

# Poetry

NORTHWEST



*Three poetesses in black  
at a symposium*

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POETRY  NORTHWEST

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# POETRY NORTHWEST

— SPRING 1964

*Mona Van Duyn*

## Seven Poems

### SESTINA FOR WARM SEASONS

"It has been estimated that every seven years or so the body negotiates a complete turnover of all its substance. In other words, your body does not contain a single one of the molecules that were 'you' seven years ago." John Pfeiffer, *The Human Brain*

Mercy on us for our many birthdays.  
Never again can we envy the lobster for his new room  
after the molt, nor any grub his changes.  
There is no water in the waterfall  
that fell before. Out of the familiar face  
a stranger comes to stare every seven years.

But he learns to look like us, we browbeat the years  
to repeat, to repeat, and so we waste our birthdays.  
Even the astronaut, whose rubber face  
slews out of shape as he bursts from the old room,  
prays to the wires to hold him and let him fall  
back home again, braced against all his changes.

Whoever believes the mirrored world, short-changes  
the world. Over and over again our years  
let us reconsider, make the old molecules fall  
from out of our skins, make us go burning with birthdays.  
Inside us, the bombardier may shift in his room  
ten times, and may, in the instant his murderous face

peels off to show no murderer there, about-face.  
And the earth will say his name each time he changes  
his name in mid-air, he keeps its livingroom  
open to the coming and going of more years  
and of more children who believe in their birthdays.  
His missiles mould away and will not fall.

But we were born to love the waterfall  
and not the water. By the reflected face  
we know each other, never by our birthdays.  
Hearts, like lobsters, hide and heal their changes,  
for our first self wants itself, and teaches the years  
that leak and fill, to reproduce that room.

Even the swollen heart can only make room  
for one more self. Dreaming Spring from its Fall,  
knee to knee, two sit there and say that years  
are all outside, that such absolute face-to-face  
stops the spinning story that tells of changes.  
and so, my dear, I am afraid of your birthdays.

For love is against birthdays, and locks its room  
of mirrors. If your heart changes it will let fall  
my face, to roll away in the defacing years.

~

#### A MEMORY

"Write a letter to Grandpa," my mother said, but he smelled old.  
"He'll give you something nice," she said, but I was afraid.  
He never looked at me, he muttered to himself, and he hid  
bad things to drink all over his house, and Grandma cried.  
A gray stranger with a yellowed mustache, why should I have mailed  
my very first message to him? Well, consider the innocent need  
that harries us all: "Your Aunt Callie thinks she's smart, but *her* kid  
never sent her first letter to Pa." (To hold her I had to be good.)  
"You've learned to write. Write Grandpa!" she said, so I did.

It was hard work. "Dear Grandpa, How are you, I am fine,"  
but I couldn't come to the end of a word when I came to the margin,  
and the lines weren't straight on the page. I erased that paper so thin  
you could almost see through it in spots. I couldn't seem to learn  
to look ahead. (Mother, remember we both had to win.)  
"We are coming to visit you next Sunday if it does not rain.  
Yours truly, your loving granddaughter, Mona Van Duyn."  
That Sunday he took me aside and gave me the biggest coin  
I ever had, and I ran away from the old man.

"Look, Mother, what Grandpa gave me. And as soon  
as I get back home  
I'll write him again for another half dollar." But Mother  
said "Shame!"

and so I was ashamed. But I think at that stage of the game,  
or any stage of the game, things are almost what they seem  
and the exchange was fair. Later in the afternoon I caught him.  
"Medicine," he said, but he must have known his chances were slim.  
People don't hide behind the big fern, I wasn't dumb,  
and I was Grandma's girl. "So *Liebling*, don't tell them,"  
he said, but that sneaky smile called me by my real name.

Complicity I understood. What human twig isn't bent  
by the hidden weight of its wish for some strict covenant?  
"Are you going to tell," he wanted to know, and I said, "No, I won't."  
He looked right at me and straightened his mouth and said, "So, *Kind*,  
we fool them yet," and it seemed to me I knew what he meant.  
Then he reached in his pocket and pulled out two candies  
covered with lint,  
and we stood there and each sucked one. "*Ja*, us two,  
we know what we want."  
When he leaned down to chuck my chin I caught my  
first Grandpa-scent.  
Oh, it was a sweet seduction on pillows of peppermint!

And now, in the middle of life, I'd like to learn how to forgive  
the heart's grandpa, mother and kid, the hard ways we have to love.

~

Poems for Music

DEFINITIONS:

"Write me some vocables."  
Robert Wykes

I. LOVE

harpoon  
    spaceage  
            gate  
easy  
    scare  
    Easter  
floral  
    over and out

II. MARRIAGE

    prose  
briar  
afternoon  
    seam  
    smoulder  
    shoulder  
voluble  
    metronome  
    home

III. CHILDREN

    Ow!  
    hold  
gory  
    Ow!  
story  
    healed  
glory  
Ow!

SONG

for Leslie Chabay, Tenor

Love come early,  
so we may spin with the world, forgive the spring,  
stop our lonesome elbowing,  
so we may find our face, light our fuel,  
and join the great hurly-burly  
that loosens knobby knees and cups the fingers.  
Love come early,  
so we may conspire with the earth to tell  
its hard but likely story.

Love come late,  
to make us hurt,  
to use the flesh we know is useful,  
to say that the world is wide,  
to sting us out,  
to show us ceremony,  
to let the hiding walls fall over,  
to keep us whole and hot,  
love come late.

Love leave us at last,  
so we may say goodbye  
to tree and town  
and be alone to see  
how all that torment tied us down  
to town and tree,  
how sweetly all that torment kept us.  
But now  
in secrecy  
we may let go.  
Love leave us at last,  
so we may rest.

"LOVE KEEPS NO SCORE OF WRONGS"

St. Paul

Love keeps no score of wrongs,  
is questionless  
as the calm earth and sky  
when comets pass.

Love will let fall its rights  
and stand at rest,  
as even the oak lets fall  
its leafy harvest.

Love turns its cheek to cheek,  
its why to yes  
when one more heart confirms  
its lucky guess.

Love keeps no score of wrongs.  
Love will let go  
all but its own being,  
if it is asked to.

QUEBEC SUITE

for Robert Wykes, Composer

I.  
Every evening  
in this old valley  
a bird, a little brown bird  
says thanks  
like a sleepy hen  
for red  
berries.

II.

The farmer sits in the sun  
and sends nine kids out to work in all directions.  
The baby sits on his lap, the toddler leans on his knee.  
We have to buy some fishing worms, *les vers*.

*"Vingt-cinq vers, s'il vous plaît."*

A tow-head boy runs for the can of worms. *"Fait chaud, aujourd'hui."*

How pleasant it is.

The sun shines on the thin farm.

The lazy farmer beams on his busy children.

We make the dog howl for the baby.

*"Écoute,"* the farmer tells his child,

*"il parle."*

*Écoute,*

*il parle."*

III.

The dog changes

here in the open, in wild country.

He wanders with chipmunks,

he saw a moose,

birds beset him,

the skunk under the cabin makes his hair go up.

He spreads his toes to walk the dock

over gaps in the boards

and looks at the lake with calculation.

He is another animal.

IV.

I am afraid to swim in this water,  
it is so thick with life.

One stranger after another

comes out of it. Right by the boat

there rose at dusk the otter,

dark and slick, as if covered with ointment.

I said, "My God, an alligator!"

And the pike comes up, his vacant golden eye

staring away from the hook.

Perhaps there are eels down under,

looking up at the skating bugs.  
In Quebec there is no alligator,  
but I see many a stranger.

V.

The rocky beaches  
are covered with blueberries.  
I thought they were blue flowers at first.  
Now we use them in pie and pancake,  
but still they look like flowers.  
Hazy blue,  
their smoke rubs off with one touch of the finger.  
Under that smear  
a deeper blue appears,  
as rich and dark as anything we earn.  
And so this country feeds our hungers.

VI.

The loon is yodeling.  
My favorite waterfowl, sleek and swarthy,  
a master duck,  
he will swim under half the lake  
before he comes up with his catch, flapping and swallowing.  
But strong as he is, brave as he is,  
he is a lonesome bird.  
He and his mate must touch each other  
all day long across the water  
with their cries:  
"Here. Here I am. And you? You?"  
"Yes, I am here. And you? You? You? You? You?"

#### EARTH TREMORS FELT IN MISSOURI

The quake last night was nothing personal,  
you told me this morning. I think one always wonders,  
unless, of course, something is visible: tremors  
that take us, private and willy-nilly, are usual.

But the earth said last night that what I feel,  
you feel; what secretly moves you, moves me.  
One small, sensuous catastrophe  
makes inklings letters, spelled in a worldly tremble.

The earth, with others on it, turns in its course  
as we turn toward each other, less than ourselves, gross,  
mindless, more than we were. Pebbles, we swell  
to planets, nearing the universal roll,  
in our conceit even comprehending the sun,  
whose bright ordeal leaves cool men woebegone.

*Beth Bentley*

#### Two Poems

##### THE SNARE

A leaf, a net, I came upon  
inside my book, so stiff and dry  
I could not think it ever supple;  
so gray, a world away from color.  
Its beauty lay in warp and woof,  
as an unraveling tapestry  
divested of its overlay  
shows framework, veins, the nerves of life.  
Its layered generations stripped  
down, the leaf is born again,  
relationless, thing in itself.  
Contrivance is life, intention beauty;  
I follow my thread to where it leads me.

\*

See how the child weaves  
his game of fox and geese  
to his mother's side, then back  
to the freedom he desires.

Away he runs, how brave,  
with never a backward look,  
then suddenly he seeks her,  
urgent with love, or fear.  
It's push and pull all day,  
all day it's purl and knit.  
Reticular our lives,  
webbed as a hunter's snare,  
with never one to say  
who's caught, or who's left free.

\*

These strings are frayed, boy; this cord won't hold.  
Cat's-cradle is a game for those who need  
close company. Run, now;

or, better, fly.

*I sewed these wings with my own hands, my brother.*  
Leave me quickly. Don't look back. See!  
the string's untwining. Break it! Make your own.  
Draw and twist a filament of steel;  
your nerves are lovely.

I strangle in my cord!

*Ah, what net has God been weaving for me.*

\*

This leaf, this netted life, my palm,  
Baltic generations grain,  
boat-shape, and etch its unique line.

In it, I hold your child-palm  
loosely, not to feel the pull  
of disengagement, when your will

crosses mine. If I could palm  
love, magician-like, keep  
the thing whole, hid, beauty in sleep,

to be awakened by love's palm-  
er pilgrimaging, sworn to faith—  
I cannot stifle the breath of my breath.

We are forever joined, palm  
to palm, and forever mother and child,  
most separate; our lives cross-grained,

we lie athwart. Come, cross my palm  
in prayer, boy. We'll swim dove-tailed,  
strange fishes, into the nets of God.

~

### EARLY WHITE BEAR

A blue half-moon canyoned in green trees  
silenced our jabber, my aunt  
stopped cursing, we gulped a lake breeze,  
and six dry Texas years drowned in the scent  
of rotting docks, dead fish, sun-warmed wet wool  
bathing suits, algae, swamp-weeds, motor-boat oil.

We took to that lake, three dolphins, or Baptists, duck-  
ing away hot memories,  
hair coarsened from sun and water, skin black.  
My cousin and her new husband, a gold and bronze  
Laocoön twining on the beach, didn't care  
where we swam. I floated on an inner-tube far

far out, sky in my eyes, water in my ears,  
curled in a whorl of self.

Under the stilted house, on dirt floors  
we squatted playing mumblety-peg with a knife  
my brother had smuggled home from boarding school,  
half-naked savages at a dark ritual;

but evenings were nicest, speeding in my cousin's coupe  
around a lake so flat a fish's  
nibble spread loop widening after loop  
of wedding rings to lap the shady beaches.  
Air poured along my copper-colored arms  
luxuriously cool. On the porches of the town's best homes

the wealthy summer people rested before vanishing  
into a night of unimaginable glamor.

Eyelids and limbs sensuous with swimming,  
I yielded to felicities my childhood hadn't known so far  
and wouldn't know again. "Early White Bear" I found  
on a list among Nice, Cannes and "other playgrounds"

that Scott Fitzgerald tendered under "Nostalgia  
or Flights of the Heart." Lured  
by young ghosts he went back there with Zelda  
one summer, but the past had fled, an escaped bird.  
White Bear Lake had dried up like a thousand tears,  
with innocence and innocent desires.

~

*Florence Trefethen*

LOBSTER POOL

Why wrangle, claw to claw, at this late hour?  
The water's boiling. Shouldn't you combine  
For one last protest, or at least farewell?  
You, in the shower room at Buchenwald,  
Squabbling among yourselves just as the valves  
Beyond the wall are gripped by leather gloves.  
Sergeants bark at doughboys who snarl back  
The eve before the charge on Montfaucon.  
Tomorrow who will care if boots are clean?  
And who will care, after Atlanta burns,  
That these two pace their final sunrise out,  
Turn, fire on signal, settle a nice point  
Of honor with mutual mortality?  
*Morituri salutamus* in one voice  
From men who really quarrel over dice  
And now feign fierceness for an audience.  
Here, in the moment when the struggle ends,  
You bandy bitter blows with natural friends.

*Ruth Whitman*

Two Poems

THE PEACOCK SCREAMS

A hidden peacock in the yard at night  
burns like a moonlit fish, an emperor crowned,  
and waits to flash his gold embroidered tail  
and waits to spread the palette of his eye  
and prick my dark with iridescent fire.

But dark was once when bright Ionian boys  
dove for pearls in midnight water. Now  
they dive for shipwreck.

Salt has closed their eyes.  
So bury all my peacocks deep at sea,  
their color is the shape of sailors drowned.

~

WINDMILLS

Don't think of windmills flailing their arms,  
but think of a watcher for wind,  
always standing in a flat country,  
green and low, with a bay  
diamonding in the distance.

Think, even if obedience is obsolete,  
of windbitten stormsnapped wings,  
openarmed to time, but still,  
without sails for the miller's dowry,  
without millstones dusted with wheat.

I could have lived in a windmill once.  
The farmer would sell it for nothing  
if I would move it off his field.

I thought of sitting with weatherbeaten sides,  
a mark for the land,  
waiting for wind.

I would be a wooden tower for time,  
with arms open, out of date, watching  
salt flake my clapboards, watching frost  
eat me, watching birds with twigs,  
watching for a wedding with the wind.

*Nancy-Lou Patterson*

## Two Poems

### CANOEING ON THE JACK'S FORK RIVER, 1939

Filled with all vertical knowledge, the eagles swung  
From the rims of cliffs like angels astride their pins,  
And the sun in its lustre hung  
From fathomless sky, and plunged in the pools like twins,

The day my eagle-wise father laughed like the sun  
Over trout-crowded deeps and intricate rapids,  
Sheering past caves, cataracts one  
After shouting another, grinding on vapid

Young sandbars sunning themselves with their bare faces  
Washing away. Then, almost in sight of our camp,  
We tripped in together, traces  
Of a root-tangle taking us, sending us damp

In our righted canoe, dripping to rendezvous.  
Time goes faster now than that craft went: my mother  
Who met us, dead; my father, too,  
Lies old. Since we rode that river, all grows other.

## THE DIG SITE

Imposing sharp geometry  
Against the yellow slope, a trench  
Discovers a kitchen midden:  
A village, scoured of carpentry  
By latter use, once raised a stench  
Of fish and living here. Hidden

Under the roots of sunburnt grass  
The broken needles lie, and bones  
Of edible creation: these  
Rare scraps are catalogued by class  
On class of students, while the stones  
Cracked by old fires abrade their knees.

Once, a busy professor found  
An Indian boy loitering  
Among the trenches. "Don't step on  
The dirt," he shouted. "Use the ground  
We haven't dug." His ordering  
Over, he turned, thought the boy gone.

In his boots of purchased leather  
The boy took careful steps. At each  
Earth pile he paused, and, unobserved,  
Ground his heel, as in old weather  
His fathers had subdued the beach  
To their canoes' prow-marks, deeply curved.



Too superior to be inferior,  
or equal to abstractions,  
the manifold conditions,  
involving human problems;  
live their silly lives  
by stratagem.

*Naomi Lazard*

### Three Poems

#### SONG AT THE END OF SUMMER

Look, it's still hot on the horizon,  
the sun is naked orange swallowing the light.  
Soon when the bulbs string out  
along the dunes, when the sea sticks  
on round heelmarks in the path  
what will we have lost?  
The words are gone as our attempts  
to say them, gone like those seven swallows  
we saw once posed for a minute on the swingpost.

I always thought tenderness dangerous,  
the sea wind stroking the path an unavoidable  
nostalgia. What ugliness, I said at first,  
and planned to make this house auspicious.  
Nobody will know how I have failed  
though the lawn was faithfully watered.

That which I leave behind, like you,  
like these cuttings of Bougainvillea dying,  
dripping their color on the clear glass,  
can be easier now. Nothing more is expected.

No one I know walks here any more, only a grey cat  
curious about the new tenants  
and to watch moths fling themselves  
against the windows.

I hadn't the sure foot either for the crevice  
broken between our differences.  
I hadn't the great heart.

#### A STOP NEAR THE BEACH

"It remains to rediscover our life  
now that we have nothing left any more."  
George Seferis

And stopping I turned to cast my glance  
over the field which had rusted.  
A golden hare (I swear it was golden)  
rushed to escape. So this is the way  
creatures hide their lives  
in the tall brown grass  
with a frenzy of astonishment and a leap.  
I've never outdistanced my eyes.  
How many midnights have they awakened  
like the eyes of statues left insecurely sealed?  
It is the same now.  
This rush of marble is the wind  
rolling the stones in, smoothing indentations.  
It is all the same as yesterday.

Here is where a child dropped a half-eaten peach  
with the flower inside, dormant.  
Thinking about what lies unrevealed  
in the center of that stone  
I carefully avoid it.

It is inedible,  
no longer beautiful, an object to be noticed.



it's a long way you have run  
in your little knit dress

All down the length of the street  
the houses are burning!

they are burning with the same color as your hearts  
as they lie exposed and dying on the operating tables

Freda Quenneville

To Barbara D—

Three Poems

to whose inspiration and  
kindness I owe a great  
debt.  
Freda

SONG

I want to go gathering  
threads and cotton scraps in a gunny sack  
and make a boll the weevils can't tell;  
gather pine seeds

that start flight but end,  
wings pinned in spider webs  
or wedged in bark, and remain  
to shudder a thin singing  
when the creek breathes  
and dirt cools under hot leaves.

I want to go gathering  
tobacco bound in sheaves with a stout twine  
and hung on racks in sheds with fires in July;  
gather dirt roads

and the heat the sun baked  
into them, the bareness the wind  
blew onto them, the dust that coughed  
from them when I walked,  
tough-soled, alone,  
to the ends of them.



Budding poetess about to write  
a poem to a butterfly



*Light-verse poetess at work  
on an epigram*



*Amateur poetess writing an autumn  
ode in her head on the way home  
from the supermarket*



*Poetess at the height of her reputation  
about to recite a recent work*

I want to go gathering  
locust shells crusted on trunks, back seams split  
with coming death, grim vacancies of skin and years:  
I will gather them  
and thorns and beggar lice  
wasp nests, bramble vines,  
maypops and rabbit dung;  
I will collect the negligible and mean  
until the wooden air is pierced  
with thin song.

### MAGNOLIA

I grew by  
Magnolia, lovely  
as skin; in summer  
it was heavened  
in stars, green sky;  
winter never  
dimmed its shining.  
When we moved,  
stronger veins  
were silent in the clay.

Haven't I  
lived by others,  
twined arms, limbs  
in rooted shelters,  
known the whelms  
of deeper skin?  
Why grow  
Magnolia, lovely,  
draining flavor  
from all that blossoms?

ONE HEART, LAST SEEN—

in Georgia. It had  
the shape of a sassafras root  
clutched warm in a grubby hand;  
a bucket of catawba worms  
wreathed in a slithering mass  
is how it felt;  
it could hold about as much  
as crayfish seines;  
the sound of it was  
June bugs on thin strings,  
and it was fragile too, pellucid  
as the web of the writing spider  
that scratched doomed names  
from the holly to the front lawn swings.

~

*Mildred Weston*

Two Poems

TRANSPOSITION

If there are words to equal  
the notes that Mozart chose,  
they should be heard as echoing,  
as clear as green streams dancing  
descending on glittering stones:  
lucid tones lovingly stroked  
or syllables as bright as air in April  
shining on mornings when no haze  
covers a troubled dream.

Yet not all light, when a dividing phrase  
reflecting change moves them—  
pianoforte—from soft to strong,

from down to iron and from dawn to evening,  
folding a pendent scale of waiting  
into a slow drawn depth of chiming  
as falling rock probes a deep pool.

Profound complexity, close woven thought  
should capture intellect, then free it,  
in gathered movement rising  
to higher, wider planes  
past earth or stellar spaces  
forbidden to the servile sign or name,  
breaking beyond the stricture of a sentence  
as music breaks through its confining frame.

~

POEM

Night fell  
when we cast  
our last stone words  
and turned from each other.

With a few steps  
over cold fallow ground  
I felt the damp clods crumble,  
heard shuddering breath  
of sleeping cattle.

Straining to see  
some road defined by lights  
through stifling darkness,  
I saw none.

Could not see  
where you, hidden by fog,  
with the same fear stood still  
in the closed nightmare field.

~

*Diane Wakosi*

## Two Poems

### ALL GLITTER IS NOT GOLD

Dreams hold the glitter of meaning before your eyes.  
The canyon, lined with grey volcanic rock,  
was menacing.  
But I jumped in, risking the crush,  
because you were after me  
and would have killed me  
if you could.  
Your partners were two beautiful women.

In the ocean,  
there was a patch filled with spiked fishes,  
and despite my fear of water  
I swam  
because you were waiting on the shore  
with black circles around your eyes,  
and I could not go back.  
Dreams hold the glitter of meaning,  
but is it truth seen from your eyes or mine?

I met a man on the road and he said,  
"Love is that way,"  
but pointed in both directions.  
I said, "Which way did He go?"  
and the man replied, "Neither."  
In the dream I tried to find your direction,  
but nobody knew. I waited,  
but you did not appear. Finally,  
your footsteps appeared overhead in the sky,  
and I tried to get up to them.  
But couldn't.

You picked stars and flung them down at me.  
You said, "I feel responsible for you.  
Here are some stars."  
But I remembered shivering in the canyon.  
I remembered swimming out in the dark ocean.  
You had black circles painted around your eyes,  
and your stars when beautiful  
were too hot to hold in my hands.  
When cooled, they were rocks,  
and I could not carry them; they were so heavy.

In dreams you hated me that I was not your Ideal woman,  
In dreams I hated you that you were my Ideal man.  
Dreams hold the glitter of meaning.  
Beneath our love, do we have all of these fears?

~

### THE HELMS BAKERY MAN

The Helmsman came in a yellow truck,  
with a hard-shelled top, like a beetle.  
Sometimes when I am in bed at night,  
I remember his donuts and fresh bread,  
white-sacked,  
sliding out in the smooth wooden tray.

I sleep under a quilt patched with roses & signs of the zodiac.  
Nine swords hang over my bed.  
In the chest beneath me  
are bones.  
Each sword has cut some part of me,  
and I cling to the sword,  
keeping close the memory of an eye or an arm,  
or a heart.

Sometimes I wake up at night.  
Saturn glows like a ruby.

Outside  
around me  
it is dark,  
but I hear the flutter of enormous wings.  
It is a hard life,  
with bones under you  
and swords over your head.  
But it is everyone's life.

At night under the blanket of the zodiac  
I hear a little toot,  
see the yellow truck come down my old street;  
and there is the Helmsman,  
asking what I want today, as I hand him my nickel.  
"A bun," I say.  
And he gives me one with the moon  
in white icing decorating the top.

*Rosellen Brown*

## Two Poems

### POEM WITH ITS TALE IN ITS MOUTH

I sat up straight last night at the recital  
to watch that blind man sing: he had silver eyes  
and hugged his braille to his chest like a guitar.  
But singers aren't for watching, after all—  
I should have made my eyes as blind as his  
but couldn't. And the worst of it, I sat  
quarter-smiling to myself to think  
today I'd have a poem out of it:  
Complex response to a man who feels his music  
(pun); the audience too moved before he starts,  
distracted eyes as open as their hearts.

Of course that poem leaked from my pen and dried  
in my stifling pocket. Let it mildew there.  
When will I learn that poems aren't born but made,  
and seldom free-float neatly on the air  
like thick perfume, like germs, for me to breathe?  
The poem is old before the first line's out  
that knows its way so well. An empty life  
that doesn't have its slippery hours of doubt!

Written, or shouldn't be, that likely rhyme.  
Real garden-toads croak at their own good time.

## UNLUCKY SLEEPER

*to my brother*

Grey nights, bleak without dreams,  
you've tossed through alone, angry  
and coldly sane. We all do that,  
amazed to remember that we never did know  
exactly how sleep comes.

But those brazen white nights!  
Behind shadows like bars we would sit in the kitchen  
going through grapefruits clear to the skin—  
agreeing on tenors but not on sopranos,  
marveling and mourning that Bartok died  
(you hardly blamed him) on Central Park West.  
We couldn't have been more casual  
had it been noon. But it was four a.m.  
and we didn't solve much, re-staging the Met:  
you kept your problems, they kept theirs.  
I'd hop off to bed, half asleep on the stairs  
and you—clenched on the edge of your bed  
you could sit for an hour, like a child expecting  
his last glass of water, drowsy  
but still too stubborn for sleep.

And now what silences drift between us!  
(Though my Charles leads out to the sea and I think  
the sea catches your Seine. Somewhere  
they touch, or I like to think it.) But  
our hands, our rivers—nothing touches  
the ravaged place, softly and strongly  
as I would.  
If I believed what I've never seen,  
that love succeeds where pills and bottles only try,  
I would be in your room tonight at four o'clock  
to talk a lullaby.

*Bernice Ames*

## Two Poems

### FOOTLIGHT FOR A PALM TREE

Cold light brittles its way up  
the shaggy trunk where glass fronds  
pose in the absence of wind.  
Pushing the stars further back  
the emerald light uses night  
as a hasty accomplice  
to promote a difference.

The flushed fact of leaden feet  
surrounded by swirling sand  
fails as sensational script.  
No short incandescent tongue  
can free lurking witchery  
cindered slowly by the bright  
confetti thrown from the sun.

Forfeiting night's protection  
and renewal, the palm, bare  
as protruding bone, sunders  
driven shadows, uttering  
no wind nor sleepy sparrow,  
leaning into splintered air  
that darkens around the wound.

### CHOICE

He chose a door, any door  
slashing the room that choked him  
where suns whirled all directions  
shrinking the air.  
Wind banged the door behind him  
coughed in spasms with his breath  
battered him against himself.  
Sound tumbled over him  
laughter wrenched the pauses.  
He wavered like any weed  
walked on by water, patience  
pulped under and no recall.  
Intention moving past him  
caught and clung  
then slipped away.

Darkness descended too soon.  
Night and never an exit.  
Somewhere there must be small light  
measured for moderate man;  
somewhere a red coil of string  
pulled to unpackage a light,  
leading to a door frame  
where the original door  
signs the pattern of circle  
(motion related to sun).  
Where is the opening door?

Nancy Sullivan

### Three Poems

"WHO, THESE DAYS, DRINKS WINE  
FROM A VIRGIN'S SKULL?"

From review of *D'Annunzio: The Poet as Superman*,  
by Anthony Rhodes, in *Time*

Behind the checkout at the A & P  
The boys in wedding rings thicken  
Into pastel men. They bag the meat with artichokes,  
The tissue with the toil of years to death.  
Nights are beer in bottle after bottle,  
Skulduggery at best  
In glasses thick as sneakers for the christening  
Of a child, grape of their first bubbling feast.

Provide, supervise  
Provender in packages for the simmering pots,  
The icy chests. Virgin, finger the fruit  
Vineless, profane under cellophane.

Superman, where are you?  
In this market marked as such?  
Poet, your stemware is your skull.

### A SEASONAL

SUMMER:

The sounds on a beach  
Are echoes out of another room in a house  
With many rooms. The voices ring  
In a shell held to an ear

In whispers of seawashed places.  
Chinese children running on their beaches  
Are heard in Argentina, and the curling  
Of each wave is an international vibration.

WINTER:

It is snowing.  
The white gulls are greater flakes  
Against this ghost of summer sky.  
Someone was wrong who said  
It snows very little near the sea.  
Today the ocean is furious with foam  
And the land with snow: white nibbles  
At white. The drifts slide against my thighs;  
Innocent fierce mounds on mounds,  
Weight on weight, white on white  
To plow and to perish.

### A GAME OF CATCH

All morning the cat watches  
The rhododendron leaves  
Dangle on the stalks,  
Brittle baseball gloves  
That leather nothing in their palms.  
The sun through the cold and dirty window  
Decodes in brilliant islands on the table.  
Swaying shadows are gentle birds  
That call up from a tiger in the animal a disabled  
Growl. The poem fingers the long flutes of light,  
The baseball birds, the morning's flight.  
Time is an italic on the table.

The waiting cat crouches frantic  
With ignorance arranged  
In a still life for this watch.  
Issuing no answer to the question never posed,  
The poem is a game of catch.

G. C. Oden

Three Poems

BIBLE STUDY

In the old testament  
"Hizzoner" was forever  
singling out someone  
to speak with.

Dream  
and he would make  
a visit.

Cruise the world  
from your favorite  
mountain top  
and he would come  
to call.

Even out of the garrulous  
mouth of the whirlwind  
he would fetch  
himself forth  
for a bit of  
spirited conversation.

Indeed,  
he was apt to  
catch up with you  
at the most staggering  
times,  
in the most debatable  
places.

So, I think,  
he does still.  
Who else, my dear  
could have snapped us  
together and put us  
so warmly to bed?

MAN WHITE, BROWN GIRL AND ALL THAT JAZZ

*Upon the Occasion of His Marriage*

It is essential I remember  
ours was a fair exchange.  
We were a happy consequence  
to paths of darkness  
in a world  
no less terrible or strange  
for all our years of toiling  
through it.

I valued you for what I took.  
That burning in you bright  
illumined our collision;  
your phosphorescence still  
must be reckoned with  
when night  
heretic with your memory  
trespasses my lair.

God knows we were; and though such love  
did not a kingdom come to us,  
each the other's  
wood of destiny  
has lit.  
You found your clearing.  
I fathom mine.  
We have had the best of it.

~

HERSELF SURPRISED

Must I contend with summer and  
my senses?  
Before both fallen  
I hug my lean bed

a whipped bitch  
scored by one heat  
then another.

Brown skin to the black night  
I parry noon extended air  
failing the close carriage of my sheet  
by recollection.

"I am so hungry."  
Was it that you said—  
self-exposure more naked  
than driven undress?  
You need not have spoken.  
Hunger summed your touch  
your taste  
your movement; and  
as I had never known nor  
would have believed it  
mine.

*Adrienne Marcus*

## Two Poems

### THE FACELESS GROW ON YOU; THE HORROR IS DETAIL

Conditioned to tightness in ourselves,  
we buy our meat from butchers  
whose hands swift skill into the flesh  
replaces cut. The hard cold fact  
of steak is no relation to that dying  
thud inside the slaughterhouse.

The knife is opportune. Separate the  
skin from muscle, show thin membranes  
clear and silver, caught between the fur  
and blood; the neck hung open to release  
a final cry against the moving cold.

### LIFE IS A NARROWING DOWN, NOT AN ENLARGEMENT

Approaching evening and this side  
of Iowa, the moving land of corn  
and stalks breaks into a town. We sit  
inside the slowing train, hear the practiced

horn announce then pass the crossings  
and the logarithmic farms.  
The dogs, respectful, hold their distance,  
paws presuming sleep within

a sanctity of shade, or stare  
from unaccustomed dimness at the train.  
We move between the streets, between  
those white predicted houses, huge

and same as any southern town.  
Attics like collections, ghosts like dust  
between the windows; the same  
magnificence of porches to presume on,

rust and swing before my eyes. The faces  
practice time like heat into the summer.  
And high above the grass the green year grows  
in streets, the unplanned elms give way

to parks, and centered in this vast  
remembering town I play  
the part of every stranger seeing  
for an instant the definition

of his past. That place  
to stop, get off, perfect  
himself for miracles or age  
and give tradition one more chance.

But I, refusing change  
as one refuses strangers coming  
to the door the luxury of manners,  
count the houses there

outside the glass as if  
each were home and more.

~

*Rosemary Daniell*

### Three Poems

#### BLACK ANIMALS

1

Endlessly, the jaguar paces.  
A well of passion races  
From his heart. The man watches,  
Glad the beast is caged:  
In those afraid of pure beauty  
Black animals raise fear.

2

The jet bull stands in fields,  
A humble sink-hole in pastures,  
Unfusible with homely grass,  
A simple sport among the cows;  
But passers-by see multicolors shine  
From black: horns, dust, arenas.

3

The crow's oval overhead  
Looks of death: his dark  
Flight churns our presentiment.  
Farmers run for guns, and some  
Hang them by a leg, like Nazis  
Did women in Rhone forests.

4

The black cat is deeper than shadow,  
Cannot hide behind tan or amber;  
And heavily, like jouncing cans,  
Long, long tales hang to his:  
Only children, unafraid of magic,  
Fall onto his unpied neck.

5

Afraid, we look for silhouettes  
Of witches; but in dark creatures  
Reclined, a depth melts through plush,  
White under-skin, into earth;  
The beauty of black life flows:  
Pure. Endless. Mysterious.

~

#### GREEN FROGS

Island apparitions,  
The small, clear-green frogs  
Leap within the wet grass:

In tropic unpromised rain,  
Drops of unmixed oil paint  
Shimmer where the swim suits hang.

The children dump them  
Into jars; we look and look:  
Such color, jumping up—

And how the verdant  
Martian beings bounce!  
To hold one in a palm

Makes us giggle, like gods  
Weak with our power—tickled  
By absurdity made green

Flesh, leaping, released.

~  
DUCKS

Watching ducks stop on deep water,  
Seeing them upright in white casings,  
I think them balancing on magic balls  
Strung tautly to the lake's bottom;

Till one duck rushing for an apple core  
Pares liquid with a yellow blade,  
Impaling me silently on speed.  
A fishing child hooks him bread;

And I dive through dark water to rise  
Beside the amazed bird. Line and water  
Break. The near-disjointing white wings  
Stretch for speed. At my touch, he swings:

His neck jerks, cartooning grace.  
Where I grasp, only a few white feathers  
Disconnect, to float alone on splash.  
He begins to swim in circles, narrowing

Narrowing, to the center of the lake,  
Swimming rapidly, perfectly through rage.  
I dream for weeks of metal through a bird face,  
Spinning smoothly, smoothly out of reach.

S. L. M. Brown

Three Poems

THE OTHER ROOM

Since it was sin, I lived alone  
And kept myself between the leaves  
Of books and impotent gardens;  
Among my admirers, a plate of grapes  
And the soft relations  
Of perfume and talc in steam.  
I went out for cigarettes and cleaned  
The last night's cheese from tableboards  
And deep in the ruin of that year  
Cooked endless coffee on a mauve-colored stove.

Contending with alarms and darkness,  
I rose over a serene bed to towels  
And my mirror's composition  
And there contrived an innocence  
To which the light consented with a yawn.  
Somewhere the daylight came with milk  
To part the lips of night  
And mine, unsounded in the gloom,  
Moved around a toothbrush  
In the laughter of the other room.

Conscripted by the day's evasions,  
I observe that nothing changes;  
I return at five with celery  
And some frozen food in natural gravy.  
By evening, united on my separate chair,  
I have gone through *Time*  
And pared my nails in a jelly glass.  
All the apparatus of domestic ruse,  
The solitude of scattered kitchen ware,  
Are companions of my dreamless mind,  
The single part of me you never used.

## WOMAN AT MIRROR

I should remember the mirror  
Of my premeditated face  
Pressing unrelated into me  
As I stand in the wet embrace  
Of towels, contemplating my error.

I should remember  
This introspective stare  
Copied inverse from an illustration:  
Each glass condemns this old imperfect sight  
Vexed by visions of an ancient errand.

Now the mirror's glance  
Condenses on my eye, steers  
Through ambuscades of swans in disrepair,  
Reveals the winter rectories within—  
And desire, dancing on a candle stem.

Already forgetting the business of pain,  
The mirror's eye conspires with philosophy  
And cold upon the bathroom tile  
Surveys the colored caps of pills  
And I wink into the eye of each,  
A whore to subtler ways of dying.

## ARCADIA: OR, THE GARDEN BEHIND MY HOUSE

Like a great windy dress the balloon tree fills  
In the wind above a slender beard listing in the garden.  
Leon lies beneath the green blood of the fern bed  
Releasing moths to the extended air.  
After twenty years, I no longer think him dead  
For the tree keeps him, soft as a waterberry,  
Growing in its side.

Beneath the parasol of that afternoon, his flask  
Gleamed whiter than the tin of sea birds  
For those traveling between beds  
Must fall to this single pure point  
On the garden floor, where I also received  
From his mouth the cold linnets  
Under my tongue.

Now I wait for one who was his friend  
And here I sleep in greener arms  
Recoiled into the nerve of this parent tree.  
Yet Leon breathes in the birdnests  
And his blood pumps in the swill of vine  
As he waits, an instinct gone to seed,  
For me, the renewing harvester.

## *Barbara Guest*

### CARMEN

Delicate manufacturess  
it's just that point  
in one's career before

On a respectable evening one takes  
the ship of delight  
having washed all stains  
from the fingers

Having prayed to Her  
of the eyelet embroidery

Tested one's slenderness  
as a castanet is balanced  
on two fingers

Adios to the solitudes  
to the surgeons who have hung  
their scalpels from your balcony

To the men of culture  
who would have you choose  
between good and evil

Your adagio is applauded  
by factory workers  
to serve is your dedication.

The Ramblas leads to the sea  
it is a leaf  
rushing to its grinder  
it is the smoke  
of the friends of Carmen

It is an envelope that withholds  
its message until the ship  
is far out at sea

The script is one of confusion  
to all useful tips  
as to how to make one's way  
to succeed in a profession  
and grow old like a mountain

Because of the bitter  
mixture of tobaccos

Who would guess  
watching her mantilla  
that soon it will fall  
on purple snow

Only the invisible courtyards  
permitted to answer,  
"Whose tears, if not mine,  
will turn to rage?"

## About Our Contributors

MONA VAN DUYN of Saint Louis is an editor of *Perspective*. Her book, *A Time of Bees*, will be published this year by the University of North Carolina Press. Her work has been in three issues of this magazine, and there is no contributor in whom we take more pride.

BETH BENTLEY, like Miss Van Duyn, appeared in our second issue (1959). She lives in Seattle, where she directs the Pacific Northwest Poets series at the Public Library. More of her work is forthcoming in *The Nation* and *The Quarterly Review of Literature*.

FLORENCE TREFETHEN teaches at Tufts and has been writing poetry for three years. She has two children.

RUTH WHITMAN has received the supreme accolade for a woman writer: the praise of James Dickey, for her recent book, *Blood and Milk Poems* (Clark & Way). With chagrin for our tardiness, we thank her and her publisher for letting us print these poems after book publication.

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON is another alumna of our second issue. Now she lives in Canada and publishes in various magazines there, as well as continuing to paint (subject: Mennonites) and taking care of a third baby.

JANE MAYHALL lives in Brooklyn Heights and writes novels and verse drama in addition to poetry. This is her first appearance in *Poetry Northwest*; we expect to publish more of her work soon.

NAOMI LAZARD studied at the Chicago Institute of Design until four years ago, when she became a writer. She has completed a novel and a play and is at work on one more of each.

FREDA QUENNEVILLE grew up in Georgia, where she married at eighteen. She has four children and lives in Seattle, where she is taking night classes at the University. This is her first publication anywhere.

MILDRED WESTON teaches English at Fort Wright College of the Holy Names in Spokane. We published three of her poems in Spring, 1960.

DIANE WAKOSI lives in Manhattan and publishes all over the place. She was one of *Four Young Lady Poets* in a book (*Criterion*) edited by LeRoi Jones; her own book is called *Coins and Coffins* (Hawk's Well Press).

ROSELLEN BROWN appeared in our Spring, 1962, issue. Her husband is finishing his Ph.D. at Harvard while she is not finishing her Ph.D., "having switched from criticism to hedonism (sitting in a big soft chair looking for slant rhymes)."

BERNICE AMES was in the Spring, 1962, issue also. She lives in Los Angeles with a lively family which includes three children and numerous livestock.

NANCY SULLIVAN teaches at Rhode Island College, after a number of years teaching at Brown. She has a Ph.D. and has published widely.

GLORIA C. ODEN lives in New York, where she edits copy for several journals of physics and contributes to *The Outsider*. She has poems in Hill & Wang's *American Negro Poetry* (which we mention for her sake, although we disapprove of segregated anthologies) and a book awaiting publication.

ADRIANNE MARCUS is acquiring an M.A. in Creative Writing at San Francisco State, writing plays, and taking care of two children. She, like Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Oden, appears here for the first time.

ROSEMARY DANIELL is another Georgia girl who is published here for the first time in her life. She is married to an Atlanta architect and has three children.

S. L. M. BROWN is a girl named Sharon, a fact you would not have gathered from our Summer, 1962, issue, where she was referred to as *he*. Her Ph.D. will be forthcoming from the University of Oregon. Last year she won our prize for a previously unpublished poet.

BARBARA GUEST, a poet of great distinction, appears here for the first time. Doubleday published her *Poems* in 1962. Her New York salon includes many of the best-known writers and painters of the day.

EDWARD GOREY! We were inspired to ask him to illustrate *Poetry Northwest*, and we are delighted with the results, even though we had suggested that the cover be a drawing of a dog walking on its hind legs. We thank Mr. Gorey for his generous and appropriate contribution to this special issue.

## Poetry Northwest Prize Awards

HELEN BULLIS PRIZE: \$100

Donald Finkel, for "Simeon"  
(Spring, 1963)

~

THEODORE ROETHKE PRIZE: \$100  
(formerly Northwest Poet's Prize)

Kenneth O. Hanson and Richard Hugo  
(Summer, 1963)

~

POETRY NORTHWEST AWARD: \$50  
(for a new poet, never previously published)

Dale Nelson, for Six Poems  
(Summer, 1963)

~

TRANSLATION PRIZE: \$50

Harold P. Wright, for Seven Translations  
from the Japanese  
(Autumn, 1963-Winter, 1964)

~

(The prize for comparative poetry will not be awarded at this time.)