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POETRY NORTHWEST WINTER 1970-71 VOLUME XI, NUMBER 4

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POETRY *4-1* NORTHWEST

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# POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER 1970-71

*Rick DeMarinis*

FURNISHING YOUR HOUSE

It isn't easy filling your house.  
And you can't hire strangers  
to do it. There's the question  
of space, how it closes in on itself  
and how the light of your latitude  
illuminates your worst hours.  
It's a serious business, the way  
dust gives form to light  
and the way light falls with the shock  
of weight. And in these bad times,  
the hours you sit alone, woman lost,  
maybe for good, old magazines  
papering your bed, you need  
strong alliances with familiar mysteries:  
tables, chairs, sofa, chest,  
the private dark of corners.

And space not filled with wood  
and fabric won't have direction.  
The four walls become interchangeable  
and your best trick will be  
walking north and south at the same time.  
You will entertain a few  
but you won't be forgiven by most.

Whatever you do, don't buy new.  
Secondhand stores have all you need.  
Tables that have fed thousands  
are priceless. Each scar in old wood  
is the eye of a ghost. Voices  
in the age-dark oak are not lost.  
The smell of old beds will storm  
your blood with images, and when you love  
the thighs of decades spring in your wake.  
Mind you, this isn't accomplished  
overnight. Go slow. There is danger  
in the blind rush to fill empty space  
and you must endure the pain of waiting.  
It's better to keep empty rooms  
than furnish on the run.  
Sleep and love on the floor,  
eat on your feet, and entertain  
in the attic where possible ghosts  
will stir with pleasure, unlocking  
secrets from the plaster  
omens from the cupboards  
prophecy from the sills.  
They will make you welcome  
and you will understand your part as host  
until you join them.  
As for the walls, fill them  
only when your grief is photographic.  
Avoid the cute trinkets of the dead.  
And when the dead worm their way  
inside, their grins will collapse  
into pure technique, and they  
will leave, shaking, bells of decay  
rolling in their reports.

And now, you must know this:  
The neighbors won't like you.  
The jaws of machines will sooner or later  
stutter in the street and warnings  
will be stapled to your doors.

You will be declared invisible,  
harmless, vague, arrested. Offers  
from large companies to square things away,  
for nothing, will be your only mail  
for weeks. And when you don't reply  
they will send angry threats  
against your free time. You  
will learn how to endure this,  
how to dismantle doorbells,  
telephones, and welcome mats.

And you will learn to spend  
days without news, idle and grave  
in a favorite rocker  
among the shacks and mansions  
and neighborhoods of time  
supremely at home.

*Vincent B. Sherry*

Three Poems

#### THE SQUIRREL

1

In late afternoon  
he comes back to watch me  
through the high grass  
I hear him, the first,  
tentative sounds he makes  
scuttling down the scrubby cold fields.  
And I know he's back.

I stuff blankets in the chimney  
hood the paintings,  
knit a black seal on the door and  
board the windows  
but he wavers  
in some forgotten crack of the shutter,



shaking his tail at me like a fistful of smoke  
and quickly  
he's gone into the clever stitchwork of his tracks.

2

I would turn from his sign, but  
by now I know  
it scatters behind him  
everywhere. Down from the fields  
and splitting over the furrow, the print drops  
into the earth where the grain scars with his miserly pokings,  
and up again, and off, here it is,  
lacquered in the clay by the well where I can see  
how his step falters as he must have drunk  
the prints totter off amazed  
for an instant I think this is  
where he will throw his bones down, no  
but here they are again, suddenly, behind me  
where he must have bounced through the thistles  
he's left a tuft of fur  
stuck on one of their stiff spikes  
like the head of an enemy I don't know if he's alive  
or dead he and the tracks have separated  
slowly the hills bear them both  
up into darkness.

3

It is at night that I feel him  
picking through me  
he follows some lost map of the blood  
to its buried source  
he tumbles,  
steadies himself, narrows his petty eyes and  
leaps  
at this crow that flops in the eaves of my chest,  
drags it down with his mizzling teeth,  
and I wait,  
as the first paw works  
into the nether spaces, I begin to breathe.

4

I have seen once,  
crusted in the dry grass,  
a squirrel skull rubbed thin and pale as a host;  
on the floor of it, a small lantern  
flickered in the fingers of dead nerves  
knocking against the dust  
until nothing answered.

#### THE CALM

I know  
no-one's name

The fields slide through the window  
like a broken arm

Inside there is talk of sleep  
The ash tower rocks into place

The bed of ice shimmers  
The pillow shrinks to a spike

A plume of darkness sprouts where I dozed  
The light twists away like rosaries

Beyond a broken bridge the old train rattles  
feeling the way as it falls

#### SURVIVORS

Outside I hear the knife  
As it buries itself in the night  
A button of blood inks the door

I answer  
The beggar offers me the feathers from his sleeves  
The chute opens I am knee deep in his darkness

He holds the stumps towards me  
I hang my lantern  
In the broken bowl of his ribs

I close the door  
The hours go by on rollers  
The windows wrinkle in the heat

I hear the laughter between the breaking of bottles  
I begin to speak  
I am the twitch in the dead limbs of God

*Gibbons Ruark*

Two Poems

#### THE SPRING

The car works the road into a lather  
Of dust that falls through the glittering lens  
Of sky till the world is washed by another  
Weather. Trees that shivered their black bones open  
Into flapping leaf-tents, the thick shade spreads  
And fills the cross-work shadows of branches.  
Sunken water rises and inflates the heads  
Of mushrooms as the earth's stiff sponge eases  
Under my feet and the warm grass prickles.  
I come to the flowers that tell me to turn  
Down the breezy tunnel of trees until  
The teeth of the fence turn white and turn  
Me again and I am through the loosening  
Gate and kneeling at the spring. I feel them  
Watch me from the porch where they are talking,  
Rocking. The sweet mist rises from the rim  
Of the bricked-in hollow. I take the stone  
Steps one at a time, clinging to the mossy  
Side till every flicker of sun is gone  
And I cup my hands to swallow the chilly  
Spout springing from the bottom. I can hear

Dry birds' voices babble down from the grass  
And I dip my face again in the water.  
They are calling. Before they call the last  
Time I press my ear to the cooling  
Wall and listen. I go up into the sun.  
One is in the white swing, two are rocking.  
I climb the steps to where they rock me one  
By one in the bony hollows of their laps  
And brush my cheek with their papery lips.

#### LOCKING UP

A shutter ticks or a finger snaps in my sleep  
Or the silenced alarm clock clicks  
As the long hand passes the hidden hour,  
And over again he is locking me into his house,  
Starting out of doors and bolting door after door  
As he moves to the center of a nest of boxes.  
First the lawn chairs drift off the lawn  
To hunch in the damp garage under dust covers.  
Beside them, the long black car is turning cold.  
Now the door overhead starts to roll on its bearings,  
Slithering over headlights  
To ring into position on the concrete floor.  
Now the gauzy wing of screen flaps shut,  
The bolt of the inner door he slips into place  
Is an oiled shell hissing into a rifle's chamber.  
Now he is rattling the bones of windows, making sure,  
Switching off the last light  
With the pleasure of a safecracker listening for tumblers,  
Laboring steadily up the stairs  
To where a small eye burns against bad dreaming.  
He is closing his own room now behind him,  
Peeling his clothes off piece after piece,  
Crawling into bed and drawing up the covers  
Like a skin he can believe in.  
Outside, he dreams, darkness is a slick black tarp  
The gods pull over the earth and fasten down.

*Wesley McNair*

DON GREENWOOD'S PICTURE  
IN AN INSURANCE MAGAZINE

Greenwood's picture,  
taking me into my dream  
of childhood where  
teachers wore blue hair  
and the earth  
was in the principal's room. He

would not recall  
their solemn  
noses and windowsticks  
ready against  
unpleasant odors. But there  
was Greenwood always

elaborately solemn  
who was also good  
with mothers (he could play  
it serious or  
chubby depending on the  
occasion). Don Greenwood's

picture in an insurance magazine!  
skilled winner  
of badges, old captain  
of the safety patrol  
in a country outside the pink continents  
of my dream

of geography! In a  
full-  
page mosaic  
of zealous frowns and sinewy grins and  
repetitious ears  
Greenwood

has dropped  
the baby fat and got down  
to solider stuff. He  
is confident in his mastery  
of the facts  
of life and death and O

I look at his strange  
face, still  
thinking into the dream  
he does not recall  
and of  
unpleasant odors

our so solid  
teachers somewhere  
in their world  
(mapless  
and windowless)  
could not stop.

*Peter Wild*

COYANOSA

The wound only blushes,  
                  a grape, a pimple,  
a promise of a rupture,  
                  then fades;  
and as the lid slides back  
there is nothing  
                  but the four directions  
                  covered with greasewood, a crusted sage  
and to the north,  
                  from a little waist of fire  
a plume  
                  rising brown, diarrhetic,

rising with hands and claws  
that curl out, searching for  
the throat of the air

and that is roughly where you are

Coyanosa  
slumbering unshaved,  
a drop from that cloud  
from some fierce bird,  
a drop of lead paint, star-shaped, dried  
and curling, tongues  
splintered on the desert's edge

we go through at seventy miles per hour  
but not fast enough  
not to see

streets without trees  
broken tanks, dead horses,  
the early goat sun shining through  
ribs of houses on blocks,  
the shades pulled crooked in windows,  
as if hastily, against the morning  
after a doomsday party

not to see

people dragging themselves  
from holes and barrels,  
who stand by the road  
and their sneers  
follow us like screams,  
women rolling in the dust  
legs spread  
gritting their teeth;  
in the peeling Skeleton Cafe  
men still drinking  
as their flesh slides off

this is the day you select your queen,  
with guns and knives dance around her  
suck her blood,

smear each other with oil  
and set the town on fire,  
only to rise again the next morning  
the same, gutted, smoking

even hours later

the grease eats at our fingers  
and lids;  
we are still driving through  
your blowing candy wrappers, Kleenex.  
by now they have fallen  
ashes into their bones;  
behind us the plume glows,  
babies turn lizards  
in their cribs;  
around them coyotes  
go crazy  
scratching at the moon.

*Albert Goldbarth*

#### ONE OF WOOSER'S STORIES

"Dancing naked is a way in which many societies conceive the ultimate outrage."

Awoo! they wanted me in wristknots, missy,  
twinetied in some cellar—here, come closer  
and I'll tell you—because they woke at night  
with a stab of fluting like a scythe sliced  
*shkk!* through their grainsack thinking: and awoo!  
the flutes were never found scattered in the fields  
by some witless fugitive: the hounds found not one scent  
unless it was of cinnamon . . . A shepherd  
swearing wings and human genitals appeared in silhouette  
on moon's face was the clown next day at market,  
missy—hush, now, I'll just hold you—pebbled  
by the children: until months after, ewes  
in border meadows gave stupendous birth  
to soft and nuzzling progeny with pinions



budding downsoft from the shoulders: offspring  
which were burnt . . . Oh, the burghers  
feared me! when the mayor's daughter screamed  
awake all Townhall Hill, and Mayor's Lady found  
a lost and special something was no longer  
plugged between her daughter's legs: replaced  
with only possibilities, perhaps a fading whiff  
of peppermint: and yet that girl would hum  
and say no more, a smile in her pouting  
and her wonderful moon irises: and after that  
was stumbled on at midnight in a haystack  
playing acorn-catch and reading poems  
and roadmaps! Awoo, I swear they wanted me  
so bad: and got me, too, I say, though accident  
and clumsy: drunken bailiff finds me  
sleeping on a newmoon eve on a silent  
incline near the woods: no twigs a crackle,  
and no crickets out to chirp, no pattering  
of leaf gusts: one moment between musics  
that they accidentally bumble in: and so of course  
are on me like the dogs on a bone . . . And jab me  
into their Citizen Square where the jeering jowlfaces  
from town swarm about me like manure-flies  
when the dogs had done and left a bone for offal . . .  
What a party time they're having! which is their  
mistake, and not a flick too soon, I promise that . . .  
They hold their chains and briar-ropes like rosaries,  
like shovels, something made to fit the palm . . . And hold  
gold fiddles for their wicked celebration which, as pastries  
pass from hand to hand, the shopmen strike in tune  
and then! as sour as their sawing is, still the cows  
stamp foot to foot in time, in stables round for acres,  
cardinals blaze out like bonfires in oak boughs  
and burst beatific bird choruses . . . My feet tap! oh, the town  
officials gather in around me like a ring  
turned gangrenous on your finger, pretty missy:  
block me to the left, the right, they block in front, behind  
and never see the chords and cantos in the air

flying with me, suddenly above their stubbly heads,  
swooping over silotops and singing to their waving  
rows of fierce uplifted fists "*Tra-la!* For I  
was conceived by dancing naked,  
and shoestrings can't lynch this outlaw!"  
and here, your mouth I know could amply refresh  
a mouth as tired with talking as mine—ah yes,  
I flew in rhapsody awoo! above their solitudes . . .

*Peter H. Sears*

#### HOW DO YOU REALLY DO

I know them again  
the way they shake my hand that shakes  
slightly expecting her drooped stem  
to sleep in my hand  
but his grip barks from the hip  
as he gives me my name like congratulations  
rolls it out as if it costs money  
but free to me only me  
and their faces are keeping my hand

tempted tempted  
to tell on myself  
tell them everything  
the door  
so thick so heavy this door  
I've shut then felt  
walking behind me  
walking just like me  
and the dream following  
when I stare away and feel  
the huge fish I stand on,  
it sleeps with both eyes open.

*John Taylor*

THROUGH CHANNELS

The phosphorescent smiling screen  
Sells death to us. The screen is gray with snow,  
Riddled, blind

To what it brings into the room  
To crawl across our faces. Blue with knowledge,  
Drained by it,

We turn our victim glance away,  
Each looking at the other for assurance.  
We still exist!

Voices explain that there are plans  
To change all that: Here are the diagrams,  
The explanations,

Trajectories, budget— Words  
Enough to satisfy whoever wants to listen,  
Words enough

If there are ever words enough.  
The good gray wisdom washes from the screen  
And floods the room.

*Vassilis Zambaras*      Two Poems

POETRY LESSON

And yet, we know something of bitterness—  
This draining out of love in syllables  
Teaches us, among other things, silence  
And how to talk our way around it.

THE FASCINATION OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Because I have spent my life  
Struggling with insurmountable difficulties—  
Women's sexual hang-ups, straggling girdles,  
My own rattling knock-knees—  
Will I be able?

Because I have met riddles threatening to ruin me—  
How to pour out ketchup or how to spell it,  
The getting rid of prune pits and gum gracefully—  
Will I succeed?

And because I have seen nightmares  
Flying at me in daydreams—  
Yeats riding sidesaddle,  
Beating a dead and falling horse—  
Shall I now say t. s. and eat another peach?

*Richard Dankleff*      Two Poems

ON RE-READING SWIFT

A woman I once knew  
and loved, and fled somehow,  
made three marks and wrote "true"  
by these lines I find now.

What Swift and she believed:  
"Happiness is the state  
of being well deceived."  
She did not separate

my words from what she was,  
for women she said live  
by fictions. And because  
their loves are fugitive.

## IN THE STABLE

He liked his young nags' attitude. Their smell,  
like nutmeg plus dry oat straw, brought to his mind  
that land where horses ruled so reasonably  
Lem Gulliver had been deported. Here  
his two colts' intellectual limitations  
sometimes clouded fine points, but they did grasp  
facts tolerably well. And matter of fact  
had always been his preference.

He said:

we sailed five weeks, storms sank us. I swam ashore  
where six-inch dwarfs did all men do. Those petty dungmills  
strutted about playing war. Stank of old fish.  
In the square by the emperor's palace the wretched poor  
sunned sores, watched their soiled world. How even deformed  
excrements can be smug, God knows. Filth.  
Those beggars' mugs lump into one slut's face  
big as a giant's hairy bum.

Leave out that.

Like the wise horses, stick to plain facts:  
ungodly pride must be made kiss the rod:  
club pride with body's foulness.

He said:

those giant maids of honor stank worse than the dwarfs.  
Their tricks you'd hardly believe—one set me astride  
her slippery nipple, a frolicsome wench . . . till  
her face turned sluttish, she broke wind,  
hopped in the stream, hugged me—I leaped ashore,  
grabbed up my clothes, while she still there in the water  
thrust her muzzle skyward. Howling. Unless . . .  
that was somewhere else.

Facts slip.

He said: someplace . . .

pomp and manure. Dumped off by pirates, I found  
the horses' island, where reason keeps pride saddled,  
where mind so orders mind that humble virtue  
prevails.

And this went on in the stable

from day to day (in the house he sniffed snuff,  
touched no one, ate by himself) till the morning,  
like Augustine suddenly struck by a much-read page,  
he came in his corral where the colts had lain  
just as the sun lighted there in the straw:  
golden biscuits baked for the King of the Yahoos:  
conflagrantly a pile of beautiful steaming horseturds.

Mrs. Gulliver found him and dragged him in.  
She told the neighbors he had a touch of sun.

*Robin Johnson*

## THE DARK BELLS

" . . . death holds no hilarity"  
and silence of houses wounds the listener:

Doorbells freeze in tight sockets;  
Phones choke on their own cords,  
Recoil yards of jangled listening, today  
Passive as candlewick.

No bell signals the thermal fevers.  
Always, do women cry out?  
Such void rejects the throat's cry  
Stabbing the air, then diffusing.

Emissaries of secrecy,  
These mute instruments seal mouth,  
Seal ears, in utter discretion.  
They inter the striking hours

While dusk muffles even the undertones  
Narrowing the sounding-board walls,  
Foreshadowing—inch by inch—  
That tight room.

*Linda Allardt*

ANGRY IN SPRING

She bore the weight of her body,  
endured air's tonnage,  
the labored heft of her blood,  
all but the egged, surviving self  
sagged dormant. The ancient  
willow greened in spite of her,  
dead grain thrust,  
apple trees grotesque with age  
broke fragile impossibilities from the bark.  
Countrywoman wise to the almanac,  
the shadblow sign of first fish running,  
the watch in the sugarbush, herself  
cycle by cycle dragged alive again,  
she fought the fulling—  
apples cumbering the branch, wheat  
heavy in the field, and in herself  
fought summer glowing headlong  
only for fall.

*David Zaiss*

Two Poems

FETISHES OF THE PATROL LEADER

at fifteen my service was only hints  
tightlipped joblots at a buck a pair  
the sea inside my shoes whispered fungo softballs  
the better customers put their morals in a box

a cockfight on the telephone all day  
hog creek swollen with pink stonerollers  
and saturday nights the free movie exploded in the  
town's groin, the place was crawling with snatch

amphibious dishwashers and first trombones  
tithed to a powder blue suede imagination  
while the edemic scoutmaster and scoutmaster's wife  
frankly sipped their Strohs 'til Lawry's closed up

with a onegun salute and the beatitudes  
it was hard to put sleep in the same bed  
Lassus died in, even harder to remember Him before  
the twelfth law interrupted an oceanic dream

and once upon a nocturne she had volleyed  
I came to attention inside my sister's piano  
the patrol leader raising the soft khaki flag there  
unnoticed beside the footpedals and Chopin himself

playing salvoes hard against a sheet  
of etudes, progressively heavier, darker  
as if two lawn mowers had met on high f sharp  
at last the needle on my ear aboutfaced and died

only the shock value of rawhide saved  
me, ringing up a hunch of folding kitsch  
after hours, baring my hands where no one could see  
deep into the clattering octaves of God's morning

White Pigeon, who died running, brave in snow,  
I want to make a quietus with your wrist's knife  
the river under your rock is chucked queer with guppies  
and no man of us remembers your scout motto's sound

THE WYVERN

The tracks leapt clear  
Of the breakwaters off White Bay  
Where I uncovered the arm slippery  
As jellyfish muscled  
Over the black rocks by the tide,  
The blooming cannons of the surf. I rowed



My eyes north a league to a cave  
In the teeth of the skiffing wind  
And held course, the hawser to the bow crawling  
Toward the red belly of my Yahweh  
Towing the sun through trucks  
Of shad, sardine shingles, sprays  
Of papery shrimp.

I imagined the moon an ancient cairn  
Exposed in the dark by the sea's slow  
Claw. The clouds drooled  
Fever till my naked head smoked,  
Asleep in the hollow of my blood. I  
Heard nothing, swallowed hard.  
Bits of bloaters  
And half-eaten wedges of horse  
Floated dimly on the cave walls.

In a hundred mornings of fog and blades of gull  
I fished between a dragonfly's wings  
Beside a good fire of lonely wooden men.  
One told a story  
With his cathedral silence.  
Now I remember only the calipers of his jaw  
Closed over the drowning deer, the great  
Shoulders stirring the air.  
The arm still rolls in the nest  
Of the shore, the fingers wrapped in gold thread  
Feeling for the eel of my memory.

*David Lunde*

SPACE

1

How to speak of the free insects  
I have chloroformed in my heart?

I have launched my fear, my  
instrument: my detectors spin  
in the bitter wind from the stars;

they record like spiders  
the taut jerk of panic  
that says something's trapped.

2

We are not bees: we have no choice.  
We draw lines on the interior canvas;

We ascribe significance: this  
is a flower: here the bright  
petals, there the stamen, the pistils:

it is love: it is you  
in a sudden change of mood examining  
the wind for the lightness of birds.

3

I know the atmosphere of Mars, have  
some notion of temperatures on Venus;

I detect, I record, I interpret,  
but I don't understand  
these footprints on a dead world.

Heart, black vacuum, killing-jar,  
what are these struggles  
in my organs and instruments?

*Douglas Flaberty*

BACK TRAILING

I once carved this tree  
It takes me back  
thirty years beyond what  
it was I started  
he told the boy son

I know this birch  
where I carved initials  
the old man said again  
back tracked a way  
set off round the sprawl  
of elms and rangy maples

We serve by going back  
he said the first time  
and turned his wish bone  
legs like a divining rod  
back to that same birch

I swear to the mad gods  
this is the spot I marked  
Red faced out of breath  
he sliced with pen knife  
the deadly white skin  
unsheathed the milky flesh

Letters in reverse clung  
and would not run  
He rolled the message  
told the boy to follow  
back trailing out  
of deep woods toward home

*Harold Witt*

NANCY VAN DEUSEN

They gave her everything—  
horse, clothes, private school,  
ballet until she quit,  
then lessons on the flute  
(she said it marred her lip,  
and locked the music up).

She sulked through half the Louvre  
and couldn't be enticed  
up the Acropolis—  
the only thing she liked  
on that expensive trip  
was shuffleboard on ship.

She yawned whole operas through,  
wouldn't pour the tea  
as grateful daughters do—  
though married the nice young man  
they chose to run the store,  
a joyless squarejawed bore

(she loved his red MG)—  
in labor with the twins  
screamed as if only she  
had ever felt such pains—  
watching her parents die  
didn't move an eye—

inherited it all—  
the house on Lemon Heights,  
the tennis courts, the pool,  
the store, the stocks, the rights  
to lands of ore and oil—  
and drank away the nights.

## "THE CLASSIFIEDS ARE QUICK"

In hot, cold, or indifferent seasons  
he is always wanted  
by someone, somewhere . . .

Aggressive? Ambitious? Burning  
to make it Big!  
Yes. Oh yes!

Well then,  
"Recognition Becomes You!"  
—and his head swims  
in possibilities his eyes  
can't follow fast enough—

For he, too, can operate a clamshell crane.  
Drive a Thunderbird from coast to coast.  
Guard, from midnight until morning breaks  
innocent around their limbs,  
the student nurses in their Lutheran parking lot.  
Or learn, in forty weeks, karate.

Yes! He can stay in touch with fun!  
Can kiss the lonely, bored, discouraged, *common*  
life good-bye and mix  
three nights a week with others over 30, under 55.  
Can send his résumé to Mr. Short, Box 48,  
who has the product,  
prospects, high commissions,  
unabused expense accounts, Blue Cross!  
—in fine, everything but Tigers  
he can train to get a signature  
and close a deal.

Yes. But he must not sit back, bite his nails  
and wish, "If only I had Spanish *and* phys. ed.  
I could teach in Pleasant Valley—"

No. Nor say, again, "Oh yes,  
my home is good—"  
and settle for the free, litter-  
trained part-Persian . . .

And the next day wring his hands  
and advertise the one he has.

## MARK ONLY ONE SPACE

Mark only one space.  
Mark "hot water" even if you have it only part time.  
Are you white, black, Japanese, or Other?  
If you are "Other" print race.  
If you are Indian print tribe.  
Erase mistakes completely.

Have you ever been knocked out?  
How long were you unconscious?  
Have you ever "hit for the circuit"?  
Did you touch all the bases?  
Did you steal home?  
Does anyone outside the immediate family use your bathroom?

If you went down for the count, did your mouth volunteer  
tiny bubbles?  
Did anyone giggle?  
Did a lady in a sporelike lavender hat  
kick a midget popcorn man full speed on the knee  
because she couldn't see around him?

Have you ever wanted to drown your sorrows?  
Are you sick and tired of being out of shape?  
Are you sick and tired of dropping your guard?  
If elected, will you promise not to come back?

## OCTOBER

Suddenly  
drive-ins close,  
stand like glass flowers  
whose petals have driven away.

Boats are pulled up  
and turned over  
all along the Fox.

The pumpkins have begun their migration.

Following  
outside the car window  
at dusk  
the reflection of your hands  
picking over the fields,  
trying to save enough  
for winter.

## NO COVER FOR STAG GIRLS

At the corner of Avon  
and Kay-Mart, they wait  
with the patience of the ugly,  
clustered around the bus stop sign  
as if it were warm.  
Like birds that have forgotten  
how to migrate, they face the winter  
down. Endless telephone lines refuse  
to release one invitation.  
"What d'you guys wanta do?"  
Surrounded by barbed wire,  
the last herd of buffalo dance,  
drink beer,  
kill time until closing.

## THE LOVERS

I find myself in a sentimental  
narrative: an old mother weeps.  
Next to her, wearing black lace,  
the girl from the check-out counter  
in Grand Union smiles knowingly.  
I hold my hand out for the change.  
She blows me a kiss. I blow one back.  
Obscenities explode behind the curtain  
that separates this room from the alley.  
A garbage can lid wobbles noisily  
like a coin coming to rest after a toss.  
"Where is she?" I ask the old mother,  
who lifts her baby-pink face to wink,  
and laugh. I rip away her hat and veil.  
Others appear in their place. I peel  
translucent layers of an image  
that is constant. A face in a pool.  
The check-out girl strips to her white apron,  
rings up a sale, gives me a hundred green stamps.  
"Please. I don't save stamps. Here." She  
blows me a kiss. The wind thumps the big  
glass panes that look out on the sea: it's  
a hurricane coming off the Atlantic.  
"Hurry. Hurry. Where is she? Where?"  
The old mother is walking on the water,  
drifting out to sea, muttering to herself.  
I bang on the glass. "Stop! Stop! Save  
me!" The girl takes readings, closes the register.  
The old mother, trailing a flannel gown,  
disappears into the whirlwind on the water.  
I'm locked in the store. The girl is outside,  
between me and the sea, blowing a kiss.



*Patricia Goedicke*

ALL MORNING I HAVE SEEN THE WHITENING

Just before dawn, in darkness  
Everything I'd murdered in myself  
Rose from the pillows and danced  
On the shoulders of my old hurts  
Where I had never permitted them before.  
Words put on clothes, they shone like jewels,  
Bright daggers busy as a circus,  
Lions alive and roaring,  
The ringmaster with yellow teeth flashing

But all morning I have seen the whitening.

While I, an amazed audience  
Applauded, made plans  
To speak of them today  
One by one they waved goodbye and went. Now  
No snow is visible, nothing  
Falling, or piercing the air  
But something is whispering out there  
Something insidious,  
Gradual, like the graying of my hair.

*Carolyn Stoloff*

Two Poems

MAD IN A GLASS BOOTH

mad in a glass booth  
losing blood  
your changes swallowed  
by the clanging box  
heart-beast ear  
fold your webs—too weak  
no tool to break banks  
crates or talk with

clumsy bundle  
permanently  
disconnected  
day drowns your beat  
fold your webs  
what ought to be is not

who wants your pelt!  
your pockets your pressure  
deep and close as a pole star  
your rodent unborn love  
your inner face  
sealed in its black jar  
like a sunrise

LOOKING THROUGH TREES INTO HOLES

*Croton-on-Hudson*

looking through trees into holes  
into the Eden-wound I see  
rats slip through festering cities  
hear promises fiddle air  
like crickets on summer nights

looking through holes between masts  
bent by wind through what is clean  
touchable I hear motors erase evergreens  
scoop gravel from streams  
drill my ears

looking through holes as a child  
world upside down moon underfoot  
wounds filling eyes with fall  
leaf into blood ink the calendar  
one day burying another

looking through holes that focus today  
in a box into litter-flat news  
looking into now's nothing an empty gun

a trumpet of lilies  
promising regeneration

looking into the lemon lily afternoon  
beeing its sweet  
carrying it to cities to strew  
so gardens will grow again  
in spaces between politicians

I see trunks of speechless men  
climb into holes into bone houses  
babies rest on women's hips  
sons stand on their fathers' shoulders  
building temples praised by women

the man-forest as holy and travel slow  
to pick flowers with those who know  
what to call them cement out of sight  
I see Earth this thunder rock  
sail somehow into light

*Mark Halliday*

#### HUMAN LIFE PARTLY EXPLAINED

From where I stand  
a good deal of evidence is visible.  
I see a bakery.  
People eat bread  
partly because they like the taste,  
partly because it gives them power  
enough to travel.

I see piles of tires.  
People ride on wheels  
to get to where they can see  
what other people are doing  
or failing to do.

I see mailboxes, telephone lines, antennae.  
People want to hear from people.

I see gravestones.  
People die when they have eaten too much,  
or not enough,  
and traveled too far, or not far enough,  
and heard enough, or not enough, or almost nothing.

*Paul Hunter*

#### TO TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF IT

Who cares if it's good writing habits  
that gets this said, gets it said?

Why don't you like the Northwest,  
like yourself, live a little,  
like the country, try yourself  
for treasons against the race?

Start again: why don't you just  
like yourself. Feel the rain  
of her hands on you, look up  
that simple, keeping in mind

you thought you were going to look up,  
she was going to drop on you but  
gently at first, and that  
I told you both all of that.

I've been here before, it's redundant  
to screw in history, love,  
like a lightbulb. You'll be sorry  
you see, you can slip, smash

the onion, weep, understandably  
short out the light you just thought up.

*Helen Sorrells*

SELF PORTRAIT

I have hung my nerve ends  
With electronic roses that click  
On, off, on, off, lovely lovely  
And twang like tooth aches.

Wound tight and tighter  
in my self-heated afternoon  
I sit among my roses and hear  
Quartets of my own voice

Speaking out of time  
And out of turn, scolding the tall  
Children who come in out of the rain  
To kiss my cheek and bring me

Component parts—switches, and wire  
That binds the stems of the roses  
Past endurance, but they endure—on,  
Off, on, off, on, on, on.

*Peter Cooley*

THE MAN WHO CLOSES HIMSELF

(after Guillevic's "L'homme qui se ferme")

You don't find him in crowds,  
the man who closes himself.  
He doesn't need hiding  
where it's so dark  
with the fires, the keys  
and the spiral where each step  
will never rise.

\* \* \*

He has learned to go  
through doors nailed shut,  
the man who closes himself,  
and felt his body sprayed  
into the grains of the wood.  
He has carried his doors  
until he will drop.

\* \* \*

He has hands,  
he has feet,  
he has a head,  
it isn't easy  
and then the torque of the wind  
is never the same  
at any minute.

\* \* \*

He knows corridors,  
the man who closes himself,  
and mirrors, the floors  
where his face will go on walking  
after he's gone.  
Mirrors that are reflections  
of all his keys.

\* \* \*

He wakes  
to find himself  
in the mouth of the sun  
falling  
without his moving  
into that sun.

\* \* \*

He finds himself  
in the bark of a tree  
where he can hide  
with the hollow inside.  
All night he will walk  
in that tree's circle, unable  
to rise through the tree  
in the way of the moon.

\* \* \*

He has seen his other  
watching in doorways,  
approaching in smoke,  
a light growing closer  
under his skin.  
For the man who closes himself  
the other is skin.

\* \* \*

For the man who closes himself  
what is the sun?  
what are the trees?  
what are the zones of the wind?  
what would it be  
to sow himself  
starting from the center?  
He knows this much  
it's his own way.

\* \* \*

For his wife  
there is nothing left  
except in silence  
beyond the words.  
In bed she moves  
under his hands like water,  
water that will not rise  
to drown him  
but in minutes.

\* \* \*

He would like to get away  
from all this, to go  
to the edge of the field  
where he could lie  
with the fireflies  
of snow that would come down  
to light his eyes.  
These eyes that want to go out  
beyond the edge of the field.

\* \* \*

He would like to walk  
in the poem, to talk  
in it, to hear the light  
lifting his body off  
as he spoke his way, the earth,  
the water, fire  
rising out of his breath.  
But the words turn him here.

\* \* \*

There is the spiral,  
there are the mirrors,  
there is still the wind.  
He crosses these, always alone,  
the man who closes himself,  
wanting to be  
with none of these, to be  
wherever they take him  
to make his way.  
The reason he's going  
is still  
to be made up.

*Jack Crawford, Jr.*

#### NUDE IN THE RAIN

I subscribe to the Lang-James theory.  
You don't run because you're afraid. You're  
Afraid because you run. It's what you  
Think it is that makes it. Well,  
I could be wrong! I may have  
Misinterpreted! Sorry, if so!  
Rest easy, phantoms of Elysium!  
The world is what you think it is! Ho ho!  
That's a fine bromide! It's not what Hegel  
Says it is, or Kant, or Nietzsche.  
So it's raining and you say, God



Another one of these! On the other hand, one might  
Strip off his clothes and walk in it!  
Silly, eh? But there you go. I see you  
All naked in it. It's pouring off you.  
It hits your head and swashes off your shoulders.  
Streams over your breasts. Your long hair  
Is coils of water. Limp. Your  
Arms glow. Your kneecaps shine. Your  
Nipples suck it. Your lips bubble.  
It goes in and out your navel. It  
Swashes at your hips. It glistens  
On your buttocks. It slides off your  
Shins and calves. Your toes twinkle  
And twitch in it. Lightning flashes off you. Thunder  
Beats all over you. Buildings glisten. Windows.  
Rooftops are refreshed. Grasses utter  
Green sounds. The nostrils gurgle.  
Lightning smashes into trees  
Looking for lightning-rods. Big limbs curve over  
From the weight of water. Faces  
Are at every window. Their mouths  
Are open. You have made an impression!  
But horses do it. Cows do it.  
Birds do it. Fishes do it. They don't go in  
Out of the rain. They're naked in it.  
Well, all right. So it's what people say!  
We all understand.  
Maybe you can't go out like I said but  
Didn't recommend necessarily. Maybe it  
Can't be done. How'd you like to be sitting  
Naked in the clink?—all wet—after  
Police came for you?—  
Or men in white uniforms?  
So it's raining and, making a grimace,  
And dropping a small profanity,  
One may say:  
God, another one of these!

*David Hilton*

#### THE MAN UPSTAIRS

Against a yellow accordion  
he loses the War always. His gray voice  
sings each night the kamikaze  
pasting his buddy to the bulkhead.

1944. He hides the year inside  
his trousers like a treasure still  
alarming him. It sirens him down  
the stairway that stops at my door.

He says he knows the arms of the police  
are really rubber hoses  
and if you give a woman an inch  
she'll cut it off. And since

the silent mailman commits  
only the big-time thefts (the letter  
from his mother announcing her rebirth)  
he knows I've stolen his dish towels

on order six years from Procter & Gamble  
in Kansas City. He holds nothing personal  
against Kansas City—all his friends  
have vanished everywhere,

the caves go under everywhere.  
And all of them were cowards anyway,  
flattening themselves into extra coats  
of mole-colored paint stuck

to the turrets of their battle stations  
as the fat zeros fell drunkenly  
upon the decks. At age 18  
to survive as a coat of mole-colored paint,

after the attack to be chipped off  
slowly, daily by the rubber hoses of  
cops, bartenders, mailmen, landlords,  
is only what a coward deserves though it is hard.

For such philosophy the Government  
thinks he is 100 percent and  
rewards him accordingly. So he  
has time for his music

that rises each night like the whine  
of an ancient propeller,  
keeps rising  
until he throws his body against the floor.

*Kurt Beattie*

#### FOR THE GOOD FISHERMAN

Now they are casting their lines,  
and the late day's light on their hats and arms  
is yellow as sunfish.

With legs white as the birch at the shore,  
see how they dangle their feet from the raft,  
all stripped bare to the waist,  
and languidly lie on the water,  
on the warm boards.

The sails lull them, the trees toss by the shore  
behind them, and the dock is for shooting stars,  
divers falling from heaven.

Alone, my mother is treading water by the shore  
where her toes touch the cold gravel  
and her hair washes around her like weeds.

Ambling through crests of lengthening shadows  
my father  
is building a fire of green wood and briar  
and weeds.  
The smoke drifts over the shore  
to the lake.

Out somewhere behind the island  
my sisters are struggling with the oars and calling,  
panicked from the rowers they did not want.

Today, dear, I have only one fish, a small trout  
that I have left in the water  
tied to a root.

Easily I watch him; he drifts easily,  
gliding through the roots  
and fading in the shade of the overhanging bank  
of ferns and moss.

I lean to the oak, in the cool shade  
I lean me, drowsy with your love, where willows  
bend to the water  
and the leaves rustle and wind  
is silly and wavers  
like the silvered tail of the fish.

But he is tied to my leader.  
He is tied.  
And so,

(that we may swim where the cold blood warms, where love  
can always find water, and the sun be born,  
where I could not for my life say anymore  
than this, this came clear in the lake, my love,  
for there, a bright day burning, burning in my eyes  
with the lives of my life, showed me our death)

I cut him loose.

THE HAPPY ENDING

When he held his hand up  
as if in surrender  
a rabbit slipped out of his sleeve  
and flew like a flag.  
Was it some kind of signal  
for money to slosh at our feet?  
The night turned to chorus around us.  
Who was this we held the gun on?

Later we told him  
all the things he knew about us.  
He saw us hating our mothers  
but loving them secretly.  
He saw how we hated each other  
and so stole the love from  
our lives.

We gave him the gun  
and he shot us to death.  
We fell in a blue heap at his feet.  
We washed at his feet like an ocean.  
We sang like the sun.  
Our blood stood up in a lump  
and blew warnings of joy.

He turned the gun on himself.  
We carried him home.  
We caressed him.  
He was someone to love.

A CANTICLE TO PEASHOOTERS

While munching chutney-dabbled duck on the pillowed veranda  
And sipping hot rum tea—tinct with a mild veronal,  
Curtly dickering over trifles with my puttering handmaid,  
I hymn a canticle to peashooters, a burbled hymnal.

To you whopping civil doughboys lumbering by,  
Straw-gun mounted puckered cheek and snicker eye,  
From the chancel, hallelujahs  
Greet your glorious what's-it-to-yas  
As you commence your hullabaloo and broadcast affrays;  
I ranting, emulate your illustrious ways.

I marvel that your ill-timed pot shots reach their mark,  
That rich meanings may be borne by short-range ammunition,  
At the vast exchange of petty loves and hates you embark,  
With what outlandish ease you master communication.

RUNNING WATER

The faucets of America  
were left on overnight. None  
are running out of water. The hoses  
are running the houses. American horses  
drink at the corner-  
gutters.

The holiday weekend  
begins. Stockbrokers  
cash in on the president's  
vacation. Whoever forgot  
to shut off the unlit pilot  
left on the power. The morning's  
electric. On another block  
near somebody else's backyard,

a live wire is humming.  
Hush.

I'm told there is water in blisters,  
and in the last stages of abdominal  
cancer, the torso converts  
to a human geyser. In the wards  
visiting well-wishers  
gag at the water coolers. Well  
water is fresh in America,  
still. The hoses were running all night.

*John Woods*

Three Poems

#### A BONE FLICKER

Some bones announce we are cruising at 580 mph.  
Some bones look in to see if some bones left the key.  
Bones are getting married tonight.  
Others find a wet spring bad for the patio business.  
Bones all over the Kona Coast.  
Bones lecturing to bones *on* bones.  
Around bones, a haze, an isinglass,  
a kind of flicker,  
talking in a wet, smacking way  
about scratching, mostly,  
an itch, an itchy bone,  
wanting out.

#### WHICH END OF THE STICK?

Is it a fire in the head,  
on top of an ice column,  
or a black box, riding a rich,  
plundering animal? What chooses,  
and what gets on with it?

Those who thump their books,  
blueprint eyed, are they never  
drunk and disorderly at think tank  
office parties, are they never  
vague, ruminating mouths,  
venturing a testament of belches?

And you who magistrate a few inches of skin,  
crawling in and out of each other  
on bended knee, what nose will you follow  
when the old brain rinds,  
and the scent trails blow away?

Lost in a dark country, a dark planet,  
in a tug-of-war on each end of the stick:  
the dirty end, and the business end.

Remember those whose eyes light up  
just short of madness, the True Way  
burning like a wire in their brains.

Their faces blazon on store fronts.  
Their voices roar from sound trucks.  
Great crowds, their countries on their backs,  
have fled down Lombardy grace of roads  
until the wire burned out at Berchtesgaden.

Then came the millions of Ikes,  
with no lights on anywhere  
in those dark, rented heads:  
a single orgasm of national purpose.

In the street you thought you knew,  
out stretches the ebony nightstick  
to put the law on you.



## THE CLOSING OF THE VICTORY BAR AND GRILL

*For Richard Hugo*

Did we go down in flames after all,  
the fuses set short over Ploesti?  
Are the mothers grandmothers,  
knitting gold stars to wear in their eyes?

I feel a stiffness when I climb down  
into my life.  
I toss back the last one several times.  
Something fabulous is coming up.

When one is a veteran of World War Two  
he is likely to have several eyes,  
each replaying outrages and illusions:  
the square needle in the left ball,  
the short-arm in helmet liners and raincoats,  
and in the guardroom,  
a crystal ball of VD kits  
for the last virgin to bear arms.  
He will sit in a Biloxi bar,  
looking dangerous, clutching his VD kit,  
trying to pierce a waitress  
with his eyes.

Later, he will offer  
the condom, huge with breath,  
to the vagaries of the air,  
where the swollen dream,  
entering the movie house fan,  
dies of applause.

You are thinking this is a long poem.  
It was a long war,  
and the Victory Bar and Grill  
is here to testify that a drinking veteran  
dreams a long gullet. He listens close,  
hearing what's coming and going,  
explosions behind his eyes,

the whip of blood.  
If you sing through this gullet,  
it takes awhile to come out fabulous.

The sun strikes amber through your beer,  
and in its spotlight  
you see a product of know-how:  
a miniaturized Belsen, with little people  
marching, the tower lights  
twisted in the wire.  
A plume of smoke from your cigarette.  
So beautifully preserved,  
you don't know whether to laugh or cry.  
The skin lampshades, the holy cross  
drooping its corners, gold teeth  
rattling in the collection plate . . .  
We were lost in that war  
and live on the other side of life  
with the others that blew up,  
where the joyless are gently restrained,  
where the powerless grow steadily beautiful,  
where we tell poems  
about the underside of grass.

Now the Victory Bar and Grill is closing.  
The short snorter, the picture of the squadron,  
flow to the archives  
on the combers of this poem.  
And we are veterans among you  
as the neon darkens,  
as the uniforms march under strange banners.

One last beer to that old bitch, World War Two,  
and her slant-eyed daughter.

### About Our Contributors

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JOHN ALLMAN teaches at Cazenovia College in New York State.

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CAROLYN STOLOFF teaches at Manhattanville College.

MARK HALLIDAY is a senior at Brown University.

PAUL HUNTER is a graduate student at the University of Washington.

HELEN SORRELLS lives in Pacific Palisades, California. Her first book of poems will be published by Vanderbilt University Press this year.

PETER COOLEY teaches at the University of Wisconsin in Green Bay.

JACK CRAWFORD, JR., teaches at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

DAVID HILTON is a teaching assistant at the University of Wisconsin.

KURT BEATTIE is an undergraduate English major at the University of Washington.

GREG KUZMA is the editor of *Pebble* and teaches at the University of Nebraska.

LAURENCE LIEBERMAN's first book of poems, *The Unblinding*, was published in 1968. He teaches at the University of Illinois.

JOHN WOODS's new and selected poems will be published by Indiana University Press later this year.

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