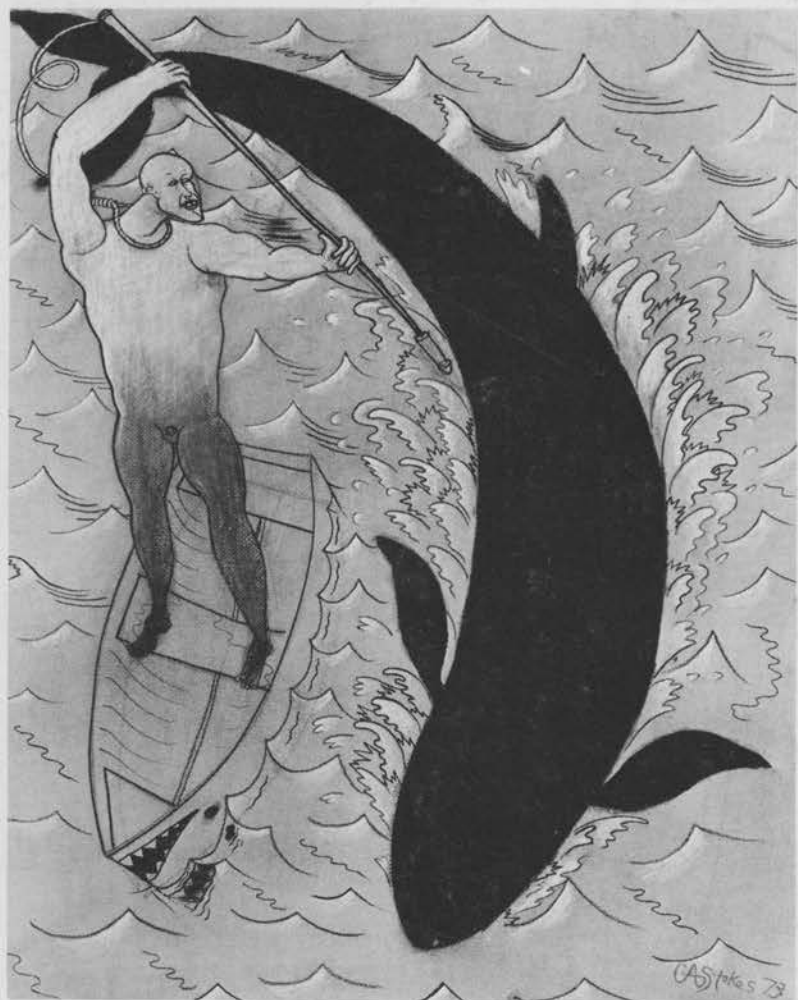


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# Poetry

NORTHWEST



# POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME FOURTEEN

NUMBER TWO

SUMMER 1973

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LEWIS TURCO Four poems . . . . .	3
LINDA ALLARDT Three poems . . . . .	8
GARY GILDNER Two Poems . . . . .	9
JACK TOOTELL Welcome: Abandon Hope . . . . .	11
JOSEPH BEATTY The Animals on the Amateur Taxidermist . . . . .	12
DOUG FLAHERTY The Village Idiot . . . . .	13
QUINTON DUVAL The Prophet . . . . .	14
PAUL HUNTER From the Desk of . . . . .	15
JOHN KOSTMAYER He Falls Asleep While Reading Saint John . . . . .	17
RONALD WALLACE Two Poems . . . . .	18
BEATRICE CAMERON Ballad of the Fisherman's Wife . . . . .	19
WARD STILES After the Great Games: A Song of the Fifties . . . . .	20
MARTHA ZWEIG Blood . . . . .	21
HAROLD WITT Two Poems . . . . .	22
MARGARET HODGE Letter to a Poet . . . . .	23
MARK HALLIDAY Two Poems . . . . .	24
MICHAEL MAGEE Three Poems . . . . .	25

IRA SADOFF	
Two Poems . . . . .	27
HELEN SORRELLS	
Going On From Here . . . . .	29
SUSAN HANKLA	
Events . . . . .	30
JOHN TAYLOR	
Two Poems . . . . .	31
PAUL JENKINS	
Is That a Threat or a Promise? . . . . .	33
MARILYN THOMPSON	
Tableau for the Public . . . . .	34
JOHN UNTERECKER	
Five Cattle on an Evening Meadow . . . . .	35
EDWARD HARKNESS	
Signing My Name . . . . .	36
ALBERT GOLDBARTH	
Two Poems . . . . .	37
DAVE ETTER	
Two Poems . . . . .	41
GREG KUZMA	
Five Poems . . . . .	43

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POETRY NORTHWEST

SUMMER 1973

*Lewis Turco*

Four Poems

THE AUTHOR OF MELANCHOLY

. . . idleness, (the badge of gentry), . . . the bane of body  
and mind, the Nurse of Naughtiness, Stepmother of Disci-  
pline, the chief Author of all Mischief, one of the  
Seven Deadly Sins . . . the Devil's cushion, as Gualter calls  
it, his pillow and chief reposal. —Burton

I have put on my badge, and I repose me  
upon this pillow beside my gross Familiar.  
My Nurse attends me—coffee, mead, or bile?  
I am in good Humour.

The room grows close with folk: Stepmother waddles  
among the lamps, tobacco thick as bats. Gualter  
and Burton hover above the Author,  
bid him take but little

notice of the Nurse—or, better—none at all.  
*Aquarius saddens the now turned year: The time  
requires, and the Autumn breeds it. One's arse  
begins to itch, digits*

cramp; Stepmother leaves the room. Burton suggests,  
*They wear their brains in their bellies, and their guts in  
their heads, these revelers in idleness:  
Who can drink most, and fox*

*his fellow soonest?* I belch and nudge my pen.  
The Seven Sins dance slyly through my spheres. My tongue  
is thick, my ink stumbles among these leaves,  
*somniferous potions,*

*knots, amulets, words, philters. They that stutter  
and are bald will be soonest melancholy, by  
reason of the dryness of their brains. I  
can no longer see, nor*

*may I breathe, so thick has grown the air with these  
bleak phantasms of the skull. Circumforanean  
Rogues and Gipsies ride in the air upon  
a coulstaff out of a*

*chimney-top. Enow! I will be idle hence,  
though "the mind can never rest, but still meditates  
on one thing or other; except it be  
occupied about some*

*honest business"—one cannot be a common  
Clark of Poesy. My mind of his own accord  
it rusheth into Melancholy. The  
Devil take his repose.*

## THE MOON OF MELANCHOLY

*a silly country fellow . . . killed his ass for drinking  
up the moon, that he might restore the moon to the world.  
—Burton*

*It was late when they came in  
through the stile. He dismounted  
beside the water trough, and the donkey  
dropped its nose into the moon to drink.*

*He stood fatigued underneath  
the wind scudding high cloud. No  
light beyond reflection lit the windows  
of the house. The barn soughed. The long grass*

*of the fields grew longer in  
shadow laid over shadow.  
The journey had taken forever. For  
as long as it takes to remember,*

*he forgot where he had been,  
and then recalled again. He  
closed his eyes, listened to the beast drinking,  
and was afraid, suspended*

*in that quiet of the mind.  
When he looked again, when wind  
had become too hollow against silence,  
he found his eyes were opened,*

*but still he could not see. His  
animal had drunk the moon  
out of the water. He tried to discern  
clouds, moon, sky, stars, the edge of the wind,*

*but found there a well into  
which he felt himself to be  
sinking. It was a vortex no world  
could withstand. In the morning he wept*

*over the animal that  
had carried him home; he wept  
in the sun that had risen with him. He  
remembered the image of*

*bone, restored as the blade sank  
homing: The moon floating in  
the trough of water and blood, and the wind  
not quite too hollow to hear.*

## MELANCHOLY'S HERBAL

*"What a pother have authors made with Roses! What  
a racket they have kept! I shall add, red Roses are under  
Jupiter, damask under Venus, white under the Moon, and  
Provence under the King of France." —Culpepper*

*There are others: Black Hellebore, being an herb of Saturn,  
(it is no marvel) is a sullen plant. If taken raw,  
it is safer to purify it *by the art of the**

*alchemist*. It is specified against all Melancholies, quartan agues and madness. *The root consisteth of numberless black strings all united into one head.*

Balm is an herb of Jupiter, under Cancer. Used as an *electuary with honey*, it drives out *troublesome cares*, thoughts blooming darkly out of Melancholy or black choler. *It causeth the mind and heart to be merry*, expels *those melancholy vapors from the spirits and blood which are in the heart and arteries*, deep-rooted.

Hops are martial, under the dominion of Mars, that hot-blooded planet. They may be *profitably given in long and hot agues that rise in fever and blood*. Despite its name, Sow-Fennel (Mercury under Virgo) is indicated in cases of *lethargy, frenzy, giddiness of the head*, its juice mixed with vinegar or rosewater.

Borage and Bugloss are Jupiter's, under Leo. *The leaves, flower, and seed*, given as cordials, *expel pensiveness and Melancholy* if used green. How they strengthen Nature! Endive is a *fine, cooling, cleansing, jovial plant*. It is recommended for *faintings, swoonings, and passions of the heart*. It is conducive to the best of Humours.

But those Roses!—what a pother and racket! What elixirs and compounds: *Sugar of Roses, Syrup of dry Roses, and honey of Roses!* Rose vapor—rosewater cast on a hot fireshovel and inhaled. Rose hips, rosepetals plucked or crushed, fit for all Melancholies: Provence spread like damask under Venus, tapestries beneath the Moon!

## THAT PARTICULAR AIR

*How come they to dig up fish bones, shells, beams, iron-works, many fathoms under ground, & anchors in mountains far remote from all seas? —Burton*

The hook has let go,  
and the conestoga  
has rolled down the cliff, along  
with the television set. All  
the women sorrow,  
for their struggle has

been for nothing, which  
they have achieved. The men  
do not give up. They have yet  
to understand that the wagon  
train will not get through.  
Of course, the wagon

train will not follow  
the Tube, it will follow  
the script; the prairie schooners  
will reach California. There,  
the women will gaze  
at the Pacific

Ocean; glance, with that  
particular air, at  
each other, at their men; they  
will lie down to have the children  
who will sit on the  
shore among soundings:

*You owe to yourself  
your own destruction.*

## EACH ONE

Each one  
 a light in one of her dusk rooms, but none  
 stretch beyond their cords,  
 none trust a torch, a pocketful of candlestubs  
 into the auricular cave, face down  
 the untamed Altamira of her walls,  
 nor ravel a Minoan thread down the branched vein  
 in the dark of the imagined horn.  
 For lack of light, she herself can sketch  
 but fragments of charts, warnings: "the foot  
 steps into nothing here, here the fissure  
 narrows, the tunnel fills with water. Bulls  
 painted on walls are dangerous to touch.  
 Take nothing; nothing taken from dark  
 will forget the dark." No maps of that mine,  
 no claims filed, no use known for the vein.  
 She herself has been lost for days at a time,  
 has brought out pockets full of stones  
 fossilized, polished by current, half-life unknown,  
 but none can follow her down, each one  
 a light turned savingly lower.

## BRAILLE

We've come too late, the light is gone.  
 We tap our left senses on this dark  
 expecting echoes (the horn! the horn!)  
 as taste has (the water at Cruz, remember?)  
 as scent (what moves is a cat  
 not seen since the ice drew back)  
 touch, then: the faces we cannot see,  
 rock face, body, clock, can none  
 tell time in the dark, what hour? what century?  
 what weapon the darkened hand will grope for  
 when the ears in the cave of the skull

alert to a footfall? by touch,  
 hammerstone, atl atl, bow, long rifle, tell  
 what time we're darkened in—grenade,  
 the rag in the bottle, plastic, what age  
 makes fossil fuel of our warmth, what ice  
 begins to form its claws on the skim of the water?

## LEGACY

He promised each of his sons a legacy.  
 "He left nothing." They mean he died owing  
 the bank, the grocer, the doctor, the REA,  
 the house mortgaged, furniture sagged apart,  
 his mining stocks worthless, his diamond flawed.  
 "Nothing." They forget the blood, long-lived and  
 strong enough to conjure with. First generation,  
 taken straight, or only cut with hers,  
 it carried madness. But cut again by love,  
 quartered, the strain came music from the vein.  
 Now when no one is named for the man, his blood  
 slumps through the ventricles of great-grandchildren,  
 ready, mixed with the sperm of lowlanders, to be  
 his legacy: one child in eight will sing;  
 no old aunt will say how many may be mad.

## AFTER WORLD WAR II

We piled in the car  
 & went for a ride!  
 My mother wore lipstick,  
 my father wore slippers  
 & the kids poked their heads  
 out the windows & giggled  
 at people kissing.  
 Later we stopped

at a Bo-Kay stand & punched  
each other in the fuzzy back seat  
while waiting for seven flavors.  
Then my father lit up, my mother  
blotted her lips,  
and we pulled into  
Country Club Lane  
which went in a circle under the moon,  
and we promised to behave—  
and look at the dark  
brick houses, the long  
carpet lawns feeding little brown deer,  
and the *swoosh swoosh*  
of sprinklers  
and the colored cars, and a lady  
wearing high yellow hair and holding  
a little white cup,  
out strolling a yellow dog  
that looked back at us  
until we were out of sight.

#### THAT SUMMER

That summer at the lake  
when the malemute babies  
nuzzled their bones  
under the cabin's floor;  
when Cyrus and Meeno  
stayed up late to watch  
a moth weave the screen  
then each other,  
taking days to blink;  
when the patient waves  
nudged the alewives  
to shore, and a startled possum  
flicked his pink paws at us;  
when the path we took  
on our morning walk  
sparkled with tracks

and our feet and knees  
and then our backs  
and tongues got wet  
there was nothing,  
not one thing  
under the sun or moon  
or those sweet cedar boughs  
that could touch us.

#### *Jack Tootell*

#### WELCOME: ABANDON HOPE

There is at this moment, for all you  
within earshot, so little premonition  
of descent to the infernal (such facility!)  
from the brotherhood of the common highway  
noisy and sociable and comfortable.  
Where a faint path digresses—a temptation—  
wonder a moment, do not stop, pass on.

Yet Necessity itself, which I have loved  
(ask Marcus Aurelius, ask Friedrich Nietzsche)  
is split by the living wedge of this day and hour.  
At the back of the garden, centuries  
scarcely noticed and surely never opened  
(cascade of ivy blurring the ancient walls,  
see the insect corpses in the spider web)  
the hinges rusted virtually solid  
but the knob holds; groans, yes, but opens;  
and past the somnolent afternoon the gate  
welcomes, compels. An inorganic thing  
draws on my longing like remembrances  
into what loneliness  
into what depths and deserts  
and for indeterminate time  
into what succession of lost narrow doors.

*Joseph Beatty*

THE ANIMALS ON THE AMATEUR TAXIDERMIST

False dawn lounges before your eyes  
Like a fat cat. You want to hoist  
It over the horizon by its scruff.

Your heart leans in the leash you hold  
Against it. Every tree is full of life,  
Rattling its bones and grinding its teeth

Behind the bark, nesting in the trunk  
Or hollow, scratching in testimony:  
We are the living and feed on our secrets in our hands.

We leap and burrow across your field of vision  
But when you follow and beat bushes  
You find only signs we have been there—

Groundmarks, smells, the shaking twig,  
A hole as empty as your eye.  
Your sights are shot through with contradictions.

Hunting us to a standstill, you try to make us move.  
You run us down with hounds and guns until we're still.  
You call it art or sport.

Your imagination runs away with you  
When you hang us in your living room  
And dare believe you have us as we are.

Resist these dreams. Tell yourself the truth:  
We exercise you, provide the free range,  
But become the wen on your mind's eye.

It is yourselves you flush out of our holes,  
More life for your heart's horn of too little.  
We make you come to life and come again

To life. Something in us moves you.  
You will not let us merely be.  
Killing us you try to make us lifelike.

*Doug Flaberty*

THE VILLAGE IDIOT

If I should die  
before I wake

mother moon take me  
into your round womb

where pain is no less  
part of the giving

the glad ritual of  
all inheritance

as love is the only  
word love breathes

when breath passes—  
shadow of a heron

over still water  
ice on the stiff wing

of a dragonfly  
Then the owl's lone

syllable enters the  
frail desert flowers

to settle my body  
like dark beneath a cat



Take me where grass  
will grow from my head

where no one else  
has seen a vision

where I'll never touch  
any life but water

Shape me knotted  
and drafty as nets

*Quinton Duval*

#### THE PROPHET

It is extremely cold. So cold we  
do not speak to each other, only  
with thick fingers of wool.

A man in a green suit stands  
above us and blows into his  
hands. This day when the band  
never showed up. And everyone  
wished they had some small  
vial of something stashed away  
in themselves.

We have been treated fairly  
though. We cannot complain. There  
is news that startles and there  
is news that no one can deny.

We choose the latter and begin  
to think about the fires, and the  
eyes time the beat of the green  
suit as it rises and becomes,  
on the spot, an evergreen. (This  
is symbolic of our love for  
ourselves.) Everyone cheers as  
the first branches catch fire.

*Paul Hunter*

#### FROM THE DESK OF ...

1

Father, I read into  
your slight notes as if poems.  
The hard pressed words yield  
so little I turn  
them face down on  
my table to feel  
how hard you leaned on the pen.

Against the grain  
I rub your stationery.

2

I remember your desk  
home & work, the two identical,  
aquarium shots of your children  
pressed under glass,  
frozen in the ice  
of youthful promise.

Three, five, seven,  
toothless, freckled,  
a sister's drawings  
of smiling vegetable children.

It is safety glass  
you sandwiched us in:  
without a scratch we look back.

3

I wish I could  
show you a seat at my desk.

It is bare  
boards oiled lightly.  
Its wings fold.

To do one thing  
I must clear  
others away,  
there is so little  
room this level.

When your grandson  
leans into his drawing—  
fish smoking cigars—  
the smoke swirls away with him.  
A ballpoint outlines  
what he leaves  
to be filled in  
another weekend.

And what we spill  
eating, clowning  
at the same time  
gets rubbed in.

It is no party,  
no platform,  
it is a place  
to be moved,  
furniture to raise  
thoughts from the floor,

little more.

4

We are a continent apart, Father,  
most of us not so flat.

What your notes are  
is unfair: but from here  
my own turn heavy handed  
too easily to answer.

I know what etiquette you taught,  
but that too is no answer.

Why should men simply  
take it *and* dish it out?  
I'd rather be this table,  
wings spread for trials,  
guests, my few wants.

I built this to bear insults.

So if you're ever by here,  
let me lend you  
these iron legs,  
this stubborn back.

*John Kostmayer*

HE FALLS ASLEEP WHILE READING SAINT JOHN

He is packing sheets in his sleep.  
His hands are knots!  
He is working his way  
Through vats of slaughtered sheep  
To the bright side of the zoo,  
Where animals in heat  
Vote the freedom ticket  
With their toes and teeth.

Here bottles never bottom, shills depart,  
And lovers never waste their time  
With dollar bills or traffic lights.  
Even their most violent movements  
Resemble the shape of your body

Close to mine. Otherwise, the air  
Is almost empty there, as clear  
As the word in which the prophet  
Saw the light he heard within  
And called them to eternal life.

## WHAT HERR SPILLMANN TOLD ME ABOUT HIS VILLAGE

These green hills  
 were made by hand  
 in Grindelwald.  
 The gardens carved in stone,  
 the pastures sewn together  
 with the patchwork of our lives.  
 The Eiger makes us frugal.  
 See the hay  
 crocheted against the sun,  
 Frau Baumann weaving flowers  
 on the margins of her garden.  
 Her house is brocaded with cows.  
 We are craftsmen and  
 the land's our palette.  
 But old women's bones  
 rattle in the chalets,  
 our sons leave home,  
 and every summer tourists come  
 to steal our poems.

## RECOGNITIONS: GRINDELWALD

You will know it's Frau Baumann  
 by the way the morning laundry  
 shakes her out to dry.  
 Or if she's in the garden  
 how the weeds pull up her fingers.  
 Every day the hay around the chalet  
 rakes her shoulders with slow strokes.  
 You will notice that  
 she carries winter on her back  
 like a hump your heart would weep for.  
 And every summer evening

you can see her thin limbs  
 prancing to the wind chimes of her cows  
 on higher pastures.

*Beatrice Cameron*

## BALLAD OF THE FISHERMAN'S WIFE

Paths meet in the distance,  
 Rocks bow down in the spray,  
 And as we sat speaking  
 Our thoughts went walking away:  
 Like leaves from under the tree,  
 Like rain we passed to the sea—

Two griefs, and a single cure!

The sky was gray, a dimmed pearl,  
 And our boat seaweed-brown,  
 Midships the sun was couched  
 And gave pale shine,  
 And hard under our keel  
 The flounder sang—

Two griefs, and a single cure!

Wind is cold and soft,  
 Soft and cold the rain,  
 Sea-kine rise, and drift  
 Over the gray plain,  
 And the pale sisters drive them down  
 To the sea again—

Two griefs, and never the cure!

*Ward Stiles*

AFTER THE GREAT GAMES: A SONG OF THE FIFTIES

1

The cheers of the crowd rose and  
fell like swords spun into the sky  
and caught in the same hand.  
The light came down from another planet.  
It changed the color of the grass.  
Girls in purple skirts leaned across  
the sidelines to sprinkle us with limedust  
and frost. We panted and swore  
and threw our bodies onto rocks  
until the bruises deepened into pools  
where we swam away from the shore  
while the god of football  
splashed our names across the earth.

2

We wore new skin.  
We danced in stockingfeet  
to slow music and the smell of wax  
and walked back to the bleachers, careful  
to keep our hands in our pockets.  
The blood washed out fences in our throats.  
We drove into the country and stopped  
on back roads where we planted our lives  
with a forest of redwoods, got down  
under them on our knees and searched  
for love in the leaves and the grass.

3

We lay in beds in a small town  
that covered half the earth  
and when we ached  
and imagined death we stuffed balloons  
in the mouths of the dead  
and made them laugh

until the balloons were full  
and then we let them  
lift us into sleep.

*Martha Zweig*

BLOOD

They have been cute since  
birth. At twelve they start to bleed  
like their mothers.  
Boys are  
horrified about the blood.  
They will have to do what their fathers do.

They have been bloody since  
birth. The war  
rattles up & down their  
villages. At twelve they start  
to fight. The Americans  
are horrified.

Boys have to  
ask about the blood. At twelve  
girls know like villagers  
what boys will  
do & are horrified. So they will have to  
make themselves cute

since birth  
for the horrified  
boys  
for the horrified  
Americans  
or fight.

## THE GOLFER

Quietly desperate, he kept coming home  
to inlaws from the east in his favorite chair—  
Grace's cousin or her Aunt Therese,  
one or the other knitting an afghan there  
and how they packed away the spuds and beef!

Or else they went out with Grace to some affair  
or met the Old Dame coming in on the train  
and he was left with a cold cut icebox supper  
and the ads to read—in the middle of round three  
they'd troop in gabbing and Grace would say "Kiss Mother."

He had to drive them down to look at the beach  
or else to the Hollywood hills for a glimpse of the stars  
as they yakked and yakked with Grace across the seat  
shrilling into his ears their Oh my dears!  
and at every jerk of the brake giving a leap.

And he couldn't have stood it—Grace always so tired  
and having those headaches, too, if while they snored  
on Sunday mornings he hadn't got out his irons  
and pretending to whistle off for some strokes at the course  
parked the Ford near the house of a widow he knew  
and they rolled and roared on her floor like coupling lions.

## HATTIE KING

Most people couldn't stand  
the ugly end of things—  
a bowel case—drooling mother?—  
they called in Hattie King,  
went out to a movie  
while she wiped bedsores clean—

with a bag of tidy ointments,  
a smile in a nurse's cap,  
came and mopped the vomit,  
slipped the needed pan  
under the wrinkled buttock  
of what had been a man—

sat up with the dying,  
never took a drink,  
crooned tunes to stop their crying,  
tried hard not to think,  
fed spoons of warm pap, lying  
they'd soon be in the pink.

But when she finally sickened  
none came to minister—  
her wrists and ankles thickened,  
she lay there old and poor  
gazing enraptured at the face  
of Christ on a calendar.

*Margaret Hodge*

## LETTER TO A POET

I have repeatedly dived deep, in cold water,  
holding my lungs full of surface air.  
Gasping for breath, I have been pulled in from the poem,  
hand over hand, called breaching.  
With the poem's form, a shellfish, in the boat,  
I have held to the descending line,  
begun to breathe, slow and deep.  
Out comes the plaintive whistle of the poem's sound.

Together we jackknife at the surface  
and swim to the sea floor sixty feet below;  
we are after what clamps on rocks  
under kelp forests, is edible in that minute.

## THE ENEMY IDENTIFIED IN A BLINDING FLASH

Look what's that on TV  
 look what's that colonizing the moon  
 look what's that bombing the hospital for yellow folks  
 what's that building the hospital for rich white folks  
 hey what's that flashing off and on  
 on top of the world's biggest motor hotel  
 where the boys who park your car wear red uniforms  
 and the girls who wash your breakfast plates wear yellow ones  
 look what's that sucking on a flag  
 selling remote control garage door openers  
 spewing vinyl and asphalt  
 that special stripe on your ten new ties  
 that wise voice saying "You just don't understand politics"  
 that extra string in your new gut squash racquet  
 extra steak in the garbage  
 hey hey what is that blue chip Pledge of Allegiance  
 what is that dark stain in a child's head  
 look! what's that in the flesh of your full cheeks  
 what's that, hey, sticking out of your wallet?

I'll be damned if I don't see—yes,  
 yes I see now, yes it's

a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their yachts  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their gasoline  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their souvenir pistols  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their cleverness  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their dying lobster  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their golf trophies  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their smooth replies  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their glossy unread books  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their sheepdogs  
 a group of wealthy yachtsmen and their women

## CONQUEST AND REVOLUTION

If I have just hit  
 a hard low deep cross-court backhand  
 I am Alexander the Great  
 and my face is made of sky,  
 royal blue with full clouds whose white is pure.  
 My hair, in its similarity to rope,  
 terrifies.  
 I am marching toward the Danube.  
 "Let the archers act as decoys!"  
 Aha. And now my cavalry volleys  
 forth from the denseness of a glen:  
 perfect; and only fifty-one dead  
 among all my loyal Macedonians.

Tennis is a sport for the rich.  
 I know it best when I double-fault  
 for then my self-contempt billows  
 like mustard gas, engulfing the ethos  
 of indoor courts that are tended, tended, tended:  
 suddenly I am a Persian slave  
 used as a footrest by noble killers  
 and my face is made of gloryless molecules.  
 "Tear it down!"

*Michael Magee*

Three Poems

## THE WITNESS

Without light, there is no face;  
 a mirror without reflection.  
 Before sunrise; this blank vision.

It moves, and I move too,  
 filling out the dark space,  
 breath flush against my pillow.

The dark side of the moon  
is no nearer my imagination  
than the body in this room.

The tongue begins to stir,  
rooted deep, now the pulse  
rising with each heartbeat.

The body in my bed is waking,  
moves slowly, discovering  
its shape, sinuous and naked.

The face I can't escape or see,  
the warm familiar scent  
leads me to new evidence.

This then is my deposition:  
I swear, as solitary witness,  
she is my living accomplice.

#### SONG FOR OLD AGE

The earth masters me,  
my rock of words,  
the pulse's spring;  
each bone goes dry.

My limbs grow hard,  
the weathered lines.  
The sounds I make  
go underground.

This tender root  
makes me cling,  
a drooping song  
waiting for wind.

#### ADAM'S LABOR

Bone from burning bone  
Adam must have cried out  
to feel the rising pain  
deep beneath his heart:

to sense her beginning  
as blood streamed down  
bathing the sweet flesh  
of his immaculate wound.

Adam must have moaned,  
the flap of his left side  
laid wide apart, a rib  
lifted from its cage.

And above, a shape  
moving hand over hand,  
a lengthening shadow  
passing with the wind.

*Ira Sadoff*

Two Poems

#### NOBODY WANTS TO GO

Nobody wants to go to the moon  
this year it's Mars  
the President wants a space station

to revolve around him  
taking pictures of his good side

the diplomats shaking hands  
the spies  
in the bedrooms the pornographers

could not escape it  
it would clean up America

NORTHWEST

in the end it would save money  
& make jobs for the poor

folks who've run out of bombs  
to make this year  
we will be number one in the race  
for space it will be good

to win something if nobody wants  
to go we will take their pictures  
we could send them to the moon  
they can bring all the rocks back

if they want to we can show them  
nothing we do lacks a purpose

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My mother was first:  
when I popped out and forgot  
to say thank you I never  
heard the end of it. Then  
my father whacked the thank  
you right out of me. To my  
first friends I am forever  
thankful for seeing me  
through the worst of times,  
they always told me when  
my shoes were all wrong,  
and when I went too far.  
I can never thank my  
first girl friend enough:  
she taught me not to let myself  
go in her presence, but I let  
myself go anyway, and she,  
thank you, let me go faster  
than I could say I'm sorry.  
I don't want to forget the  
government to whom I am

endlessly thankful. I could not  
thank my wife in her presence.  
And since we have no children  
to thank, there is just enough  
time to thank the world for  
letting us visit, and taking us  
out of it just when we learn  
we can almost live without it.

#### *Helen Sorrells*

#### GOING ON FROM HERE

Going on from here—(we'd intended  
some startling adventure under virgin skies,  
a climbing of the blue to prospect the sun,  
perhaps?)—but found instead going on  
meant each morning scuffing over our same  
mind-set, as if it were a house in which  
we must always live, the address  
on every mailing list, remnants of the past  
drifting in like junk mail re-delivered.

Oh, we changed a little—bought new clothes  
that walked us down old streets in an aura  
of newness; spoke words earthy as potatoes  
to express our need to reveal nothing;  
starved our despair with bright affirmations  
and a little church-going; smiled often  
and were witty as Xmas trees; acknowledged  
in our two a.m. tunnels of darkness that in any  
country, however pastoral, we would be  
our same warring selves;  
went on, went on, went on,  
discovering the wheels and discs and jewels  
of courage, how it works like a fine watch;  
discovered at last we had joined the ranks  
of Most People.



*Susan Hankla*

EVENTS

I. BLUE

Someone walks over hills  
as you imagined.  
Distance is the color of rivers.  
A mountain. Bodies of water.  
Rain.  
It is a lack of dust.  
Something travels the corners of your eyes.  
I had to cross three waterfalls to reach you.

II. WHITE

A knowing spot of sun  
on the stoop.  
Morning's corner.  
A knocking. Opening doors.  
Arrivals by plane.  
An old word climbs her mind.  
Windows. Laundry.  
The small room where we slept like giants.

III. BLACK

An envelope.  
A frightening hat.  
The streets.  
No one's glove.  
You scissored the crumbling paper.  
The faceless guest.  
You waited in the shadow's climate.  
Lightning. No return.

IV. DANGER

It is in clothes spread for a party  
on your bed.  
You test the air for limits.  
Cling to the garden.  
There is no safety.

Bombs. Tulips held at arm's length.  
News. Tall thin women.  
Odd smiles at weddings.

V. SURPRISE VISIT

Messages.  
Someone has found the ring you  
lost in the snow.  
Rub silk with your breasts.  
Skin says welcome.  
New words fall over you  
like rain.

VI. CHANGE

Fear breaks like glass.  
The mirror swings.  
You unbend from illness.  
Desires rise.  
Clear space. I am combed like a poster.  
Weight lost, lightness in the wind,  
gaining time.  
Touch shrubs. There is room.

*John Taylor*

Two Poems

SONG

Out of the mountainside the last light looms  
Unappeasable as the light of the star  
That watches without caring.  
The town shrinks  
Down to one streetlight and one bar.

On the road, on the narrow highway  
The highbeams play  
In front of the lonely car  
And the darkness drinks  
Whatever the couple inside are sharing.

Whatever they see I cannot say,  
Having been so far apart from love  
I cannot say what they see above.  
All I can see  
Is a single cloud that burns.

The mountainside's severity  
Dwindles and goes away,  
But the town is far  
And lovers must have their rooms.

But the star still stares from the sky  
Though the car turns  
And the trees are passing by.  
However they get to town tonight  
They travel by a long-sent light.

#### MACHINEGUN

In the muzzle of the machinegun  
There is a hole.  
Things vanish in it.

Things do. You can't be sure.  
You won't be sure you won't  
It looks so dim.

There are machineguns in the park  
Waiting for all the picnickers  
So stay away.

The bullets in the belt are teeth.  
They're starving.  
Why do you starve too

Looking so hungrily into the hole,  
Waiting to go  
When it turns on you?

Are you ready to listen?  
The machinegun is ready to speak  
So listen as long as you can

While the bolt is drawn back  
And the cartridge chambered  
And the trigger tensed.

Goodbye, goodbye  
To anybody who waits to hear  
What the machinegun can say.

#### *Paul Jenkins*

#### IS THAT A THREAT OR A PROMISE?

Ardor of the arbor, rhodomontade by the sea:  
all this is yours if you take me seriously.

When a passel of songbirds and a lug of plums  
arrive Air Freight, don't worry who, don't bite your thumbs;

I promise composure in any circumstance.  
Let's pull wry faces—pout and grin and grit. Let's dance

like manatees in the everglades  
the bump and roll, the slow blue chew. Charades,

I can hear you claim, all fake! all bombast  
hiding from love-light what it needs to last—

deep feeling, not fine words—and would you try  
to reconsider psychotherapy?

OK. I'm going. But I warn you to expect  
me back in a flash with proof that trouble rejects

all cures. I'll pound your door each night with my nonsense.  
Love has no logic but resilience.

*Marilyn Thompson*

TABLEAU FOR THE PUBLIC

Certain days are prescribed, uniformly textured.  
Nothing unscheduled happens, this is easiest  
for us all. Economic monotony, occasional  
splashes of purple  
shadow, from pigeons. Anyone may lift his eyes,  
small candles flickering.

Eating is unnecessary but fashionable, a way of leaving  
dry interiors. Thus tinkling of ice cubes is  
soothing, as for the toothache of a man alone  
at a small table. His presence, a distress  
without companions, we accept as accurate,  
a curious replica of all that is possible.

Women are blonde,  
a universal color. The children in school.  
The children, little fragments. Their fathers come for them  
at dusk, in silver cars. The fathers' faces  
color of exhaust. Beside them the children cry  
softly, like rabbits.

And it is evening, a frieze of positions  
ritually taken. Women's posed lips  
question the children's foreheads for fever,  
that hot, historic  
game in the dark, dark which is the beginning of forgetting  
we now exactly reproduce. We do

forget  
and expect the reassuring repetition of exhaustion  
and put away the frozen moon, unbroken,  
and a concentric series of doors like waves  
lap and close. Within the last rippling fold of dream  
lies the relieved brain.

*John Unterecker*

FIVE CATTLE ON AN EVENING MEADOW

I

Rain curtains the sea,  
a grey memory  
ravelled on sunset.

There are lakes in chipped pavement,  
blue lakes  
stained grey.

Trailing her broken chain  
a heifer  
climbs out of sunset.

II

evening darkens the cliff.  
I think of cities'  
dark stains,

a trail of stains that curdle in gutters.  
A stream divides four cattle from a brown heifer;  
the stream is lined with grey willows.

III

Now the sun has dropped into the dark sea.  
Frogs that serenade darkness blur the slow stream.  
A brown heifer hesitates at the edge of water.

IV

The grass is wet: I do not stretch out to count stars.  
I know there are cities that crumble into sickness,  
a swill of saliva, dead animals rank in dead sewers.

V

In this breathing meadow, cattle move, invisible in the blurred  
starlight.  
At the edge of every sea, ghost figures brush mouth against mouth.  
I stretch out on the wet grass. Tomorrows . . .

*Edward Harkness*

SIGNING MY NAME

It is nearly twilight.  
Nearly.  
I'm signing my name.

I sweep away the broken brooms,  
I lock the storeroom of useless hinges.

At the edge of the prairie  
I dig up my shoes.

Already it is July  
And dusk falls on one side of the mountains.  
This is another side.  
I'm signing my name on the skull of a hawk.

It wasn't so long ago the stars were real,  
And the cherries fell.  
Nothing could stop them.

So I confess again:  
What I label owns me—  
The buried spoons, the shells,  
The sadness of doors,  
The shadow my hand makes at night.

I keep spelling.

I pass from one dark thing to the next,  
Subtracting my footprints  
Until I arrive at the starless,  
Dense middle of my name.

I hear myself shout,  
Where are the guitars?  
Why this hunger for salt?

*Albert Goldbarth*

Two Poems

HARD TIMES

1  
Faucets  
hover over the sink  
like the short-sleeves  
of an amputee  
remembering what it was  
to wash up.  
°

These are hard times  
in Chicago, darling.

2  
Winters like this freeze  
anything shining  
to anything unbuttoned.  
Hard times.  
The lonely man's neck  
must wait for spring  
to thaw the knife-blade  
out of the cut  
across his eager fingers.  
°

Ice. The infant gums  
and tongues some warmth  
about the blue ankle  
trapped  
in the frozen baptism,  
beats his head against ice  
for the foot bloated  
belly-up within.  
Hard times. Ice. You could claw  
a hole in the tear  
glazed over your cheek  
and fish  
with my heart on a hook  
for your sorrow.

Ice in Chicago. Darling,  
hard times. Anything wet  
becomes monumental.  
The lonely man  
haunts the streets with an egg  
of semen  
cracked in the palm of his hand.

3

I need you. By the way  
my fingers travel  
over the swells of you  
like refugees  
leaving America  
I know. The thumb  
is blind from birth.  
It bends  
its head to the ground  
and moves  
by what it hears there.

A time of need.  
Voices in a telephone cable  
twine without touching.  
Lovers too  
have been known  
to keep rubber between them.  
Ice:  
words in a wire  
die of cold  
waiting outside  
for their ring to be answered.

I need you  
to say: to a herbivore  
the whole world's a salad.  
You're silly  
like that. I need to feel your breasts  
burn like bulbs.

And we need the bulbs.  
They make their own light

and we do with them,  
in a hard time,  
for cherubim.

#### TOWARD CLARITY

The brain,  
the great snail, twitches  
the two shafts of light striking through your eyes,  
its antennae . . . and slowly moves  
on its own secretions  
no matter how fast the car goes.  
Ride the tollway:

you're small, just one more hubcap  
lost in the Illinois fields. A crow  
catches last light along the undersides of its wings  
and glows  
against the coming dusk like a flare  
above where a trucker's waiting, hundreds of miles away,  
for splints and a jar of plasma.  
The tollway: you're small. The tollway: the edges of signs  
shave off your peripheral vision.

What you stare at  
on the tollway's  
a point where your two shafts of looking  
meet,  
it could be hundreds of miles distant, and driving  
the car's an attempt  
to reach by sunset  
some unknown town  
beyond the state line  
where your eyes cross  
far ahead of you  
to spend their night introspecting.

It's true; it's summer, the gleam  
along each stalk in the blonde stretch of wheat  
emanates from within; what could be colder,  
now, than when your Volks pulls  
into a beef truck's shadow  
and, dreaming of piped-in ice,  
your ribs contract  
with an empathy sharp as a meathook;  
even prayer—how long could that stay warm

on its knees in this interstate night? The blood  
italicizes itself at that,  
the skin needs to pucker  
as if for the rare white kiss of adhesive tape  
against an I.V. needle, every inch  
of your motor skills tics  
wrist-thick  
up your temples; and the eyelid jerks  
like crazy, at last, a nervous breakdown  
one nerve big. The tollway:

wreckage. The tollway: how does it seem from the height  
of a rescue plane? when the pilot spots  
a coil of gutted colon  
on the windshield, intricate to him  
as a thumbprint. Wreckage:

you need perspective, some progression until it's small  
and transparent, a figurine; and passing  
a melanoid raccoon  
struck at the side of the road, counting mileage  
by carcasses, the dark snouts draining  
dark skulls out on gravel: you want the next one

albino, a hare in your headlights  
gone blanch enough  
to accent its matted red message  
clearer than warning on a road sign,  
telling you what to avoid in the twists up ahead,

saying where you're bound for; and maybe  
the next one

even clearer than that,  
the ghost, the glass, the cow  
defined by only slats of light along its sides,  
to stand  
unperturbed, purposeful, on the tollway  
and dare the oncoming beef truck.

*Dave Etter*

Two Poems

"YELLOW-BELLY"

They called him "yellow-belly"  
for not standing up to a bully,  
for not fighting beside his buddy.  
"So what," he said.  
"What difference does it make anyhow.  
It shouldn't be no crime, you know,  
to not want to get into a brawl."  
But from then on he kept to himself.  
Wounded, self-sentenced to silence,  
he stopped playing catch with the kids,  
stopped pitching horseshoes in the park.  
He even let his cabin cruiser  
decay under a cottonwood tree.  
That boat, by the way,  
has become a county landmark of sorts.  
You'll see it there in the front yard  
when we drive past his house.

Well, it sure must have eaten him up,  
his failure in the tavern that time.  
Otherwise he never would have done  
what he did last Monday night.  
Imagine trying to take a gun away

from a gunman holding up a liquor store!  
Of course he got shot,  
but they say he's going to make it,  
going to come out good as new.  
Why did he do it? people ask.  
Hell, he's committed to this town.  
It's his place and he aims to stay put.  
It's no great thrill, I'll tell you,  
to have to walk up to the Square  
for cough drops or White Owl cigars  
and have to stomach  
"How's the old yellow-belly?"

O. E. MOONEY

Well, here I am in a Rock Island caboose  
eating bread and onions for lunch  
and watching a heavy summer rain  
steam on the Middle Western streets.

"Be good," said Mark Twain,  
"and you will be lonesome."

Cold rain in Culpeper County, Virginia:  
I was alone and silent there, also.

I know how the talk goes, what they say:  
*That Mooney, he's no damn fun, you know.*  
*He wont gamble, wont take a drink.*  
*Standoffish. That's him. Standoffish.*

Why cant I swear, knock a man down?

The railroad is the only body I've bruised.

I need a bad woman to be bad with.

But I'm Mooney, the shy onion eater.

Greg Kuzma

Five Poems

THE VICTIMS

These are the victims keep them  
happy keep them away from fire and  
flame they will be needed later  
put them aside don't let them bother  
you you are better than they are  
don't leave them out in the air  
some may rot they are known to chip  
and crack in the cold they need  
to be kept fresh nonetheless make  
sure they have their eyes open though  
some will never know what hit  
them don't feed the victims and  
don't walk on them stand them up  
in the hall keep them oiled they  
will need to fall apart quickly  
and easily when the time comes they

sometimes don't wear well you  
should dispose of them promptly  
try not to overcook a few minutes  
in scalding water usually suffices  
check their color so as it goes with  
your eyes work for a good fit  
you don't know where you'll be  
maybe in a tight spot you don't  
want anything hanging out making  
you obvious

stay calm when they will look  
you in the eye

accompanying them beware of dark  
streets dark alleys seductive  
saloons they like to hang out  
there tell their stories they like

to walk into dark alleys pants full  
of money jingling

they are always flaunting their scars  
they have long memories for the  
horrible whatever

you do don't let them get in the  
first word don't take them home  
right away give them a few feet  
of rope give them a few feet of rope

#### FOR MY FATHER

I am the bones that grew into his suits  
and brought them back into fashion,  
his ties around my neck drew great applause.  
I fired his guns, the first time they had been  
fired in years, I changed the tire on his car,  
I was his jack and jill, his up the hill,  
the water in his steaming iron. I am the  
bulb in his garden still warm from his hand,  
doing my hair up in blue. The rust in the barrels  
of his guns loves me, I set it free. And  
I am the one who tore all his wallpaper down  
that was making his teeth seem yellow, that  
put the kick back in his leg, restored the oil  
to his french fries, boy they were getting  
dry. I am his dreams dressed up as girls,  
I am his first deer of deer season, ducks  
breaking from cover, wings dripping. Once  
I was his ladder when he fixed his roof,  
and once the radio. He liked old country  
songs, I had a good station, needed a tube  
later, but he didn't bother. Now I am  
the dust collected there around the wires,  
the irritating static. He needs a screw driver,  
something is broken, I lie long and still  
in the drawer. I am the thing broken, the

new thing, the thing they don't make like  
they used to, nobody can fix. I am the wall  
where he runs out of patience, the swear word  
left by itself on the counter, hands in its  
pockets, no one to talk to. The empty whiskey  
glass, the car keys laid by the toaster, the  
pencil and the pad on which he'll write his  
grocery list. Midnight now, I am his tomorrow  
beginning to get dressed.

In the morning I am his orange juice, cold  
enough. I am the snow on his roof.

#### CLEANING THE FISH

After he had cleaned the fish,  
taking out their mangle of guts,  
ripping their gills out the way  
you rip a pop top beer can top,  
then, as an afterthought, chopping  
the heads off besides, instead of  
gouging out the eyes so that they  
would not spoil, turning inward,  
and rot the head and then rot,  
in turn, the meat, the fish got up  
on their tails, which he had  
neglected to cut off, and spoke  
thus: We are from these waters,  
we are the deposit the rain leaves  
against the drought, we are the  
mothers of the weeds, who tuck  
them to bed for the night, we are  
the nightmares of the drowning  
worms, washed down into streams,  
we are the sun if it could come  
up out of the river it would  
shine in the colors of our spots:  
And you have killed us early in  
the morning of this day. But



he heard nothing, being busy  
taking apart his fishing pole,  
washing his handsome and handy  
pocket knife that had once  
belonged to his grandfather,  
lighting up the last of the  
cigarettes, the best one of the  
day, whereas the others had been  
spent in nervousness and thrown  
to the snagged lines and slippery  
rocks of the white water. This  
last one was for the fish, and as  
a tribute to them. Beneath his  
feet, small water leeches gathered  
in the pool, where the fish heads  
stared up blind.

#### BEFORE LEAVING THE ROOM

he checks the way the light crosses his path,  
the left hand's position on the curtain,  
the row of red spots on the skin.  
He checks the angle of the toe, the muscle knot  
his calf, slightly raised, begins to pronounce  
in his mind. He checks the width of the wind's  
progress among the trees. The buttercups do  
the dance of the buttercups, the moon, where  
is the moon? Is the moon on the list? No.  
He dusts his fingernails for fingerprints.  
He cracks his voice to check the depth of  
his voice. And then he is nearly ready.  
He checks the spell put on the vase of flowers  
by the tabletop, to see if it's unbroken,  
the smudge of mayonnaise perhaps, where a finger,  
far from its best work, had idled in some  
dim amusement. Cigars? He counts them.  
There are ten. Five books are open and he  
closes them. Where is the marker he needs

now to indicate the preference of his finishing?  
He reaches for the light switch and he finds  
it there.

#### POEM IN TWO PARTS

I watch myself grow thinner and thinner.  
I study my hands receding.  
I study the worms of my feet as they nose the ground.  
I feel a breeze down my neck.  
I turn, there is nothing, a face, a woman  
pushing a cart, a street with white houses.  
I sit while food is laid before me.  
I reply to the aroma with copious saliva.  
I eat and am made fat.  
I study the pages of books, perhaps  
I will find myself in them.  
Perhaps I will be at home when you call.  
My voice will be the one I seem most  
tired of, the one I am resting now,  
preserving for promises and the sake  
of promises.

If you are coming remember I am rude,  
I tire easily, I fall asleep in awkward  
positions. I am almost capable of saying  
yes, if that is something which can be  
completed over coffee. I am ready for  
coffee. I am ready to be removed from my  
clothes and studied. You will see how I  
have never loved a thing. You will see  
how many strangers are inside me. A plague  
of insults rides my tongue. Chances are  
we will not hit it off. I am out of excuses,  
sick of robbing my life for poems. Avoid  
me, I have grown too proud of my scars.

### About Our Contributors

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ALBERT GOLDBARTH's first book of poems, *The Feces Fruit*, was published this year by New Rivers Press. He lives and teaches in Chicago.

DAVE ETTER's book of poems, *Voyages to the Inland Sea*, was published in 1971 by the University of Wisconsin Press. Another book, *Crabtree's Woman*, appeared in 1972. He lives in Geneva, Illinois.

GREG KUZMA's latest book of poems, *Good News* (Doubleday), has just been published. He is the editor of Best Cellar Press and *Pebble*.

### Poetry Northwest's Donor's Fund

THE Donors' Fund, generously subscribed to in the past, made possible the beautiful covers, chiefly by Northwest artists, and the annual poetry prizes: the \$100 Helen Bullis Prize and the \$50 Theodore Roethke Prize. In the last issue we announced the establishment of a third award: the \$25 Young Poet's Prize.

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If anyone would care to establish, or help establish, a new prize, in any amount or of any kind, the editor would be glad to discuss the possibilities by correspondence.

*Susan Hankla*

EVENTS

I. BLUE

Someone walks over hills  
as you imagined.  
Distance is the color of rivers.  
A mountain. Bodies of water.  
Rain.  
It is a lack of dust.  
Something travels the corners of your eyes.  
I had to cross three waterfalls to reach you.

II. WHITE

A knowing spot of sun  
on the stoop.  
Morning's corner.  
A knocking. Opening doors.  
Arrivals by plane.  
An old word climbs her mind.  
Windows. Laundry.  
The small room where we slept like giants.

III. BLACK

An envelope.  
A frightening hat.  
The streets.  
No one's glove.  
You scissored the crumbling paper.  
The faceless guest.  
You waited in the shadow's climate.  
Lightning. No return.

IV. DANGER

It is in clothes spread for a party  
on your bed.  
You test the air for limits.  
Cling to the garden.  
There is no safety.

Bombs. Tulips held at arm's length.  
News. Tall thin women.  
Odd smiles at weddings.

V. SURPRISE VISIT

Messages.  
Someone has found the ring you  
lost in the snow.  
Rub silk with your breasts.  
Skin says welcome.  
New words fall over you  
like rain.

VI. CHANGE

Fear breaks like glass.  
The mirror swings.  
You unbend from illness.  
Desires rise.  
Clear space. I am combed like a poster.  
Weight lost, lightness in the wind,  
gaining time.  
Touch shrubs. There is room.

*John Taylor*

Two Poems

SONG

Out of the mountainside the last light looms  
Unappeasable as the light of the star  
That watches without caring.  
The town shrinks  
Down to one streetlight and one bar.

On the road, on the narrow highway  
The highbeams play  
In front of the lonely car  
And the darkness drinks  
Whatever the couple inside are sharing.

