

Poetry

NORTHWEST



SUMMER 1965 / VOLUME VI / NUMBER II / ONE DOLLAR

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POETRY NORTHWEST

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NUMBER TWO

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Libraries and Bibliophiles Please Note:

We have a few copies of Volume I, Number 2, *Poetry Northwest* (Fall, 1959), unbound, and without covers, containing Joseph Langland (nine of his extraordinary "Haruspicing" poems), David Wagoner, Mona Van Duyn, Maxine Kumin, Michael Hamburger, and others. at \$1.00

The rest of Volume I and half of Volume II are not available.

Volume II, Number 3: Cover and four illustrations by Carl Morris. Poems by Hayden Carruth, John L'Heureux, John Woods, Vi Gale, and others.

Volume II, Number 4: Poems by Jean Garrigue, Kenneth O. Hanson, Joanne de Longchamps, Harold Witt, Richard F. Hugo. Prize-winning poems by Hayden Carruth.

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Poetry Northwest

POETRY NORTHWEST

SUMMER 1965

Robert Hazel

SOUTH

I

I hear water walk
I hear children fly
I hear men and women plot
flowers finite in the bloom
I hear them speak a room
into madness into night
I hear the sick and lame
recite their arms and lips against
empty windows broken panes

Bankers, doctors, money to you
Priests, lawyers, justice to you
But black hands still hands
still eyes black house, hear
I see your dirty smiles
tractors aprons caps furrows
your guitars and green whiskey
I see your pencil marks
on brown paper lumber walls
Steal, lie, grovel, fawn
Take any iron that lies loose
any woman any ladder
Grin the bars that jail you now
Common, Common, O my father!
Common girls in tall white heels
over roadhouse gravel, boys
in white coats with red flowers
withering on your lapels!

NORTHWEST

I hear the crossed priest pray
and the prosecutor sneer
and the banker count his liens
and the doctor wash his hands
of us over our live bodies
over our thin coats and shoes.

II

White, quit chicken
Colored, quit lard
Needles, quit cotton
Whores, quit street

The sun falls down
The trees lean down
The birds fly down
The faces look down
Shadows climb down
My father dies alone
My mother lies down
The fires die down
Their breath's bright crown
dies down like bloom
this spring like dawn
on time, all time
Love is its light down
comes to its brief claim

Men, quit work
Woman, quit church
Let the vines run
in the garden
Let the trees grow Let the cold
Christ quit breathing twice.

III

Time stay love stay brain stay
I think therefore I
stay where late we sing
We cause light to wheel day
heart-roar rib-silence
sun ice seed freeze
stolen fire early ash
We make injury pay the scar
I feel therefore am
flower post nail stone
I am love after love
I am buried without a harvest
due I am dying new
Brightness falls from the air
Girls die drunk and young
O let the lamps burn
on tables bread wine music
Seed my brain into time
A growth of green ringed with hands
to protect your little veins
deep under the last freeze
Dust has closed your eye
I see therefore I
am sick and must die
Only lies are given me
Grass even lies to me
Earth tells me ripe lies
green against the fact of stone
Pity on us love in us terror in us
tears on us hands on us light in us
waste of us loss of us breath in us
pain in us growth of us light across us
Time's green last heard light.

IV

Timbers warp stones crack
Arms and hammers watch them fall
I have failed to build a house
artful quiet blind to none
where kind clocks smile at errors
mathematics makes of time
where the soil does not run
women forget to be afraid
men forget the cold streams
of their children's unguessed minds

Make dark, my God, wreck
my walls and furrows! Let black
hover the marrow of my darlings
Prince? Poor man! You thought those leaves
were the banners of an exiled queen
with spotless hands, clear mind.

V

Let loss let lack let stack
rake mow grain chaff
the last spectrum dust of us
Let the level mileward land
return the dust of handy eyes
harrow teeth rolled cuffs random straw
jay sparrow crow and star

Goodbye field stone river
Goodbye Legion Klan Baptist
Goodbye white virgin by willows
near a mudhole Goodbye Faulkner
Goodbye Elks and Eastern Star
Regulators Union deserters
Goodbye Davis Goodbye Lee
Goodbye evening red fireflies
mist of willow dancing ponies

Young father, who were you?
Before your death, who were you?
Before you loved, who knew you?
Young mother, who were you
before your body burst and your
careful hands rescued my breath?
Young wife, who were you
before our child rotted in your
dear flesh, who were you?

God in the green of Heaven
imagined now, account to us
We are treated badly Pay us!
Give clods eyes Give us love
after good acts Give us back
wine for water knowing for seeing
Give us a law Lay the last straw
Give us full baskets to lay
at the base of the monument

Rack rifles Rack feathers Rack rue

~

Adrien Stoutenburg

THREE PREDECESSORS

ADAM

And there I was,
sitting there,
keeping to myself,
and then she came walking to me
and touched my ears and mind and mouth
and ran her hands through my hair
like a thresher, and even kissed me
before her white arms pushed me away

into the dark garden again
which was no longer filled with my own sparks
of sitting and keeping to myself,
and I went out and said to my first god,
I am yours, truly,
and was kicked by that great boot,
and so lie here
and long for her mouth
and my own mouth
kissing the dust I had before.

NOAH

When the floods came
swirling like wet armor,
driving the world into the trees,
only I had a raft seaworthy;
only I knew the animals well enough—
their ways and their eyes
and the round thoughts
in their slanted skulls;
only I could lead them out.

They smelled my own skull
rotting, and followed.
They sniffed at my heart growing,
and came leaping after,
or crawled (those lesser creatures
such as slugs and sloths),
but all arrived in time,
antelope and centipede,
and the jackal
with the laugh scarring his sad face.
I was their leader
and their eyes looked up to me,

I who every night, alone in the straw,
circled my cage
and listened for the sound of a dove
coming back, or at least going forth,
but hearing only, as now,
a dark beast snoring above.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

My head being separated from my body,
staring there from the platter,
it is easy enough now to see
where I made my mistake
through over-devotion to clouds or candles
and wind performing like a god
(a dust devil spinning in my brain),
to study how I might have combed my beard better,
used different perfumes,
or improved my haircut.
These things matter.

My eyes, still open,
are fatuous even in death
for I secretly loved the dancer
and wanted her head, soft in my hands,
and her body also in my hands
which could have preached more
than my desert-stained mouth.

I was called just and holy in my lifetime
but when the sword came down
my body rose in lust.
Observe it, daughter of water,
erect on its charger of dust.

HARVEST POEMS

I

In wheat country
for miles
telephone wires and power lines
loop
between thin poles
standing across the country like people
saying the same things to one another over and over,
waiting to do something to the landscape.
Sitting on a wire,
one bird
keeps it from happening.

II

Afternoon,
with just enough of a breeze for him to ride it
lazily, a hawk
sails still-winged
up the slope of a stubble-covered hill,
so low
he nearly
touches his shadow.

III

You meet them with surprise
hidden
in the pale grasses.
In a landscape that desperately needs color,
why do the flowers
stay
so close to the ground?

IV

A fieldmouse
crouches low
nibbling kernels of wheat
left where the combines worked last week.
A shadow
the size of a hawk
darkens the stubble
an inch away.
Before he can drop half a kernel to the ground,
one claw sure as steel
gathers
in his back.

V

Where will that plant grow
which floats upward and downward on the wind
like a dandelion seed?

VI

Looking absurd as a near-sighted scholar,
a grasshopper
clings to a short blade of grass.
Having climbed so far out into space,
and finding the grass
too insubstantial to jump from,
but enough to hold him,
he climbs
slowly backwards,
then steps off onto the ground,
stops there a moment,
and disappears
in one
invisible
leap.

VII

Star Thistle, Jim Hill Mustard, White Tops,
Chinese Lettuce, Pepper Grass:
the names of things
bring them
closer.

VIII

Women who marry into wheat
look out kitchen windows
seeing
nothing but wheat,
and then come back to
a backyard locust tree
beneath which
beautiful city streets spring alive,
night streets radiant with glowing lights
that brighten
as each new shining locust blossom
falls
into the dust and tall dry grass
where
for months
no rain will fall.

IX

Crickets plague the stubbled fields.
Their songs
travel in low, thin lines,
beaded
where thousands of wheat stalks
interrupt their flow.

~

Edward Watkins

Three Poems

THE DEVIL'S BALLADE

When did right thinking ever make a poet?
Kipling, for instance, when he bombasts away,
those endless catalogs of Whitman's show it
isn't sufficient merely to answer Yea:
don't we say less when we have something to say?
Somehow the morally right have a dull wit,
always making the best—if only they,
whatever happens, made the worst of it!

Baudelaire's wound (he took such pains to show it)
became the world's, and all he said was Nay.
Poe's demon made him all too pure a poet,
and he said nothing. Having nothing to say
is equally dangerous: better to suffer and play
upon that suffering. Poems that fit
every occasion sometimes are made that way;
whatever happens, make the worst of it.

Dante himself, and Milton also, knew it
and Mr. Eliot's waste land made it pay:
the only way through the inferno is *through* it;
don't stop to offer homilies on the way.
The amazing thing is, Hamlet can be gay
within the quiet center where we sit:
"You players in a play within a play,
whatever happens, make the worst of it!"

Dear reader, enough comedy for one day.
Please lay aside this poem. While you knit
your brows, it may or may not go away—
whatever happens, make the worst of it.

~

EXTREME UNCTION

They have come now, the official angels of death
while nurses chat in the hall of Saturday love
to the last bed, demanding my last breath

which I have no intention of parting with.
The smell of the ether hasn't thrown them off:
they have come now, the official angels of death

inexorably down the tearworn path
with those last rites I want no part of
to the last bed, demanding my last breath.

I disavow them, lawyer and cleric both:
their final summons has no power to move.
They have come. Now the official angels of death

may go, cleansing their hands of my bloodbath.
Go, too, you next of kin, you who grieve
at the last bed, demanding my last breath:

though the doctors in sweat have stitched it, the mouth
of my wound cries out, *I shall certainly live!*
They have come now, the official angels of death
to the last bed, demanding my last breath.

~

METROPOLITAN

Our eyes in sadness day by day
reflect the crimes that bloom among
our parks as darkly as the subway:
the muggings of eternal wrong.

They're in our blood, our breakfast food:
the knife, the rolling and the rape.
In some dank corner now the good
in us surrenders to the ape.

~

Eric Torgersen

Two Poems

And now
with a haircut and shoes
I'm a man again;
because you're my friend now
I wait for that.
We'll have dinner sometime,
and behind my jacket and tie
I'll hide from your eyes.

I'll open you doors
between us
and take off your coat
between us...

And then—
and all for the hell of your smiling—
I'll jump out and gape at you crosseyed
from behind my two new eyes
that go both in the same direction.

~

TO AN OLD WOMAN

Walking to school by myself
I passed you each day at the same time
knowing you'd smile.

That night in the rain—
I was walking up the hill to my house
and you were inching down sideways
not sure of your steps

(the water all rained down the hill
and it looked like a lake at the bottom...)

your days rained down on my skull.

~

Two Poems

THE BLACK WHITE BOY

*i have always said that i would be happy if i could do two things:
sing and play basketball.
i now see that these two aspirations are one:
i want to be black.*

*i would be about 6' 3", long and lithe,
straight in stature, loose and limber in movement,
walking and talking with a natural rhythm.
i would have a good negro name, like roman jones.
and i would be as black as polished ebony.*

*i would strut around boldly, dressed smartly
and wearing a felt hat,
waiting for someone to call me "nigger."*

*and when he did, i would knife him
and slit his pale belly from his groin to his lily neck,
just to see if he was as white on the inside
as he was outside.
then i would turn him over on his back
and step back to laugh and watch him bleed.*

*and i would swallow hard when the blackness began to flow out.
i would stand ashamed as the opened snowy breast
poured forth fluids as black as midnight.
and then i would understand.*

*i would quickly leave the ugly thing and walk on
with my head bowed.
and when someone said "nigger," i would know
and love him.*

I

*i would have a natural athletic prowess:
i would have the easy speed of a sprinter,
the poised grace of a high-jumper, the grimaced face
and tightened muscles of a broad-jumper,
and the quick judgment of a football quarterback.
but i think i would express myself best on the basketball court.*

*i would dribble low with speed and accuracy,
i would rebound with precise split-second timing,
i would hit from the outside with a soft touch
or drive in for a smooth lay-up.*

*when i saw a chance for my favorite shot,
i would put my man
off-balance with a precise twitch of my head and drive by him,
jumping from the top of the key,
changing over in mid-air
and lifting the ball at the last possible second
to lay it up from the unexpected side,
all with a grace and ease
that would give the appearance of simplicity.
and the loudspeaker would rattle, "basket by jones."*

*later in the game a fellow from the opposing team
would try a similar shot,
faking with his body
and driving around to jump, change over, and lay it up.
and it would be good. and the crowd would cheer,
and the loudspeaker would rattle, "two by olson."*

*but i would see and so would the crowd and so would olson
that he was unable to execute his movements
with complete smoothness and grace,
and that no amount of practice would rid him of his stiffness.*

*and i would understand my fellow man
and have compassion
and love him.*

II

i would have a natural musical talent:
 i would have the simple and complex rhythms of a jazz drummer,
 the quick fingers of a pianist,
 the trained ear of a symphony director,
 and the round voice of an old folk singer.
 but i think i would talk best through a trumpet.

i would play in basement bars and crowded dancehalls,
 on the street, and by myself on the roof or on the dock.
 i would not play in carnegie hall.

i would step up onto a small stage in a crowded nightclub
 and sway easily,
 snapping my fingers to the bass and brushes,
 humming with the piano.
 and then i would lift my trumpet to my lips and blow.

i would put my soul into it,
 starting in my lungs and pushing it up my pink throat
 into my puffed mouth, forming it with my lips and tongue
 and shaping it with my fingers
 until it finally slipped out the shiny orifice of the trumpet,
 almost visible,
 into the smoke-filled room.
 and when my eyes and ears felt ready to burst,
 that's when it would feel the best.

near the middle of the number i would let down my trumpet and sing
 —words and sometimes just sounds,
 nonsense sounds that told the story of life.
 and sound, sweat, and soul would be one
 in that little room.

and when i was done no one would clap;
 you clap in carnegie hall.
 they would know that it was me that had filled the room,

and they would go on talking and staring and sleeping,
 and i would finish my drink, set the glass on the piano,
 wipe my brow
 and lift my trumpet again.

later, during intermission,
 a boy would put down a glass and step up to the stage
 he would pick up my trumpet
 and wipe the mouthpiece hard.
 he would play and sing too in a mellow tone,
 and the people would clap.
 and we would all realize the difference between
 bing crosby and louis armstrong.

and i would see,
 and i would love my brother.

*christ said to love my enemies,
 to do good to those who hurt me, and to forgive
 those who persecute me.*

*well, i guess i've done that o.k.
 i emulate the negro because he can sing and play basketball;
 others hate and persecute him
 and i let them do it.*

*and that's what these lines are about:
 they're here to tell you that i'm the black man,
 stinking, rotting black.
 turn me inside out and the stench will wilt the flowers
 and kill the bees.
 it will drive the children screaming into the woods
 to seek solace with the animals and birds.*

*i tell you i smell with the blackness
 that crawled up the cross to smother christ!
 i am the sticky-black viscous fluid.*

*you should burn the cross in my yard.
i am the one to spit on.
i should be hung upside-down by my heels and castrated
and the blood should flow down to gag me*

*because i am the real nigger,
so filled with ugly, decayed life
that i cannot sing or even move
with grace.*

~

A SELF PORTRAIT

who does that old lady in art class
think she is anyway
asking me why i paint faces green
i'd like to paint hers
with a big brush
slapping it back and forth with both hands

and why didn't she like the crucifixion
was it because christ didn't have
long shining hair
was it because it was tangled
and matted with blood
because his jewish face grimaced
with pain
his starved and beaten body
twisted awkwardly

i'd like to drive one nail
through her
and see how long
her hair stayed combed

Naomi Lazard

STUDY FOR A TRAVEL BOOK

It is six o'clock and a table has been ordered
to celebrate the evening. The day has passed quickly
as any ritual, for we have barely time enough to meet
or remark the beauty of the weather
before the shops are closed. A fitful light
illuminates the moment. For this brief time
I see you as you are, and have to leave.

In the pointed shadow of the obelisk
three American ladies sit
and mark the hours as they drop from time.

There is the darkness opening and shutting;
eighteen years with one man, and how they never
managed to escape, how it rains at least once every day.
They drink, exchanging similarities.
Apart from this adventure
there is a song troubling the colonnade
promising to those who want to give, another choice.

Further across the rain in a baroque hotel
the divorcee from California in her amethyst ensemble
and fresh mown hair
sits elegantly like a piece of crystal about to break;
waits for her new young man while the back of every head
resembles her lover of three years ago.
... Wasn't it you I noticed there beside the railing
leaning over the empty air?
I was expecting you to come and save me ...
She wrote him five letters before she left
explaining exactly where and when she would be
in Roma, Milano, Firenze, Assisi.

We walk like mirages through real streets
leaving the click of heels on marble.
We are paper folded figures
opening with all our arms.

Who doesn't know the cats by moonlight
on the stones surrounding the Pantheon?
Or the door in the second column
that leads to a frieze of pensiones, amber hued
and shaded by lush plane trees all in bloom,
where only Italian is spoken
and the police never come.
For if the moment were now, and the afternoon
soft around the Coliseum; if politeness or ease
were answers, who wouldn't choose to be there?
Behind the slatted windows a lacy gloom
settles on the couch and a wide awakening
shivers inside some well loved eyes.

Hands that are young but seem compassionate
lie beside my own on the wet stone.
It is easy to forget who I am.
I touch the fabric of your coat to feel you near,
only have time for such important things
as noticing the way the shadow of your lashes falls on me.
The only thing forbidden is the thought of another summer;
even a long look out of the window will speak
too urgently of distances. We stop here
and live as if we have a thousand years.

Even when we're sure of our stop
(on number 98, at the abrupt turn from Gregorio VII)
I am often afraid to descend.
I remember I am a stranger;
unknown summers are hidden inside my pillow.
After serious study the bright red scar on your cheek
where the war struck you engages my interest
to the point of distraction.

I forbid myself persimmons, sometimes all red fruit.
We are like two figures in a grove
because here it is enough to be still
while the sounds from the arcade mingle
with the wind on the shutters like the chatter of teeth—
and let our lives fall where they will.

~

Jane Mayball

Two Poems

THE EXCHANGE

He gave me his poison, so he could be gay;
I gave him my sweet, so I could be poison.
He battered down doors, and lunged with a knife;
I gave him a party, he asked for my life.
Sky was no limit, he hated so fully,
was pure as a child, all purged of his folly.

And I, and I, whose bidding was love,
watched over his footprints, oozing a grave.
But giddy with rancor, he bloomed a flower.
The sun was his luck, and everyone light.
He drew it off seawalls, his hard clever heart.
And those who gave love filled him with power.

He strode through the yellowing twilight of time,
lawless and aimless, wanton, sublime.
The world died at his feet, compost and mould,
from deadleaf and blight extracted a soul.
Where he proclaimed wrath, I answered with reason.
His spirit turned sweet, and mine became poison.

~

THE WIFE

Has a butterfly on her skirt,
eats cold oatmeal in the kitchen,
counts the clock and never departs,
throws out garbage for salvation.

A long master line commands her head
like children dressed like kings.
She sits at their sceptres, born to be sovereign,
suffers no thought her own.

Now moonlight eddies through the window,
shrivels her curl-papered hair;
she gasps to the thought of an immense stone beauty
somewhere ranging her hardworn body.

~

William Harmon

Four Poems

NORTH CAROLINA'S ANSWER TO AHASUERUS

When Esther Bergstein's eyes bewildered me
I blew through my recorder all the harder

the primitive classics from the Baptist Hymnal
my hopping fingers stopped and opened holes
so Power in the Blood could circulate

through Dolmetsch's wonder working cylinder.
To our left Gary and Hammond auroras blazed

steel into neon and before us fires burned Lake
Michigan into First and Second Chronicles
and Adam Sheth Enosh Kenan Mahalaleel and we

consumed bologna blown up in balloons
between two Ogden Indiana dunes.

I longed for cornbread turnip greens and grits
eructed gas-of-sausage breaths through the tube
and kept it up piping hymns for dear life, Lord.

~

REEL: MIRROR-PLAY

The island in the lake is in the lake, as
thou in thee
and as the
great snail of Fuji slowly, slowly
climbs up its
own glass shell.

The twins have nightmares each morning
of looking out through
double-hung windows where
choruses of square clouds are anvil-
ing in a ring in the ring
of the blood-blue sky,
of coffins within little children, the shadow
of a spider eating dinner on a mirror.

Screwed to the transept lie the helpless wings, as
I in me
and as the
lake island snails around the sky, going
from medium to medium
like lunatic Mrs. Lincoln

The twins wake up at midnight shivering
in a boiling bed full of bugs and nails and glass.

~

Pounded pounded pounded on the nut house door
Fist reduced to
blood Finger nails coming undone
Assaulting
the iron surface with jabs hooks uppercuts
Bones in the hand
like so much loose ice in an ice bag
hanging at the arm's end
And O the nuts
manned the barred windows
with crazy eyes
Bones showing through the busted
knuckles broke the front door down
Dead light at a second door
What's the matter Let me in What's wrong
It was dad bought a Picasso
Sixty thousand bucks
Took saw and scissors He cut it up
Mother and Child in pieces like a puzzle
Let me in
Go away
Let me in Go away
Please let me in Go away please
And pounded pounded on the iron gate of the federal pen
with ballpeen hammer
Heavy head coming off the handle
And O the cons
at the barred windows
with mean eyes shifty as an April day
It was Monopoly
gave Park Place for the Waterworks Little green houses
and big red hotels
Chance and charity
Jeopardy and ruin

LALITAVISTARA

Only a
Mary star
bears light
not fire.

NORTH WEST

SEPTEMBER SONG

A cool evening in early fall.
The evening brisk yet frail
thin as a river's skin,
open to tracings like a canvas of air,
people, shops, traffic lights and cars
briefly imprinted on the evening's surface,
a painter's strokes on a watery base.

On the radio a rarely performed
Schubert work. Vienna a long time ago.
I walked there once. Ah, much more
than once. A statue in
a basin in a square dedicated to
the penniless, the dreamridden
genius, Schubertplatz, Schubert-
gasse, Schubertallee

a damp evening, the streets
lit dimly by electric bulbs
in streetlamps where not long ago
gas had flickered,
the whole flickering evening drifting by
in the darkness under the bridges
of the Danube Canal.

Adagio. The width, the height,
the length of the evening spread,
have far-reaching effects
like a crack in a glass,
the brush of time on a sensitive brow,
a pebble on a surface that cannot endure.

Adagio. The slowness, transitions
from hardly discernible shadings
to deepening frown, the pain

that comes with the changes in music,
creeps into one's being like the breath
from gratings in streets
when the temperature has fallen to zero

these have not the power now to rouse
a question. The question is gone.
Gone also the youthful agitation
that there is one.

In supreme naturalness
fades the statue of Schubert's
nineteenth-century head.

In supreme naturalness
the shifts and fadings
of a brief walk one brief evening,
one brief evening one brief fall.

~

Robert Bloom

Five Poems

IN THE MONKEYHOUSE

Nanny ate a biscuit tortoni.
She took out her teeth, but
I got a baked apple anyway.

After lunch we saw seals.
Seals do not have ears,
but sea lions do. Have ears.

Now you know about them.
The camel eats popcorn.
Fish do not eat popcorn.

Now you know about them.
Tigers pee anywhere.
Tigers don't like people.

Some goats are nannies.
My nanny is not a goat.
All goats eat anything.

Afterwards we saw bicycles.
My nanny cannot ride a bicycle.
She just takes out her teeth.

~

COLUMBUS DAY

I have my universal method,
you have yours.
Let there be peace between us, Gray Cloud.

I'm a poet, sir.
It's something different, and then,
one can always power-mow the lawn.

The forest has no secrets from me,
for I am its naked lover.
But where have I left my shirt?

Times have changed, Gray Cloud.
A street in honor of Hogan Bassey
divides your lodge.

Come, let us apply the universal,
each to each. I shall shrink
my enemies. You may stretch them.

If only other men might get on so!
Tell me, Gray Cloud, in whose arms
will you lie tomorrow, panting?

~

DON'T GO BACK

Don't go back anywhere:
those old walks are gone
with the highway and nostalgia
's the great killer, after cancer.

Don't go back anywhere:
that boy died, motherless,
in the evening, and the gang
pitched him in the river, a victory.

Don't go back:
but when you do, rub a fist
in the dirt for me
and one in the eye for you.

~

MY EX-

I met my ex- yesterday.
She wanted to sell me her pots and pans,
explaining that she was leaving for San Francisco.

Well, there's no answer to that.
I have both a pot and a pan,
and no feeling at all for her, really.

"But what will you do in San Francisco?" I asked,
knowing she would never get there,
not by conventional methods.

"What would you do?" she replied angrily,
tossing her greying, bobbed hair.
"Eat out?"

~

THE VERITABLE PLAYERS

We are poseurs, not actors,
Shakespeare,
for these are men who know
four walls can fall
nor strip them of their talent.

But eye us, imitators!
all unconscious of our parts,
bound to them by birth
as pigs and chickens!
See the bear, the usurer;
the outright bull who paws
his plot nor serves the cow
except in his own season;
the fox, the criminal;
the rat, the plaguey one;
the lyric chickadee whose song
is common stuff but rare to many;
the cur, the scavenger;
the cat, so choicely kept;
the rabbit, proper keeper
of our garden, whose toll
and manner fit a paltry patch.

We are but bearers of the torch
to veritable players, nor may we
learn great lines in time,
as actors do.

These latter men put on a part
as you and I a vest,
yet withal, without it,
go naked at their best.

~

Eugene Ruggles

Two Poems

MANNERS

When I walk the woods
especially when the September
fires are fresh with red

going in I hang my mind
on the first twig.

~

SUN

This furnace flowers
its conquering image
in dandelions

as every April
it slams the dirt
with grass,

loves low into August
the hottest of all
like noon and holds

until oak and elm smoke
bursting in their
red leaf rain,

displays on down December
the wind white skill
with form of snow—

a snow storm of sun
that can always break
these open eyes open.

~

Two Poems

IN THE SMOKING CAR

That hatless chewed woman sending me messages
with her eyes, what does she know about me?
That I've had my last child, that my
clocks are stopping? That love still comes to me
like birthdays or Christmas, and a kiss
can be a whole concert?

She is grayer than I, more toothless,
but she grins like a sister.
Do my sins show?

What deception
does she see through me?
I shrink from her wrinkles, her sporty air,
her certain knowledge, older than cats,
that I am pretending, pretending, pretending.

~

I BITE A STONE

I had this dream where I told you to go away.
I don't know what the end of the poem will be.
The dream said it. It wasn't really me.

Was this a kind of self-discovery
To have this dream (I always wake to stay)
Saying I don't need you, go away?

I gasped, coming up from webs of sleep.
I tried to brush the sticky threads away.
I don't know what the end of the poem will be.

Something about a young girl with a deep
Need for mother twenty years ago.
Like most necessities, it didn't keep.

I cannot see where, waking, this will lead,
Nor why I told you I had lost my need.
I had this dream where I told you to go away.

I don't know what the end of the poem will be.

~

Phyllis Rose

END OF WINTER

for Noel

Near fool am I in April to imagine
At winter's end, an end to dangerous loving.
Given to doubt of any sudden vision
I could not trust the cold excitement rising
Into the bony structure of affection
When sun on the ice spun light about you striding
Over the frozen lake in the barren season.
Hard to your steps the quickened air fell ringing
And love cracked with a solid, riving motion
Through lucid, rigorous bone, though I stood striving
Not to be struck by a winter made illusion.
Now, though the rainy spring is overcoming
The iron chill of the air, it has not taken
That dazzling, stern excitement. And I cease doubting.
Love blazes at the center, cold and certain.

~

KEEPER OF THE GARDEN

I

I awoke this morning
just in time to watch
the sweeping gulls
searching for the last
edible stars.

II

Strange are these children:
willows bowing to the wind.

III

Nothing so beautiful
and alive: the hands
of flowers, cupped to
catch the rain.

IV

Sun going down.
Surface of the garden
shimmers in this
palest light.

V

(leaf stone bird star)

VI. *Poppies*

dark orange
ragged
sentinels

of my desire
fragments
of myself

catch fire
take to
the wind

in this
high field
they come

to rest.

~

E. F. Weisslitz

Three Poems

SUMMER AFTERNOON

The wren built a nest
in the hydrangea bush;

for this lapse of
Sublime Intelligence

I sat in the garden
every day the three gray eggs
waited on the branch: not

Man's alone, evil, said I
folding my hands and

dreaming the sun...

~

AMPHIBIA

REPRESSION

Under a stone
the red salamander
waits for me
to pass.

Most beautiful of all creatures!
tremble
 if you must

in your deep-shadowed
corner.

DIVORCE

For seven years I
clutched at that straw
and held it from
drowning—

forgetting it was I
who had fallen
into the river.

LIFEBOAT

In the distance
a lighted steamer
glides
 across
the sea-sky

a game-board toy
pushed along
by the hand
of a child.

who else
would play
such a monstrous joke?

~

SKELETON

Searching down old roads, crossing
half-rotted bridges
 following
streams in pastures where the tiny
blue forget-me-nots
bend over the slow water;

climbing over stone fences
from one man's land to another's
I studied the countryside

those sweet summer mornings;
I knew every plant, shrub, vine
and bush that grew in the valley,

the elusive Indian Pipe that
must have shade, the brilliant
buttercups that must have sun;

searching, crossing, following,
climbing, studying—
 nothing
was left for the afternoon

except turning.

~

Two Poems

INVENTÁRIO

Cambiei tantas casas:
trens imóveis nos quais dormi.
E agora, olhando para tudo que me resta
vejo que ainda carrego coisas demais comigo.

Talvez bastaria
uma bússola para orientar entre a gente
um tripé para o descanso
após a caça às imagens
um abecedário
um dicionário universal sem palavras
e uma lâmina de barbear
com a qual possa marcar cada manhã no rosto
uma juventude que cada vez mais
fica nalgum lugar
atrás do espelho.

PENA

Quero escrever um poema
tão simples como um copo d'água
ou um pedaço de pão, esquecido
num canto de mesa por uma criança.
Um poema, transparente como uma janela
e, ao mesmo tempo, leve como um pedaço de chumbo nas asas
pesado como borboleta numa cidade, entre caminhões,
um poema feito de palavras
invisíveis, cujo eco se ouve
durante os séculos, murmurando
como um rio, sem fim.

Translated by Robert Austerlitz

INVENTORY

I've slept in so many crowded trains
I've moved so often from house to house
And now when I look at all that remains:
Baggage and ballast.

A compass to find my way among men
A three-legged stool to rest
after the quest for images, and a spelling book
A universal dictionary without words:
These should do.

And a razor
each morning youth to engrave on my cheeks
Youth—which day by day
hides farther behind the mirror.

STYLUS

I want to write a poem
as simple as a glass of water
or as a piece of bread abandoned
on the table by a child
A poem transparent like a window
light like a winged ingot of lead and
yet heavy like butterflies among city lorries
A poem wrought of invisible words
Whose echo is heard for some hundreds of years
Murmuring like a river, forever.

Five Italian Poems

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS

That's our last look at the green canal.
Now the steps go down. Our life
is stone and chain. Moments back
we passed the Tintoretto mural
and saw our judgment screamed:
life in a rheumatic cell.
Jails today have thinner walls
and better air. Judges are the same.

Here we see a claw mark of despair
ripe as those mosaic walls outside.
We hear the sobbing of a mind gone wrong
from years of hearing water pound
on stone, unseen, ten feet away.
Guards are fun. We tell them jokes
and they remove our chains for meals.

Giants paint what kings require.
Uniforms ablaze. Glory of our time.
Multicolored spears. Sweet axe
come down and save the state from shame.
This son took the throne and so on
while you and I went white with pain.

And now we've won, let's paint one torment
only: dungeon where a king still begs for food
and smiles. Mix black with black to get that gray
of stone that tells him, age, but never die.

~

DOCKING AT PALERMO

You can't weep like them, can't pound the rail
with love for this or any land.
You never understood a cloudy north
so how these tears or that syllabic sun?
This rock that came at you for hours
came at others twenty years ago
in dread. You pass the bay
where they invaded, saying it was wrong.
On either side a cliff and raining guns.

The dolphins had their fling and now
Palermo comes. Blue dots on your right
are welders welding ships. Other dots
are neon just turned on, others
faces strained from waiting on the dock
and now the son is old and home to die.
If you went home a bear would turn away.

For them, the gangplank's down. For you
a cheating cabby waits. Learn the names
of streets or give them names to fight.
You have five hours here. If here before
with hate, you walk a street called war
and beg a man who was a beggar then:
now I have no gun, show me how to cry.

~

W LA RESISTENZA
Cortona, July 5, 1964

The castle mad with decay, intimate streets,
flaring tile domes, faces that light
when I turn out not be German—
whatever the charm, I think of the plaque,
or forty-three names torn from where they belong
and cut into stone, multisyllabic and stark.

It's never right. The band can't hit the notes.
The mayor forgot his speech. They place the wreath
awkward as food left at a destitute door
then march chaotically on to the graves,
another wreath ready, a cornet carving my ear.

After they've gone I mutter "never again."
But what does that mean? Banner and flag and *viva*
our freedom? Better to fix on the pigeons
rising as one and changing sides of the square.
And better to pray no day finds me German,
rifle well oiled, my enemy spitting despair.

~

BEGGAR IN SAPRI

How much money would erase him in a dream,
his lids inflamed, his bare feet biblical
with sores? Why beg me, the strange,
but not the soldiers with their girls
two tables down? The bay across the street
is affluent with sun. Cars I can't afford
are tearing through the port. Yet he comes
to me in half a baseball uniform.
I won't compute the handout in american.

Disease that makes the lids that raw
must have a cure. At least a name.
Food is the affair of man and state
and after food, whatever life remains
Angels can come down and peck.
I see him feed his dog a scrap.

He waits somewhere on a stone thin street
without his eyes. He left them in my wine.
I drink the world's disease and shame,
two thousand years of love gone wrong
and here, a beggar's groan
is nothing when the church bells gang.

~

THE PICNIC IN THE SARACEN RUIN

That rock shaped like a ship might scare us now
but we know stone is stone and that the cross
is ornament, no mast. And danger
never comes by sea today. The tile
is not original. One must crawl on dirt
to watch the west through peepholes dark men cut
and one must sleep there, snug in rumor
(there is no crusade) and wake when one oar creaks
because the sea is night. Our milk
and *mortadella* and the blue sea clear of shark
insist we nap against a parapet
of sun. To sailors this stone bulk
could never be just ruins in the moon.

Remember forts at home, thick logs and flints
and photos of the men? Here, the pines are thin.
A painter-spy tried hard but got it wrong.
The main room held an extra hundred
all with spears. The cries of first invaders
on the rock below were waves. The final clash
was sun tomorrow and the empty sea.
That cross is really recent and the stains
we thought were blood are flowers in the cracks.

Perhaps they wept and cursed the barren sea
and screamed at night: when will Christians come?
Let's take our orange peels home. Those glints
are gulls or rough spots on the sea.
Time has bombed the spears away
and men who can't be photoed must have turned
toward the mountain and the gleaming town,
memorizing nouns and starting up the stone.

~

About Our Contributors

(for the previous issue: Vol. VI, No. 1)

JOHN KNOEPFLE appeared in the Winter, 1963, issue of *Poetry Northwest*. Chicago recently published his book of poems, *Rivers into Islands*.

PHILIP BOOTH is in Maine on his second Guggenheim, finishing a book tentatively called *Weathers and Edges*.

ISABELLA GARDNER's most recent book of poems was *Through the Looking Glass* (Chicago). Among other distinctions, she is one of the loveliest women in the western world.

GENE FRUMKIN had a book called *The Hawk and the Lizard* (Alan Swallow) in 1963. John Logan considers him the best of the Los Angeles poets.

FLORA J. ARNSTEIN had four poems in Volume V; she has taught poetry-writing and studied it with John Logan at San Francisco State.

RICHARD FROST's first collection, *The Circus Villains* (Ohio), is imminent.

JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN has published widely; last year Hill & Wang published her book, *The Testament of Samuel Beckett*. She writes perceptive book reviews for the *Baltimore Sun*.

WILLIAM DUNLOP, a young British poet, and protégé of the late Theodore Roethke, teaches at the University of Washington.

ROBERT WALLACE teaches at Vassar. Recently he edited an anthology of poems on poetry, *The Mirror's Garland*; Dutton is bringing out his poems, *Views from a Ferris Wheel*.

RAYMOND ROSELIEP's third book of poems, *Love Makes the Air Light*, is printed this fall by W. W. Norton.

ROBIN MAGOWAN has been teaching at the University of Washington; now he has moved to Berkeley. This was his second appearance here.

JESSIE KACHMAR, formerly of Seattle, now lives in Chicago, where she studied with John Logan and helped found the Poetry Seminar there.

DAVID RAY teaches at Reed College; Cornell recently published his poems, called *X-Rays*, and a book which he edited of translations of poems from the Hungarian Revolution.

GEORGE KEITHLEY writes both fiction and poetry and teaches at Chico State College.

CAROLINE SISKIND teaches at the University of Illinois and is also a former student of John Logan.

JOHN WOODS appeared here for the third time. His last book was *On the Morning of Color* (Indiana).

RICHARD DEUTCH is a former student of John Knoepfle. He now attends Bard College.

BARBARA OVERMYER was recently co-winner of the Alice Fay di Castagnola award of the Poetry Society of America (3,500 clams!!!).

MORTON MARCUS of San Francisco has had poems in the *Chelsea Review* and *Genesis West*.

VERN RUTSALA's book of poems, *The Window*, was published by Wesleyan. This was his second time in *Poetry Northwest*.

J. EDGAR SIMMONS is in the forthcoming anthology, *New Southern Writing* (Louisiana State University).

MARTHA ASHER FRIEDBERG also had three poems in Vol. V; she is an ex-student of John Logan and an associate editor of *Choice*.

STUART FRIEBERT teaches at Oberlin in the Department of German and Russian.

ALAN GOLDFARB used to play football for Grinnell; he is big stuff in Urban Renewal in Chicago and has been published in *Critic* and *Choice*.

PAUL PERA lives in Berkeley where he works in a factory. This is his first publication anywhere.

JEAN FARLEY will also be in the Louisiana State University Press anthology, *New Southern Writing*. She has appeared in *Southern Review* and *Shenandoah*.

SAINT GERAUD, a pseudonymous saint, was praised by Kenneth Rexroth in the June issue of *Harper's* as the most talented poet of his generation.

SISTER MARY GILBERT's book of poems, *From the Dark Room*, was published by Bobbs Merrill in 1964. She had three poems here in 1961.

FRANZ SCHNEIDER, a former student of Theodore Roethke, teaches at Gonzaga; he is co-translator, with Charles Gullans, of *Last Letters from Stalingrad*.

DAVID WAGONER recently published his fourth novel, *The Escape Artist* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux); his fourth book of poems, *Staying Alive* (Indiana) will come out next year.

~

JIM JOHNSON, whose painting, *Circus Figure* appeared on the last cover (thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Preston Niemi, who own it), lived in Seattle until he left for Stanford this fall to study and teach.

Contributors to This Issue

ROBERT HAZEL teaches at N.Y.U.; his *Poems* were published by the Morehead Press in 1961; Morehead also publishes the anthology, *Deep Summer*, in which this poem appears.

ADRIEN STOUTENBURG won the Lamont Poetry award last year for her book, *Heroes Advise Us*. She lives in California where she also writes children's books, thirty so far. First appearance here.

ROBERT SUND lives in Seattle; we print only a fragmentary selection of his numerous and lovely harvest poems; previously we have published his translations of poets of Swedish Finland.

EDWARD WATKINS has published far and wide; his first book of poems, *Figures of Authority*, awaits publication. He lives on 8th Street, N.Y., handy to that good book shop.

ERIC TORGENSEN wrote the poems we print while a senior at Cornell. He teaches English at Addis Ababa University for the Peace Corps. *Epoch* has published his work.

DICK BAKKEN wrote "The Black White Boy" when he was a twenty-one-year-old student at Washington State. This year he is teaching English at Pacific Lutheran in Tacoma. Communications from C.O.R.E. or the K.K.K. will receive our close attention.

NAOMI LAZARD appeared in our All-Girl Issue (which made quite a few people mad; but the really good lady poets thought it was funny as all get out), with distinction. She is presently living and writing in Siena.

JANE MAYHALL is another alumna of the A.G.I. (Vol. 5, No. 1, despite what it says on the cover). She is married and lives in Brooklyn Heights.

WILLIAM HARMON wrote these poems while serving in the Navy. He also writes us splendid letters from U. S. NAVCOMMSTA, Navy 220, FPO, N.Y. 09582.

ROBERT BLOOM's instant epic, "Glug, Son of Blaha" (from Vol. III, No. 2) still gives us a stitch when we re-read it, which is often. Now Bloom strikes again, with "Columbus Day." He also lives on 8th Street and claims he is "unconsciously funny."

EUGENE RUGGLES is also a sailor. San Francisco is his home, when he's home. Like the Messrs. Hazel, Watkins, Torgersen, Harmon, and Bakken, he makes his debut here.

RUTH WHITMAN is another All-Girl from *that* issue. She lives in Cambridge, Mass., where she is engaged in translating the poems of Abraham Sutskever from the Yiddish, to be published by Clarke & Way in a bilingual paperback.

PHYLLIS ROSE makes a third appearance here. She lives in Honolulu.

DAVID SANDBERG, formerly from Spokane and Portland, Oregon, now dwells in San Francisco, publishes in *el corno emplumado*, and scrawls poems on stones in Ben Lomond (Calif.). First appearance.

E. F. WEISSLITZ also lives in the Cambridge area, where she has three children and a husband who knows about computers. First appearance.

STEFAN BACIU was born in Rumania; when he was seventeen, his first book of poems won both the National Poetry Award and the Award of the Rumanian Writers' Society. Since then, he has lived in Brazil, Switzerland, and the United States, and has published more than thirty books of poetry, criticism, and political essays, in Rumanian, Portuguese, Spanish, and German. He now teaches at the University of Hawaii.

ROBERT AUSTERLITZ, Mr. Baci's translator, teaches at Columbia University.

RICHARD F. HUGO, our pride and joy, has a new book, *Death of the Kapowsin Tavern* (Harcourt). After a year in Italy, where he wrote these magnificent poems, among others, he has returned to teach English at Montana State.

LEO KENNEY, who did the painting especially for this issue (if a contributor wrote a line as sibilant as that we'd reject it), has brightened up the Northwest by moving back to it from San Francisco.

Back Issues of Poetry Northwest

(continued from page 2)

Volume IV (1963-1964)

Number 1: Donald Finkel's "Simeon," in full; long poems by Patricia Goedicke and Emile Capouya; "Twelve Psalms" of Bertolt Brecht translated by Frank Jones; ten poems by William Stafford; four poems by Harold Witt. Lavishly illustrated by William Cumming and Berkley Chappell.

Number 2: *Theodore Roethke Memorial Issue*: poems by distinguished Northwest poets, among them Richard F. Hugo, Eve Triem, Kenneth O. Hanson, Scott Greer, Robert Sund, and James B. Hall. Cover by Carl Morris, and a tribute to Roethke by the editors.

Numbers 3 & 4: *Comparative Poetry* (double issue): poems, with translations, by George Seferis (Greece), Henri Michaux (France), Miguel Hernandez (Spain), Gunnar Bjorling (Swedish Finland), Chairil Anwar (Indonesia) and three other Indonesian poets, Sakutaro Hagiwara (Japan) and four of his contemporaries, Attila Gérecz (Hungarian) and two of his compatriots, Jean-Joseph Rabéarivelo (Madagascar) and two more African poets. Also, poems by Robin Skelton, Lloyd Parks, Charles Wright, Robert Kent, Robert Sward, John Tagliabue, and others.

Volume V (1964-1965)

Number 1: cover and four illustrations by Edward Gorey, especially for this issue of poetry by American women: Mona Van Duyn, Ruth Whitman, Jane Mayhall, Naomi Lazard, Nancy-Lou Patterson, Diane Wakoski, Barbara Guest, and others.

Number 2: Poems from England and America: cover and six poems by Tony Connor. A translation of Baudelaire's "The Albatross" by Kingsley Amis (pseudonymous); prize-winning poems by Robert Conquest; Theodore Roethke's "Elegy"; poems by Arthur Gregor, Jean Garrigue, Christopher Levenson, James Schevill, John Montague, Aaron Kramer, and others.

Numbers 3 & 4 (double issue): Cover (four color) and two poems by Elise Asher. Poems by A. R. Ammons, Vi Gale, Robin Skelton, Samuel Hazo, Charles Edward Eaton, four poems by Arthur Gregor, Kenneth O. Hanson's "Seven Greek Poems," and others.

Single issues: \$1.00
Double issues: \$1.50

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