



POETRY NORTHWEST

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POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER, 1960-1961

Earle Birney

Six Poems

EL GRECO : *ESPOLIO*

The carpenter is intent on the pressure of his hand
on the awl, and the trick of pinpointing his strength
through the awl to the wood, which is tough.
He has no effort to spare for despoilings
or to worry if he'll be cut in on the dice.
His skill is vital to the scene, and the safety of the state.
Anyone can perform the indignities; it's his hard arms
and craft that hold the eyes of the convict's women.
There is the problem of getting the holes exact
(in the middle of this elbowing crowd)
and deep enough to hold the spikes
after they've sunk through those bared feet
and inadequate wrists he knows are waiting behind him.

He doesn't know perhaps that one of the hands
is held in a curious gesture over him—
giving, or asking, forgiveness? —
but he'd scarcely take time to be puzzled by poses;
criminals come in all sorts, as anyone knows who makes crosses,
are as mad or sane as those who decide on their killings.
Our one at least has been quiet so far
though they say he talked himself into this trouble,
a carpenter's son who got notions of preaching.

Well here's a carpenter's son who'll have carpenter sons,
God willing, and build what's wanted, temples or tables,
mangers or crosses, and shape them decently,
working alone in that firm and profound abstraction
which blots out the bawling of rag-snatchers.
To construct with hands, knee-weight, braced thigh,
keeps the back turned from death.

But it's too late now for the other carpenter's boy
to return to this peace before the nails are hammered.

1

FRANCISCO TRESGUERRAS

Half out of your coffin,
Francisco Tresguerras,
You cast a wry look at us,
asking the way.
To the right and the left of you,
off to their Heaven,
their Hell, they go clambering,
all your squat townsmen,
certain of Something,
ignoring your question.
Only you are left clueless
no man for a queue.

Down here their descendants
avoid still your eye;
black mists of old women
and huddled rancheros
point the nose to the pavement
while round them your columns
rise slender and soaring
into reaches of grace
and trumpets of light.

They have hung up once more
all the clutter you banished;
misshapen pieties
pockmark the sheerness;
mock-blood of a god
drips from your dome.

Yet out of your fresco,
down on the lot of us,
Francisco Tresguerras,
still stares out the face
that is question and answer.

Your Heaven, your Hell is
half out of your coffin
still to be asking,
still the creator,
while the centuries move,
right left and right left,
from the vision arrested,
from the Limbo of art.

Born in Celaya, Mexico, 1759; died there, 1833. Self-taught architect, sculptor, engraver, poet, he introduced neo-classical form into the churches of his town, in opposition to the elaborate rococo style prevailing before (and after). One of his churches still preserves his mural of the Last Judgment, containing a self-portrait.

1

HAIKU *to a young waitress*

With dusk I am caught
peering over the holly
hedge at the dogwood

TRANSCONTINENTAL

Crawling across this sometime garden
now in our chaircars like clever nits
in a plush caterpillar should we take time
to glance from our dazzle of folders
and behold this great green girl grown sick
with man, sick with the likes of us?

Toes mottled long ago by soak of seaports
ankles rashed with stubble
belly papulous with stumps?
And should we note where maggoting miners
still bore her bones to feed our crawling host
or consider the scars across her breasts
the scum of tugs upon her lakeblue eyes
the clogging logs within her blood—
in the pause between our magazines?

For certainly she is ill, her skin
is creased with our coming and going
and we trail in her face the dark breath of her dooming.

It is true she is too big and strong to die
of this disease but she grows quickly old,
this lady, old with us
nor have we any antibodies for her aid
except our own.

ALUROID

Blurred in a blot
of laburnum leaves
panther taut
the small Siamese
has willed even her tail's
tip to an Egyptian frieze.

But not her two
sapphire burning blue
pools whose planetary bale
to the topmost wren glares through.

The silent ritual she brings
they shatter, by their shrill
profanities deny
her lethal godhead till
Bast in anguish springs
her tawny grace at nothing

drops unfelicitous upon
the powermowed lawn
a staring failure
chittering.
Dish clinks
and in a breath
she is a fawn
cat, house-intent.
Bast's thirty teeth are masked.
The terrible fires sink
to almond innocence.

The wrens fly off to other deaths.

TAKKAKAW FALLS

Jupiter, Thor, how he thunders!
High in his own cloud somewhere
smashes
explodes on her upslant ledges
arcs out foaming
falls fighting—
o roaring cold down-geyser—
falls
falls gyring, flings
rain rainbows like peacock flights
vaulting the valley
His own gale rends him
heads off spray-comets
that hurl from her taut cliff
shreds even his cataract core
juggles it
struggles—holds?
falls
ho
like Woden
Zeus
down
terrible the bolt of him—
writhing past firs
foamdrowned to skeletons—
the hissing iced-nebulæ whirl of him
crashes
batters unstayable
batters bullthroated
life-lunging

Tak-
ka-
kaw
batters the brown
throbbing thighs of his mountain

Out of mist meekly the stream

Milk-young he mewls in naked-green moss
bruise-purple boulders
Slickens to slope, pours
silt-turbulent through pine, races
whole to the Yoho, coils
with Columbia, wanders
the ocean tundra, climbs
by sunladders slowly to
storm
glacier
down to the
spawning
thunder

Harold Witt Five Poems

SOME LIVES

Some lives have ruined layers, Troys below
slow mound barren meetings of the eye
lie dump heap palaces, onetime walls—
Cassandra chanted wildhaired prophecy,
breastplate heroes clattered in the halls
vivid burnings melted like a snow.
Some lives are fossiled with a buried glow.

Some lives rise more Egyptian, slipped in sand
great shapes still visible though chipped conceal
tombs of faience, sarcophagi of gold,
jewel masked Pharaohs who in marvelous murals
are punted huntward, recognizable.
You see the very bone beneath the hand
that held regality; the liliated Nile

flows continuous, as green as real.
And there are lives like wrecked, conjectured Rome,
broken forum steps that lead you up
to nothing but a single perfect column,
alleys of headless vestals, a stone lap
that has no breast or face; you only feel
a certain glory vanished from the rubble.

And then in this sad chronicle at last,
this list of lives, come some of pinnacles,
structures windowed gold and dipped in dawn,
with swirls of glass and color being built,
harplike bridges to a rivered island
sapphire at night, not yet a ghost
of shattered splendor in a present past.

A FLOWERY POWER

A flowery power glistens pistils now,
petal and sepal wheel, into whose traps,
humming in honey, bees go tumbling down.
Monarch and Buckeye glimmer on the discs.
An ardent gardener, raying, sprays and stoops
to weed the wonder with warm, swelling wrists.

Basketing beauty, a spinster happily snaps
scissors that clip the season of its sex,
but more whorls open; white, licentious lilies
unwind their shimmering slimness on a calyx
and more bees paw, like stallions sensing fillies,
the airs of pleasure, pounding hooves in pollen.

The rose has gone to pink and red extents,
prinked as Antoinette or the Nile siren,
loosing from velvet sveltness believable scents.
And experienced cerei, like whores at night,
offer softness among sticks and stones.
Like much that's natural, this force depends

on seeming otherwise for its success,
on means of symmetry for crooked ends—
the mystic flower forks roots in moist manure
which we forget, festooning sentiment
with brazen daisies, praising nature
as if it were our eyes it blossomed for.

SUCH BIRD EXCITEMENT

Such bird excitement after their home's explosion
— bubble of clay booming on an awning —
the dog squealed running, a scent of embryos
attracted across lawns, tiger cautious,

the death alertness of the ready cat.
Looping, bereft in air, the nestless swallows
stunned by unbelief, kept circling back
and clung to onceness where now nothing was.

It even looked as if, if birds can kiss,
they kissed with beaks, consoling, two alone,
the last survivors of a natural chaos,
then flew in restless circles once again,

hoping Vesuvius would unerupt,
the roaring wave curl backward or time stop
just before the granite mountain cracked
and towns began to topple, rocks to rip.

Safe in her nervous nursery, another mother
warned them away; because her structure stuck
she had no pity on the eggless other
who fluttered by her door and tried to look.

Then disappeared. After the cat had crunched
those tiny spines, blind eyes and brittle beaks
there seemed a sound of sobbing from a branch—
as if such small unhuman things could grieve.

1

HERE IN HER HOT HAITI

Here in her hot Haiti tropically trapped,
touched by her hand's sands, last seen
swimming her naked as slow waves slapped,
napping in palm fringed shadows of her sun,
I wandered inward; blue with rain,
she lavished pads and lilies on hushed ponds,
finned abundance leaped her upward streams,
I climbed her peaks of stone in delicate dawns.
She was the final island I had reached,
long voyaging, Columbus, de Leon,
and, from the burning bay where I was beached
I never turned my moorings back to Spain
but stayed her native in a calm that charms
the warm explorer after bone cold storms.

THE DOG I'M CHAINED TO

The dog I'm chained to, sniffing up the hill,
stops me for subtleties nicer than my own—
posts of perfume and attars of dung.
You'd swear he smiles, mingling with the smell
his own peculiar, leg up to the view.

He misses maples except their fragrant, smooth
purposive bases. Lavishments of leaves'
starpoints speckled yellows on pure blue
quiver above his head, but the breeze reeks
with cats and gophers he would lead me to

through creatured grasses I can only guess,
whose spiders might be spices on his tongue.
Blind to hugeness, alert for enemies,
his pawed advantage always on the ground,
this sensuous beast is gentle nevertheless.

He wheels a furry, bluntclawed leg at fleas
and pinkly pants while I survey the sweep
of golden vistas vague to canine eyes,
then wisely rests, concernless at my feet
if brightness fades or I philosophize.

1

William Stafford

Seven Poems

FALL WIND

Pods of summer crowd around the door;
I take them in the summer of my hands.

Last night I heard the first fall wind outside;
the wind blew soft, and yet I shiver twice:

Once for thin walls, once for the cold of time.

NOT BEING AN ACTOR

In the wild we find animals various as thought;
we call this wild wisdom.

Those animals became spotted the way
we become distracted: we have a dappled understanding.

Orbiting all points, the inner ear
implies a cone of sound intending to be heard,

And the scene so steadfast knows itself
a scene still, till it folds into its being.

We should act only where we arrive,
in a hard scenario, in checker light—

Or never act, but be.

1

FLOWERS AND ROCKS

for a botany-geology teacher

Attentive to the air, returning the rain's touch,
many soulwort flowers line our path
and wait for botany to save geology:
the green, the kind, the living to take the rock
the way Scripture saith.

But in a way the earth's already a flower,
for when the mountains grow Saint Snow,
pacing their tops along, what can a poor man do
but take this petal in his mind:

return, apostle stones, and flowers too.

For they are attentive, all. All root from stone.
And all earth offers us we bring to meet the rain.

MY NAME WILL BE SAMOSET

Drive spikes into trees and climb
to see how big the wilderness is. Find
paths, but then other trees. Fine!
There isn't any end.

I want the wilderness back — it to be wilds
we explore, not anyone's yard, even Einstein's;
roads to lead nowhere, and — low when we speak —
gibberish, native speech;

Thumb-prints on all the leaves:
"Wanted, God, Dead or Alive";
and I to be Samoset in a land
explorers — being determined men —

Cannot ever find.

1

HOMECOMING

Under my hat I custom you intricate, Ella;
at homecoming I glance and remember your street.
"What happened to Ella?" they ask, asking too fast;
so I fold them off, thousands of answers deep.

"Nobody saw her after the war." We are driving;
in front of the Union Building we stop and get out.
You balanced one night on that step, then leaned.
"There's Potter's Lake." And there goes our path down straight.

"Hello, Paul." "Howdy, Tom." "Glad to see you again."
They shake. "It's been a long time," they bellow, "by God!"
I shake. They sing an old song. I hunt a face.
Every voice yells in my ear, "She's married or dead."

Oh all you revelers, back of the songs you're singing
they have torn down Ella's house — you've forgotten it;
and Ella is lost, who brightened all our class,
and I stand here, home-come, to celebrate.

Under my hat I custom you intricate, Ella,
passing the places, betraying them all with a wave,
adding past dates and jobs that led us apart
flickering into revolving doors, till I've

lost you. What happened to Ella? Where does she live?
Remember, Tom? She's that girl we once spoke of.

↑

NOT POLICY, BUT LOVE

Regarding river lights
(my life has been variously lived)
was just a quiet thing
I sometimes did.

Those river lights have shone
in a way to save our home,
for beyond our jealous walls
were lights, or dawn —

Calm lights, not policy
but love: those river lights
were love without intent
lost in the night.

Through dark their pearlness poured
far over the glistening tide.
I watched those river lights
with long regard.

THE TITLE COMES LATER

In my sleep a little man cries, "Faker! Faker!"
and I tell myself mildly and seriously
that it is well to listen;
but in sleep it is that I evade: awake,
I meet the whole weather of my life,
cold and real.
(The title is "Remembering, or
Guide Your Dreams Awake.")

In sleep all dreams belong, correcting each other;
but in blizzards of our waking all possible worlds
are fighting each other.

"Every act in every dream deserves to live,"
I tell myself, mildly and seriously:
"accept the law that grounds your being;
awake, asleep, or neither, everything belongs."
But awaking from awaking, I am a little man myself
crying, "Faker! Faker!"

↑

Sister Mary Gilbert, S.N.J.M.

Three Poems

NUNS IN THE QUARTERLIES

Used as accents in a landscape or seaview,
upright in merciful black on the sand's monotone,
not even the devil's advocate could question
their purely decorative purpose. Like fountains in Rome
and eagles hanging over cliffs,
they are all suggestion,
posing no problem deeper than the eye.

But if the memory persist in asking why, an evening frolic
through slicker pages of the thicker magazines
where nuns drift in and out of nightmare scenes,
yields complementary answers, all symbolic:
Woman, the ancient lie, the unattainable mystery,
the apple high on paradisaal branches,
the history of heaven and hell, of fall and pardon;
innocence unmasked in God's own Garden.

Naive, perhaps, or else inscrutable:
like Mona Lisa or like Whistler's Mother?
The things they do not say are always quotable,
and unknown quantities reduce the other
terms to their just equivalent. Nuns are the fictions
by whom we verify the usual contradictions.

1

TUMBLEWEED

Detachable. The mobile American par excellence:
rootlessness its survival, and the way
to permanence, an airborne transience
over dusty miles.
Gregarious in its origin,
perpetual distance wears it thin:
all sinew and fiber in a pulp-and-blossom world;
drier than sage
and less inclined to cling;
hollow as cactus but robbed of its reserves.
Not so dramatic, either, with shadow, spike and flower
crowning a hundred years with impossible bloom.

Tumbleweed lives by the day or less:
its route is rotary, its music motion, and it calls
from every river margin and wayside gulch
crying the wind *Take me. Of all this matted company
most volatile and free!*

Freer than feathery dandelion adrift on hum of bees,
heels over head in bed of violable clay,
weightless and waiting
it courts the fickle air.
Patient among reeds, its seeds accept the sand,
abide in evanescence,
calculate on chance.
Its vagrancy vaguely sanctioned by radical elements
and good for something surely:
synthetic cereal —
better than seaweed! An active vegetable.

Tumbleweed, restless and windblown,
rises on breezy rhetoric to unspectacular flight
out of the billboard jungle,
out of the closed, airtight
cells of civilization
into the open plain: useless and fruitless,
homeless, helpless, lost
to dignify Becoming sprung from dust.

1

A KIND OF RESURRECTION

Bruised by the wintry air
the Dead Sea apples hold
rigorously to boughs
from which the weight has rolled,
lean to the lengthening light
here in the tree's shadows.

Fused to the twig's bold spear
locked in each open side,
harvest dissolves in ash
the dwindling season's load
and reconciles in night
the hale, the hectic flush.

Closed on its riddled core,
impermeable to sun,
flesh brandishes the thorn
by which it was undone
and wears the snow-tomb's white
silence with unconcern.

1

Joseph Langland

Three Poems

SACRIFICE OF ERIC

Missing our neighbor, we searched the empty sheds.
We called his name along the iced creekbeds.
Eric, we sang upon the rocky draws,
Eric, and then we faced the silent pause
With one ear cocked to the world.

Somehow, we knew,

But we kept pretense alive a day or two,
Following any tracks laid out in snow
Until we trailed ourselves in the moon glow.
And all that time, in woods by the gravel beds,
He stood in his swollen postures over our heads,
Hanging, frozen, and swinging free in air.
We stopped a few feet off, too baffled there
To talk or move. Someone took off his hat.

Well, he was found. At least, we had done that.

Who got my neighbor there upon that limb?

All those dark faces murmuring at his back?

Who slipped the latest noose that carried him?

Did he? We looked; there was no other track.

Who quickened the thicket clutching at our clothes?

Did he? The woodlands quaked upon our cries.

And who could read the winter's tale he knows?

We saw that pale abyss, the unlidged eyes.

Who swung him out and downward from that bough?

Did he? For fear our hanging hearts would break

We cut him down. Who bears his burden now?

Who swings us all? Forbear, for Jesus' sake.

Toward those intolerable silences we came,
And action saved us when the mind was lame.
We tried some magic for an old complaint
And bowed.

I thought some medieval saint
Stepped gently from the wounded wood which bore
My neighbor like a gargoyle evermore
And gave him, with eroded hands, a crown.

But seeing it wasn't so, we let him down
And carried him out across our bottomlands,
The deadweight of his world upon our hands,
And heard, and hear, in sudden solitudes,
An old wind walking in our lower woods.

I call him my own neighbor, when I dare,
But that's not easy, having come from there.

SACRIFICE OF THE GREY WOLF

Trotting in wintry rounds of bleak intent,
He hung upon the distant knolls and draws
As if he sought each one of us, alone,
Howling our very names. Our heads were bent
Sidewise to hear him wail against our cause.
We gouged his tracks and lost him. He was gone.

He should have kept his nature to himself,
But no, he let it fray the winter air
And trail along the bottomlands of sleep
On the tall drifts. One night the limestone shelf
Defended him with a cave we came to share.
Another night he rode among the deep

Thicketed hills and gnashed our dreams apart.
Next came his southeast wail. Next night the north
Eroded ditch beyond the close ravine
Sprang at the chill of dawn and froze our heart.
At last, we knew a hunter must go forth
To be hunted while he hunted. The icy sheen

Upon the crusts of snow broke underfoot
And sifted downward in the winter's flight.
Morning and evening stood in equal wait
Upon the house of sleep, zeroed and mute.
And when the stars sang out upon the night
His shadow flashed beyond our barnyard gate.

We heard the westward wailing of the winds
Under that threat, or over it. Who knew?
Shivering, we waiting it out upon the stark
Echoes of grey disaster, while our minds
Hobbled the sheepyards with the crippled ewe.
My sisters woke up screaming in the dark.

Wake up, wake up, we whispered. You're dreaming. Tell.
And out of sleep-knotted hair their eyes still saw
What young mouths mumbled, as if it came to pass.
His tongue was an ashen grey where the comet fell.
His tooth was the edge of world. His enormous jaw,
The old abyss. And his claws were shattered glass.

Then up it stood, the manlike beast in the child;
Inaudible prophecies rippled under its throat
And growled in the flowery garden of their youth,
Prowling their flannel comfort. Beyond those wild
Peripheries of warmth, occasions gloat,
Skirting their fairy woods with a grey truth.

Who howls at midnight from our bottomlands,
Degrading us with watching, while the gun
Stands with its polished eye inside the hall?
Who cocked the safety for uneasy hands?
Run to the north ravine. Who hides? We run.
We aim, we stand, we wait. Is it nothing, at all?

Had the sly fiend but slashed across our gate
And sunk his teeth into the heifers' shanks,
Or ripped our ram to death and, dripping, fled,
We could have settled then. But that grey fate
Wastes our rest behind the bloodiest flanks
Of frayed imaginations in our head.

A stutter out of the henhouse late at night,
And all our nerves are cackling up on edge
Until the cock-mad mornings strike them off.
A bleat among our breathings, and the light
Flickers the lamps and waves the bedroom walls
With ghostly nightgowns under the winter's cough.

Out of the west, then out of the east, he comes.
He rattles the corn-shocked fields and shadows the huts
Of blackberry patches prickling under the snow.
We rifle our winter buttons, shaking, all thumbs,
And batter our wits. We jab our fists in our guts.
For God's sake, take what you want! Take it, and go.

He took it, but early spring in the gorged ravine
His fur was a ragged patch upon the ground
And his belly split and stinking upon the fence.
There the old shadows flicker over the scene,
Although we stand, with the circling days, around
The sunburst of a vast indifference.

There the nights walking at the grey wolf's side
Steal out below the morning's upper rim
Though all of spring go leaping in the wood.
And there we live, where none of us can hide.
I even think I'll be expecting him
From the dark winters talking in our blood.

1

SACRIFICE OF A HILL OF ANTS

We gathered our winter wood in the middle of fall,
Working with brush fires going, meant for scraps
From spindly twigs of trees, and trimming bark,
Fallen in chips of timber from the axe.
This kept us tidy, and it kept us warm,
And though it wasted upward in a flash
Of crackling blaze too sudden for much good,
At least, we knew it would.

That acrid smoke, mischievous in the wind,
Drove us off from a tree we had felled, and I,
Idling around with sparks, spied an ant hill

And red ants scurrying upwind from the fire.
I teased a little flame upon a stick,
Then bore it, flickering forward like a smile,
And stuck it in the middle of their run
For a little harmless fun.

Taking our spade, I thrust it at the top
Of that small hill and cast it to one side.
There an amazing city in all its crowd
Of rapid instincts, wrinkled in ruts of time,
Ran far beyond my innocence. Those dots
Danced to the flashing missiles in their eyes.
I submarined another underground,
Watching them run around.

The way they seized their wealth and hauled it off,
A frenzy of intention, I could tell
They knew where they were going. Sure of forms,
Those bright corrupted arteries were shed
As if deliberate speed could save them all.
How could they know what I was up to next,
Arriving with a pitchfork filled with fire
Upon their town entire?

In all their miniature wisdom, suddenly trapped,
They ran off crazily for their cellar homes
Under such sunlight that their heads went mad
And twisted all the wits their world had known.
They buckled in blood, rolled in a dead flash,
And odors from their parching bodies rose
Nut-brown below the cataclysmic pyres
Of the afternoon's desires.

Then the wind shifted, so back we went to work.
Our young arms flailed upon October's ease
Toward oven breads and kitchen chairs all rocked
Back from the roaring stove on a winter's eve.
Chatting casually, snug in a chilly world,
We worked the pivot of fire, but a smoky dream
Rose from the miniature hill, and a thousand heads
Sang in their crackling beds.

Allyn Wood
Two Poems

CRANES AT ROTTERDAM

Like dinosaurs reaching to munch
Ponderously yet delicately over the homes of Rotterdam,
The cranes mark inlets where waves of brown and delft splash land.
Inhuman things — swivels unbending,
Mantids of the small and arrogant heads,
They flicker their iron tongues, taking no notice
In the foliage of steamship signs, in the ebb and tide of us
Grey in our rain slickers like periwinkles.

We merge with the merpeople holding back the sea
Shouting their trident language. Have we come to see, only to *see*
Their waffle fields cross-grooved by aquarelle,
Spires and bridges on a pewter tray,
Warp and woof of grey-red houses eyed like dragonflies?

Historians may choose some formal motifs
For the life of Rotterdam, our time, this vacation year;
The cranes are not among them, nor the people wheeling to Land's End
Parking their bicycles to wave the ships each way
That the first-last rock of Europe seem not grave.

Nor the sun — consummate mutator —
Breaking these iron vertebrae
(Germinating the bales as they swing)
Nor the moment the cranes flare up like Eiffels of Delaunay
And the tulips on the Square flare
Red, yellow, arterial.

WHITE ATHENAS

White Athenas, disengaged and ruined,
Floating on couches from their parthenons
Cross low our Appalachians,
Haven of their countrymen
The quarriers.

They look down
Long uninvolved now — long
Done with deus ex machina,
Yet curious to see, from their retirement,
How others stir with the enlightened tong.

Too vigorous vapor to give birth
By other means than marvel, they
Throw matronly showers of rays to earth
Where the quarriers' children play
(Not yet too old to marvel, they —
At snow in sunlight from the fat white clouds).

Surprised, the Athenas find these neat
Sunday houses on straight streets
No closer to resolution's patch
Than keeping a watchful terrier by the latch.
Frail air their master, too; space at the gate beyond
In Doric plainness rising on and on.

John Tagliabue

Twelve Poems

1.
Eiheji
Since
the
beginning
of
the
world
began
the
stones
have
been
chanting.

2.
*The chanting of the sutras and the slow ceremony
starting at three every morning at Eiheji*

The
slow
repeated
rapture,
the
intervals
of
silence
and
ecstasies
astounded
the
prologue
to
satori;
the
monk
asleep
or
awakened
was
enchanted.

3.
Returned

My
room
surrounded
by
light and shadow
days and rain
waiting for me
like a tree waiting for a bird
like a raft waiting for an Actor
like a coffin waiting for a very tall King
to take its roof off and say Heaven Now
waited patiently like a wife preparing love and silences
waited perfectly like light or life proceeding with songs.

4.
Adam lay in his cradle
 pronouncing the names of things
Adam carried the tree
 pronouncing the sound of blood
Adam chopped the coffin
 announcing the future
Adam and Eve wept and sang
 and on the Oceans and near the Suns
 the Angels chartered the course for lovers.

5.
Islands drifting
like sleeping whales,
women dreaming
like flying babies,
clouds receiving
like sleeping gods,
mountains momentous
like you now.

6.

The sage advice of any moment

Fish
and fissure,
clouds and coughs,
rough days in the sun like bright words;
age says sage.

7.

Pleasure

A bay
the size of a pea pod
as cool as a pea pod,
also mountains,
also parsley,
also it's raining,
what more now
can describe you?

8.

Calligraphy

It must be easy to fall asleep
in front of a book like this
like looking at the summer night.

9.

Writing kanji;
swatting fireflies;
conducting music.

10.

"Mu" means "non-attachment" or "Nothing", etc.

Mu

Mu

said the taoist cow.

11.

Natural Friendship

The straw coat
draws the fields and flowers
as protection
as he and his shadow
walk through the rain or snow.

12.

Aum

The wind carrying letters
like the seed carrying the Past
like the suns carrying the Future
like you revealing the letter Now.

NOTE: Elheji is a Zen monastery in Western Japan.

1

Donald Hall

Three Poems

KING AND QUEEN

after Henry Moore

As they grew older,
the land which had grown wheat
washed down the hill,
and the river
carried the land into the sea.

The priest with the horned
mask, who brought meat
from the altar,
turned into a bird
and flew among mountains.

The people of the markets
who touched their heads to the ground,
changed into clumps of weed
among the gutters
of the bare hill.

A galley which carried wine
sank in the harbor,
and a barge of hooks
smoked and heaved
to raise it from deep mud.

The King and Queen rule
over the dark nation
of thrones. As slowly
as a river builds a delta,
they have become still.

THE FACTORY

That the belts move
among grease

is the sun which stands
on a farmer.

The air is a chaff
of tiny gaskets.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

A bear sleeps in the cellar hole, where pine needles
heap over the granite doorstep, and the well brims
with acorns and the broken leaves of the oak tree
which has grown where the anvil rusted in the forge.

When my eyes close, I can see another summer:
a bark of rust grows on the trees of the gas pumps,
and the EAT signs gather like leaves in the shallow
cellars of diners, and a wildcat waits for deer

on the roof of a car. Blacktop buckled by frost
starts goldenrod from the highway. Fat honey bees
meander among raspberries, where a quarrel
of vines crawls into the spilled body of a plane.

Vladimir Mayakovsky

ИЗ УЛИЦЫ В УЛИЦУ

У-
лица.
Лица
у
догов
годов
рез-
че.
Че-
рез
железных коней
с окон бегущих домов
прыгнули первые кубы.
Лебеди шей колокольных,
гнитесь в силках проводов!
В небе жирафий рисунок готов
выпестрить ржавые чубы.
Пестр, как форель,
сын
безузорной пашни.
Фокусник
рельсы
тянет из пасти трамвая,
скрыт циферблатами башни.
Мы завоеваны!
Ванны.
Души.
Лифт.
Лиф души расстегнули.
Тело жгут руки.
Кричи, не кричи:
«Я не хотела!» —
резок
жгут
муки.

Ветер колючий
трубе
вырывает
дымчатой шерсти клок.
Лысый фонарь
сладострастно снимает
с улицы
черный чулок.

КОЕ-ЧТО ПРО ПЕТЕРБУРГ

Слезают слезы с крыши в трубы,
к руке реки чертя полоски;
а в неба свисшиеся губы
воткнули каменные соски.

И небу — стихши — ясно стало:
туда, где моря блещет блюдо,
сырой погонщик гнал устало
Невы двугорбого верблюда.

НЕСКОЛЬКО СЛОВ ОБО МНЕ САМОМ

Я люблю смотреть, как умирают дети.
Вы прибоя смеха мгlistый вал заметили
за тоски хоботом?
А я —
в читальне улиц —
так часто перелистывал гроба том.
Полночь
промокшими пальцами щупала
меня
и забитый забор,
и с каплями ливня на лысине купола
скакал сумасшедший собор.

Я вижу — Христос из иконы бежал,
хитона оветренный край
целовала плача слякоть.
Кричу кирпичу,
слов исступленных вонзаю кинжал
в неба распухшего мякоть:
«Солнце!
Отец мой!
Сжался хоть ты и не мучай!
Это тобою пролитая кровь моя льется дорогою
дольней.

Это душа моя
ключьями порванной тучи
в выжженном небе
на ржавом кресте колокольни!
Время!
Хоть ты, хромой богомаз,
лик намалюй мой
в божницу уродца века!
Я одинок, как последний глаз
у идущего к слепым человека!»

МАМА И УБИТЫЙ НЕМЦАМИ ВЕЧЕР

По черным улицам белые матери
судорожно простерлись, как по гробу глазет.
Вплакались в орущих о побитом неприятеле:
«Ах, закройте, закройте глаза газет!»

Письмо.

Мама, громче!
Дым.
Дым.
Дым еще!
Что вы мямлите, мама, мне?

Видите —
весь воздух вымощен
громыхающим под ядрами камнем!
Ма — а — а — ма!
Сейчас притащили израненный вечер.
Крепился долго,
кургузый,
шершавый,
и вдруг —
надломивши тучные плечи,
расплакался, бедный, на шее Варшавы.
Звезды в платочках из синего ситца
визжали:
«Убит,
дорогой,
дорогой мой!»
И глаз новолуния страшно косится
на мертвый кулак с зажатой обоймой.
Сбежались смотреть литовские села,
как, поцелуем в обрубок вкована,
слезя золотые глаза костелов,
пальцы улиц ломала Ковна.
А вечер кричит,
безногий,
безрукий:
«Неправда,
я еще могу-с —
Хе!
— выбряцав шпоры в горящей мазурке,
выкрутить русский ус!»

Звонок.

Что вы,
мама?
Белая, белая, как на гробе глазет.

«Оставьте!
О нем это,
об убитом, телеграмма.
Ах, закройте,
закройте глаза газет!»

СЕБЕ ЛЮБИМОМУ
ПОСВЯЩАЕТ ЭТИ СТРОКИ АВТОР

Четыре.
Тяжелые, как удар.
«Кесарево кесарю — богу богово».
А такому,
как я,
ткнуться куда?
Где для меня уготовано логово?
Если б был я
маленький,
как Великий океан, —
на цыпочки б волн встал,
приливом ласкался к луне бы.
Где любимую найти мне,
такую, как и я?
Такая не уместилась бы в крохотное небо!
О, если б я ниц был!
Как миллиардер!
Что деньги душе?
Ненасытный вор в ней.
Моих желаний разнузданной орде
не хватит золота всех Калифорний.
Если б быть мне косноязычным,
как Данте
или Петрарка!
Душу к одной зажечь!
Стихами велеть истлеть ей!

И слова
и любовь моя —
триумфальная арка:
— пышно,
бесследно пройдут сквозь нее
любовницы всех столетий.
О, если б был я
тихий,
как гром, —
ныл бы,
дрожью объял бы земли одряхлевший скит.
Я
если всей его мощью
выреву голос огромный, —
кометы заломят горящие руки,
бросятся вниз с тоски.
Я бы глаз лучами грыз ночи —
о, если б был я
тусклый,
как солнце!
Очень мне надо
сияньем моим поить
земли отощавшее лонце!
Пройду,
любовищу мою волоча.
В какой ночи
бредовой,
недужной,
какими Голиафами я зачат —
такой большой
и такой ненужный?

Vladimir Mayakovsky

Five Poems

Translated by VICTOR ERLICH and JACK HIRSCHMAN

FROM STREET TO STREET

Av-
enue.
Jowels
of bull-
dog
years
hol-
lower.
A-
cross
iron horses
out of windows of scampering houses
the first cubes leaped.
Swans with necks of steeples
arch low in the cabled traps.
In the sky the giraffe's drawing
is about to splash colors into rusty tufts.
Gaudy, like trout,
is the son
of a sloppily ploughed field.
A magician
pulls
steel tracks out of the trolley's mouth,
hidden by the clockfaces of the tower.
We are conquered!
Tubs!
Souls!
Elevators!
The bra of the spirit's unclipped.

Arms scorch the body.
It's no use crying
"I didn't want to . . ."
Sharp this
wrack of pain.
The stinging wind
tears
a tuft of smoky fur from the stack.
The bald streetlamp
lecherously strips
the street
of her black stocking.

1913

SOMETHING ABOUT ST. PETERSBURG

Tears slide shingle-down, down into drainpipes
scribbling fine lines of rivers on the palm;
And into the low hanging lips of the sky
Nipples were thrust, of stone.

When the sky was pacified it became clear:
There, where the tray of the sea glitters,
A drenched pilgrim whipped wearily
The doublehumped camel of Neva.

1913

A FEW WORDS ABOUT MYSELF

I love to watch how the children are dying.
Haven't you noticed the foggy tidal wave of laughter
Behind the tusk of sorrow?
And I,
In the reading-room of the street
Turned very often the volume of the grave.

40

Midnight,
With drenched fingers touching me,
And the fence stuck into the ground:
With drops of the heavy shower on the bald spot of the dome
The cathedral was madly jumping:
I see Christ run away from his ikon,
The wind-battered edge of the tunic
Was kissed by the weeping slush.
And I am shouting at the brick
And I am thrusting the daggers of frenzied words
At the swelling flesh of the sky
Crying:
"O Sun
My Father,
Pity me — at least you do not torture me —
For distant roads are sopping up the pouring blood you spilled.
This is my soul,
In rags of a torn cloud
In the burnt-out sky
On the rusty cross of the steeple.
Time!
At least you, you crippled ikonographer,
Paint my face
On the almshouse of this monster century.
I am all alone, like the last eye
In the country of the blind.

1913

MAMA AND EVENING MURDERED BY THE GERMANS

Along the black streets white mothers
Feverishly lie prostrate like coffin brocade,
Sobbing into shouts about the beaten enemy:
O close, close the bulletin's lids!

NORTH WEST

41

A letter.

Mama, louder!

Smoke,

Smoke,

And still more.

Mama, what are you mumbling?

See:

The whole air is paved

With ricocheting cannonshells from cobbles.

Maaaama,

They just brought evening in, bleeding all over.

He held back for a very long time,

Burly

And virile

And suddenly

With a crack in his rugged shoulders,

He burst, poor guy, into sobs on Warsaw's neck.

Stars in babushkas of chintz

Were keening:

"Killed,

O, my dear,

My darling!"

And the eye of the new moon frightfully squints

At a dead fist clutching a ring.

Lithuanian villages cramped to see

How, hammered by a kiss into a stump,

Watering the golden eyes of its churches,

Anxious streets of Kovno cracked their knuckles.

And evening is shouting,

Without legs,

Without arms:

"It's not true,

I can still

(heh-heh-heh)

— kicking spurs in a sparkling mazurka —

Twirl a blond moustache."

A bell.

Mama,

What's up?

White, white like coffin brocade.

"Oh, leave me alone,

It's him

. . . dead . . . gone . . .

O close, close the bulletin's lids!"

1914

TO MY BELOVED SELF THESE LINES ARE DEDICATED

Four tolls,

Heavy, like blows.

"To Caesar what's Caesar's; to God what's God's,"

Yet where should

Someone like this lion go,

Where is my den prepared?

If I were

As small

As the Pacific,

I'd stand on the tiptoes of waves,

I'd cuddle and curl up to the moon in my tides,

But where can I find a beloved,

Such as myself,

Who could fit into this infinitesimal sky?

If only I were poor
Like a fat millionaire!
But what good's money for the soul
With its insatiable thief inside?
Not all California's gold would suffice
The runaway tartars, my desires.

Or, if only I were a stammerer
Like Dante
Or Petrarch,
To go up in flames for One!
To burn her in ashes in my poems!
My words
And my love —
An Arc de Triomphe,
Through which
Mistresses of all times parade,
Receding into distances without trace.

O if only I were
Subdued
Like thunder!
I'd whimper
And hug trembling this senile hermit of an earth.
If
I roared with all
The power of my voice,
Comets would throw up their flaming arms
And plunge into the void in anguish.

I'd tear the nights with the rays of my eyes
Were I only
As dim
As the sun!
But, alas, as it is,
My radiance is doomed
To nourish the earth's skinny dug.

So I'll amble along
Dragging my big bulky love behind me.
O, on what
Feverish,
Hydrocephalic night,
By what Goliaths was I conceived,
So huge,
So colossally oafy?

1916

NOTE: Born in 1893, Vladimir Mayakovsky became on the eve of the First World War an acknowledged leader of Russian Futurism. The bold, striking imagery of his early verses and their savage, emotional intensity placed Mayakovsky among modern Russia's foremost lyrical talents.

After 1917 Mayakovsky endeavored to put his poetic gift at the service of the new order. Yet his revolutionary marches, versified slogans and flamboyant eulogies of Bolshevism alternated with slashing satires on Soviet bureaucracy and increasingly anguished lyrics. In April 1930 he shot himself through the heart, only to be acclaimed, shortly after his death, as "the most talented poet of the Soviet era."

V. E.

Thom Gunn
Modes of Pleasure

I jump with terror seeing him,
Dredging the bar with that stiff glare
As fiercely as if each whim there
Were passion, whose passion is a whim:

The Fallen Rake, being fallen from
The heights of twenty to middle age,
And helpless to control his rage,
So mean, so few the chances come.

The very beauty of his prime
Was that the triumphs which recurred
In different rooms without a word
Would all be lost some time in time.

Thus he reduced the wild unknown.
And having used each hour of leisure
To learn by rote the modes of pleasure,
The sensual skills as skills alone,

He knows that nothing, not the most
Cunning or sweet, can hold him, still.
Living by habit of the will,
He cannot contemplate the past,

Cannot discriminate, condemned
To the sharpest passion of them all.
Rigid he sits: brave, terrible,
The will awaits its gradual end.

William H. Matchett
Three Poems

CUMBERLAND IN LOVE

Sometimes, mistaking the tree for his own —
The welter of leaves
FronDED between the sky and his window frame —
Or mesmerized by patterns the streetlight weaves
On twig-shadowed stone,
He binds his limbs with tendrils of her name:

Clumsily, straining the atrophied nerve,
The intractable stance,
His hands unfurl, splay feet lift and fall
As he circles the startled room in an atavic dance
Till the candle flames swerve
And the portraits join in mazurkas on the wall.

But when, afghan-wrapped, having exorcized the tree,
He resumes his work
(Not without dotting *t*'s and crossing *i*'s),
Around his dispassionate features no metaphors lurk:
His will, he presumes, is free.
Beyond his leaf-sheltered window the shadows rise.

CUMBERLAND'S DAYMARE

However firmly resolved, however reprovED,
However reminded that effort is exciting,
His mind is apt to wander twice removed,
Escaping the book by which he escapes his writing
(By which perhaps he escapes . . .

but he can't pursue it,
Peeling his onion till there's nothing to it).

On hot afternoons, afloat between dreaming and knowing,
Washed by a softly lapping miasma of words,
He is sometimes swamped by a vision of what keeps him going:
The blatant profusion of poultry, the endless herds
Of cattle, milked and gutted, bloody and beaten —
The living hordes of creatures he's mangled and eaten —

Mephitic carloads, pipelines in and out,
Brains and livers, quivering masses of clams,
Steaming compost, grainfields, pheasants, trout,
Castrated yearlings, scrubbed pigs, sheep and lambs
(Corn-fed and over-, teat-fed and under-grown),
Their ribs and thigh bones stripped to flesh his own.

To some end surely, some talent beyond tooth and claw,
Surely potent with beauty (though ruled by refinement and tact);
Or is he merely that crouching cormorant maw,
Viviparous in theory but viviphagous in fact?
He closes his book and, paunchy, mawkish, grotesque,
Turns to stare at the blank sheets on his desk.

SET PIECE

The cranium threatened the clavicle,
The clavicle blotted the eye,
The iris shed its lights and bled
Till the ventricles sang to the thigh.

The geranium thrashed the clavichord,
The clavichord blasted the sty,
Stiletos soared through the nimbus and poured
Hosannas out of the sky.

Till lassitude throttled the leper,
The leper blessed the fly,
But the maggot's curse befuddled the nurse,
Whose shrunken breast set pale in the west
While the hero drained out of the spy.

Bruce Berling Two Poems

CHICAGO AND BACK

His father one week dead,
He fled
West, where he drank with cronies and tried to make
A neurotic blonde to keep his blood awake.
(But I don't know you, she said.)

Over the seventh rye
A sly
Fox who insured one life on every plane
Out of Houston, Texas, said, Yes, it's a bit of a drain,
But Time is my chief ally.

The city soaked like a sot.
He caught
A cold and cursed the seepings of the sky.
(They said, It's bound to let up by and by.
In a pig's eye, he thought.)

The third day, seedy, sore,
He swore
He'd never take another drink; said Screw
To Chicago, packed his bag, and flew
Home (where he drank some more).

EPITAPH ON A FREUDIAN

He lived, erogenizing

nothing in particular,
everything rather: lamp shades,
bottles, the sultry colors
of book jackets, light bulbs, ferns,
everything beginning with
B and C and L, in fact
everything. *Let us*, he said,
find meaning in forms, in shapes,
take for our truths only those
the body puts its seal on.
Let old Adam eve us in
to thought. So, for sixty years
— the sleepless flesh prehensile,
omnivorous — daffodils,
Roman vases, match sticks, rugs,
skyscrapers, hairpins, wheat fields,
the Caribbean, Poland,
Orion and the Bull, rubbed
their bottoms on his bottom:
a shack-up with life, a real
doughnut and banana dream,
till neuter death deballed him.

Philip Levine Three Poems

IN THE TERMINAL

The lights have faded in this waiting place;
Although the clock whirs on, it will not sound
The punctual arrival of the few.
The many come, who part from no embrace
Nor seek another on this alien ground,
The final station we must travel through.

They sit apart, the landless and the lost
Who have so lost themselves their words become
Vague emblems of despair they cannot feel.
And who can listen? who can bear the cost
Another's sorrow brings to this night's sum?
Outside the sky is turning, and the wheel —

The broken wheel of stars — cuts through the night.
Faint hostages to fortune, we must wait
For that calm ending they are grinding toward.
One falls alone in the uncertain light,
Or stands a moment stunned and desperate,
Sounding one's name like any other word.

BUYING WEAPONS

Beside the road the 105's
Repeat themselves in ordered rows.
I count the guns; a cold rain drives
Into my windshield, and I lose,
In a vague blur, false clarity.
After a moment sight returns.

Here are the old forms: barren tree,
Long unploughed fields, and greying barns
Where now the smaller guns are housed.
The howitzers command the eye:
Portentous, waxed, blunt barrels raised
As though against some enemy;
Each one is coupled to its bride,
An empty mover; each resists
Time and the rain: mechanic pride,
Instilled in what is made, persists
Beyond the term which use demands.
I have come here to buy for one
I never met, rebuilt Garands
Which I will never touch. The gun,
The polished weapon aiming true,
I can admire — perfected skill
Which through the weapon will renew,
No matter why or what the kill,
A sense of human mastery.
What mastery? The rifle proves
More perfect than the sighting eye,
More perfect than the ends it serves.
Faced by these low untroubled hills,
This barren tree, the silent guns,
The knowledge of our thwarted wills
Sickens my conscience. I must turn
Down the next road, pass through the gate,
And make my purchase. We succumb
To what we call our mortal fate
Until the craft of choice is numb.

THE WOLF CHILDREN

The little nameless ones
Who might have been Betty & Jack,
Who might have been children instead
Of wolves in a wolf pack —
At night they take the streets,
Moving on all fours,
Snapping at each other
And all the locked doors.
Prince has stopped his barking,
The garbage cans come down,
Their little teeth are clicking
All through the town.

Wait beside a hole,
Catch a little one,
Put him in a corner;
When his tantrum's done
Caress him like an infant
Whose errors are your own,
Feel his little heart,
Colder than your own.
He might have been John or Jack
Instead of the world's child,
Whose teeth are at your throat,
Whose yellow eyes are wild.

Nancy-Lou Patterson

Three Poems

THE NOOKSACK RIVER

"Excuse me, Old Salmon; I'm about to eat you."

The mountains lie like crystalline women,
Rearing stony haunches, prone as does,
And from their green ice breasts the riven
Streams fall, wrung from milky floes,

Down the stricken thighs of the talus,
Among the shy valleys, down to the Sound,
That old potlatch dish, bottomless
As Tsonoqwa, the Cannibal Woman, drowned

Among cold plenty. In marginal weather,
On the shimmering tidal desert, the flats
Where insects raise mirages, tethered
Hip to hip, lie the boats like cats

Asleep in the sun. Crouched skeletons
Between the spinal driftwood, lost
From the Salmon People, the net-racks ruin
And peel. When Spring hangs her crest

On nude beach willow, the bleak
Netting blossoms with bobbed vines
That will gather the salmon up like sleek
Grapes. Before the morning dawns

Indian women with eyes as black
As the lightless river, crunch over clean
Salty gravel, stripping the net-racks,
Loading the boats; ghostly women between

The house-shaped driftwood, the foundered roots
Of ancestral trees. Popping like clams,
The engines gossip when the boats
Are free and hurrying, shout in the rooms

Of the river, waking up the mudhens.
Snuffing the motors, the women put out
Tailboards and nets; the drift begins.
Arcing as purely as a seagull's flight,

The soundless boats descend; their borne
Riders bend, taking up nets recovered
Like rainbows over the roller horns,
Stripping the seaweed, bitter-fingered,

Paying chill coin for the Salmon Race's courtesy.
Bursting from the stinging peak-papped
River, the fish come, resurrecting:
Arm-long Springs, burst eyes popped

And bloody gills as ravenous as mouths,
Jaws terrible with sickle teeth,
Bodies the shape of force, prowed
Like vessels. Quicker than breath

The Humpies follow, steely and small,
Rampant with injury, comic in death,
And the Silvers, like hand-wrought jewelry, all
Go writhing and flogging under the seat.

The drift completed, the nets aboard,
The women sit as if carved, steady
The tillers, announce with a pulled motor-cord
Their return upriver. Beneath their sturdy

Denim-trousered loins, the salmon die,
And each skilled hand, ringed in fishy sweat,
Holds to a waiting mouth a wry
Small match flame, lighting a cigarette.

FISHING CLOSURE

*"Fishermen will fish four days out of every week,
observing a three-day weekend closure."*

Rain down, oblivion, let me depart
Beyond the land's-end rocks, the seagull nest,
The rooted reef; let ribs around my heart
Unclose and loose their catch; release my breast
To washing salt. Come, ocean weather, start;
Let me go down beyond my knees to rest.
Between the boat and net where small fish dart
I sink the plunger's loud cup, lest
One fingerling escape. Work's best: worst, times
We lie at anchor, hours or cards, one like
Another. Now in night let me lie down
Upon the stones. Blow out, moon, let my dimes
Control the tide. Come, sea, let silence strike
On bone. Let me be drunken. Let me drown.

A SINGLE SKULL FOUND IN A SALISHAN MIDDEN

Brown as a fallow pod
Bereft of milkweed's silk wonder
Withering beside the Old Smokehouse Road,
This skull, disembodied, under
The midden's limey sod,

Among the oyster shells
Curling like the sundried tide-spume
Layered with chalk and ruffled from the shoals,
Among the lucent cup-shaped clam
Valves each as empty as

Itself, some six feet down
Below the remnants of a fire's
Wasted kindling clogged with dying carbon,
Even below the flinted spears
And granite grinding stones,

With its loosening grin
Intact when the grassed knoll was dug
By a builder for a summer cabin,
Made an Indian, questioned, shrug:
"How did a skull get in

With the other debris?"
Taking half an hour to reply,
Folding his wrinkled knuckles on his knees,
Sighting raven eyes against the sky:
"Stranger or slave, I guess."

Robert Peterson

Three Poems

NIGHT AND DAY

7 a. m.

Waking hazards of broken friends
and incompetent cameras . . .

Fragments are all I have yet,
and eggs, cooking against time; .

—lit the gas gloomily, negative .
to mirth. Wagner was cut off

for the news, and none of it good.

Endings and beginnings: Come closer,
love; what light are we
the center of?

(From an old poem:) . . . would rather
have your coolest kiss
than salt.

. . . and give you a young choice of green
(new). Not bad.

In any event, Spring is no time
to slumber —

4 p.m.

Gathering all of it
up from the day
in the shadow of the falling hill,

counting dogs, socks, flames, pills,
and other positives . . . Oh, well —

open with a good number
drop off to Sibelius.

POEM NOT ALL MY OWN

*"A stray deer wandered out of the hills
onto Stinson Beach yesterday. Apparently
terrified by the crowds of curious sun-
bathers which soon surrounded it, it fled
into the surf."*

NEWS ITEM

*"That with one shot, so to speak, a man can
kill two things. The bird that he is hunt-
ing, and perhaps the hunter in himself."*

WRIGHT MORRIS

We teased it off the sand.

Not far, but it drowned. Sadly, the
lifeguard went and got her.

For that doe, we should
have done our weeping as we slept,
then, sweetfaced,
shot her.

JEAN GABIN AS SHIP

In this plot he's a chef, falls
for his stepdaughter, loses his
best friend over it, etc.
There's some killing, things
finally get resolved, and he
comes back alone to his kitchen,
sadder, at the end.

But what he thinks isn't important.
It's that smooth, well-trimmed walk
between the big scenes
I go to see. I try it myself
sometimes when I have a need
to be making, not love, but speed,
with lots of deep water under me.

Ann McGarrell

Two Poems

PIER

I keep green glass because it is the sea,
I hold its twisting light and all its sand.
This sea is mine, to break or throw away.

That one beneath the pier moves with the moon
and blinds our faces shut like arcade lights.
COME ON beats laughter of a tickled fool,
a nickel's worth of THE GORILLA'S BRIDE
(the brute dies frustrate in a cardboard Borneo),
a doll to drown (pink feathers in the surf affront the gulls).
Your mouth turns up to laugh (I leave it there).

Song: tell me a solvent for the cat's long scream
and win me from a ride to crazyland
where blood and fur are stiffening on my hands
I dodge the sun it splits like rotten fruit
the painted horse rocks slowly much too late

How can I love you till I love this ground
that quakes away? I want a hill of jade
hard to its heart, cold through the hottest day.

PICTURES OF BARBARA ON AN ISLAND

Sunblind I balance on a cliff whose edge is light.
If I could see the humming air was all, I'd fall.

I lean into the warm, my eyes squeezed tight;
my hands brown slowly on the ruined sill.
This house becomes me as black dresses do —
the splintered wood and glass and missing door.

Look, I'll be Chaplin and his Paulette, too:
"It's Paradise," he says, drops through the rotten floor.
She picks him up, steals fruit, winks, dances, weeps —
I could do that. But the weeds the sea the sand
blow lines across my face. I have to stand.

James B. Hall

Memorial Day: 1959

I

When the long iron boat spat us kicking
On the beach near Mers El Kebir
The sea birds twittered past our let-down
Ramp and we ran laughing at a continent,
Not one truly thinking he could die;
But now I think of Elwood Matson
Surprised that night in his own bivouac
Hole, tent poles and his own Garrand
Gouged through his blanket and his blond head,
For a tank track foraged through the lost
Field of his sleep.

II

And A. C. Roten: often he danced
On our tent ropes, and would sometimes sing
Those low, cold Tunisian stars to sleep.
Married, a picture of small girls hiding
In his wallet, and lucky at reconnaissance,
I did not think that he could ever be
Only some rags at Senid Station, thighs severed,
His throat screaming for its mother . . .
And later Graysted, Kibby, Ethred, and Sidney Hines
Died also by S-mines in the Riviera's green
Unforgiving afternoon.

III

Suddenly winter came upon us near Hagenau
And the season's old revenge of snow shook
The black intricate trees like thunder.
Beaton, and his patrol, in parkas white as breath
Vanished into those mumbling, low-hung boughs.
Later we found them in a shallow bowl
Of that forest, swaying, trussed in the wind,
Flanks maimed, and their heads drowned in the terrible snow.
After that we took no prisoners, fought much
Among ourselves with knives, became beasts,
But still, alive.

IV

Now is this longest day of May again
And while the shrapnel rain rattles this window pane,
I thought to write some easy, formal thing
To say how those alive — being so — see on ahead,
And thought thereby to justify their sleep.
But oh when I saw them all once more, again,
I thought: no lies, to those who really died.
Instead let stand this hasty parapet of verse:
For A. C. Roten, Ethred, Matson, Kibby, Graysted,
Paul Sommers, Sidney Hines, John Halstead, and one patrol,
For they are dead.

Eve Triem Eight Poems

SUN AND AMIABLE AIR

Sun and amiable air
Suddenly, where had been
Cloud everywhere; and within
Cloud and cold a door
Opens: other callings to hear.

You've been washing the dark
Things of thought all the night
Of a lightless season; delight
Yourself in the white work
Finished, brighter than white.

Grass, the smallest petals
Yellow and underfoot blue
Are a speech of rattles
And cymbals breaking through
The washed globe to tell you —

To tell you to be their voice
Rejoicing that the nights end.
On the songs of willow wand
The wren-wing mornings rise,
The sorrow-washed hearts ascend.

IN MOONLIGHT, RESTING

In moonlight, resting:
baring breast to the white
to cool a smart within.
Grief has a body

and it must be tended.

Small they look from where I skitter;
easily left (the muddlers) to fast
in their peculiar forest.

Wiser, still wet of the first fountain,
from my own verity
can abstain; to come under their

NONSENSE — people comely but un-
teachable. Winds (northwest) will dry
my real tears, rock once my crying.

A GARDEN'S SECRET

Tall from the split emerald of trees
The miles of fair atmosphere
Are brighter than smashed glass.

In a small garden I watch,
Taking the sun a water
Beating an empty beach.

Garden. Neat as handkerchiefs
Monogrammed by a bird's
Curl of song under leaves.

Keeps a secret, won't talk
Of the God who is nested
Here, in the cool of time to walk.

Nile-azure lily, marguerite
And roses, without my God
Of garden, border a blind street:

O Alph-Omega which lends
Me breath and power to feel
The Ghost-Who-Befriends,

Be nearer than the bee
Stumbling from petal to page
To finger, O *Reality!*

With all made things, all desire.
I am man, I must die.
Catch me to Thy mind of fire!

THE LAZARUS CAROL

And so we are awake.
Again the grave of sleep
Is robbed of Christ the sun.
We who hated our bodies,
Our habits, our shabby names,
Now we must sin no more.

A river of winter sunrise
Like marred pearls or old paper,
Counting the Solstice hours
Flows from the side of a sun
Nailed to a hilltop pine.

We are redeemed for this:
To make choice shall we weep
Without reason, or wake
A dreadful reason for weeping.

Though the nations, ox and lamb
Garlanded with herbs,
Pretend that for a day
They are ruled from Bethlehem,

The nations pile new weapons
To build their hill of worship.
They set a threatening skull
In the straw of the Manger.

Not by nations but in single
Risings are the living dead
Baptized with the day-shine.
Each of us is chosen
For naming and praising the creatures
So lonely in their beauty,
Of the kingdom of creation —
Or for nothing Christ the sun
Had risen to the worlds.

WALKING OVER WATER

The cities bloom upon a root of evil.
I watch the clock for tidings of the mood
To walk the bridge and watch uncited light.

East, east, witcheries of riverglow
Trans-shape the bricks into a cloud of dancers
Horizoned by the copper din of drums.

The town, anonymous, mirage of park,
(All trees in tubs of onyx, pomegranate lamps)
Or a grove of quince with quicksilver dragons.

A boat breaks water into greater light
Around, blown east, a roaming firefly
Sailing the glisten as if it were grasses.

The over-under linger of the river,
Unending water-waver . . . on the bridge
I sing in the pollenless field of the dead.

With the Lyre constellation I look from land . . .
That road so simply imagined for trucks with oil
Flies, an angel of fire yoking the waters.

MY PRIVATE SAINT

Remembering my private saint
I study metaphors for pain:
of a garden's daisied nations,
how they are as lost as asphodel;

of men, sea-islands and seas, lost
as the roots of the Christly hyssop;
and I toll the vanishing young
across the no-flowing river of lead.

Look through the dark-glass, hearsay —
rages for the untold, true Christ,
or at my private saint (*who do
ye say I am?*) teaching the owls.

O bleeding Maypole, unshading both —
and neither — and *not* by knife-cross light
they kneel the weeks of desert night,
a raging love their only candles.

Midway a sun and a moon, Jupiter
(third eye in the head of a saint)
continues to see that garden-moment
ticked quickly in a sky of time —

the WORD fleshed, or the man weeping?
I touch gently my private saint:
be remembered his lion-leading gaze
longer than his stonestruck hands.

About the Contributors . . .

EARLE BIRNEY is regarded, in many quarters, as Canada's foremost living poet. He teaches at the University of British Columbia.

HAROLD WITT lives in Orinda, California. His book, *Beasts in Clothes*, will appear in the Macmillan series this spring. He has finished a novel, and is at work on an experimental movie.

WILLIAM STAFFORD's work appears in *POETRY NORTHWEST* for the second time. The editors of the magazine will continue to print large wads of Mr. Stafford at frequent intervals.

SISTER MARY GILBERT, SNJM, is at Holy Names College in Spokane, where she has been a teacher of journalism as well as poetry.

JOSEPH LANGLAND presents us with three more poems in his cycle, "Haruspicing at Valley-View Farm," which this magazine proudly presented in its second issue. Mr. Langland is an editor of *THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW*.

ALLYN WOOD is the wife of a professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana, and has been published by *THE YALE REVIEW* and *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY*.

JOHN TAGLIABUE writes us charming letters, sends us bales of extraordinary poems, and signs things, "Love, John," though we have not met him. He recently returned from Japan, and is presently at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine. We want to take this opportunity of wishing him a happy Valentine's Day.

DONALD HALL is an editor of *THE PARIS REVIEW*, and is responsible for the selection of British poets in the new edition of *New Poets of England and America*, co-edited by Robert Pack, out soon.

A note on VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY prepared by VICTOR ER- LICH appears on page 45. Dr. Erlich, of the University of Washington, is the author of *Russian Formalism*, a full-length critical study published by Mouton (The Hague), 1955, and has written numerous articles and essays on Russian literature. JACK HIRSCHMAN, his collaborator, had his first book published by Indiana University Press in 1960, called *A Correspondence of Americans*. He is presently at Dartmouth, but will be at U. C. L. A. next year.

THOM GUNN's book of poems, *The Sense of Movement*, was published by Faber in 1957, and in America by the University of Chicago Press in 1959. He wrote an appreciation of Ruth Pitter in our third issue which, Miss Pitter said, made her "cry with relief" to learn that her work pleased a young English poet.

WILLIAM H. MATCHETT is a professor of English at the University of Washington. His book of poems, *The Water Ouzel*, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1955 (\$3.00).

BRUCE BERLIND teaches in the Department of English at Colgate University. When we accepted his poem "Epitaph on a Freudian"

he wrote, "I don't know of any other editors who would touch it with a ten-foot banana."

PHILIP LEVINE lives in Fresno, California, has three sons, and has been published in *POETRY*, *PARIS REVIEW*, *THE NEW YORKER*, etc.

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON appears here for the second time, also. Since her earlier appearance, she has had a baby girl named Francesca. She continues to be a painter and a teacher of painting as well as a poet.

ROBERT PETERSON has been the poetry editor of *CONTACT*, the quarterly published in Sausalito, California. We believe that we are the biggest little magazine in which he has appeared so far.

ANN MCGARRELL is married to a well-known painter, and, like Allyn Wood, lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

JAMES B. HALL, novelist, short-story writer, poet, critic, art critic, editor, professor at the University of Oregon, seems to have earned that rare and honorable appellation, "man of letters." He and his wife and five children are spending the winter on the Island of Balboa, California.

EVE TRIEM, widely published poet, is presently living in Seattle. Poems of hers have lately appeared in *POETRY*, *QUARTERLY REVIEW OF LITERATURE* and *POETRY DIAL*. Her book is *Parade of Doves*.

MORRIS GRAVES, poet of painters, and native of the Northwest, has been living in Ireland for the last couple of years. At present he has fled from an unusually wet Irish winter to travel in Egypt and Ethiopia. We thank him for permission to use his painting on the cover of this double issue, and point out to our readers that it is singularly appropriate in view of Mr. Langland's poem, "Sacrifice of a Hill of Ants."

POETRY NORTHWEST regrets to announce the resignation of Richard Hugo as an editor of this magazine. The name of a new editor will be published in the next issue.



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