

VOLUME XV • NUMBER 2 • SUMMER 1974 • \$1.25

Poetry

NORTHWEST



POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME FIFTEEN

NUMBER TWO

SUMMER 1974

EDITOR
David Wagoner

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS
Nelson Bentley, William H. Matchett

COVER DESIGN
Anita McMullen

Cover from a sumi painting by Carl Morris of Portland, Oregon.

Most of the Summer Issue of *The Malahat Review* will be devoted to the work of this distinguished painter.

BOARD OF ADVISERS
Léonie Adams, Robert Fitzgerald, Robert B. Heilman,
Stanley Kunitz, Jackson Mathews, Arnold Stein

POETRY NORTHWEST SUMMER 1974 VOLUME XV, NUMBER 2

Published quarterly by the University of Washington. Subscriptions and manuscripts should be sent to *Poetry Northwest*, Parrington Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts; all submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscription rate, \$4.50 per year; single copies, \$1.25.

© 1974 by the University of Washington

Distributed by B. DeBoer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N.J. 07110; and in the West by L-S Distributors, 1161 Post Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94109.

PHILIP APPLEMAN Questionnaire to the Poets of 1926	3
TOM MESCHERY Two Poems	10
GIBBONS RUARK Four Poems	12
RICHARD R. O'KEEFE Two Poems	15
RALPH ADAMO Death Poem	17
WILLIAM McLAUGHLIN The Great Frustration: Agreement	18
JAMES J. MCAULEY The Path	19
JAY MEEK Millard Fillmore	21
JAMES M. MITSUI Picture of a Japanese Farmer, Woodland, California, May 20, 1942	22
H. R. KENT Walking at Night	23
PAUL HUNTER Paving the Way	24
RICHARD STULL The End Lingers	27
JOHN UNTERECKER August 22.	28
FRANK R. MALONEY Two Poems	29
R. S. GWYNN The Denouement	31
JOHN TAYLOR Burning a Week's Newspapers	32
JOHN ALLMAN Two Poems	33

IRA SADOFF	
Two Poems	34
NORMAN H. RUSSELL	
Two Poems	36
JAMES CUMMINS	
Two Poems	37
SANDRA M. GILBERT	
Two Poems	40
DIANA O HEHIR	
Three Poems	43
PHILIP BOOTH	
Two Poems	46

Change of Address

Notify us promptly when you change your mailing address.
Send both the old address and the new—and the ZIP code numbers.
Allow us at least six weeks for processing the change.

POETRY NORTHWEST

SUMMER 1974

Philip Appleman

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE POETS OF 1926

Born in the year
Rilke died, you are all
creeping up on death: when the nation
is 200, you
will be fifty—one fourth
of our history yours;
looking back on it now,
the Depression, the Wars, the decades
of Movements—how
does it feel,
to have slipped past it all, only
poets?

RESPONSES:

I. A. R. AMMONS

Try wading in sand,
you will see
that History is the craft
of life seen backwards, Order
available at last because
events are dead
as the crust of a picked crab—forms,
definitions, erected over our acts
like country gravestones.
The mind, I used to think—my mind—
is a mirror, not a magnifier;
today
I find it more
a refractive medium, a little sky

making sunsets in the dust
of living—in any case,
no microscope.
History? Movements? Find
 a caress in the curve
 of a tern, the risk of death
in the dainty step of herons—the mind,
refracting, paints it all:
 where we have been,
 where we are going,
all we need.
Tomorrow
I shall see it differently.

2. PAUL BLACKBURN

La misère existe : that is all
 it is a very
 Zen
 experience / this life.
It is midnight : it is Xmas
 it is Xmas midnight.
 Why
do you never / listen?

THERE IS NO SUCH THING
as Relevance

in the
hallways
Nemesis
is
thumping
on
snare-drums.

I am thinking
of angels
I am thinking
of L.A.
I am thinking

of what comes after
the ninth inning :

it is a very
 Zen
experience / this death

3. ROBERT BLY

More than leaves, more than flakes
Of snow in Minnesota,
Words fall through the darkness,
Drifting into poems:
In the Oval Office, Nixon is shuffling,
Ankle-deep in poems—he kicks away
Allusions to Jefferson, calls Kissinger,
Demanding to know where the hell all the poems
Are coming from, why the Minute Men are not
Blasting them down as they float in,
The C.I.A. not throwing them into dungeons—how
Are they getting through, miring the National Guard,
Marching on the Pentagon?
No answer, only wheezing, like the oom-
Pah-pah of a beer-hall band. Nixon fidgets,
Calls New York: why is the Market
Glutted with poems, it's all
On TV, a scandal! Another scandal!
The Chase National Bank
Goes militant, sics its bulls
And bears on villanelles,
Sends out stockholders armed
With push-brooms, sweeping poems
Into neaps for bonfires—nothing
Helps: Nixon chokes on a lyric, panics,
Pushes the red button,
His ultimate weapon fires—billion-dollar rockets,
Maddened by poems,
Scream off to burn huts in Asia:
In a fine frenzy of National Defense
We bomb ourselves back
To the stone age.

4. ROBERT CREELEY

When they sd to me this
is the way it all
unravels, the loose ends
of history,

I heard the indifferent rain
falling
into somebody else's
ambition

and I sd look, if you sing
in a minor key
they'll call you
a minor poet.

5. ALLEN GINSBERG

AMURRIKA!

Give me the wretched refuse of your teams: pitchers
with sore elbows, tackles with slipped disks,
geriatric jocks, Unitas, DiMaggio, Riggs—
I WANT HEROES! Boxers with rubber legs, Wimbledon champs
with redhot tennis-elbows—all speckled, spotted,
brindled bigshots—give me billiards kings with D.T.'s,
famous jockeys gone to fat, Soap-Box Derby finalists
over the hill in grad schools—
Kerouac! Burroughs!—I want your 30's idols, Cary Grant,
Robert Taylor, John Payne—Sages, Archangels,
show me their wrinkles, their flab,
and I'll give them a Karma they never found on the
Silver Screen: San Francisco! Denver! Katmandu!—
give me your aging failures, Universe, listen to me—
I'm sick of pushing 50 a hero to kids who can't remember
Dean Rusk—
give me the Golden Oldies, the best torsos of my
generation, men with cataract eyes glaring at the
abyss of oblivion, the guts sucked out of them—
none of your Noble Causes, all of us hanging in there
gutless in our hallucinating daisychain chanting

give me your tired blood, your poor circulation, your
huddled quarterbacks retired in '53—send these
to me because

I AM AMURRIKA

and I'll kiss every one of their grimy toes, Amurrika,
and your true history will begin in the year of that
Lightning Eternal Paradise Epiphany Apocalypse!

6. JAMES MERRILL

It is enough; time presses, we are thrifty
Now with fire and gold, with scorn and praise
Of Progress, of all Movements: these are the days
Of 1976, and I am fifty.

The cupola on Water Street's in motion,
Panning past World War II, past Rilke dead,
Past mad King George trumpeting *Off with their heads*
At traitors snitching land across his ocean.

Does it matter now? To whom? Is mine the freak
Vision, focusing Water Street, solemn
In fog, gray gulls, the grim Doric columns
Of George's reign, pretending to be Greek,

Fooling no one? No more than all that stuff
About the wars, the Movements, the Depression:
Interesting, perhaps, but a digression.
I'm fifty. I am fifty. It's enough.

7. STANLEY MOSS

My friend, you don't understand,
You with your clear Engagement;
For us it's all shift, mutation,
A matter of slant vision:
We see with the eyes
We sleep with. Why do you suppose
Pope pronounced couplets as if
Infallible, Frost saw the world
As a snowy woods? Why
Does Lowell speak only to God?

We bend light around ourselves, our looking
Makes funhouse rainbows. Movements?
Why, everything moves: look around,
Can't you see it all shimmering, quivering,
Velvet-green—this landscape perfectly
Moss?

8. FRANK O'HARA

In the gazebo we were flipping
piastres, fighting off outraged
parakeets, insisting
Bosch would have loved us all:
salamanders, Moors,
avaricious philosophers—this
is getting serious—rain
rams the latticework
like hired goons. Escape from History?
We flip for it—two out of three?
Sudden death:
I say, split for the Indy 500,
They say, a week on Fire Island.
Piastres fall like rain:
I lose. Goodbye Broadway,
Hello Rilke.

9. W. D. SNODGRASS

So what did you expect,
To get younger every year?
As everything else went sere
And yellow, we'd resurrect?

Of course our teeth are rarer
Each decade, our dark hair flecked
With grizzle—whose blank check
Is made out *Pay to Bearer*?

We all bring with us towards
The grave, or incinerator
The guilt of the creator
Of nothing. Nothing but words.

There's fear in every flower,
Shame on all horizons:
Neighbor, choose your poison;
We tasted, then chose ours.

10. DAVID WAGONER

Is there a voice of the Turtle
In the land? Of course: it is in
The cadence of our idiomatic Snake,
Our Owl, our eloquent Trout.
Think of it, you who speak
Nothing but guttural Fortran,
You with your broken Payroll, your pidgin Suffrage:
There are featherless bipeds out here
Beyond your hearing,
Collecting folk songs of the Spotted Thrush,
Howling in native Wolf as if your lives
Depended on this message:
The end of the mantic Muskrat and the Seal
Is the end of you, my inarticulate friends.

11. JOHN WOODS

Maples bleed themselves dry:
Mother Nature has changes of life, too;
It hasn't been fatal yet. Don't
Kid yourself—if you're really up
On Movements, you'll feel the smoke
Slithering out of November bonfires,
The first feather of snow
Melting on your cheek. Depression?
It's the opposite of April,
Darling buds of May in cold
Storage, hot flashes in a freezing month, War
To the last chrysanthemum.
You should be asking,
Why is it that after fifty years of marriage,
I'm still faithful to spring,
Never look at another season, wait,
Through depressions and wars,
For that witching every year,

When April tickles the palm of my hand
And I flower green and yellow . . .
What's that?
Spring? Listen:
If you have to ask,
You can't afford it.

Tom Meschery

Two Poems

CONTINUATIONS

When the breath turns back into the mouth.
When your eyes become crystal, your teeth mercury.
When you dig a hole the size of your hand,
When you bury your hand with leaves.
When you cover the leaves with sweat.
When your glands bore you.
When your friends die from overeating.
When your friends continue to die.
When the seed you believe in
is proven to be nothing but a seed.
When the prints of your only movie are destroyed.
When you have fallen from enough roofs.
When your illness is diagnosed as a callus.
When you are told instruments will not cure you.
When you mix plaster with your remaining hand.
When you make a perfect impression of your face.
When you make a perfect impression of your heart,
brain, lungs, bladder, and intestines.
When your fingernails become mother of pearl.
When your fingers hang around the neck of a beautiful woman.
When you are given what you want most and refuse.
When you acquire a fortune.
When your fortune grows into a tree.
When your tree becomes a mirror that deceives you.
When you climb up your mirror.
When there are no more mirrors to climb.
When the last and imperfect clue disappears.

BLOWING UP THE TENNIS COURT

That summer the crowd grew
until the back row stood
with their heels in the ocean.
(I was never sure of the exact
shore, Atlantic or Pacific.)
I only knew the last anarchist
on earth, my father, was somewhere
there waiting, dreaming
as a russian bear dreams
of his captors. Once my father

led me to the tennis courts,
his "whites" like bleached
hair-shirt matted to his body
and served me dizzy said
afterwards, Stenka Razin
was a bandit but he had
a serve better than most.
His crimes were artistic.

That summer each match went
deuce, matchpoint to deuce.
The sun sucked the last moisture
from the clipped lawns and made
the players sweat their headbands
and stains like wounds spread
across their backs and fronts.
My father called this dying for nothing.

Instead, my father called
for real blood, a son
who blows up trains for money,
a grand escape, survival
in the Caucasus or Africa,
a hundred places marked
carefully with a red X
on a map during years of boredom,
recalling games he used to play.
My father called this living for something.

That summer I won everything
and carried home a silver
plaque and put it on the wall
above the mantel. My father
never looked up from Siberia
spread out on his lap,
the Pacific and the wilderness of
Macedonia falling from his knees.

Gibbons Ruark

Four Poems

SINGING HYMNS LATE AT NIGHT FOR MY FATHER

While our mother, your dark-haired lover,
Lay paralyzed with polio,
We heard your crackling voice recover

A lost tune on the radio.
Never a singer, you nearly sang in time
"You Are My Sunshine," one more blow

Struck gladly for the March of Dimes.
Sister and I called up and pledged
Five bucks to hear it five more times.

For though on Sunday mornings you edged
Back from the pulpit microphone,
At home you offered like a cage

Of swallows your hopeless monotone.
By the old piano out of key
You sang too early, stopped too soon.

Last time I saw you, you had only
A seamy lyric in your ear,
Dandling the baby on your knee

To words you never let us hear.
If now, far from you in the close
Of night, we falter out of fear

Or out of tune or out of too much whiskey,
Bear with us, even in distress,
And when we raise the raucous noise

Of "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing"
We will make an everlasting
Music with something missing.

SAYING GOODBYE TO MY DAUGHTERS

Though the room is the same room I am always in,
In the colloquy the voice grows less a stranger,
More nearly an old friend, nearly my grandfather
Telling me yes, you are allowed to go away.
Slowly the whole room fills with the dusk of summer.
It is as if we were stretching on the sun porch
For a long evening, talking of the tall marsh birds
That settle down for winter in the bayshore pools.
In the light the room has never known a white bird
Flaps and flaps so harmlessly against the window
I release the latch and let it float to the lawn
Where the young girls calm their wings down into their arms
In gestures so casual and lovely they might
Be brushing the snowdust from the sleeves and shoulders.

WEATHER REPORT TO MY FATHER

You always took sharp pleasure in the weather,
Noting the angle of sunlight or saying
Merely to yourself as I am saying now,

Yesterday all day it failed to snow,
And now this morning fallen everywhere
The earth is six white inches nearer heaven.

I look beyond the vine-leaves at the window,
Beyond the tree-forks catching their wings of snow,
Beyond the acres of descending light

To a cold transparent Carolina day
For four years now accumulating nothing
But cloudless heaven breathless as the small boy

Waiting for you in the doorway all those
Winter evenings, who heard your only breath
Fall out of February like a snow.

TWO DEER: AN EPITHALAMIUM
FOR JAMES AND ANNIE WRIGHT

Two deer fly by without
Their shadows letting out
The secret that they are:
Two deer under a star.

Who knows where they have gone?
One with a tree of bone
Shining out of his head
And the shy one he has wed.

They are you, Annie and James.
The earth does know your names.
May your life grow somewhere
Out of this lonely air.

May shade fall from these words.
In some lights, pray the Lord,
The shadows of the deer
Are more like deer than deer.

Richard R. O'Keefe

Two Poems

JULY INSOMNIAC

You can't trust anything these days.
You can't trust summer nights.
The moth that crawls across your flashlight breeds
The monsters on the bedroom walls

That waked you, child.
Infant of day dreams, egg,
You, consciousness, the would-be sleepyhead,
What frightened you, reflections, gnats?

If only you could sleep
They would oblige:
White sheets, white wings, the pupa corpse
Of birth, crash, suicide.

There's nothing here but you.
The body of the world is small.
The nervous walls crawl up and down
Because you light their paths.

While all your eyes are logical, the stars
Have pulled thin blankets up to hide
From string quartets, mosquitoes, starved crazed mares
The night rides on. The crowd

Is far outside and far within,
The germs of galaxies.
What do you do, caught here between?
The sheep are trapped in eyelids, and your eyes

Have swollen to the night itself,
Somnambulistic shepherd. The dark
Reminds you of lost home,
The foetus, the expanding universe.

Here in the pure dark bedroom loud with thought
You want the bedroom you can see,
And not the womb,
And not the universe.

You lie like a caged murderer
And dream by your own light
Your innocence, and how to get to it:
The chair or the escape.

URGENCIES

What's to protect the forest from the trees?
Who's to insure the ocean's water supply?
How can we guarantee the birds will fly,
Control the doctor as he spreads disease?

Under these weights I bow my empty head
Like Atlas, my heroic hollyhock
At the southwest corner of the house. The shock
Of last week's storm still cripples him. And instead

Of building theories to repair these dams,
I play with verses. The committee comes
Tomorrow with my last and hearty chance.
My mind's a mess. I haven't time to change.

How did I ever get so out of step?
I raised five metrical club feet to vote,
And everybody laughed except the State.
They'll dump me with the garbage on the moon

And monitor my death for TV ads.
If only I could get myself concerned,
And be like everyone, destroy and build,
Consume, convert, sell ideologies.

But I have no degree in hobbies, failed
My anals in the research lab, and wrote

Intelligible gibberish in song.
My whole life's taped, so no one will forget.

Could I persuade them that I still could try,
Perfect a counterfeit economy,
A formula—say—roses into guns,
Or hold my finger in a lesbian?

But it's too late. The garden's gone to seed.
The dog is sick. The barn roof leaks. Friends dead.
I walk through tall dry grass alone and smile
In my last quiet for a long, long while.

Ralph Adamo

DEATH POEM

You lie in the lake weeds,
the river is your dream
under purple flowers on brown stems,
the legs of some insect that you are
blown in a wind change to the cotton air
out over the water, where no fish jump at the sun
from the sun still surface of the lake.
And now the preparations of the crickets,
the bright weeds rustling toward dark
when the leaves hold the last sun motionless.
You are in another land where the flowers are black
on their gray webs and the lake creeps like a river

but word never comes at night.
The wound in your belly is bright as a bird's mouth
and singing you to sleep.
The lake is red with one voice.
The land grows young as water.

William McLaughlin

THE GREAT FRUSTRATION: AGREEMENT

Between Two Gaelic-Irish Townsfolk
Overheard in Athlone (County Westmeath)

Our fields are the worse off today
than twenty years ago.

We couldn't have done more if we'd
got out the seed-drills
by design to sow
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

The English when they had the land
made some damn good bosses.

Who gave directions clear
and straight and helpful—
but winning has its losses:
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

Too soon we chopped the big estates
into smithereens.

And small farmers have not the heads
or hands they need to go
after those devil greens
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

These parish priests, now—Socialists!
would collectivize.

So I'm all for that, but stop
the over-graze, make peasants
wiser than those wise
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

Send their boys to ag' schools
set up in old Great Houses.

They come back too smart to share
acres or profits, they've
chemical douses for
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

Anyway, the farm belongs to himself,
the kid's old man.

Who taps out his dottle and
goes for a pint, accepting
as the God's plan
thistle, ragwort, and dock.

James J. McAuley

THE PATH

"... and when I speak, the images of all I speak of
are present, out of the same treasury of memory; nor
would I speak of any thereof, were the images wanting."
—St. Augustine

It was our one flirtation with the winter.
Fiery eyes in a bush
Fleshed by our lights.
The dark way home brought us to the white edge.

Wheels quiet on snow. Our neighbors' tracks ahead.
Had they seen the alert muzzle
Watching from the bush?
The head that watched lovers and passed its curse on them.
Did an old rage, a blunt pulse
In the brain, hammer them too?
Anger at dark and cold, and its free tracks everywhere.

A black form on the long ridge of Wright's Hill,
Haunched like an idol
Against the low clouds,
Still as hunter or hunted as we passed,
Steering between high banks.
One night it attacked,
Snarling, leaping at the lights, eyes burning
As it fell away behind us
Rolling and scrabbling on the ice,
And the limitless white silence returned to path and hill.

The old men told
Us what to do.
"Kill it, track it down to its lair, its young
Too, kill them, kill."
We remembered its eyes.
One, very old, blind, neither woman nor man,
Said nothing, hands
Stretched to the flames.
A widow fed small twigs, one by one, to the fire.
Heavy snow that night.
Going home, we saw
Its fresh trail beside the treacherous road.

The long line of men and youths abreast,
Black ciphers in the snow,
Hallooing, whistling, barking.
None of us would give it an assured name,
Or believe in more than one.
Our voices rang in cold air.
The spoor gave out on the windblown ice of the lake.

The women began to feel,
In the blood of lovers and sons,
The beast of the blazing eyes, hunter and hunted.
Old paths from house to house
Grew faint beneath new snow.
No one saw the creature or its tracks.
At last the silent one
Growled from the hearth:
"It will always be there. You cannot live without it."

That was our one flirtation with the winter.
Afterward, our cars,
Lights chewing tracks
Through darkness, sped the highways between our cities.
We named the animals,
Set names for everything,
Even for what made our hearts race as we passed
Through the dark
Beyond our lights.

Jay Meek

MILLARD FILLMORE

Gentlemen, for the three years of my office,
since our president
took deathly ill from the hot sun, ice water,
and cherries
on Independence Day, I practiced one virtue:
I knew in all things
the value of avoidance. So how can you tell me
I
was mediocre? Look not at what I accomplished,
but the greater good,
what I insured was never accomplished upon us.
In all things,
all ways, I invoked a just spirit of compromise
and conciliation. Item:
I placated weak Spain when 400 revolutionaries
from our own
country invaded Cuba backed by slave-trade gold,
for after the incursion
was put down and the invaders publicly executed,
I refrained, sirs,
refrained from declaring war. Item: I lectured
on justice in Cincinnati
after Cardinal Bedini's visit raised a mob yell,
"Hang the Butcher,"
and where I might have stirred the anti-Catholic
vote, I did not once
let the name of the papal nuncio pass my lips.
Item: my diplomacy.
When my Omnibus passed into law and Abolitionists
bristled at the stiff
Fugitive Act, I won them; when "Cottons" scorned
my Compromise
and called for secession and war against our fort
at Charleston, I won *them*.
So do not say I waver: if I have straddled fences
it is so

Paul Hunter

PAVING THE WAY

Streets all began when
we bottomed out of the market

Mr Big put his foot down and went under
his funeral then paved the way
to the corner and opened a bar

since then we've grown aware
of the problems of corduroy
plank brick rubble
corncob concrete asphalt
not to mention intimate

for who doesn't know

streets that park and neck
streets that get lost on purpose
streets that get laid
streets that break up and go together
streets that light up after dark
and get hooked

why, we all know

streets are driven to drink
streets run away from
the scene of accidents
high strung streets pass out
over nothing

streets get abused
streets crack under torture
though streets can take it
streets even sing under torture

most streets are anything but pedestrian
they cook in August
they cut the heart out of cities
you can take them one way certain times
and not the other
they often meet in public
and hold you up
some are slick rough dangerous
some doublecross
no wonder streets are curbed
no wonder they go under many names

for all their failings
you can still back up streets
they fatten on taxes
they build up over the years
cars bank heavily on them
though streets have been known to go under

streets have always been
exposed for what they are
yet they go about our business
swept clean of undesirables

they are mistaken for cities

homes line up shoulder to shoulder
face front
count off by number

streets bury their parents
and sole competitors

streets would stop us cold
were it not for their confusion

streets climb and coast
streets honestly get mislaid
streets go with the signs and flout them

streets whine and run off the rain
streets fill without warning
and empty slowly
streets lap
gently at your driveway

streets have always been for bussing
and against deadends
they were run down and played out
from the beginning

some streets are laid out for conquest
some squirm in self defense

they are wired and undermined
they crawl on their bellies
under no man's land

some streets are driven
by sledge through city blocks
that split for kindling

They are never innocent
no sooner is a new street
rolled from Delivery
than its skin is broken

if there is one thing
streets would like to get straight
it is the lay of the land

Streets wear thin as a subject
though never as thin as
the shod and tired
that keep running
a good thing into the ground

No wonder we take to the streets

Richard Stull

THE END LINGERS

Whenever we couldn't play outdoors,
we would invent games for the inside.
You would be my best friend and I would hide
under the table like a broken hand.

I let myself be pushed around. I was pitiful for you.
Then our friendship disappeared.
Like a light bulb turned off in the morning,
I changed overnight.

It left you howling and lying in jagged pieces
while I watched myself walking home,
sitting down for coffee with my wife.
I was shaking all over.

And now when I see you, we seem to be hiding
behind different chairs. I call your name;
I slip notes out over the floor like:
I know you're there; why don't you answer?

I can't even sleep without you.
I dream about you standing on another planet
screaming to me, jumping up and down on the frozen surface
as the earth swings away into its new orbit.

I throw life lines over to your side;
but things are moving so fast now
the ropes snap and go trailing off below us.
I tell you I don't know how it happened.

I'm just not alone anymore like you.
I can't see you without thinking about it.
But one day I'll reach the top
of the first hill and look back.

Someone will be standing by a barn
far below in the valley.
He'll shout, "We're doing fine. Go on.
Thanks for stopping by."

His skin is like ragged leather
and his faded overalls seem doubled up in pain.
And I'll turn away and run down the other side
because I have no other choice;

because I remember his eyes like cracked marbles
and the brown spit when he stopped yelling.

I remember one night when he woke me from a warm sleep
telling me quietly I must leave because he hated me
and would kill me if I stayed until morning.
And we cried because we did not understand.

I'll remember that man forever
because he looks so much like you.

John Unterecker

AUGUST 22

Here at the edge of nowhere and the sea
you wind a thread of seaweed on your wrist.

"Now I belong to this place."

Like a coil of sandy hair
it loops the blue pulse of stretched skin.

Salt tides stretch out into the blue salt darkness of the sea.

Frank R. Maloney

Two Poems

MY FATHER RACING HORSES

Mudders, fillies like Last Gap, Silk Stockings,
Baby Needs a New Pair of Shoes
Warmed winter whisky and steaming mornings
Cold enough to frost and slow the stop watch.
My father bought me boots black
And strong enough to stand manure.

At four I had a genuine Stetson hat
Not much bigger than the toy ones
They used for gift certificates.
He'd put me on display, challenge the cook shack,
Where jockers, walkers, warmup boys ate
Chop suey *cum* ketchup for their breakfast:
"Guess how old he is. He's mine, you know."
Before I knew I was a boy, I used to be a midget.

Longacres, Playfair, the Meadows,
I made the circuit with thoroughbreds
That took my carrots or my ass
With equal appetite. They raced; I hid
In tackrooms to escape being a lucky
Rabbit's foot my father lifted by the hips
Over his cigar-punctured face,
Shouting "Go, you bastard" and waving me like a pennant.

THE WATER AGATE

I

Among the shelves of snowflake
Obsidian, potato chip
Selenite marked "good display specimens";
In the dusty warehouse of Dover
Scientific, Long Island City; near boxes
Of barite roses from Oklahoma

And dog-tooth calcite; in the company of gems
And curios lately of Zaire, Malagasy,
Franklin, New Jersey; in the shadows of lapis
Lazuli and malachite, and six Apache
Tears for \$1.25; here I seek
The water agate, like a scrofulous
Baronet taking the cure at Bath.

II

The polished face shows movable
Water trapped inside millions of years.
Like the bubble in a carpenter's level,
It seeks what's flat. It rests
At the center. Not like a dragonfly amber
Caught napping between mosquitoes, this water
Lives, no skin-sack of bones that once breathed
And swatted flies. I have seen
The triple sarcophagi of Pharaoh,
His carcass pinched like an old raisin;
The elegant caskets of turquoise and brilliant
Faience to pickle his brain, his guts,
His giblets. All this must be explained to us
By a docent of the Cairo Museum,
Who speaks with a French accent
And swears by Mohammed.

III

Better than charms and natron,
I will horde these water agates,
Garnered in Brazil and selling
@ \$15.00 and \$25.00 ea.
Crack open each agate,
Drain off the million-year-old
Drop. When I have enough to fill
An Old Fashioned glass, I will give
It to you as a drink. You will last
Through the rise and fall of oceans,
The Cascades will evaporate
In the morning tide. You will walk
A mist through generations

Of redwoods, tell the drifting
Continents about the Gift-giver
Whose bones are lost in the warehouse of dust.

R. S. Gwynn

THE DENOUEMENT

Who were those persons who chased us?
They were the last of the others.

Why must we always be running?
We are the last of our own.

Where is the shelter you spoke of?
Between us and all around us.

Shall we be safe until morning?
There is no doorway to enter.

How shall we live in this desert?
Just as we did in the farmlands.

How was it done in the farmlands?
Just as it shall be here.

What is the word for this place?
No one has ever used it.

When shall I hear the word?
Never, until it is spoken.

Who were my father and mother?
Trust me to keep your secret.

What is the mark on your forehead?
What is the mark on your cheek?

BURNING A WEEK'S NEWSPAPERS

New York is burning here,
Paris catches fire;
Even Peking's nightsoil
And a torch of offshore oil
That's been burning for a week
Is only a bit of black,
A root that can never grow,
A speck upon the snow,
And every one of the great
Notorious names of state
Dwindles before my eyes—
Names that victimize
And victims' names as well,
Released from the printer's hell,
Vanish in the fire's breath,
That easy language of wrath
The world spoke from the first.
First lessons are the worst,
The baby slapped to life,
To Heraclitus' strife,
Red-faced, begins to roar.
To love is to make war,
And fire is in love with words,
It shuffles them up like cards,
The kings and the queens and the knaves,
And always it deals out spades,
And I am burning here
With the other names of the air.

WIVES OF GENIUSES

They wear eccentric hats and they listen.
They take children to the wrong museums
and talk too loud. They faint at parties.
They spill coffee on beautiful women.
They wear no panties. They forget books
with unhappy endings, and dream of obituaries.
They sit nude on formica tables.
They ask your name and put it in diaries.
They write anonymous notes to Neruda.
They lose old friends like parking tickets.
They answer the phone. They keep their looks
at all hours, and stand in windows, like mirrors.
They sing behind doors. They cook in silence.
They smile like saints in empty churches.

PERSONAL

Florida woman wide-hipped pretty fair
condition mid-40's never married
seeks slender man 24-35
moderate barfly OK no politics
poor skin or Oedipists
needs loving right man open to moves
marriage likely am growing
tired of long walk widowers
who don't smoke or swear
I sleep late lie sulk nag am bad
dreamer with mortgage paid for
central A/C who loves antique Tennyson
no Hemingways please
no Cuban spies fleeing hurricanes
no hectic loners with bony fingers
used to women like clams
no fishy symbolists please or
menorah saints giving orders

good talkers old-time venters
needed but I don't listen after
1 A.M. yes I'm top heavy I've
never tried this before
good eater over 5'9" won't
go hungry hidden yard available
photo a must small feet come to me
lover of wrought iron faithful as Friday
will meet you half-way in the mail
will walk to Miami to greet you

Ira Sadoff

Two Poems

LOVE POEM

1.

Who could take another spring
like this, the starlings
nesting in the pines like black
fruit, the dark blood
of the grass beginning to flow
again, the white stars
of the snow digging their graves
in the sea of mud.

2.

The bookshelves are swollen with water.
The drainpipes overflow with leaves
and twigs, the bodies of small insects
are sliding down the shingles.
The slow rain is everywhere.

3.

Yesterday my wife took off
her clothes for the first time
in a week. The light
from her body glowed like the red

lamp of the darkroom. When I touched her
breasts I could see my bones
shining through the cups of the palms.
Her eyes were like pockets
of midnight, her stare went through me
like a tongue of black secrets. What sun
could fly through the body
like this, what rain, which dark birds?

FORMER RESIDENCES & OCCUPATIONS

I used to live in the castle of syntax
I twisted words freely about my body
like a snake charmer in search of a snake
I played freely with the King's English
I never refused a subject I didn't like
my tongue was like a dexterous thumb
flipping through the pages of the longest books
I never told a lie I never gave advice

Then someone advanced the revolution of silence
the barrier of language fell so quickly
the house was quiet as a dead man's lecture
I was asked to take leave of my senses
a number of children shrugged their shoulders
the adults hardly nodded there was this strange
romance about silence the most sensitive
wilted away in the corners the paragraph
was dying the turned phrase remained
free in its grave the missionaries
of language were left speechless

the castle walls crumbled slowly
like a mild applause
the last rites were left unsaid

LOOKING ALL WAYS

a snake swimming in a stream
finds frogs who are seeking
flies and grasshoppers who are sleeping
waiting only one way then the snake
comes the other way

only the man closes his eyes
the snake and the frog never sleep
the snake looks both ways
the frog looks but one way
the man sleeps looking no way

the duck looks down and the hawk
comes above to kill the duck
the deer looks up the wind
the wolf comes up the wind behind him
the man wakes looking all ways

as i look now walking this
dense still wood of pines who
look no way seeing no thing sleep
all the day and night not
even seeing my watching eye.

WHEN I HAVE WALKED

when i have walked the black forest
the still war trails of the enemy
i have wished to lie down to sleep
but sleep is death in the enemy woods

when i have walked the long hills
the sharp hills of the hot desert
i have wished to lie down to sleep
but sleep is death in the desert

when i have walked the snow mountain
the slipping blood rocks of the mountain
i have wished to lie down to sleep
but sleep is death on the mountain

now in this green river valley
now in this warm cloud day
i lie down on the moss to rest
but i cannot sleep
i listen always for death coming.

THE STUDENT

On those mornings his mind contains a field of blackboards,
and he is no closer than another teacher's voice
to the sound of a woman who loves him, in a field of flowers.
He walks across a small town to his part-time job
in a hospital, leaving a snail's sludge of hours, years, wasted
in the dream of part-time money. He doesn't think it's a joke
as he punches his time-card into the face of the clock: "11:15."
Wearily, he walks by the wheelchairs, the Surgery Waiting Room,
dreaming of notebooks shaped like voluptuous, naked women.
He hasn't laughed in two years. Nothing has amused him.
Taking to heart the problems of identity relevant to his age,
he's looked for himself everywhere. At night he posts huge
searchlights
to sweep the low terrain where he's certain he's hiding. He employs
guards—fat, gun-happy men, in towers—and strings up miles
of electrified barbed-wire to fence him in. When he looks up
at the concrete walls he must climb, the courtyards he must sprint,
he gets disgusted, and sleeps for a month. Hungry, in bed, he dreams
he's an arm fed intravenously from Hank's Hamburgers. He
manipulates
his dreams like a movie director: couch, white wall, here; woman,
trees,

there; and has rooms of money stored discreetly somewhere,
avoiding
the crassness of coins and bills. He dreams he's a woman about to be
raped.

He dreams he's the rapist. He dreams he's a rich tapestry hanging
on the wall of a medieval castle. He dreams he's everything great
he's ever read. He dreams he hasn't read enough.

He dreams he hasn't been honest with one woman ever in his life.
They come to him in dreams, agreeing. He dreams their words for
them:

"You were better than us, and not good enough. Why did you choose
me?"

He doesn't know what to tell them. He goes on to the next subject:
murder.

But the horror of killing astounds him, so he thinks he has no
capacity

for life or death. He's a lover of Art. He hates Art. It makes demands
on him. It terrifies him. He hates power and fame, so he wants them
immediately, to forget them. He hates people, he hates his age:
his own, and the one that surrounds him, each morning, like muck.

"Kindness is only possible after sadness," he tells anyone who asks,
but only if he feels like it. He never studies. He can't stand it.

The only thing he's fairly sure of is on some mornings he's sure he's
alive.

He weaves his thoughts about the city he lives in into a noose; his
future

is the horse he sits upon as his head enters this new awareness of
himself.

Student of life, he longs for a woman's hand to smack the rump.

GAMBLER'S DEATH

It was only a matter of time and windows,
give or take an ashtray.

He revolved like a duck in a gallery,
but slowly, past the windows:

business office, teller's, race track's . . .
in the year of the proposal of money.

He woke each morning to his face
stamped on a coin he'd put up above
the sink to help him shave: when it moved,
the blade clicked off the whiskers
like turnstiles—
the absence of money was like age.

He discovered a woman sleeping within him
like the thought of himself
on a certain day of his youth.

He drifted, a boat unmoored,
in the realm of her gaze as he watched
his hand float toward his soft drink at lunch,

or rest on the wheel at a stoplight.
At night, in the driveway, the car door open
for light, his eyes sometimes lifted
from the racing form spread open,
its facts and times like the muted,
knowing talk of trainers, jockeys,

or of owners who drove beneath the green trees
in black cars each Saturday morning,
and handed out money like elegant,
unapproachable gestures of duty, success,
the quiet assurance of age—
and he would think, for seconds, he saw her,

someone he had never seen, but felt,
as he suddenly felt the darkness carry
the last shouts of a children's game
into him, more remembered than heard,
filling the car with a terrible longing
for the family he saw behind the lit windows.

And each night it seemed it took longer
to get there, that living room.
Then, the white, forgotten end—
the bed folding its rectangular ghost

about him like a bad hand, keeping
the scream from his throat. Only his eyes

mirrored his son's face like lemons—
glimmered, sank, and no jackpot:
his gaze around the room, each doorway
releasing one of his family, each window
a welcoming handshake and bluff greeting—
and he, too old for the shows of such strength.

Sandra M. Gilbert

Two Poems

THE VENGEANCE DREAM

"Vengeance is mine" saith the Lord
He rises like steam from my coffee cup
He rises in my throat like silver blood
ruthless and metallic

I'm driving through Thousand Flowers Georgia
with my friend's mother
she's wearing broken granny glasses
I'm carrying a dozen maps I can't read

the streets are strewn with bodies of old ladies
spines twisted like broken umbrellas
smashed flowerpot heads
poor feathery wrists, gloves torn off

"Naturally their purses were snatched
(and vice versa)" says my friend's mother
and the Lord has stolen our blood
He has changed it to mercury

a sluggish river, a slow river of retribution
our blood flows down the hot main street
of Thousand Flowers Georgia
past the wilting flowers

month by moon it flows away as
the hands of the clock turn and
the maps dissolve in my hands
and the Lord says

"I have taken your revenge
it will never be yours"
"where is it?"
"won't we ever find it?"

shrieks my friend's mother as she weeps in my arms
her face in tatters
her face a sodden
rag of a torn-up granny gown

GETTING FIRED OR "NOT BEING RETAINED"

A letter came in the mail from the Vice President of Crucial Events.

Though I tried not to open it, it got out of its envelope
like a secret agent who slips through a door when no one is looking.

The letter gazed at me gravely and took stock of me as if it were
an uncle who had not seen me for twenty years.

Then it said: "Due to circumstances"—and something else I didn't
hear—

"decisions have been made" it said "requiring that
and so in accordance with all established procedures you
are not being retained in your present position—that is—"
the letter took a quick puff of a cigarette
and grinned (an engaging grin, like the grin of a movie actor
who makes his fortune from his teeth and hair and lovable
shoulders)—

"that is—" said the letter— "You're fired!"

"Awfully sorry to have to transmit this bad news"
the letter added, seeing my dismay,
"but that's how things are, you know."

I wasn't bothered. At least I didn't think I was.
I went out into the garden and sat down among
my old friends the rhododendrons and drank some coffee.
The rhododendrons held out five-fingered clusters like
new green stanzas they were writing—"What
do you think of this?"—and
I thought well of them and I was calm.

But in the meantime, while I was gone, the letter
took possession of the house. The letter
stretched out on the livingroom sofa and asked for a newspaper,
which it scrutinized with eyes of steel.
"What's all this shit?" asked the letter sternly
when my children left their sweaters on the kitchen floor
or my husband played the phonograph too loud.

The letter unpacked its suitcases and hung up
an astonishing number of fancy jackets
(all dark tweeds, most of them
from Brooks Brothers and J. Press)
in my bedroom closet. The letter
sent people on errands and ordered special
delicacies from the supermarket—for its diet was
unusual: it liked the wings of new-hatched chickens,
the legs of live crabs, oysters white as
eyes, carrots whose scream when they
were ripped from the ground
was recorded and verified by experts.

The letter took over my study and replaced the books
with volumes from its own collection, all
black paperbacks, all untitled.

At last I couldn't bear to live
with the letter,
to watch it read and eat,
so now I mostly crouch beneath the rhododendrons,
thinking careful thoughts:
"If first I—
then perhaps I—

after which—
and so forth . . ."
while the letter scrapes carrots in the kitchen
for my children.

But the children—
bless them—have got used to the letter,
as though it really were a badtempered uncle
with whom they have lived all their lives.

Diana O Hebir

Three Poems

A FAREWELL TO THE WITCH IN THE WOOD

You cannot, old slow droning aching crone
That dwells in the pit of my aptitude,
You cannot claim that it was good or that
I learned anything,
Or that life was better;
(No one dragged out of that mess a lesson like a captured halibut).

It was bad, bad, all bad.
Its single virtue, a flashed unanimity,
Neat like a bar of music, round, completed,
Phasing you off into nothing, acrid old harridan:
A puff of yellow air across yesterday's unlikely landscape.

I've paid you well; I've paid you high; don't ever try
A re-visit. Bony thumbs, stay out of my soup.
The four good fairies can ring my children's bed playing
plainsong;
You've no visiting privileges; go be a stone in the well;
Leave my fingerlings free.
I watch them tramp a way I never could;
They do not think you exist. They laugh at the idea. Good.

LIVING ON DEATH ROW

For a correspondence student of my husband's,
a resident of San Quentin's Death Row

There isn't any desertion like it,
Someone goes off and takes the key
And the human race scoots on without you.
They dash by your door saying goodbye, goodbye,
And then there is a silence like the inside of a meteor.

The jail cell spun like a question; you couldn't see the sun;
The window blocked itself up with gravity;
You wedged yourself inside with your knees under your chin,
And flashed round and round. It would take your lifetime to
recapture earth.
Your mother died. Your father rode to Damascus where
The Department of Correction polished its amperes,
Put new bulbs in its trajectory, set off
Four rockets, all scarlet for denial. Your sister prayed like mad.

No one had seen your ship for years. You inside
Thought of death as the vent of the elephant, yourself a stone.

Your sister's prayer shot by you like a blue aurora.

The warden cried, come down! but before you fell
They ransomed you. Your solitude like a cocoon, a hard cloud,
Unrolled itself.
Be whole, they said. Climb out. Be new. Arise.
Out you sprang shaggy as saved from hell,
An astronaut
Brought down with only a teacup more of air.

You had your pain in your arms, curved in a helmet
Over your fierce round name.
Sun polished it. You said, I
Am the dark when the squeezed eyelids make a comet;
I am my swaddled years;
I am my passage to the sun.

THE HUMAN BODY IS 97% WATER, 3% DUST

The dust must be dumped to await the Hoover Co.,
The water circles the universe twice, comes back
Intent on becoming part of someone great.

Next time, let me be someone brave,
Someone fanatically true, someone whose heart
Expands like an old-fashioned suitcase,
Someone who knows that everything is real.

I know a lady whom nature gypped wholesale;
She's angled like King Tut in her chair,
And no one ever thinks of her as petitioner, only as motion
Or as a saracen passion, or as four fields at evening
When day rises and sovereignty moves in.

Protest gets no place. One could turn the whole sky out
by its corners
Shake loose the fabric of being;
Still, some other comet again will some day be trapped thus
Trapped, tricked, caged in the deep hole in the mountain
Where incandescence brighter than emphasis glows from the
stones at our feet
The walls we hesitate to touch.

But, friend, they have promised me absolutely
(They have written it up in a book) that next time will be better
You will speed on new ski blades. I don't know
What I want for myself. It seems logical, it seems true
That spirit steals from sense, joy is rationed. So instead
Of the unimpeachable body, the perfect mind, I'll take your
present fetch, your kind;
Tracks in the soul's snow only, tracks
Fragrant, icy, perfectly measured; trails in the soul's bright snow.

HOMESTEAD

I tossed my boots, once, up at the sky.
Today I've taken my pockmarked nose
to the birches; and deeper, into the spruce.

My eyes hold birds that my ears have forgotten.
My fingers meddle with berries like bear cubs.
To call my old wife I whittle black walnut.

To whistle her out I use an old tune.
The wind wasn't bitter when we came to settle.
But this, after all, is all we have come to.

One of us settled for much too little.

THE PHOTOGRAPHER

I hunt.
I hunt light.
Not easy noon.
Not mere sun.
But how shadows winnow:
the early moment,
the dignity that grows late.

Wherever I learn to see
I turn native. The trees tell me.
I give thanks to lichen.
I sit against rocks to reflect.

I remember my fathers: the game
they sought. The track, sight,
and spear, the caves they came back to;
the tall walls they wrote on,
graced by low light.

Shapes, pulsing!

The brave stillness.

Old light and new light
pivot and climb; there's nowhere now
for a man's eye to sleep.
I hunt far in, as deep as
light moves, where light steep
in the long momentum.

Not that it holds; it
changes. The changes
balance. Before they tip through
to re-group I let
my eye open, fill
for a fraction of
truth, and shut:

I keep for life

how light
shapes how
lives deepen.

About Our Contributors

PHILIP APPLEMAN's second book of poems, *Summer Love and Surf*, was published in 1968 by Vanderbilt University Press; his first novel, *In the Twelfth Year of the War*, was published by Putnam in 1970. He teaches at Indiana University.

TOM MESCHERY has had a distinguished career as a professional basketball player and coach. After a year of graduate study in the Iowa Writing Program, he is returning to basketball as assistant coach of the Portland Trailblazers.

GIBBONS RUARK's first book of poems, *A Program for Survival*, appeared in 1971 via the University of Virginia Press.

RICHARD R. O'KEEFE's chapbook, *Uccello's Horse*, was published by Three Rivers Press in 1972. He is living in Toronto.

RALPH ADAMO has appeared in numerous little magazines and is working in the Arkansas Poetry-in-the-Schools Program.

WILLIAM McLAUGHLIN's book of poems, *Ourselves at One Remove*, was published in 1972 by Cleveland State University Press.

JAMES J. McAULEY, born and raised in Dublin, is teaching at Eastern Washington State College in Cheney.

JAY MEEK is currently on a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and is working on a book of narrative poems.

JAMES M. MITSUI, a graduate student in the University of Washington Writing Program, is teaching high school in Renton, Washington. His first book, *Journal of the Sun*, is soon to be published by Copper Canyon Press.

H. R. KENT is a graduate student in the University of Arizona Writing Program.

PAUL HUNTER lives in Seattle and is making guitars and writing plays.

RICHARD STULL lives in Cincinnati and will be enrolled in the University of Iowa Writing Program this fall.

JOHN UNTERECKER's new book of poems, *Stones*, has just been published by Dolmen Press. He will teach at the University of Hawaii beginning this fall.

FRANK R. MALONEY has just graduated from the University of Washington Writing Program.

R. S. GWYNN teaches at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

JOHN TAYLOR has recently returned from a year in England. He lives in Washington, Pennsylvania.

JOHN ALLMAN, who has appeared in many magazines, teaches at Rockland Community College in Severn, New York.

IRA SADOFF's first book of poems, *Settling Down*, will be published soon by Houghton Mifflin. He is the editor of *Seneca Review*. His first published poem appeared in *Poetry Northwest*.

NORMAN H. RUSSELL's book of poems, *The Hunt*, was published recently by Windfall Press. He is dean of the School of Science and Math at Central State University in Edmond, Oklahoma.

JAMES CUMMINS lives in Berkeley and is at work on a long poem.

SANDRA M. GILBERT's book about D. H. Lawrence's poetry, *Acts of Attention*, was published in 1972 by Cornell University Press. She teaches at Indiana University.

DIANA O HEHIR lives in Oakland.

PHILIP BOOTH teaches at Syracuse University.

Poetry Northwest's Donors' 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, the \$50 Theodore Roethke Prize, and the \$25 Young Poet's Prize.

If you would care to be a donor, in any amount beyond the price of a subscription, you will earn the gratitude of our numerous gifted contributors, our editorial staff, and our growing national audience. All gifts to *Poetry Northwest* are tax deductible.

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.

