came in, as silent  
and unquestioning as a house. Sometimes he came  
to me then, he had to kneel, and kissed me like a boy.  
Then the kiss turned into a whisper (with the kids inside).

How they smirked when he left; you'd think I couldn't content him.  
I gave him ten times what he asked; that is, when he asked,

which wasn't often. Mostly, he prowled about picking up ashtrays and riffling books like a kid who'd just found what he was made for, and nobody to try it on. He brought out the mother in me. Something else, too.

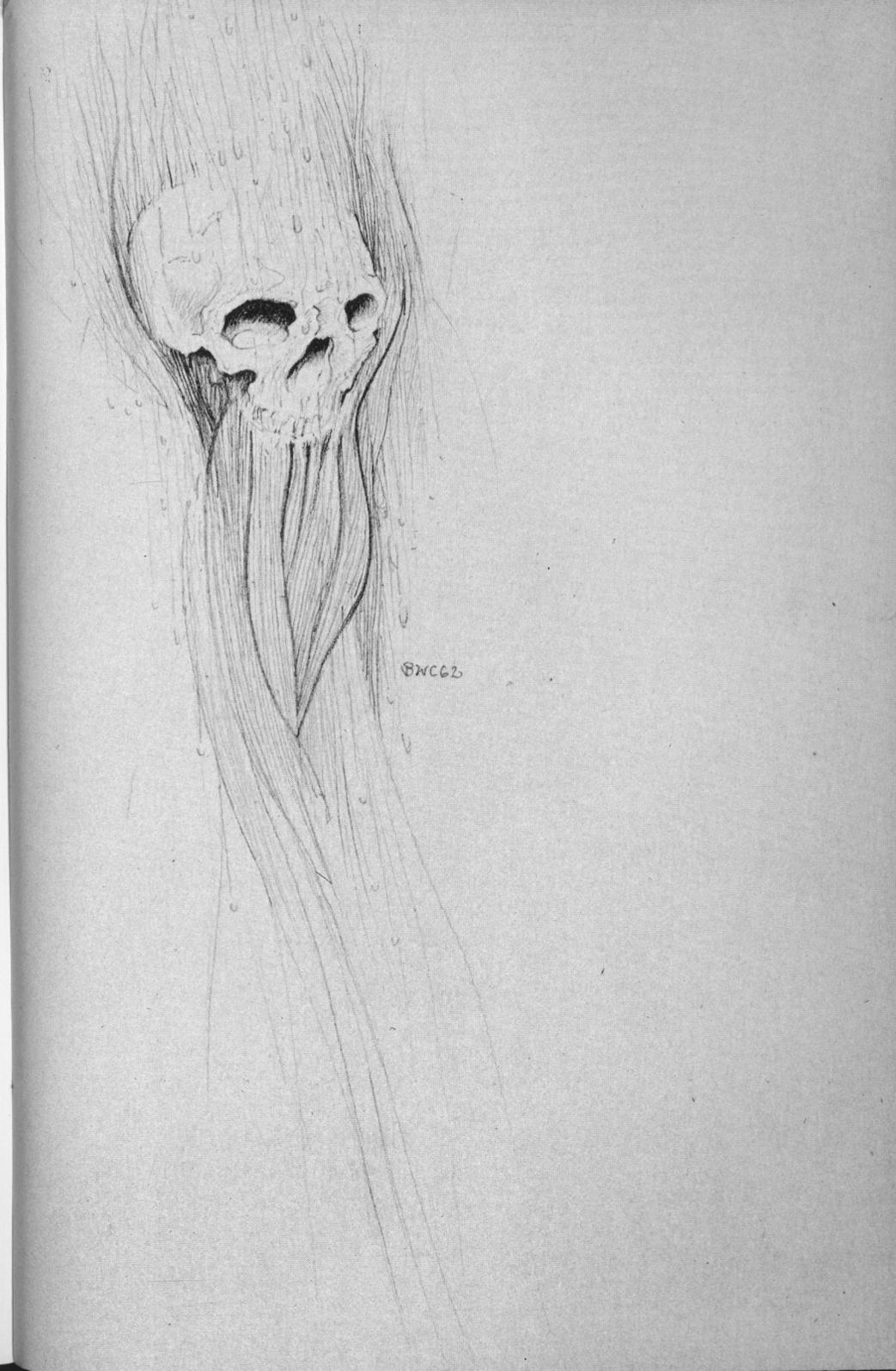
One morning he sat up and smiled: All right, I'm a bastard. I don't deserve you. God knows I never said it, in so many words. He walked out buttoning his shirt, not grandly, mind you, that wasn't his way; more as if he were going out for a stroll or a beer.

I look in the mirror, sometimes, queer how things change; his sweet seed sown, his body of a boy run through me like a river: now, for this mushroom, for this fusty pocketbook of a thing, can I call him to task?

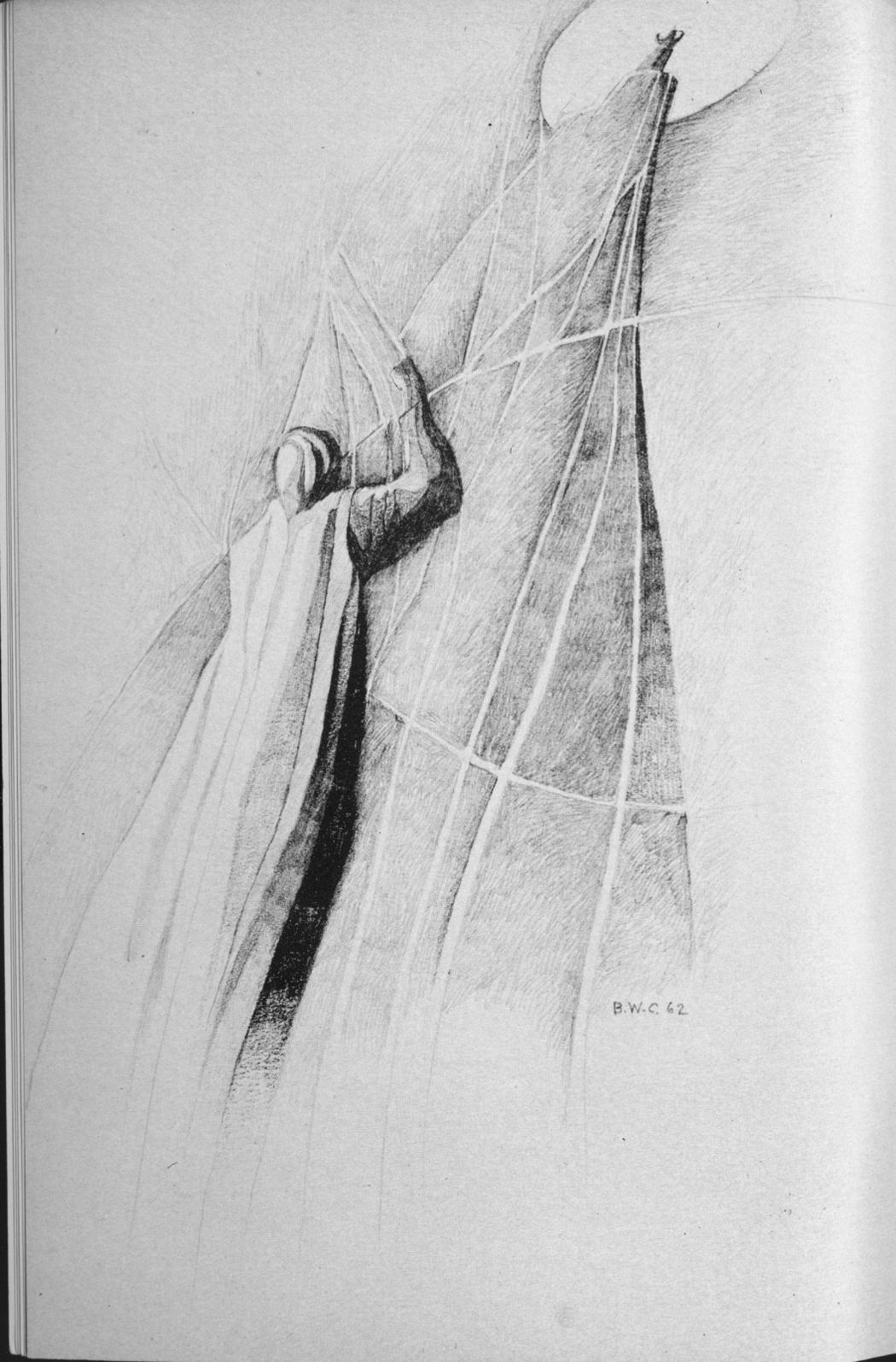
NOTE: FOR THOSE WHO WONDER HOW SIMEON  
CAME TO BE MARRIED

*The legends tell of at least three stylites called Simeon.  
The first and most famous is said to have converted a dragon;  
of the Younger, little is known, and all of it boring,  
though he claimed in a letter to have already been sitting  
on a pillar when he lost the first of his baby teeth.  
The third is hid in a cloud, lit only by his death,  
when his pillar unfortunately acted as a lightning-rod.  
Were there not others, of whom nothing is heard?  
do the legends fail us here, or in any respect?*

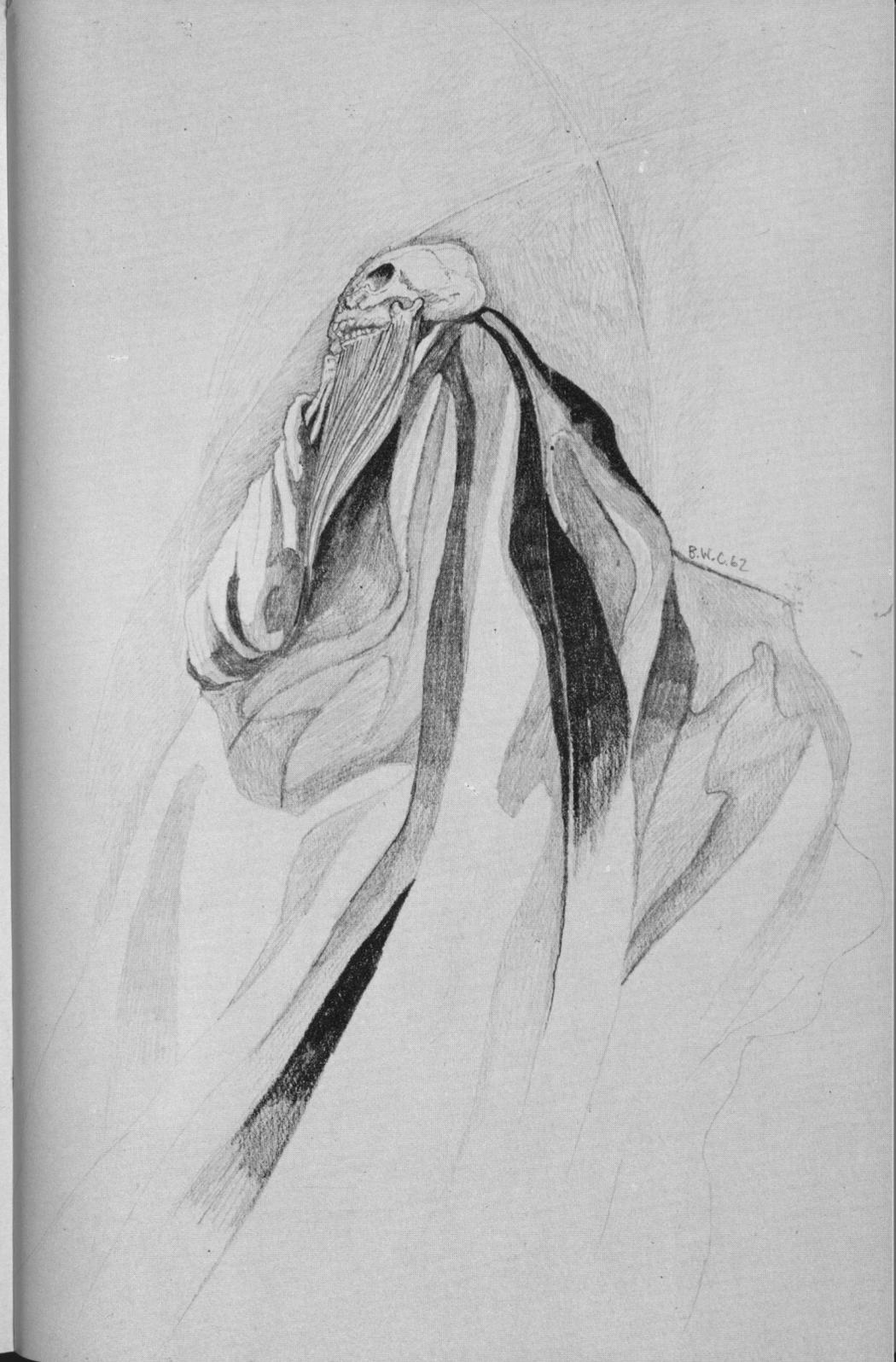
*The value of originality is suspect,  
and the rite, to retain its potency, bears repeating.  
There have been men since Adam's first uprising  
who would shin up a tree, or a gallows, or a flagpole, and flutter  
for hours, days, years, in the crowd's cruel weather.*



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B.W.C. 62



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## I PAY SIMEON A VISIT

Guileless, damn him, always the innocent,  
grease of the calf still glistens on his mouth;  
his blue eyes frame a question, half reproach.  
While, squinting up like this, into the sun,  
the twisted mask you wear might stand for hate.

Co-signer, of your own free will, whose fault  
is it they come to you for the rest of the payments?  
For Simeon's house is now by default your house,  
his children your stepchildren, his wife your wife.

In every kitchen quarrel or green offense  
you see your rights in question (though in this  
their silence and restraint are above reproach);  
you flourish each hour and paycheck like a gift,  
nor can forgo, with Simeon, pride or praise.

Five days a week you pay off Simeon's debts,  
on the weekends crouch in the study and write verse.  
Outside the children yowl for their milk and love,  
and the duns, hear them? cry, You owe! You owe!

## SIMEON AMONG THE RAINDROPS

It rained down on him, it gathered in his beard  
and his eyebrows, and at the end of his nose. It clung,  
fell away from him, clung. It got under his clout,  
it trickled around his tool like a woman's finger.

He looked between the drops and saw the stones  
raise imperceptibly their ancient backs to take  
each drop as it came, in the fleeting second before  
it ran down into the ground and lost itself.

He peered from the caves of his ears and heard it whisper ;  
from time to time he opened up his mouth  
to let it in. It merged with the flow of his thoughts,  
it crept to his center, it spread. He began to tremble  
a little, then uncontrollably. He lost  
himself in a bone-wrenching ecstasy. At last he was warm.

He knew the sickness, he gave in to its caress.  
Like a boy's first case of clap, it would not kill him :  
it was only an initiation, not an end.

#### HOW SIMEON CONVERTED THE ISHMAELITES, WHOM NONE HAD REACHED

*What do you mean he had a hard time, honey. I had a hard  
time. You had a hard time. We all had a hard time.  
The lady downstairs*

Like the madman, he is sacred ; he can insult the king.  
He is a living reproach : beware of his wrath.  
Shall we tell him to laugh away the smell of his wound ?  
Shall we tell him his shadow is a passing whim of the sun ?  
He will not be cajoled, or put off, nor his logic refuted.

Though he understands nothing, yet he provides understanding ;  
though he stinks like the ditch of hell, he is divine.  
Staring into the depths of his wound we worship  
all that is mortal, passive, empty of meaning ;  
we cannot ignore his suffering, it is our own.

Yet were he instead to claim joy, we would slay him forthwith ;  
for who but a fool could believe him ? Who, even granting,  
could abide for long the chatter of a shining face ?

Standing in his long shadow we are as children ;  
for we are made in his image : dumbfounded we listen.  
In the silence, it is always possible we shall hear  
the sound of our own hearts' beating, some news of ourselves.

#### THE PILLARS CONTINUE TO INCREASE IN HEIGHT

The first was all of a piece, a nine-foot finger  
blown from the mother cliff. He made it up  
in a leap and a scrabble ; the air was fresh, the shadows  
sharper, blacker, things drew in their edges.

At the point of focus he paused. But there is no pausing ;  
each day calls forth reaffirmation : he climbs.  
The air grows thin, he weakens. As well, he sighs,  
be giddy now as later in dotage : upward !

#### SIMEON NEARS HIS TIME

Already the fluids settle, on his feet  
great blisters form and ooze, his final illness ;  
at the last, a dry leaf on a barren tree,  
he will release his hold, and be blown away.

A Job who went out looking for his boils :  
will God stand by for this ? will there be this time  
an explanation, or double your money back ?

To these questions the skies are silent as usual.  
Actually, Simeon has asked for nothing, he has taken the boils  
before, or as, they were given. He moves with the punch ;  
he turns the other cheek, and moves again.  
If this is punishment, he takes it like a reward.

Yet walk out in the street : the crowd threatens,  
it raises against you its soiled pragmatic fist.  
Up there, the blow is real, the boot in the can ;  
the moment of contact, however, is drawn out for years.  
In such tranquillity, terror is recollected,  
rejection made bearable, taken a grain at a time.

## THE SWEET TASTE OF REVENGE

*If you don't see what you want, ask for it.*

The time of forthrightness is past, the out-and-out miracle: Damn it, I need some light; and there was light. The honest rod pulsing with miracles, the pubes in sunlight, moist and miraculous as a garden. No longer the stolen fruit tastes sweet, no longer the honest stone is raised in the quarrel, nor raised the arm of the honest lie at the stones of the crowd. The priest turns judge, the repentant thief goes free; the hero rides for pay. At the foot of the stone the crowd leaps in his horny hand like a spear.

I knew a fellow once who used to eat his apple, flesh, stem, seeds, all; inexorable and fastidious as a god, nothing escaped him, not the least trickle of sweetness, not the last bitter miracle in her pod. A true philosopher, an honest man, where has he gone?

These days it's with me or against, either hate or love, shit or get off the pot. A committee came yesterday with papers, demanding: the stink of his ferment assails the public air, the safety of children is threatened; they would pluck him down and toss him in the bin. To be honest, I don't know what I think. Some nights, in this heat, lying with my face to the window for the faint night breeze, I catch a whiff of him, and the old rage rises in my chest. I think, what is that bastard doing to me? But it passes. Everything passes; little by little the night breeze carries it away.

## THE WOUND

1

A priest once came who doubted Simeon's substance. Simeon's head jerked once: a beckoning? The priest labored up; on hands and knees for the height he gazed on a wound as large as a woman's mouth, red, depthless, open. Far below, each man and stone became itself, distinct, literal, plain, like the breasts of a woman in moonlight.

2

A legend persists among the Arabs Simeon had hidden under his clout an image of the goddess of Minos, which he brought out only when he thought he was alone. By the time he had reached sixty feet no one could tell where Simeon left off and the heathen idol began. Or what he was doing. When they reached him, he had left but one great wound, from which his life had poured. The goddess of Minos was nowhere to be seen.

### SIMEON: ON SACRED LOVE

The priestess of Minos arranges her limbs to ease the passage of my delight, and we are gone bobbing along the blood to the drowning sea. From night to night we drift with the tides like the dead.

### REPLY: CONCERNING THE WIFE

A certain human clumsiness and certain purely personal blemishes contrive to slow and stir my beating blood at once. There is no perfection possible. But there is tomorrow.

### SIMEON'S SONG

Praised be the six holes of sense, where the mind's fingers grope;  
praised be the hollow of balance, where beauty hides;  
praised be the gully of need, whose fleshy flowers,  
eaten, but remind the appetite of what it seeks.

Praised be the shaft of my sex, I follow to the end.  
Praised be the anus, doorway of revelation;  
behind you the rites of change are conducted in darkness,  
in your steamy rift the smith beats his ore into life.  
And praised be the mouth, omnivorous as God,  
of flanks, entrails, smoke, sleeping-pills, anti-freeze;  
tunnel of delight, ditch of our sustenance: hide me.

### THE SUN

It burned him to a char of wick, to the irreducible,  
the no longer vulnerable, that which no longer can be  
imposed upon, or changed. Also, he was dead.

He may still have thought; there was no way of knowing. When  
had his senses so made one with the ardent weather  
they might as well have been the weather? So,

it was hard to decide when to bury him; if at all.  
For the sun had already accomplished whatever the dark  
lady of worms could do in her house. Better.

He smelled not at all, resembled nothing, either  
to pity or loathe, he offended no one. Really,  
it was hard enough to remember he was once a man.

### THE DEATH OF SIMEON

He knew the sea that lapped at the shore of his ear.  
All things impinged alike, pleasures and pains,

his own or someone else's, a woman's, a people's.  
He acknowledged the insults and did not disavow  
the praise, or the exaggerations either.

He suffered them to come. He heard the whisper  
of the drowned, mermaids and sailors; all things took on  
the phosphorescence of dreams and dying fish.

Lady of Minos, he cried, sea of grape, bowl of honey,  
breast whereon Odysseus foundered, source  
of my first cry, sphinx of my difficulty, mother:  
long have I drifted, come, let me probe your dark  
with my winnowing oar. Again I shall father forth  
children, furniture, debts, populations, war.

In the distance he heard the crowd roar like a triton:  
Father, Simeon, why dost thou forsake us?  
He smiled, lay back as if spent, and let go of his soul.

### AFTERTHOUGHT

Or have I the right to think, in the end, he doubted?  
At the brink where man turns god, what darkness falls?  
It is not revenge: that ignorance was his  
humanity. It was the god I hated.

### EXPLANATORY

*Once there were two brothers: Simeon,  
and Simeon's brother. It may seem ironic to some  
that Simeon's name should come down to us, while the brother's  
is completely lost; since only the brother ever  
learned how to write. But of the two, Simeon  
was clearly the more resourceful. He saw quite early*

*the vanity of fame, and settled instead  
for a comfortable notoriety.*

*Since the seed  
of honor is pride, which germinates best in the dark,  
he set about scratching like a crow to lay it bare.  
After several years of this, during which, it is said,  
his terrible practices caused his brethren to judge him  
'unsuited to any form of community life,'  
he deposited the result of his labors atop  
a pillar, exposed to all men's speculation.*

*Thereon he performed, until the hour of his death,  
continuously and free of charge, his various  
functions as a man. Not much of an act;  
yet it brought the crowds. He seemed, like the mountebank  
and the dancing girl, to offer more and more.*

*The effect of this outdoor life was in general salubrious.  
He managed to live his allotted three score and ten;  
although after a time his scent turned suspiciously high.  
Something about him innately rotten, perhaps  
(his wound, his mind), began to open like some  
nocturnal flower, and poisoned the dreams of the city.*

*Meanwhile, the brother, who had never learned  
to manage his life with Simeon's chaste perfection,  
shuffled on, seven days a week, payday to payday,  
as dignified as a beggar brandishing pencils.  
It is from his hand we receive this little collection.*

*Or what remains. It is hard to believe he wrote  
nothing after this. As if Simeon's death  
and his own all but coincided. Or did he refuse  
that gambit, and return, poor wandering Jew,  
to his dry goods and his wife? Rimbaud of the Bronx,  
Judas with a paycheck, you can almost see him.*

## *Emile Capouya*

### L'AN TRENTIEME

Testaments these days are out of style,  
Everyone says—and everyone is right;  
*Vox populi, vox Dei*—so my bile  
Would simply go on simmering out of sight  
But that it strikes me in this year of grace,  
This year of mouldy threats, this Doomsday Eve,  
That if I'm fired from the human race  
I have some things to leave before I leave.

Some unconsidered trifles, but my own,  
That may do service yet to my dear heirs,  
Some tasty tidbits clinging to the bone,  
Some smack of sense to go with my gray hairs—  
These things I freely grant, bequeath, bestow  
On such as, running, yet find space to read.  
I knew a thing or two that they should know,  
I missed a chance or so that they might heed.

I've had a try at smartening the parade  
Of my own awkward squad, my days and nights  
(Money I've missed, to call a spade a spade,  
But pressed my claim to all my other rights);  
Not the man to waste my own light ever  
Nor prompt the Fates the thin thread to dissever,  
Those dreary dimwit dull Stakhanovites  
And honored artists of the slaughtering trade.

When I was young an idler was a bum,  
A naked actress then was called a whore,  
No gas-pump was a lubritorium,  
The supermarket still was but a store.

Plain speaking was the vogue when I was young ;  
I may blow hot or cold but not lukewarm.  
I caught the habit of the single tongue,  
Point with *my* pride, view with my own alarm.

The corporation and the illfare state  
Have clipped my wings as they have cracked my song ;  
Yet do I flutter up toward Heaven's gate,  
Still singing, if not sweet, then loud and long.  
Some birds, we see, take kindly to the cage  
And fret them not at all but live resigned.  
One thing alone provokes their prisoned rage—  
The *rara avis* of the tameless mind.

Such shall inherit . . . birdseed and birds--t,  
And pecking-order glories past compare,  
Who shun the cleanly spaces nor admit  
The direful chances of the open air.  
Watered, fed, and all done by the clock,  
Against the day they bake or boil or fry—  
What price then the capon and the cock,  
The hen and pullet, dieted to die?

Enough! The barnyard reek sticks in my throat  
Worse than committee bilge or caucus stench  
When Donkey, Elephant, and patient Goat  
Outdo themselves to give your guts a wrench.  
Enough! There is a purer wind somewhere ;  
The animals that snuff that wind are wild,  
They are discreet, they grace the billowing air,  
They glance enticements at the human child.

*Et ego in Arcadia* . . . ? Never fear.  
No cockeyed Cockayne landscape blocks my view.  
I work for wages, bear the slights you bear,  
And find payday the grimmest, just like you.

But Rousseau was not wholly in the dark  
For all his noble savage is absurd—  
Behaviorists and con-men show a spark  
Caught from the conflagration of the Word.

The Word, the Word, amoral, tolling low  
And louder like a wave-swung buoy bell,  
With languors for the easy amorous swell  
And clanguors crying to the wind's bellow,  
Tolling in the coffer of the breast  
That scends and swims in milder, wilder seas  
Than those lapped round the world from east to west  
To lull the Line or taunt the Hebrides.

So far the fustian of an outworn day.  
The note is forced? I wrote it, I should know.  
But if I choose a primrose *pis aller*  
It's that there are no highways where I go.  
I must be brash and brassy to be heard  
When poets are sonorous as a snore,  
And critics in their secret parts are stirred  
By patient parsing of the verb "to bore."

No creed, from New Conservative to Zen,  
No Viereck and no Ginsberg will avail ;  
The formal cause of poetry is men,  
Sans which, make up your mind to see prevail  
The gifted shills of the old army game,  
The unco couth, the gay, the beat, et al.,  
Rhyiming to prove that one can, all the same,  
*Perdre le nord sans perdre la pédale.*

What! K— and his ilk queer? I didn't say.  
It may be so for all we know, but then  
Who cares who sleeps with whom, in just what way  
Time-serving catamites ply tongue or pen,

Whoring with history, bedding down with each  
Bloody-minded Turk of class or custom,  
And dip for dreck like seagulls off the beach,  
And cram their craw with dainties fit to bust 'em?

\* \* \*

Come then, my Muse, now that you've shown your bent  
And cried up your romantic view of fate,  
Immerse in the destructive element,  
Quit stalling, burst forth like a stream in spate.  
The world awaits a rich bequest—in verse—  
From one who has our epoch down so well,  
Variously skilled to snatch a purse,  
Solicit ads, or manage personnel.

~

*Patricia Goedicke*

STRANGER IN THE HOUSE

I

The first time he appeared to her she was only a small child  
Curled like a butterfly in the soft hollows of her bed,  
Twisting and turning in the drowsy dark,  
Admiring the rosebuds on her flannel nightgown.

At the heart of the warm house she smiled secretly to herself,  
Pinocchio the pineapple on the bedpost spoke,  
The shadow of a hairbrush made a wolf  
Wagging his pointed ears on the wall,  
And she giggled like a bird beneath the blankets,  
Tickling her ten wonderful toes.

But a step on the staircase sounded, muffled, mysterious,  
And suddenly frightened, she pulled the covers

Neatly up to her chin  
And lay there with her eyes wide open,  
Hands folded, heart beating  
Waiting for him to come in.

And the door opened, and the dark stranger  
Stood there in the lamplight staring,  
Spoke sternly to her, told her to stop doing  
Whatever she was doing,  
But cradled in his arms she began to cry. No matter what he said  
She knew his name was Death, and she was going to die.

II

The next time he came she was much older,  
Sprawled on her bed with her hair in pin curls,  
Reading a love story to the teddybear in her arms,  
From time to time watching the sun  
Dappling her pillow with spots of yellow gold.

"The river of life," she read,  
"Is the river of love, and death—"  
Is so far away I don't have to bother,  
She murmured to herself, munching a red apple,  
Poking at her hair to see if it were dry.

But she moved suddenly, and felt for the first time  
The wound between her legs, the mouth  
Gape wide open in a river of red.

Her hands began to shake, and she sat up  
Horried, hearing the step on the stairs again,  
Hating herself, ashamed, thinking  
It's my fault, my fault, what will happen to me, oh  
What have I done?

In a tantrum of fear she threw the apple  
After the teddybear and the love stories out the window,

The dripping walls of the house closed in,  
The egg-yolk sun disappeared,  
And she shouted over and over I *will* be good  
To the doorway where the dark stranger stood.

### III

The third time he came she was better prepared.  
All through the ceremony, in the joyful pomp of the organ  
She praised him, nevertheless she knew him:  
Shadowed, carnivorous, on the other side of the door  
Prowling through the forests of the moon—

Frozen in her tracks, his breath hard at her heels,  
She shivered like a trapped rabbit,  
But all the time the old wound  
Deliciously, in spite of herself, pitifully  
Throbbled in her thighs at his coming.

“Alpha and Omega, the cradle and the grave, life  
Is a fight to the death, and love—”  
Is the pimp that destroys us, she whispered to herself  
Helpless, unpinning her white veil,  
But standing there awkwardly, loosening her hair,  
Seeing his face in the mirror she stopped looking at her own,  
Gingerly she lay down beside him in the strange bed.

His voice in the dark was soft, the beloved hands  
Gently flattered and caressed her, slowly  
Pinocchio and the wolf receded in a flood of honey,  
He stood in the doorway, his step was on the stair,

And then she remembered, she could not help herself,  
She pulled the covers up to her chin  
And lay there trembling, waiting for him to come in.

### IV

She waited a long time for his next appearance.  
The slow months dragged by, but even in her impatience  
She never forgot the fear, the familiar terror  
Steadily growing heavier under her heart.

She tried not to think of it, the horror slowly approaching,  
But the cross of her elephant body continually cried out  
Under its unbearable burden:  
Kicking and kicking against her,  
Clamoring to get out,  
Pinocchio the long-nosed one, the vicious,  
The serpent tooth of survival secretly feeding—

“I could die for his sake,” she said once  
When no one else was around,  
And she dreamed of rabbits sacrificed, martyrs  
Drowning in tidal waves of blood

But finally the end came,  
The end, she said over and over as the ocean roared,  
The step on the staircase sounded, and she lay down  
Once again on her bed to await the end—

And rose on the third day in triumph with the wound healed:  
Cradled in her arms the red-faced, pineapple-headed  
Son and stranger no longer.



## Twelve Psalms

Translated by Frank Jones

### VISION IN WHITE

1. At night I wake in a bath of sweat with the cough that throttles me. My room is too small. It is full of archangels.
2. I know, I have loved too much. I have filled too many bodies, used up too many orange skies. I am to be eradicated.
3. The white bodies, the softest among them, have stolen my warmth: they were big when they left me. Now I am cold. I am tucked in under many blankets, I smother.
4. I suspect they will try to smoke me out with incense. My room brims over with holy water. They say I have the holy dropsy. That's fatal.
5. My darlings bring along a bit of chalk in the hands that I have kissed. I get the bill for orange skies, bodies and all. I cannot pay.
6. I would rather die. —I lean back. I shut my eyes. The archangels clap their hands.

### CARGO

1. I've heard that making love gives you a thick neck. I wouldn't like that. But I hear you get a thick neck from sky-riding, too. So it can't be helped.
2. The red canvas sheets that you wrap yourself in, along with the cars, applaud; the big cars' timbers creak because they have to go up; I think they're like animals champing at the bit, but the rider is on their backs. He has sucked onto them like a tick, bloodthirstily, the ghastly polyp; he hugs the fat purple beast and rides toward heaven, where sheets pick him up. The yellow lamps crane their necks to see how high a man can go without wrecking the works.

### SKY RIDE

1. You have to shove your knees forward like a royal whore, as if you depended on your knees. Which are very large. And purple death-leaps into the naked sky, and you fly upwards, sometimes rump first, sometimes front face first. We are stripped bare, the wind gropes through our clothes. Thus were we born.
2. The music never stops. Angels blow so hard on a little Pan pipe that it nearly bursts. We fly to heaven, we fly over earth. Sister air, sister! Brother wind! Time passes, the music never.
3. At eleven at night the rides are closed, so that the good Lord may keep on swinging.

### PSALM IN SPRING

1. I'm lying in wait for summer, fellows.
2. We've laid in a stock of rum and strung new guts on the guitar. White shirts remain to be earned.
3. Our limbs grow like grass in June and the virgins vanish in mid-August. At this season delight is rampant.
4. Day after day the sky is filled with a gentle glow and its nights rob you of sleep.

### SONG OF A BELOVED ONE

1. I know, darling, my wild life is making my hair fall out and I have to sleep on stones. You see me drinking the cheapest liquor and I go bare in the wind.
2. But there was a time, darling, when I was pure.
3. I had a wife who was stronger than I, as grass is stronger than the bull: it straightens up again.
4. She saw that I was wicked, and loved me.
5. She didn't ask where the road led that was her road, and maybe it went downward. When she gave me her body she said "That's all." And it became my body.
6. Now she is nowhere, she vanished like a cloud after rain, I left her, and she fell backwards, for that was her road.

7. But sometimes, at night, when you see me drinking, I see her face, pale as the wind, strong and turned toward me, and I head into the wind.

#### SONG OF THE WIFE

1. At evening by the river in the dark heart of the bushes I sometimes see her face again, the face of the woman I loved: my wife, who now is dead.
2. It is many years since, and at times I know no more of her, who once was everything, but everything passes.
3. And she was in me like a little juniper bush on Mongolian steppes, concave with a pale yellow sky and great sadness.
4. Our house was a black hut by the river. Gadflies often stung her white body, and I read the paper seven times or said "Your hair is the color of dirt," or "You're heartless."
5. But one day as I was washing my shirt in the hut she went to the gate and looked at me, wanting out.
6. And the one who had beaten her till he was tired said "My angel—"
7. And the one who had said "I love you" led her out and looked at the air with a smile and praised the weather and shook her hand.
8. Now that she was out there in the air, and it grew dreary in the hut, he shut the gate and sat down behind the paper.
9. I haven't seen her since, all she left behind was the little cry she gave when she came back to the gate in the morning and found it shut.
10. Now the hut has rotted away and my breast is stuffed with newspaper, and I lie beside the river at evening in the dark heart of the bushes and remember.
11. The wind's hair smells of grass, and the water cries incessantly to God for peace, and on my tongue I have a bitter taste.

#### PSALM 7

1. We didn't bat an eye when the white waters came up to our necks;
2. We smoked cigars if the dark brown evenings got on our nerves;
3. We didn't refuse when we drowned in heaven.

4. The waters told no one that they were at our throats;
5. It never came out in the papers that we kept silence;
6. The heavens are deaf to the shouts of drowning men.
7. So we sat on big stones like happy people;
8. So we killed the greenhorns who talked about our silent faces.
9. Who talks about the heavens?
10. And who cares what water, evenings and heaven mean to us?

#### SONG OF MY MOTHER

1. I no longer recall her face as it looked when she was not yet in pain. Wearily she pushed the black hair from her brow, which was gaunt, and I still see her hand doing that.
2. They had threatened her for twenty winters, her sufferings were legion, death was ashamed to touch her. Then she died, and they found the body of a child.
3. She grew up in the forest.
4. She died among faces that had watched too long at her deathbed and so grown hard. She was forgiven for suffering, but lost her way among those faces before she fell to pieces.
5. Many go from us without our holding them. We told them all we had to say, there was nothing more between us, our faces hardened in saying goodbye. But we didn't say what mattered and were sparing in what was needed.
6. Oh, why don't we say what matters, it would be so easy, and it damns us. Easy words, close behind the teeth, fell out as we laughed; they stick in our throats.
7. Now my mother is dead, yesterday, in the evening, on the first of May! Fingernails can't dig her out!

#### PSALM 9

1. How terrifying in the night is the convex face of the black land!
2. Above the world are clouds; they belong to the world. Above the clouds is nothing.

3. The lonesome tree in the stony field must feel that everything is in vain. It has never seen a tree. There are no trees.
4. I keep thinking: we are not observed. Scurf of the only star in the night, before it dies!
5. The warm wind still is busy making connections, the Catholic.
6. I seem very singular. I have no patience. Poor Brother That's-all said of the world: "It doesn't do anything."
7. We are traveling at high speed toward a star in the Milky Way. A great quiet is on the face of the earth. My heart is beating too fast. Otherwise everything is in order.

#### PSALM 10

1. Under a meat-colored sun that brightens the eastern sky four breaths after midnight, under a mound of wind that covers them with gusts like bedsheets, the meadows from Fuessen to Passau unfold their propaganda for the joy of living.
2. From time to time, railroad trains full of milk and passengers divide the seas of wheat; but the air is calm around the thunderers, the light between the rock-piles, noon over the motionless fields.
3. Shapes in the fields, nasty-looking creatures, work with slow movements for the palefaces in the rock-piles, as stipulated in the contract.
4. For God created the earth so that it would provide bread; He gave us the brown-chested men so that the bread would get into our stomachs, mixed with milk from the cows He created. But what is the wind for, glorious in the treetops?
5. The wind makes clouds, so that it will rain on the fields, so that bread will be brought into being. Now let us make children, in lust for the bread, so that it will be eaten.
6. It's summertime. Scarlet winds excite the plains; as June ends, smells become immeasurable. Huge faces of naked men, baring their teeth, float southward at enormous heights.
7. In the huts at night the light is like salmon. We celebrate the resurrection of the flesh.

#### PSALM 11

1. In July you fish my voice from ponds. Brandy is in my veins. My hand is made of meat.
2. The pond-water tans my hide; I'm hard as a hazel-switch; now I'd be good in bed, my girl-friends!
3. In the red sunlight on the stones I love guitars; they are bowels of cattle. The guitar howls like a beast; it feeds on little songs.
4. In July I have an affair with the sky. I call him Kid Blue; superb, violet, he loves me. It is manly love.
5. He turns pale when I rack my cattle-gut and imitate the red fornication of the fields and the sigh of mating cows.

#### PSALM 12

1. What do they want of me now? I've played all solitaires, spat out all brandy, shoved all books into the stove, loved all women till they stank like Leviathan. Already I'm a great saint, my ear's so rotten that pretty soon it will fall off.

Then why is there no rest? Why do people keep standing around in the yard like garbage cans, waiting for a contribution? I have made it clear that I can no longer be expected to deliver the Song of Songs. I've set the police on those customers. Whoever you're looking for, I'm not the man.

2. I am the most practical of all my brothers—And *my* head's the first to fall! My brothers were cruel, I am the cruellest—And *I* weep at night!
3. Along with the Tables of the Law, the vices have gone to pieces. Even sleeping with your sister isn't much fun any more. For many, murder is too much trouble; writing poetry is too common. In the insecurity of all relations, many prefer to speak the truth, unaware of the danger. The courtesans are pickling meat for the winter and the devil has stopped summoning his best people.



Four Poems

SKATERS,

while we marvel on our seats,  
dance on ice, blade backward, whirl and wish  
faster than sight, glide our very wish  
with flowing knees and bodies that can swim  
upright in rinks as easy as a fin.

Such feats of foot and ankle, limber limb,  
we wonder how perfection can be human  
when what we know of people otherwise  
stumbles and hates; this skating man and woman  
move to disprove, in blue and circling lights

those other truths that now seem lying rumors.  
They link like music in a pace of grace.  
Even walkers never went so well.  
Only in Greece, once chiseling Phidias  
saw it like this and had the art to tell—

a practiced comment on the rest of us,  
gluttons who wheeled to this abstemious feast  
and greedily sit to gobble with our eyes  
possible lightnesses of dazzling athletes,  
precisions that could be a way of life.

~

THANKS TO THE OCTOPUS

Thanks to the octopus that hunched  
tense in a tank, arms wound up  
around its body, redly bunched—  
one breathing head, its feet, a group,

I count my gilless luck to look  
down darwinian, not to doubt  
the better air where I can walk,  
ten-toed descendant, man with hands,

at ease along the civil sands.  
My debt is deep to view those cups  
the subtle creature needs to kill—  
milky discs in crimson dusks

of snaky purposes—to feel  
free from the sea where suction grips  
the creeping crab, the victim snail,  
crushing whatever slows or sleeps.

Merci, cephalopod, for showing  
necessities of tentacle,  
tenacities beyond my knowing  
and tricky inks when one is under

pressure and without a tail.  
I've read that in a tamer water  
the devilfish (maligning name  
for such an introverted monster)

spurning food, will shyly dine  
upon himself, prefers to munch  
his own extremities for lunch.  
And thanks to you, whoever netted,

from an oozing green museum,  
lasting lessons, unintended,  
tangled in the specimen:  
how far from nightmare we have come,

superior of brain and lung,  
escaped from terror, we are taught,  
up through octopus and ape,  
out of instinct—into what?

~

#### AGAINST THE WORM

Now summer greens she stoops in goodness' garden  
as if uprooting evil with the weeds,  
stands tanned and half bemused, one white glove on,  
broad leaves and bright squash blossoms to her knees,  
thinking abundance, melons that will streak  
and long beans dangling from the tendriled vine,  
plump corn, and rounds of redness seeded sweet—  
the fruits of love that ripen only with time.  
Now harvest nears she goes with spray and spade,  
a wiser Eve who's armed against the worm  
and lives in friendly enmity with God,  
or who, or what, put madness in the form,  
hung the delicious image, then made fly  
and creep the hunger powered to destroy.

#### LINES FROM INNER SPACE

1

Should I consult my horoscope today  
and find my waiting fate in constellations—  
inquire what cozy zodiacs will say  
of love and war and power among the nations?  
Bright Venus rising on a sparkling chart  
confounds my plans for birded quietude—  
the quarreling blood is up in fiery Mars.  
The thing to do is not to go outside.  
All that has changed. Copernicus saw through it.  
Man's egomania thought himself the center,  
haloed by perfect circles, and God knew it—  
but after that—the telescope inventor,  
the eye of Galileo, and the I  
rocketed released into infinity.

2

What loomed so hugely shrinks to a small ball,  
even the peaks are toy peaks, and the lands  
diminished outlines shored against a puddle;  
a clocking shadow sweeps its spectrum bands,  
light into dark, across it for a while—  
then we are gliding starward beyond that—  
nine gold dots around a burning circle  
like motes inside the iris of a cat.  
What are we cruising toward across the vast,  
past nova views and through such emptiness,  
intruders in a universal dust  
speeding from loneliness to loneliness  
when insight could have guessed it all the time?—  
this distance only brings us closer home.

Such intricate and lavish multiplicities,  
 infinities of leaves, the endless sand,  
 rose shape, daisy, fleur-de-lis,  
 the stitch across the calcium fan of clam,  
 such care for form in petal and swirled pearl  
 of conch or abalone, none too small  
 to have its sheened design, its stripe or whorl,  
 each dark or brilliant feather—something final—  
 and even those invisibles, made large,  
 gazed at through a glass reveal a world  
 so patterned that there seems enormous purpose  
 as if galactic balances could whirl  
 in points too tiny to conceive unless  
 zero dwindled into spaciousness.

A certain tilt is what achieved the seasons,  
 a slant of sun and tipping at the pole—  
 different planets have their different reasons,  
 some always burning, others keeping cool  
 because of distance or the way they face,  
 the clouds around them, the orbits we observe,  
 none like the earth, a green and perfect place,  
 warmer or colder depending on the curve.  
 At least our latitudes seem loveliest  
 from springtime points of view, in summer thoughts;  
 if autumn witherings should trouble us  
 or whitened steepness deepen winter doubts,  
 we know we're only traveling through the freeze  
 and coming back to Eden by degrees.

Now I am here in feet, in face, in hands,  
 a garden man less ignorant than Adam,  
 clothed in the thought of what no snake intends,  
 eating the fruit on which I only fatten,  
 fed with death's knowledge, shamed from superstition,  
 unflashed by sword from local paradise,  
 one at my side, but not my side's creation—  
 the God robbed rib that fable's woman was.  
 How many books have proved me not so special,  
 and billion births exploded myths of Eden,  
 that fertile plot a speck wrecked in the spatial  
 speed of immensities that keep receding—  
 yet it is warm today; among the leaves  
 a naked nearness moves that could be Eve's.

Those gods were lovely but they never lived,  
 jealous in robes or stripped in nipples Greece,  
 tablets of myths, the laws that lightning chipped;  
 who posed for stone were only whores and boys—  
 nothing beyond except a hope's projection,  
 nothing inside but what the mind desired,  
 no virgin birth, no raying resurrection,  
 the god was finished when the man expired.  
 Preponderance of ugliness and cruelty  
 preferring to be beautiful and kind  
 implies, perhaps, in opposites, a unity,  
 but mysteries that none can comprehend  
 subsume an idol even in the word—  
 if flies had gods, their gods would swarm the turd.

There always seemed some sense in sensuous sequence—  
 taste tested best along the hungry tongue,  
 the knowing nose chose sweet to ranker reekings;  
 if freewill ears had preference of tone  
 not noise but harmony would charm their chambers.  
 No telling where the parching eyes might wander  
 to drink oasis; though there were disclaimers,  
 when lovers most desired, their touch felt fonder.  
 Then like a keen machine to shatter matter  
 or stars that burst to sudden puffs of smoke,  
 certain thinkers paused to reconsider  
 and theory caught complacency at a stroke—  
 our fishy senses gasping through the rim  
 of water into air were told: *Now, swim.*

The air has tricky Echoes, and the ear  
 blithely believes, as eyes, in images—  
 gullible Narcissus, trapped in lying water,  
 the seeming surface is the dream that damages.  
 Neither the smooth youth nor the horrible Dorian  
 can be completely pictured as the truth.  
 Some say they've seen the Snowman, some the Saurian  
 rising midocean, hissing through a froth—  
 and who can say they didn't, or that some,  
 rused by a pool or portrait never drowned.  
 They surely died, and what they then became,  
 ghosted out of sight and out of sound,  
 was strange enough, essences of matter  
 beyond distortion's art or power to flatter.

Dreaming destruction, every line gone down  
 and no way out, apartness in the air,  
 the streets awry, the natural and known  
 a frantic phantasm, an abstract blur,  
 and walking in it, talking in a whisper  
 as rubbles smoke and distant noises veer,  
 not quite screaming, even when they're closer,  
 not believing it is now and here—  
 up what were stairs, past blasted balustrade,  
 past burning dirt on once immaculate waters,  
 still thinking This is fear, a dream's charade—  
 only a nightmare shudders so, so shatters,  
 then waking up, to feel, in the familiar,  
 clear vibrations fabulous before.

Choice? Oh yes—ostensibly existential  
 since Nothing cares and Man is all there Is;  
 ill Reason dies and lusty Will's potential  
 becomes the Emperor of Emptiness.  
 No matter what a mess the old man left  
 the wise young boy still might set it straight;  
 he is too cynical to feel bereft;  
 he knows his Love is Hate in masquerade.  
 He has answer to the Nothingness  
 though it may echo hollow and absurd:  
 the touch of nakedness on nakedness  
 conceals its context in a chosen Word—  
 not *cogito ergo sum* but what I am  
 selected thought to be the Moon and Sun.

Nothing can stop this hot pursuit of shadows,  
 if not glad satyrs chasing after nymphs,  
 cosmonauts across the starry meadows,  
 their sex zipped up, fly for a grimmer glimpse  
 of something that can never satisfy.  
 Their yearning changes atoms at a touch,  
 it isn't naked to the naked eye—  
 the laurel branch that fooled Apollo's clutch.  
 When they come back with stuff of satellites  
 and proof of creatures circling distant suns,  
 our days will still be days, our nights, starred nights,  
 and plunging lovers still will kiss and plunge,  
 whose sandy pastures, in the human sense,  
 seem green as any astrals past the fence.

Here are two forms long famed in song and story,  
 hard muscled man, and softer at the hip,  
 the one he wears against him like a glory.  
 They glide to pleasure in a sliding grip,  
 thigh trying thigh, they ride, they ride, they ride—  
 O what delight at nipple, side and lip,  
 what a throbbled rapture seminal inside  
 when true components meet and fleetingly fit.  
 But that's not all; it's only half the tale;  
 his hands subside along her silken back,  
 and as she sighs, he wonders Did I fail?  
 the pulse already slowing in his neck,  
 and soon they sleep, a silence at each side,  
 and each one turns and dreams a different world.

What is this urgency that swims upflesh,  
 this microscopic polywog of life  
 fighting eyeless toward the waiting egg,  
 a particle of husband in the wife—  
 why does it want to get there, why does it try  
 against the odds of time and darker odds  
 to find a mother for its destiny,  
 a faith that's nourished in a curve of bloods?  
 Why should it hang, evolving from a fish,  
 repeating cycles that the eons took,  
 two parts united to a single wish  
 when what began it might have been a look  
 casual as creation, dust and thirst—  
 till whirled involvement was a universe.

In chills of space and temperatures of stars,  
 shadows and brilliances, I felt at home;  
 west through the deserts in the wastes of Mars  
 I only paused to recognize the dream;  
 outward past blizzard moons and whirling rings  
 and farther still through zones of other suns  
 whose wheeling systems seemed remembered things,  
 I traveled light, and darker implications—  
 all this had happened time and time again,  
 the heats of love, and zeroing of hate,  
 division slicing at a sudden line,  
 the atmospheric tricks of light and weight,  
 so that, returning, what I meant to say  
 was—circling is another way to stay.

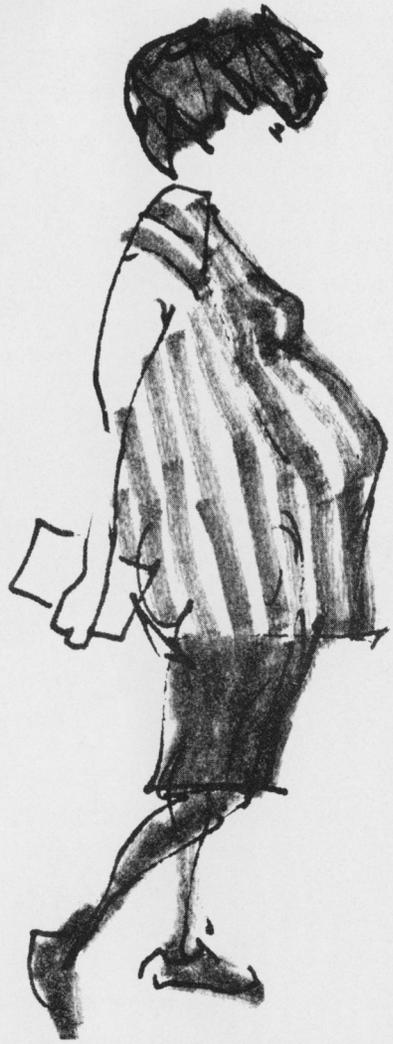
William Stafford

Ten Poems

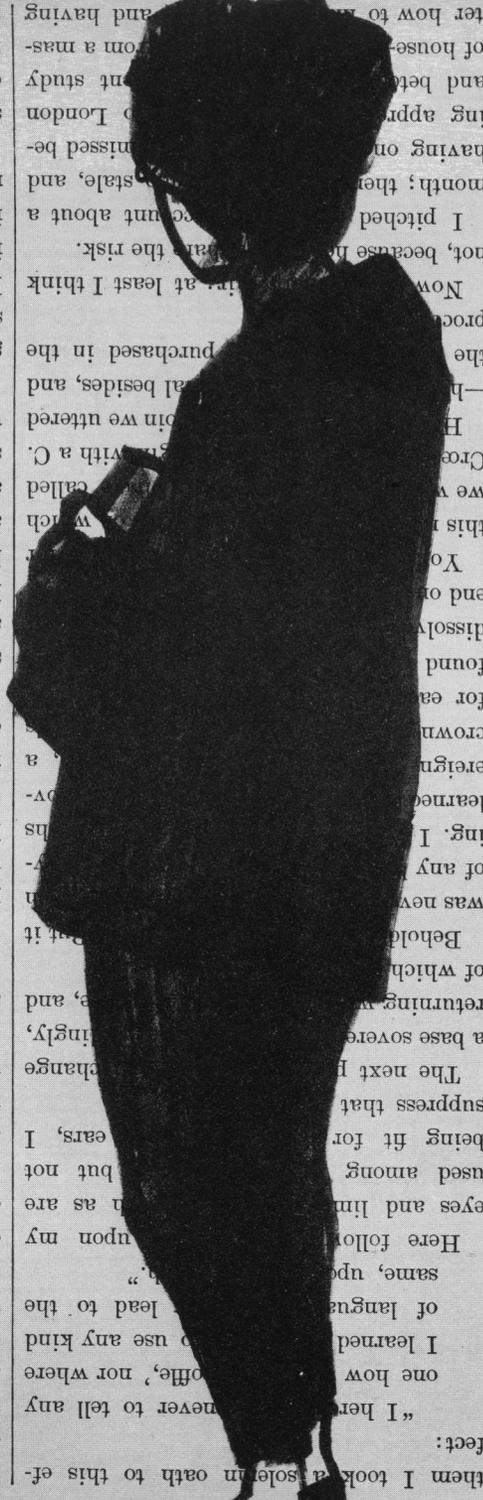
ACROSS THE LAKE'S EYE

Walking ice across the lake's eye  
to the deep and looking along the sight  
at other worlds asleep for space  
but not for light—  
we came wide awake.  
“Why close what eyes we have?” you said,  
And “There’s a lefthand world that other people see  
that slinks aside from me,  
that my dog hears;  
the negative of the world, that suicides love;  
that comes along the track from its pinpoint place;  
that barely swerves beside our face  
escaping either way outside our own,  
beyond where night surprises the snow.”  
You made me look around that night.  
And coming back you spun this lefthand story:  
An island burrowed under the water  
and rose pretending to be a different island,  
but a fish had followed it, making bubbles  
wherever the island went. “Echoes,”  
you said, “avoid that island now:  
sound is dead there, but haunts the concave water  
where the island used to be.”  
The world has character, you contended,  
as we stamped home across the land,  
making a record of that night,  
marking the progress of an island.





them I took a solemn oath to this ef-  
fect: "I here-  
never to tell any  
one how  
I learned  
of language  
lead to the  
same, upon  
Here follow  
eyes and lim  
used among  
being fit for  
ears, I will  
suppress that  
The next I  
a base sover  
returning  
of which  
Behold  
was nev  
of any  
ing. I  
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crown  
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and on  
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NIGHT LIGHT

There is a footfall faintly every night.  
All daylight things have matched and gone to bed,  
but in the silent town one room has light,  
a restless tenant, and a steady tread.

Daylight things converge and then lie down;  
we tell them over till each one stops.  
But there has to be one walker in a town  
to face the night, to walk until he drops.

We honor daylight senses—count breath,  
are absolute, have purpose, grant no treason  
in cause-effect, day-night, now-then, life-death.  
But we fail, and have to lie at night without our reason:

That footfall through things everyone can hear  
becomes required of us by all the rest.  
The more we are all-wise and see ends clear,  
the more stubborn is the pace of that strange guest—

That living compass each night makes to veer  
one footfall on, and after that to rest.

WILLIAM STAFFORD is one of our own, and we greeted with love and pride the news that he won the National Book Award for his book, *Travelling Through the Dark* (Harper and Row, 1962). Poems from his earlier book, *West of Your City*, appeared in the first issue of *Poetry Northwest*. Several of the poems singled out for praise by the reviewers of his latest work first appeared in the Winter 1960-61 issue of this magazine. He lives in Oswego, Oregon.

## ULTIMATE PROBLEMS

In the Aztec design God crowds  
into the little pea that is rolling  
out of the picture.  
All the rest extends bleaker  
because God has gone away.

In the White Man design, though,  
no pea is there.  
God is everywhere,  
but hard to see.  
The Aztecs frown at this:

*How do you know He is everywhere?  
And how did He get out of the pea?*

~

## IN A NORTHWEST MUSEUM

This man—Tlingit?—filed his teeth to tear,  
preferring flesh of other cannibals,  
eating whole generations at his fire:—  
this Tlingit skeleton is many men.

We dwell awhile in such material  
our teeth ache when we bite; we travel down  
a mist that gulfs canoes, until we melt  
like Tlingits flitting into skeletons

The owner of the dust had loaned to them.  
We travel toward their kingdom of the wind.

~

## THE GIRL WHO DIED WHO LIVED

Last night an old sound came by chance:  
dust regained its honest place  
the way it stopped when years ago  
that little girl who died, who lived  
across our street, was lying in the rain  
we played in till the church bell rang.

Back then we thought the minutes came  
one at a time; but in the sound  
that came by chance all minutes leaped  
at once and bore me down, remembering.  
I stood a stranger chance had struck  
or bells had caught; I leaned on dust,  
Heard the storm bring the neighborhood  
onto our porch that afternoon,  
gathered for help, all talking at once,  
trying to regain our quiet place  
before the girl who lived had died.  
Fingers in the rain still identify her face.

~

## WEST OF BOSTON

With steadfast lechery my parents loved each other  
all through old dead summer into winter care  
while willows accepted the wind—  
its valueless compliments.

A yew tree now grows there, lasting many a year,  
dark at the end of the drive, definitely part of the world,  
yielding as a tree should,  
but maintaining whatever it has in mind.

~

## OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Plat 40: A Avenue to F; Eighth to Twelfth.

On sewer diagonal Q. Annexed in 1954.

To who concerns himself with it: our neighborhood  
has pavement that fans to drives, to lawns, to split  
levels. (And one house so old it has two storeys:  
the daughter brought a child back, who rides  
the daughter's old wagon, "DEBBIE" on its side;  
Daughter's convertible wheels out, evenings, top down.)

Our streets are clearly marked.

An area of good homes and families,  
well kept yards, and leisure.

The lawyer's wife is training a Great Dane,  
back and forth across the school ground.  
Her husband golfs; her children are grown now.  
Her garden is protected by snail bait.  
The dog obeys the leash but lurches to act great  
and rolls his head to maintain his great tongue.  
Dogs must be on leash or under voice control.

Homes feature the newest construction.

One house, we understand—its owner often  
away—has giant sprinklers everywhere,  
an automatic flood, should fire start;  
and under the rambling bedroom wing a basement  
bomb-shelter bar extends, connected at all times  
by intercom with the phone and the children's room.  
The carport is brick and stone.

Near bus line, and public services.

Wednesday nights put out the garbage cans  
(Disposals can't take everything). At dawn  
a banging truck rounds every drive; the dog  
does his one bark; robins patrol the lawns;

the snails die in their slime; the paper  
boy leaves a new paper pattern at each door.

You get all sides: Republican and Democrat.

A religious community, with a place designated  
for a church.

Out of the sudden space at evening, birds  
race, breaking a moment the quiet we have,  
and flooding to where light owns everything.  
We try to recognize their call by holding it  
in our heads till we have to bow;  
we follow them, remembering an old saint's advice:  
"Don't become 'creative' until you have to."

No scandal, but your correspondent does know one  
woman, a scholar, goodlooking, young.

Feather-fine, her educated dust  
can apprehend St. Francis' birds  
pecking at encyclicals eight hundred years  
removed. We've dreamed: our scholar's eyes all thumbs,  
riffing shelves of books toward where she stands  
beside the stacks, marked "Civilization."

She is listed in *Who's Who*.

We have a planning commission.

They say the future looks good.

So much for now: the social brain prints  
every day a mat, with pictures that dissolve  
to become the next, a newspaper on pavement.  
We'll try again, again, to find the perfect page,  
dotting the i's and proofreading every roof.  
Just look out now: our neighborhood—it's always there.

It haunts the rain.

## A VILLAIN I SAW

Wherever he went a cat beside him  
carried a mouse in its mouth:

*Oh soft murderer—imperceptible hunter from the south!*

Nobody else there noticed;  
the talk was always calm:

Listen, you tame listeners!—

*In small corridors of terror another mouse is gone.*

Others march on this trembling ground  
and enjoy the tainted air:

But look here at the pitiful record—

*these little footprints everywhere!*



## THE FERN IN THE COAL

Wanting—I heard one time—made hands,  
and fear made feet. But whatever involved  
this feeling not fear, not any need:  
this *everything descending through the air*  
*looking for a cause* when lovers meet?

One finds a face in air elaborated  
more than ferns are done; then comes the touch,  
the coal—and hands come from this world  
to form frivolity back toward all the fern,  
and back before man came, before there was a world.



## READ TO THE LAST LINE

Suppose a heroic deed—  
at a big picnic, say, you save a child;  
later the child is killed while being a hero;  
then you meet the beautiful sister,  
and all. . . . You have a son who wakes  
in the middle of the night and cries;  
you hear him—strange—there in the dark, and—

Suppose all the supposes.  
You find your self-story patch-quilted  
all over the place; and after that  
you are reading an author who tells  
your whole story, around all the spirals,  
till you come face to face and recognize you.

Grateful, you find yourself  
identified, so clearly named that you decide  
to bring other patches together by  
rounding on that author, too, with some  
greatest, ultimate deed: he deserves something.

So you in turn begin a story,  
but then you stop—what goes on?  
“I’ll not tell nor be told what I think,” you cry;  
“none of it’s true, anyway.”

And all the time it’s your own story,  
even when you think: “It’s all just made up, a trick.  
What is the author trying to do?”

Reader, we are in such a story:  
all of this is trying to arrange a kind of prayer for you.

Pray for me.



## About the Contributors

DONALD FINKEL composed this sequence of poems, "Simeon, or The Death of God," for this magazine, in response to a suggestion that he write a verse drama for us to print. However, a play of his, "The Jar," produced at the Poets' Theatre, Cambridge (Mass.), appears in the current issue of the *Quarterly Review of Literature*. He has a second book ready for publication and is working on a third.

EMILE CAPOUYA must be described by that honorable appellation, "man of letters." He writes on literature, politics, and public affairs; he instructs in poetry at the New School and the YM-YWHA in New York; his reputation as an editor is enviable; he has completed one extraordinary novel and is writing another.

PATRICIA GOEDICKE graduated from Middlebury College in 1953 and is presently teaching part-time at Ohio University. Two of her poems appeared in this magazine last spring.

FRANK JONES, of the University of Washington, is one of the leading translators and interpreters of the works of BERTOLT BRECHT. His is the standard translation of "St. Joan of the Stockyards," published in America in 1961, and just recently in Britain. Brecht wrote the first eight of the Psalms in the early 20s, and they appear in his *Collected Poems*, Vol. 2 (Frankfurt, 1960). The rest were probably written in the 30s, and were first published in Berlin in 1957.

HAROLD WITT appears in *Poetry Northwest* for the third time. The long poem printed here, "Lines from Inner Space," is the title poem for his next book, presently in the hands of his publisher. His last book was *Beasts in Clothes* (Macmillan, 1961). He lives in Orinda, California.

The note on WILLIAM STAFFORD appears on page 41.

## Poetry Northwest Prize Awards

HELEN BULLIS PRIZE: \$100

Volume II: Hayden Carruth

Volume III: John Logan, for "Whistling Wings"  
(Winter, 1962-63)

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NORTHWEST POET'S PRIZE: \$50

Carol Hall, for Four Poems (Winter, 1962-63)

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POETRY NORTHWEST AWARD: \$50

S. L. M. Brown (a new poet never previously published),  
for Three Poems (Summer, 1962)

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COMPARATIVE POETRY PRIZE: \$50

Richard Kell (Ireland), for "The Neighbourhood"  
(Winter, 1962-63)

~

(The prize for translation will not be awarded at this time)