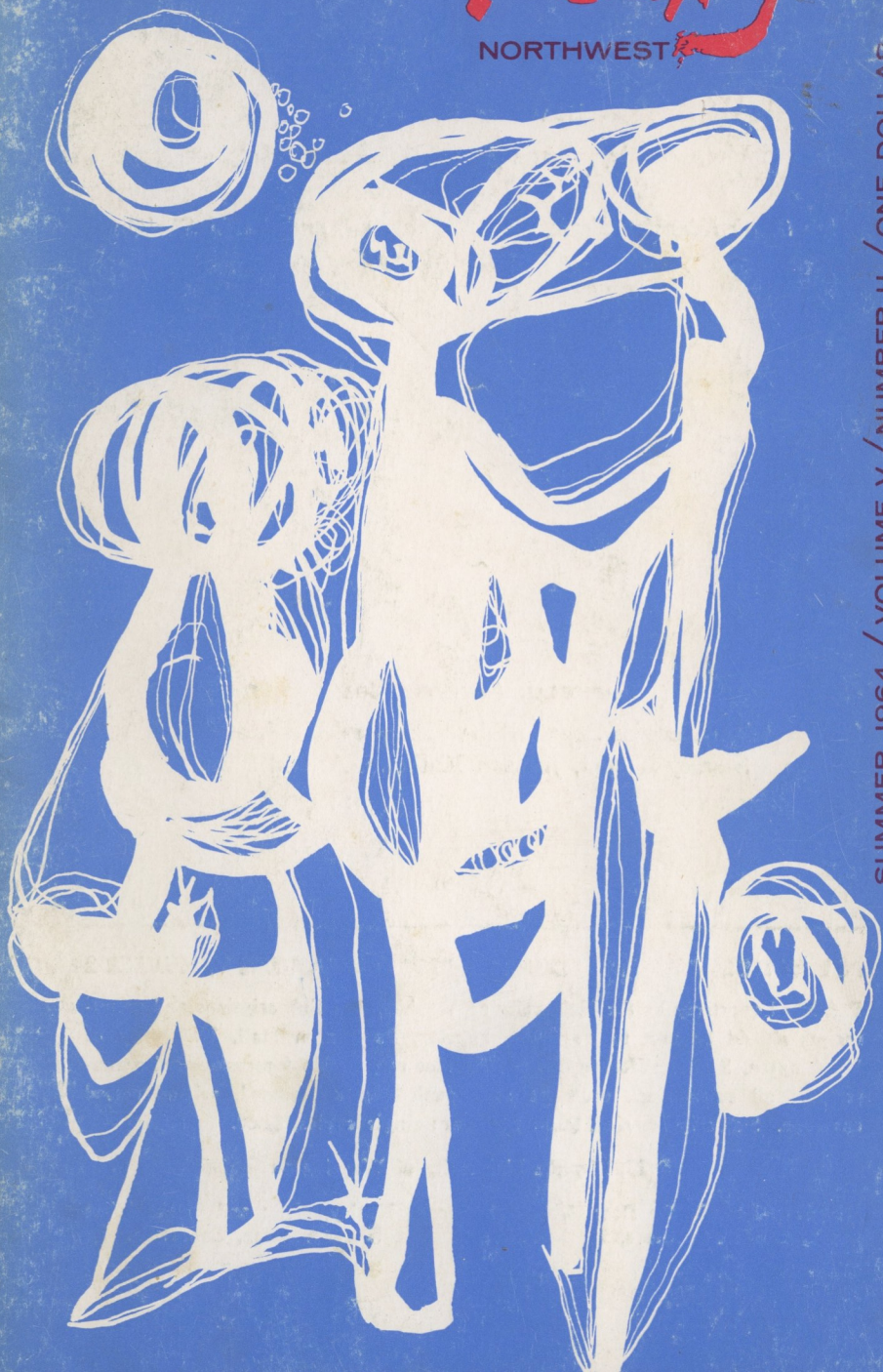


# Poetry

NORTHWEST



SUMMER 1964 / VOLUME V / NUMBER II / ONE DOLLAR

THEODORE ROETHKE

(1908 - 1963)

ELEGY

Her face like a rain-beaten stone on the day she rolled off  
With the dark hearse, and enough flowers for an alderman,—  
And so she was, in her way, Aunt Tilly.

Sighs, sighs, who says they have sequence?  
Between the spirit and the flesh,—what war?  
She never knew;  
For she asked no quarter and gave none,  
Who sat with the dead when the relatives left,  
Who fed and tended the infirm, the mad, the epileptic,  
And, with a harsh rasp of a laugh at herself,  
Faced up to the worst.

I recall how she harried the children away all the late summer  
From the one beautiful thing in her yard, the peachtree;  
How she kept the wizened, the fallen, the misshapen for herself,  
And picked and pickled the best, to be left on rickety doorsteps.

And yet she died in agony,  
Her tongue, at the last, thick, black as an ox's.

Terror of crops, bill collectors, betrayers of the poor,—  
I see you in some celestial supermarket,  
Moving serenely among the leeks and cabbages,  
Probing the squash,  
Bearing down, with two steady eyes,  
On the quaking butcher.

~

The Theodore Roethke Memorial Fund

Information will be found on the inside back cover of this issue.

POETRY NORTHWEST

SUMMER 1964

*Tony Connor*

Five Poems and One Translation

LANCASHIRE WINTER

The town remembers no such plenty,  
under the wind from off the moor.  
The labour exchange is nearly empty;  
stiletto heels on the Palais floor  
move between points of patent leather.  
Sheepskin coats keep out the weather.

Commerce and Further Education  
won't be frozen. Dully free  
in snack bars and classrooms sits the patient  
centrally heated peasantry,  
receiving Wimpies like the Host;  
striving to get That Better Post.

Snow on the streets and Mini-Minors  
thickens to drifts, and in the square,  
from grubby plinths, blind eyes, stone collars,  
the fathers of revolution stare,  
who, against pikes and burning brands,  
built the future with bare hands.

~



## TO HIS WIFE

Composed of shadows and damp clothing,  
the setting you have left  
for me to write my poems in  
(having yourself taken  
to bed) is witness of your deft  
devotion to my downfall.  
I must be all for you: loving or loathing—

and either a full-time job. You crave  
every preoccupation,  
detail of thought not being your care  
provided you are there.  
Surely tonight, of all nights, when passion  
has heaved bodily overboard  
any suspicions we had that the other gave

less than we gave ourselves, you might  
have left me to do my writing  
unencumbered by this array—  
the effort of your washday?  
Whose very shadows, jutting, butting,  
menace my desk and hand—  
familiar of your sleep, daring me to write

of anything but you. This token  
of servitude then: a poem  
made in your image, despite  
my wish to spend these night  
hours as though this hearth and home  
knew none but me. A state  
in which not the merest whisper of you need ever be spoken.

~

## ALEX AT FORTY

I find him in the spare room,  
curled on a mattress on the floor,  
another over him. His face  
is pouched, he snores amidst the reek of beer.

At ten in the morning, still flat,  
with last night's revelry curdled to  
a nasty mouth, he opens pig-  
eyes on a crumpled suit, a new day.

Blearily to our fire (there's nothing  
owing) he comes to make his peace  
on stinking feet. My wife is polite  
but disapproving. He coughs, he hems and haws,

abject and arrogant by turns.  
Apologies twist his mouth like insults:  
he laments his squandered gifts, his thirst,  
family pride, guilt, and all Celts—

but borrows ten shillings. Half inclined  
to doubt my job—the monthly cheques  
with which I pay the bills, I buy  
a poet's share in the dog-rough fall of Alex,

who leaves at eleven: Opening time.  
I watch from the window. In the street  
his step recovers its jauntiness.  
My wife serves coffee, bitter as defeat.

~

## EIGHTH MONTH

On the floor by the bookcase,  
potted in some fibre whose name I do not know,  
chubbily, amidst leaves of luminous green,  
a purple bloom illustrates the verb to grow.

Yes, as from a grammar ;  
I do not care for it, and cannot pretend  
it is more than a useful prop to my purpose :  
an ease-in to a painful subject, a means to an end.

The brown earthenware jug  
with the roomy, booming inside, which I lift from the shelf  
to slow the poem, to take a breather,  
reflects a changed world, a view of myself

I hasten to lose. The clock  
ticks towards birth ; near it Uccello's "Chase",  
in faded photogravure, insists  
the permanence of Art, and brings me the face

I had when I prised those pages  
free of their staples fifteen years ago,—  
silly with hope. Much of sadness  
cautions me from my purpose ; offers the verb to grow.

Yes, as from a grammar.  
A limiting honesty with which to greet a wife  
back, splay-footed, from a visit,  
trundling a belly fit to burst (it seems) with new life.

~

## THE POET'S AGE

It visits you at night. You have awakened  
from damp, barbarous dreams to this worse thing  
haunting the house in which your family sleeps.

You cannot see, or hear, or feel it, although  
the black becoming lumpy with your possessions,  
the small sigh from the cot, even your wife's

delicate flank against your rough flesh,  
are terrible in its presence. You will not rise  
to seek assurance from your poems. Lying

breathless with fear you know they were not worth it.  
You will not rise to smile upon your son.  
He is growing towards your death. You will not turn

to find companionship ; you had young loves,  
but that was long ago. You sweat in a staring  
silence through which the rolling planet speeds,

you and that thing you jollify with birthdays,  
dignify with position, charm and honours,  
you and this lustful, ravening, killing thing.

~



Trois Poemes

LES MÉTAMORPHOSES DU VAMPIRE

La femme cependant, de sa bouche de fraise,  
En se tordant ainsi qu'un serpent sur la braise,  
Et pétrissant ses seins sur le fer de son busc,  
Laissait couler ces mots tout imprégnés de musc :  
—"Moi, j'ai la lèvre humide, et je sais la science  
De perdre au fond d'un lit l'antique conscience.  
Je sèche tous les pleurs sur mes seins triomphants,  
Et fais rire les vieux du rire des enfants.  
Je remplace, pour qui me voit nue et sans voiles,  
La lune, le soleil, le ciel et les étoiles !  
Je suis, mon cher savant, si docte aux voluptés,  
Lorsque j'étouffe un homme en mes bras redoutés,  
Ou lorsque j'abandonne aux morsures mon buste,  
Timide et libertine, et fragile et robuste,  
Que sur ces matelas qui se pâment d'émoi,  
Les anges impuissants se damneraient pour moi !"

Quand elle eut de mes os sucé toute la moelle,  
Et que languissamment je me tournai vers elle  
Pour lui rendre un baiser d'amour, je ne vis plus  
Qu'une outre aux flancs gluants, toute pleine de pus !  
Je fermai les deux yeux, dans ma froide épouvante,  
Et quand je les rouvris à la clarté vivante,  
A mes côtés, au lieu du mannequin puissant  
Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang,  
Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette,  
Qui d'eux-mêmes rendaient le cri d'une girouette  
Ou d'une enseigne, au bout d'une tringle de fer,  
Que balance le vent pendant les nuits d'hiver.

~

METAMORPHOSES OF THE VAMPIRE

The mouth I longed for, like a heavy fruit  
split in its over-ripeness, gaped above me,  
breasts tipped by horny nipples rasped my chest,  
and "Love" I cried, "Oh Love," while in that cavern  
deep in her flesh she sucked my life away  
with merciless flexings, and the fruit swung down  
oilily dripping words like scented juices :  
"Die further inside me, die my happy man,—  
no need for conscience, I am first and last.  
Salvation's in my breasts, grasp at it, bite them ;  
God's in my womb, thrust upwards to his light ;  
I'm planets, constellations, galaxies,  
I'm birth, and death, and love, and day, and night !"

The fruit's wet pith engulfed me. In a dream  
I staggered the crazy beds of endless rivers,  
thirsting to screams beneath a black sun,  
and toppling, died amidst my empty veins.  
I woke craving the fruit. Turning to kiss her  
my parched lips met a lolling sack of blood  
shaped like a giant doll. I fell away  
through spinning drums of blackness, till the dawn  
opened my eyes to the heap of dry bones  
assembling by my side : a skeleton  
that squawked three times, inanely, and was gone.

~

## LE BALCON

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,  
Ô toi, tous mes plaisirs! ô toi, tous mes devoirs!  
Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses,  
La douceur du foyer et le charme des soirs,  
Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses!

Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon,  
Et les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeurs roses,  
Que ton sein m'était doux! que ton cœur m'était bon!  
Nous avons dit souvent d'impérissables choses  
Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon.

Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées!  
Que l'espace est profond! Que le cœur est puissant!  
En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,  
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang.  
Que les soleils sont beaux dans les chaudes soirées!

La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison,  
Et mes yeux dans le noir devinaient tes prunelles,  
Et je buvais ton souffle, ô douceur! ô poison!  
Et tes pieds s'endormaient dans mes mains fraternelles.  
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison.

Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,  
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.  
Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses  
Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton cœur si doux?  
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses!

Ces serments, ces parfums, ces baisers infinis,  
Renaîtront-ils d'un gouffre interdit à nos sondes,  
Comme montent au ciel les soleils rajeunis  
Après s'être lavés au fond des mers profondes?  
—O serments! ô parfums! ô baisers infinis!

~

*Lloyd C. Parks*

## THE BALCONY

Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses,  
O thou, my only duty, my sole delight,  
Thou shalt recall the wonder of our kisses,  
Charms of the hearth, and those enchanting nights,  
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses.

Those nights illumined by the coal's blue ardor,  
The balcony, veiled with a rosy vapor.  
How soft was thy breast to my head, how good thy heart!  
We said things, then, imperishably apart,  
Those nights illumined by the coal's blue ardor.

How fairly sunset shone in the warm twilight!  
How deep seemed space! How mighty the heart's flood!  
Bending o'er thee, queen of the adored,  
I dreamt I smelled the perfume of thy blood,  
So fairly sunset shone in the warm twilight.

While evening thickened to a vast partition,  
My eye would guess thine iris in the deep  
Dark, as I drank thy breath, O sweet! O poison!  
Fraternal, my hands would lull thy feet to sleep,  
While evening thickened to a vast partition.

I know a spell will summon back those hours.  
I live my past again when I clasp thy knees.  
What good, then, to seek thy beauty elsewhere  
Than in thine own dear body, in thy soft eyes?  
I know a spell will summon back those hours.

Those vows, perfumes, infinities of kisses,  
Will they be born again, surge from abysses  
Closed to our sounding? Rise to a sky like the sun,  
Young for ablution in unfathomed ocean?  
—O vows, perfumes, infinities of kisses!



## L'ALBATROS

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage  
Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,  
Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,  
Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.

À peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,  
Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,  
Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches  
Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.

Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!  
Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!  
L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,  
L'autre mime, en boitant, l'infirme qui volait!

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées  
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

~

---

HELFRID UGGINS, whom we take pride in introducing to an American audience, is "famis"—as he quaintly spells it—in England, and on the Continent as well, as the founder and guiding spirit of the literary movement known as the Cockney Renaissance. We gloss his exquisite translation on the opposite page, in reverent emulation of our elder sister magazine, *Poetry* (Chicago), which has done so much to promote and explicate the "Lallans" poets in this country.

THE EDITORS

## Helfrid Uggins

### THE HELBATRAWSS

*aht er Charley Bordilairs parleyvoo*

Qvite horfen, fer a larf, coves on a ship  
Ketches a uge seaburd, a helbatrawss,  
A hidle type as mucks in on the trip  
By follerin the wessel on its course.

Theyve ardlly got im on the deck afore  
Cackanded, proper chokker—never mind  
Es a ighflier—cor, e makes em roar  
Voddlin abaht, is vings trailin beind.

Alof, yus, e was smashin, but es grim  
Like this—e aint arf hugly nah es dahned!  
Vun perisher blows voodbine smoke at im,  
Anuvver tikes im orf by oppin rahnd!

A longaired blokes the sime: ead in the clahds  
E larfs at harrers, soups is cupper tea—  
But dahn to earf in those ere jeerin crahds,  
Them uge great vings gums up is plates, yer see.

~

#### Gloss

*Mucks in on*, elects to join; *cackanded*, clumsy; *proper chokker*, really depressed; *never mind*, in spite of the fact that; *roar*, sc. with laughter; *smashin*, of attractive appearance; *grim*, ill-favoured; *perisher*, rascal, despicable fellow; *tikes im orf*, imitates him in a mocking fashion; *longaired*, artistic, creative; *soups is cupper tea*, he is most at home in foul weather; *gums up*, renders of no effect; *plates* (sc. of meat), feet.

*Robert Conquest*

Three Poems

EVENING IN APULIA

Hours have passed. The sea-glow  
Warms and deepens into dusk. Swallows  
Flicker and dip over the harbour. And the sun,  
A ripe, bursting flower, low on the Apennines,  
Sheds on the paper an apocalyptic light.  
But he looks back upon lines awkwardly stating  
The elements of a problem.

The train at half-past nine  
Pulls north into another life. He is not ready  
For the waiting questions. For five years, or ten,  
Let him lead the poem's life  
In the interstices of politics and horror,  
The human sanity on its sandbank standing  
In the rough rising tide.

And perhaps then  
Proud, sensuous and sceptical,  
A poem like a passionate sun may rise  
From this small life to light an iron age,  
Giving its independent ethic out against  
Improbable messianic consolations,  
The beast-cry and the sirening future.  
Or, if not, still such failure  
Is better than all the other loud successes,  
And to have left inside the failure  
If not the poet the free human,  
If not the colossal poem for which an age labours  
At least a few refreshing moments, the last sip of a flask  
Supporting life for someone, somewhere  
Until the sweet oasis. He can try.

Yes, the chances are against it. And the method may be wrong.  
For the art's rules are uncertain. Perhaps already  
By a damp northern hill now, some neurotic  
Works on, works on into that brilliant future,  
Burning his lonely anger to a poem.

TWO SONNETS TO A THEME

I. AVANT GARDE

He thought his singing could postpone disaster:  
He spoke the thrilling formulae on love;  
His tongue moved frightened down its secret groove  
Clever with tiredness, nervously faster

Through fevers and horizons as it tried  
To beat the images into a weapon:  
Time was not on his side, it could but sharpen  
Those blades of choice on which the hero died.

For though he was overwhelming at a moment  
The enemy stood patient and would hear  
Unmoved all brilliant and disastrous song,

And then evoke such immanence of wrong  
As could forever with some quiet comment  
Squeeze the last note out in a fist of fear.

II. WASTE LAND PATROL

And though wherever the horizons break  
With a long gleam and flush of distant waters,  
Long hours toiling down the stony wadis  
Lead only to another Bitter Lake,



The salt, corrupted fluids do not bring  
—As to those other skeletons bleaching there—  
Delirium's green dewes or parched despair,  
But moisten tongue and throat and let him sing.

That energies may flower in his will  
Forcing a challenge through his speaking action  
To move the double spheres that are and seem,

And enfilade us in some hidden skill  
With weapons forged from the real will and passion  
That poetry mines for deep inside the dream.

~

### THEALOGY

*Homage to Robert Graves*

God the Father, brooding like a hen,  
Builds a good fug round chicken-livered men.

In what dry caves of Sinai, counting kine  
Lean as themselves, a patriarchal line  
Imposed their bearded mania on the sky?  
And what numb scholiasts would not let it die?

Yet poets have kept from that crass emblem's grip  
A sharper, wilder, bright relationship:  
Cool, glittering body, endless as their cry,  
Goddess the Mistress arcs across the sky.

~

*Arthur Gregor*

### Three Poems

#### THE LAND LIKE AN ODALISQUE

Messengers of spring,  
red, gold, and purple winged,  
are active now in trees.  
The storm is over,  
bits of the debris  
are relaxed as in a sleep  
and the land lies still.

The leaves once torn from trees,  
the shoots of timely plants  
lie now voluptuous  
in a lack of wind, as lies  
the land, still but expectant  
like a ripe mistress  
or a garden open to sun.

Like an odalisque overcome by  
the melody her slave-girl sings,  
the land lies in early spring.  
She sings of love that streams  
from pools overhung with trees,  
from flowers, fruits entwined  
around stone stems and walls.

She sings of love that holds  
the jar on the tiled floor  
where her mistress' garment is  
discarded and in folds,  
a love that makes itself known  
through a slave-girl's fingers  
expertly handling a lute.

The love she sings is expressed  
through tears when a crowned figure,  
burned and dark to cover up  
his gentleness, appears  
in a flare of sun like a dream:  
tears that fall when the music fades  
and when the world breaks in.



### SOME ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

*The scene:* A Bathing Resort in Spain

A dark mist hangs upon the sea.  
The change in sky is out of character,  
and the weird behavior of the water.  
Upset, the summer guests walk up  
and down as if expecting news.

Large birds not common in these parts  
are perched on tops of cliffs  
where on more ordinary days  
the bathers sit to dry. To relieve  
this mood, the owners of  
hotels have put on jazz.

A table-umbrella torn from  
its metal stand, turned inside-out  
by an abnormal wind  
lies unretrieved  
like a disaster out of reach,  
threateningly distorted  
on a shunned, a battered beach.

What has happened?  
What monster has broken forth  
out of some dreadful mind  
to pursue a ghastly need?

What ill-distorted shape  
that stalks now on the sea,  
hissing behind the air,  
driving the waves, fist  
upraised, clouding  
the minds of men like mist?

No one can tell  
the happening beneath  
the fury and the lifting fronts  
of sea, how long this turn  
will last, and what  
will be revealed  
when the disturbance ends?

Silently the strange large birds  
sit perched on cliffs.  
Their seeing eyes are sealed.



### AN EVENING OF SACRED SONGS ON AN ESTATE OF BIRDS AND TREES

A blackbirds' flight in droves,  
the dive of scavengers,  
of noble birds with hooked  
beak ready for the bite; the trill  
of small birds on a branch,  
wind whirling into dust  
a blanket of fresh snow  
obscuring frail trees of  
a year ago: these  
have little to show but  
the movement they repeat.

The tenor sings of *Herrlichkeit*,  
brings the Madonna to mind  
in a church in Mexico,



the movement of more than  
a thousand years painted  
in her ascension on the wall;  
or a youth with golden hair  
and golden wreath of leaves  
dragging his boat up  
a legendary shore, saying:  
"For splendor have I come!"

Imagine while you hear these songs  
a man with staff on his way  
to the ruins where stood the city  
once ordained by God. Then let  
this essential pain invade you—  
for the sake of movement, inward, out—:  
of a wanderer's momentous grief,  
the devotee's sudden loss  
of comprehension, the knowing  
spirits bleeding at his side,  
suffering the full sorrow  
he cannot yet accomplish.

~

*Jean Garrigue*

## Two Poems

### EPITAPH FOR MY CAT

And now my pampered beast  
Who hated to be wet,  
The rain falls all night  
And you are under it;  
Who liked to be warm  
Are cold as any stone,  
Who kept so clean and neat,  
Cast down in the dirt  
Of death's filthy sport.

~

## UPON THE INTIMATION OF LOVE'S MORTALITY

It is the effort of the lie  
Exacts a wounding pulse.  
I loved you much  
When everything had excellence at once.  
First was our freshness and the stun of that.  
Your body raved with music. What was lost  
Is just that element our time always takes  
And always in love we venture off some height  
The nothing else can equal after it.  
The thought of that bedevils me for miles.  
How can I save you from my own despair  
To think I may not love you as before?  
Spoiled, we become accustomed to our luck.  
This is the devil of the heart.  
We were the smiles of gods awhile  
And now, it seems, our ghosts must eat us up  
Or wail in temples till our tombs are bought.  
Attended now by shades of that great while,  
Disguise is the nature of my guile  
And yet the lie benumbs the soul.  
Get me the purity of first sight!  
Or strength to bear the truth of after light!

~

*Christopher Levenson*

## Three Poems

### THINGS

I watch in despair  
The house growing,  
Things acquiring  
An air of permanence,  
Furniture that clings

To the bare makeshift walls.  
 Each way I turn the bric-a-brac  
 Solid now and reliable  
 Hems in the past, seals off  
 All possible futures.  
 Souvenirs become  
 Our permanent setting,  
 Till like habituées  
 Of shabby waiting rooms  
 We outstare the gay posters,  
 Acclimatize to the dust,  
 Aware that the one solution—  
 Leaving—is long past:  
 We have become the decor.

~

### A GOD I COULD BELIEVE IN WOULD BE IRON

A God I could believe in would be iron.  
 Housing on mountain peaks,  
 He would visit us suddenly, merciless as tornadoes.  
 We would feel his presence silent as a cancer.

Whether or not we pray to him, each year  
 So many, slain like young hares  
 Caught by the combine harvester, smoked out like hornets  
 Or carelessly smashed underfoot,  
 Proclaim his omnipotence, all acts of God.

We live in the shadow not of his grace but his terror.  
 Why should he, God the destroyer, sacrifice  
 Even a crust to ants? Why his son?

*And if they want to die  
 At the stake, in the pit for my sake,  
 Why then, I'll spur them on like fighting cocks, equip them  
 With tinsel and raffia, let the vermin  
 Exterminate themselves, yet call it  
 My inscrutable will.*

This God exacts no belief and does not need us  
 To conjure him from faith. He cannot die.  
 He came before the fire that became our world  
 And will survive the oceans cooled to ash,  
 Surveying his handiwork.

~

### THREE MINUTES ON POETRY

The microphone bobs towards me like a float:  
 At the other end of the rod in a swivel chair  
 The cameraman plays me, I am angled by lamps.  
 Then, cooped like a battery hen, I lay the answers  
 To two questions a minute.  
 "Our poet friend" I heard the technician call me,  
 A tame eccentric, a queer bird, a pet canary  
 Come here this evening to sing to us.  
 Cross-legged I try to relax in my few yards of decor  
 Cramped between hit songs and a feature on holidays.  
 The interviewer smiles: "Now, tell me, Mr. Levenson..."  
 The well-rounded phrases fur my tongue like sloes  
 As we talk to nobody  
 But four flickering images of ourselves  
 Suspended across the studio, catch ourselves smiling  
 Yes, nodding yes, for half a minute too long  
 After the sound was cut. A poet's job, I said,  
 Is to be concise. They had taken me at my word,  
 Their bit for culture done.

~



## Two Poems

Over the gaping eyes of a hare  
Hanging by its feet from a hook,  
The butcher draws a paper bag.  
The butcher is not Lady Macbeth.  
He cuts with an air of clean blood,  
A thick mustache of prosperity ;  
We are his patronizing lords, we eat.  
To hack with a cleaver, carve with a knife,  
Rasp with a saw, slice in a grinder,  
These are not murder, but service :  
The common dream of meat.

Shadows, angels of necessity,  
Those glowing wings beating at us  
With shining vision,

we repeat ourselves

Again and again in wars of the inner madmen,  
until wings become knives

And we cut our way out into solitude,  
Thick isolation in the empty streets,  
No sound, everything is dead;  
We rule the streets in rage,  
No bodies left to punish,  
Only trees watch us in their green,  
The pavement of solitary streets salutes us,  
The sea sounds its surf in our ears . . .

We turn inward again  
Until the image is born slowly  
And we hear the hinges of our flesh  
Open to the inner madman and his smiling angel;  
We embrace his war of ancient weapons,  
Embarrassed by our swords and helmets,  
Old costumes firing missiles; we try to weep,  
Our tears hidden in currents of racing rivers.

## Four Poems

The sea breaks louder in my room tonight,  
Slams down from shelves and curves across the floor,  
Spatters the window, twists through lint and nap,  
To rinse me out beneath the farther door.

In other rooms and towns this sea's dissolved  
My island always, gathered itself and poured  
At me down stairs, through rails, and over boards  
And strained the sand from under my arched foot.

And always before, someone (I think not I)  
Has braced my back and locked my knees and clawed  
Me down through sand to rock, but still that wave  
Has always sucked me in and spewed me out.

But now, tonight, someone I cannot name  
Beats out away from beaches windward, knives  
Into the swollen cone, and now I find  
That gulls fall far and farther still behind,  
And water hisses only at our wake.

## PHYSICIAN, IF YOU CAN, REMAIN A STRANGER

Physician, know yourself: both bell and book  
Would bungle in the hands that do your work.  
Were you a mere mechanic, you would shake  
The scruff of any 'prentice who dared dream  
That his own hands, which can unclog the choke  
And start the judge on time, unclog the court.  
Were you a soldier, you would long have known  
Before you took the wallet and the watch  
To turn the dead face down, the dead hands up.

Physician, you are too precisely honed  
To blunt on alien metal. All your skill  
Can't keep the bone you set from mending or  
That mended hand from crooking on a throat.  
But should you climb that finger to the eye  
And glimpse behind its retina the fist  
Which closes on that throat, you would take fright  
And slip the knife too far, to save a life  
Not this, not now—but next or next in danger.

Physician, if you can, remain a stranger.  
Hippocrates would madden could he look  
Down the gleaming barrel of his oath.

## FALCON-FREE

Unleash the hound and set the falcon free.  
At garnet rim of evening they will turn  
To bring the prize unharmed and fawning earn  
The certain dividend of tail and head,  
Eager for chain and jess again and bed.

So fetter me  
That when the stag has bled  
My modest trigger fee,  
Some will lay their hands upon my head  
And compliment your prudent venery.

## A CROSS FOR TWO

All my life, with less than half to go,  
I've worn my weight: skin against chafed skin,  
Vein to vein, and bone to hollow bone,  
My self and I—a Siamese twin.

No monster he! More monstrous, far, that we  
Look at our doublehood without much dread,  
Comb our knotted pelt, and pick the fleas  
Without disgust from our misshapen head.  
Nor do we, though each night presents the knife,  
Relieve it on our grossly thickened throat;  
Nor yet feel shame that every step must lame  
That poor four-footed spoor. Encysted so,  
How shall we straighten toward Gethsemane?  
How plait a thorn into a double O?  
How carry a cross for two up Calvary?

Where only the whole are wholly crucified,  
How can I, out of semi-suicide  
Forgive them, when my watching self survives  
To garrote my bequest? How wear the pain  
Of foot and hand torn out? How stop the stain  
That spreads where I tore my side out of him?



John Montague

Two Poems

PACIFIC TWILIGHT

FROM THE PAPUAN

*The Poet Laments His Brother's Death*

Cicada of evening, sing and sing again!  
Sadly I gaze at the ground:  
Somewhere a spring chuckles,  
Near at hand, a waterfall echoes it,  
And the bird Afouna whistles  
In the heart of the twilight,  
Singing always, as I gaze sadly down.

*He Relates His War*

It was I who, with this hand,  
Seized the eagles!  
The colours of such a battle—  
Was its equal ever seen?  
With this mighty javelin, I  
Slew even the Paradise Bird!

*He Returns Emptyhanded*

Babane, sweet kingfisher,  
Thing to myself belonging,  
Can you see me with another self,  
You who mimic a female companion,  
With your burst of singing?  
Tell me, between us two,  
What in the valley of  
The Moune and the Badime  
Did I ever go to do?

~

COMPANY

There is no hawk among my friends.  
Swiftly they cruise their chosen air,  
Not to spy the grey field mouse  
And plummet fiercely to the moor,  
But to survey a heaven, inspect  
The small, the far. Is it news  
That the beetle's back is abstract,  
A jewel-box; the ash-pod has glider wings?  
Cruelty is not their way of life,  
Nor indifference; they ride the currents  
To grasp the invisible. The service  
They do shapes also what they are  
And the fernlike talon uncurls.  
There is no hawk among my friends.

~

Michael Gregory

Two Poems

KEY WEST: SUMMER 1962

How does your hand survive  
soft above this bright water  
where every beauty is death,  
your spirit move  
as you moved (lightly  
where the deepest step is soon lost)  
through these stormy isles  
across this night?

Feeling your touch  
when the troubled words stopped  
I tried to see your face  
but it was all wind.

~

## BIRTHSONG

The jays woke me out of Erin centuries ago  
Lamefoot the singer, popinjay of tales;  
popinjay too of village boys' sticks  
and the old spinning woman's needles and hook.

A hawk's dagger feet flew me over the sea  
Blindeye, mad seer of visions;  
bearer of sad tidings and cracked bowl,  
tired of sounding my own voice.

A gaggle of grey men hanged me out of Ohio  
Strawface the boy on the tree;  
fed me to flames in the haymound night  
with a bright golden gash in my side.

~

*Lillian Morrison*

## OF KINGS AND THINGS

What happened to Joey on our block  
Who could hit a spaldeen four sewers  
And wore his invisible crown  
With easy grace, leaning, body-haloed  
In the street-lamp night?

He was better than Babe Ruth  
Because we could actually see him hit  
Every Saturday morning,  
With a mop handle thinner than any baseball bat,  
That small ball which flew forever.  
Whack! straight out at first, then rising,  
Rising unbelievably, soaring in a tremendous  
Heart-bursting trajectory, to come down finally  
Blocks away, bouncing off a parked car's  
Fender, eluding the lone outfielder.

Did he get a good job?  
Is he married now, with kids?  
Is he famous in another constellation?  
I saw him with my own eyes in those days,  
The god of stickball,  
Disappearing down the street,  
Skinny and shining in the nightfall light.

~

*Robert Burlingame*

## Two Poems

### SPRING-SUMMER MORNING

It seems to him, somehow,  
that it could go either way—  
this season that spins like a girl  
in the first siege of love

With the prim leaves over the window  
and on top the building  
the mother's washing of her lazy son  
the breeze just begun, noon  
at topmast

If Easter had come, then all would  
be clear  
but it hasn't and temperatures like  
people seem unable to rise or go down  
Except the sister screaming to her child.

~



## READING DON JUAN IN A HILTON HOTEL

I was afraid of that  
she said  
tweezing a wild hair  
from an armpit  
while over Greece  
Byronic thunderheads  
flamed—

So much difference  
there is between now  
and then:  
recall that tress  
of Spain three  
feet long reaped  
for love  
and mailed home to  
Lady B  
her son of  
his red life drained  
by unHomeric physicians  
and Fletcher  
gone to macaroni.

~

*B. E. Neff*

### Three Poems

#### EVERYONE WOULD LIKE TO BE SOMETHING ELSE

A Dyak in Borneo said—  
I would like to be a  
volcano then I could  
lie on my back all day  
and smoke and everyone  
would think I was working.

Inside the back of my shirt it said Single Needle.  
That's what I want to be.

A single needle lifts a thread no  
heavier than a sigh and pokes holes  
no bigger than a gnat's belch. It goes  
just so far and stops turns a corner  
never skips but runs along and stops.  
Once free it doesn't look back.

When I was a single needle operator that's what I  
thought I wanted to be.

But the thread of things  
wears away the eye  
soon it is pointless  
the season is long and  
the pattern unchanged.

I would like to be a Dyak.

~

#### ON THE PLAIN GROWS WILD PLUM

*(Chinese form circa 550 B.C.)*

On the mountain is the white elm tree,  
On the plain grows wild plum.  
You have embroidered robes  
But you never mend or care for them.  
You have many children  
But you do not love them.  
When you are dead  
Who will bring you rice?

On the mountain is the juniper tree,  
on the plain grows yambean.  
You have a home  
But you do not sweep the floor.

You have a lute, a zither,  
But you do not play upon them.  
When you are dead  
Someone else will treasure them.

On the mountain is the hazel-tree,  
On the plain, hyacinth-bean.  
You have meat and rice;  
Why do you not beat the drum,  
Dance for pleasure,  
Drink to rising day?  
When you are dead  
Someone else will kindle a fire.

~

#### THE GRIEVING LOSS

A voice dies on the wind.  
Oh Oh sorrow lives forever.

In this house of seven moons  
I have mourned  
each fallen leaf  
with agate cloud.

Who will listen now?  
Black wings beat  
against the storm . . .  
an unused pool  
stares at the empty garden.

Who will hear  
the gate-bell call?

~

*Aaron Kramer*

#### Two Poems

##### PORTRAIT BY ALICE NEEL

I'm not sure there will be walls  
or eyes  
but if there are  
this portrait may be wondered at.  
Let me say then at once  
so that no mystery develops  
why—although he holds a manuscript—  
the poet is not reading  
and why—despite a mood of gloom—  
he seems to smile.

He is looking not at the fire-escape across the way  
nor at some starscape: aeons, lightyears further—  
but at an Alice Neel  
in a green smock  
who thrusts into him deep, deeper, as if with her long brush,  
takes it out dripping,  
puts it down wet on the canvas (which he mustn't yet see),  
raises the brush again  
and bends toward him: peering, peering as no one has before.

So, wishing he could play back that plummeting stare,  
those impatient brows,  
as a lake would—  
he looks;  
and, wondering whether  
her cunning, caring, freshwater eyes  
have caught the very bottom—  
uncomfortably he smiles.

~



## ESCAPADE

Past the communion of tongue and lips,  
the high heaving and interweaving,  
lasts a union of fingertips  
until her breathing's deep and even;  
then we're separate—as if my hand slips  
out of her hand. Goodbye. I'm leaving.

Swift, with a smile, through every street  
at once—free of the luscious unity—  
lone as the moon I move, complete  
with cloud (but missing his immunity).  
Pausing at every corner, I greet  
my shadow: poised for opportunity.

Manikins, sad in your gay disguise,  
beware of me! I shall abandon  
you, too, after the lulling lies:  
I am no all-night-long companion.  
I warn you: stay away from my eyes!  
They are wet paths to a dry canyon.

Swift, with no smile, to the last dead end,  
the lost drinker dizzily lurching,  
the perfect pole that never shall bend,  
blossom, and branch, for birds to perch in—  
but only glows like a useful friend:  
—as if it can lead me to why I'm searching!

Beyond the dreamer, the unborn blade  
of grass under the greenless gutters;  
the handled butterfly's masquerade:  
gowned and crowned there, behind her shutters,  
not knowing the prince of her dance has been spayed,  
not fearing the net in which she flutters;

swift, swifter, on highways ploughed  
for death, where death like seed is planted,  
where all four seasons shoot up proud

stalks of death, more than are wanted—  
lone as the moon, complete with cloud,  
I move (not haunting, but oh! haunted);

until, in the distant dark, a sound  
slashes, swordlike: a laughter, or weeping.  
Bloody all over, I turn around  
and see my fingers still in her keeping;  
then (since to wake her might be frowned  
upon) I join with her in sleeping.

*Phyllis Rose*

## Two Poems

### COPS AND ROBBERS

And him, the other one,  
I never meant to hurt him.  
The game was nice and slick  
But fake, of course, so I thought  
Nothing could matter. As long  
As we side-stepped grainy plaster  
On stairs and knocked past all  
Those broken bottles, cans,  
And general paper trash  
In the hot alleyways  
We'd be all right. Our guns?  
Honest-to-God imitations  
Of the real thing. Harmless.  
Dark. We got mixed up,  
All of us. One, I think,  
Changed sides and didn't tell.

Then matchlight glowed suddenly  
 Under a tight face, cold.  
 So I yelled, "Double Crosser,"  
 Lit out for the back fence, felt  
 Myself impaled. But wasn't.  
 Really frightened, I wheeled,  
 Flinging my arms out hard,  
 And struck: he fell apart.  
 And so the game was over.

### PROTEST

Bright haired far shooter—O god, stop tracking me.  
 Send your cursed arrows flying somewhere else.  
 So close is hardly fair—your aim's too good.  
 And what do you want me for? I'm not a girl  
 Any longer. Take Laura, or, for that matter, Cypress.  
 Sun god, destroyer of mice, leave me alone.

Pan's fingers over the notches of his pipes  
 Are smooth, though he's a great muscled hairy goat.  
 Dancing that bearded satyr's shaggy capers  
 I collapse in dithyrambs and laughter.  
 I honor the gods, but he's worth my time. Even you'd  
 Admit that. Then let go my wrist. Give me  
 At least some peace. Here me. Stand away.

And wait. And sing, sweeping your calloused fingers  
 Over the strings of the lyre, till I come laggard  
 Back from Pan and swear as I swore before  
 Never to leave. Haven't I always repented?  
 After some great disappointment I'll serve you again.  
 I'll even get consecrated. This time I promise.

### *Marguerite Kaiyala*

### THE REMAINDER OF RAIN

(Horace may be made mention  
 of now that his black line no longer bowls  
 bowed eyes brain-  
 ward. He might complain  
 that this impermanent rain hardly compares to the jewels  
 of the spring at Bandusia. And where are the Sabine hills?)

The remainder of rain globules  
 on blossoms in this rinsed city-yard garden.  
 At rain-set, it rolls  
 itself into water-pearls,  
 rounding, divining, the color it sits a prism on.  
 Shining, it is the expression of a summer sun.

Lilies laden with belief  
 in God strain their tenuous stem under the gross  
 gloss of rain, or self.  
 One may be forgiven if  
 he cannot quite believe in the pearled absoluteness  
 of their alleluia beauty: to him it will suffice

that the diacritical stress  
 of the rain-round on this green garden off  
 concrete, has been softness,  
 while the patent pokings of the obvious  
 ordinary trees splinter the sun on rain on leaf,  
 green-foiling the air in classic correction of grief.

We offer DIANE WAKOSKI our profound apologies for misspelling  
 her name in our last issue.



## About Our Contributors

THEODORE ROETHKE's "Elegy" appears through the generosity of his widow and administratrix, by whom it is copyright (1964). His last poems, *The Far Field*, are published by Doubleday this July.

TONY CONNOR, poet and artist, gave the cover as well as his poems to this issue. Oxford will publish a selection of his poems, *Lodgers*, next spring. His last book was *With Love Somehow* (Oxford, 1962).

LLOYD C. PARKS will be a Fulbright lecturer at Lille next year; he is at work on a new translation of *Le Rouge et le Noir*.

ROBERT CONQUEST's anthology of British poetry, *New Lines 2*, was recently published by Macmillan (London). The last time we printed him he won us our first (and only) Borestone Mountain Poetry Award.

ARTHUR GREGOR, well-known poet, is a Macmillan editor; poems here, and in our next issue, will be in his book, *Shadowplay*.

JEAN GARRIGUE lends grace to this magazine for a second time. Macmillan will publish her recent poems, including these, in the fall.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON teaches at Bristol and has been published by *Encounter*, *The London Magazine*, *The TLS* and *The New Statesman*.

JAMES SCHEVILL directs the Poetry Center at San Francisco State; his "Stalin-grad Elegies" made a stir when *Contact* printed them recently.

ALBERTA TURNER lectures in English at Oberlin, where her husband is a professor; they have co-edited several scholarly works, mainly on Milton.

JOHN MONTAGUE's poems, *Poisoned Lands* (Dufour), came out early this year. The Papuan translations are not one of our little jokes; they will be in a book by a French priest-anthropologist, Père Dupeyrat. They have an affinity with Montague's own personal "Celtic twilight."

MICHAEL GREGORY commences his doctorate in English and Folklore at U.C.L.A. this fall, when he emigrates from Penn State.

LILLIAN MORRISON is the general editor of Thomas Y. Crowell's new poetry series, which includes a volume on Keats by our advisory editor, the great Stanley Kunitz.

ROBERT BURLINGAME teaches at Texas Western College in El Paso.

B. E. NEFF lives in South Pasadena; he has not been published till now.

AARON KRAMER's new book, *Rumshinsky's Hat* (Thomas Yoseloff), includes these poems; he teaches at Adelphi Suffolk College on Long Island.

PHYLLIS ROSE has married and moved to Hawaii since we last printed her.

MARGUERITE KAIYALA is acquiring a Ph.D. at Washington; this is her first publication.

## The Theodore Roethke Memorial Fund

When Theodore Roethke died, those of us who loved the man and his work hoped that some way would be found, less ephemeral than the funerary garlands and pieties, to pay tribute to his living presence among us, in our time, and at this place. Beatrice Roethke and the friends and colleagues of her late husband agreed that a fund to establish an annual Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Reading would be an appropriate way to commemorate a man who played so large a role in reestablishing poetry as a spoken art.

On the twenty-fifth of May, 1964, the greatly distinguished American poet, John Crowe Ransom, winner of the Bollingen Prize, and latterly, of the National Book Award, gave the first reading of the series on the campus of the University of Washington. It was Ted Roethke's fifty-sixth birthday. With his rare grace and matchless style, his eloquence, modesty and wit, Mr. Ransom began what we hope will be a permanent benefice to this literary community.

The selection committee for the annual Memorial Reading consists of William H. Matchett, editor of the *Modern Language Quarterly*, chairman; Carolyn Kizer, editor of *Poetry Northwest*; and the poet who is conducting the Advanced Verse Writing class which was Roethke's own: this year the British poet, Henry Reed. The committee, selected by Robert B. Heilman, chairman of the English Department of the University of Washington, in consultation with Mrs. Roethke, respectfully asks that continuing contributions be made to insure that this program, which helps maintain the University's high distinction as a poetry center, have adequate financial support. Checks should be made to:

The University of Washington  
Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Reading

Contributions should be sent to the Office of University Relations and Development (care of Mr. Alm), Administration Building, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98105.

## The Theodore Roethke Prize

The Editors of *Poetry Northwest* wish to thank MRS. LENORE MARSHALL for her splendid gift to the Donors' Fund, for the purpose of assisting the magazine in awarding an annual prize, in the name of our late friend and benefactor, for the finest poem or group of poems by a Northwest writer to be printed annually.