



Poetry

NORTHWEST

AUTUMN 1962

VOLUME III, NUMBER 3

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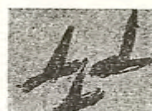
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POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME THREE



NUMBER THREE

AUTUMN, 1962

JOHN L'HEUREUX	
Three Poems	3
EVE TRIEM	
Three Poems	8
DAVID GALLER	
Two Poems	10
STANLEY COOPERMAN	
Four Poems	13
ROBERT PETERSON	
Three Poems	16
LEWIS MEYERS	
Four Poems	19
PHYLLIS ROSE	
Three Poems	22
FRANK JONES	
Two Poems	27
CHARLES GULLANS	
Four Poems by J.-M. de Heredia	28
TRACY THOMPSON	
Two Poems	34
ROBIN EVANS	
The Fable of the Cat and the Peacocks	35
ALBERT McLEAN, JR.	
Homo Faber	36
ANN LONDON	
Song for Five Figures in a Tapestry	37
STANLEY MOSS	
Two Poems	38
M. L. ROSENTHAL	
Two Poems	40
VERN RUTSALA	
Two Poems	41
JOANNE DE LONGCHAMPS	
Dionysus	42
MAXINE KUMIN	
John Holmes Memorial Poem	46

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POETRY NORTH WEST

AUTUMN 1962

John L'Heureux

Three Poems

A PRIVATE KINGDOM

Somewhere marrowed deep within the bone
unmarred by wonder or certain knowledge
married to wisdom wounded in memory
lies the omen.

Tugging the frozen mitten from the ice
wool clinging, thumb unyielding, red fuzz
sticking where the mitten lay; numbness
spreading to the hollow of the back,
tongue frozen on the cold iron hinge.

A cold wind is blowing from the hill
and trees blackened by the mistral rain
whisper sullenly, their cold leaves crack
and rub on one another like funeral wreaths,
wire flowers hollowing the wind.

The sound resounds in the mind's cavern
the click of leaves and the click of bones
fingers drumming the nervous table, chill
pervading the marrow of the bone, stillness
stillness and wind in the rain black trees.

Ice clinks in the glass, the crystal ice
in the mind echoes and the chill seeps
like rain into a coffin into the backbone
along the spine and thrills through vertebrae
numbing each bone with the cold that scars.

And always under the hollow terror
under the echo, sinew, thought ; deep within
the marrow of uncomprehending bone
lies the omen.



THE BEQUEST

I

The twentieth season
saw summer falling
in comets upon

our winter. The reason
was evident : calling
the Spirit at dawn

one morning, expecting
no answer, not wanting
one really, a dead

tree bloomed, resurrecting
the buried and haunting
the mind with the dread

of a summons to life
everlasting. The flower
came suddenly cleaving

the tree as the knife
of time severs an hour
of agony, leaving

the dead. The word
in our burgeoning heart
unexpectedly won

possession : we stirred
at our roots, stood apart
in the light of the sun.

II

There have been mornings like this before :
clean air washing the birches
white and yellow and pure as sunrise,
tingling their leaves to catch the light
and scatter it bleaching the foliage everywhere.

There have been mornings like this before.
The sky has been cloudless and clear as memory
the lake as cool as an agate brooch
and sunlight on birches.
And before there was knowledge of Christ in these
immanent, good ; before there was *fiat*
and sunrise and love.

But never this height and depth : silent,
a pillar of birch
washed white and pure in morning air,
never this silent transcending sound
no swallow stroking the still of the air,
never this silent ;

nor ever this waiting the word unspoken
quiet by any prayer unbroken
the gift ungiven, the proffered token of love :
this silent.

III

You are not bread and sunrise, you are ocean
sweeping around me with your merciless *fiat*
blinding me when I plunge to your deeper lights.

If I were certain of some tomorrow and not nothing
I would lunge deeper driving hard down with flickering feet
and shatter your lights with the kiss of my mouth

or have done with you and write my sworn *never*
on your implacable surface.

If I were certain of some tomorrow I could wait
and watch in safety your mortal fascinations,
treading in patience my thirty-three summers,
and think waiting enough.

If I were certain of some tomorrow :

but who

is certain of tomorrow, now, when you crush
my breath to tiny finite bubbles
and dazzle me with vision of always deeper lights.

Who can measure out time to borrow now
when you fold me in your depths sweeter than love's body :

I know your ruthless *fiat* and I plunge.



ROSE AND FIRE

Now, this desert, is time of triumph.
Now no comfort and no comforter, no bird sings
in the orange tree, figs are unflowered
and a cold sickle moon slicks the wet sand
to a sallow brown.
The tree is down and the figs are barren.
Wind no longer stirs the sand ; it lies heavy
as despair, motionless.

I sit on the edge of my bed, death's brother,
and contemplate my private wilderness, floor
stretching to some dim oasis green as tomorrow
far as birth, wondering will the white rose
and the black fire ever be one.

They merge in my eye's mind
wondering will the ritual rose water sprinkled
on my hands help me remember the dead
or indeed the living or anything, wondering if
rushes still whisper among themselves in the wind
somewhere. Somewhere. Remembering in a dream
how the Sphinx smiled once.

Not even memory can wake this night.
Not rose water nor the onyx flame
orange trees, birds, nor ritual lamentations
will water barren earth, dim the triumph ;
now sounds the hour of beyond alone :
stripped to raw Christ, to elemental nerve.




Eve Triem

Three Poems

CRYSTAL

To wish. An energy resembling
light. Things—wood, stone—soak it up.
O joy I felt in my crooked
turns of being, fingering names
on the trinket as I went :
a light too potent to love,
dreaded Light! Rolling in the
mind a crystal ball big as the
globe we rock on, and it crashes
earth and sun. Where I fell, cracked
mountain hacks bone, breaks reason,
flying two birds white like water,
smaller lights scattering fire.
Look not. Touch, rather, mind to
mind, the crystal. Great, great and round.
Beads, darker bells to bong me
into whatever well the real
things fall—wet with grief I grope.
Lost, swept up and lost, wood and
jewel with a city's rubbish burned!
The crystal, ready for my mislaid
sorrow, collects me as tansy
crumpled for pungence; presses what
of heart I have into Its light.



WILLOW

Journey to the end of night
is steep;
along a twilight
all hoard and weapons dropped.
And he walking that way drops all his leaves.

I grow from my seed of sleep a willow
a waking tree. Alone.
Breaking the whited lines of water,
freeing the fish from an unrolled cloth river.

Beyond, pressing into darkness,
the cut stones of wall,
moss thrusting plush out of cracks.
O in tarnished thicket
hundreds of red-silk beetles

(Oxford-dons of the grass).

Nourishing nothing,
self-keeping, I spread wide and wide.

And calling no one,
keeping to myself clangors of railroad-bell,
the barge-horns hoarsened,
the linked dark-floated barges.

I have killed,
without a knife I killed,
I nourished no one.

Willow, willow.

The doves send at me
their arrow-eyes.



MOMENT IN MUSEUM

A teasing woman, a stone head glowing down,
Returning my look with almost living wonder,
Tells me a fable more durable than stone.

A marble that was white, white as a bone,
Has yellowed, but the broad eyelid is tender.
A teasing woman, a stone head glowing down.

Mouth of coquette, mild as a quarter moon,
Though she bit down on wisdom's bleakened cinder,
Tells me a fable more durable than stone.

No bigger than a cup, without a crown,
A trifle in the museum's hoard of splendor.
A teasing woman, a stone head glowing down.

That her curls stirred and in a seelight shone
Before there were two thousand years of grandeur,
Tells me a fable more durable than stone.

*Lark, hyacinth, and lover—briefly known
And greatly loved—these continue to defend her,*
A teasing woman, a stone head glowing down
To tell a fable more durable than stone.



David Galler

Two Poems

THE PROMONTORY

Plummeting toward the sea, the mountains
Seem to have stopped just short enough
That a small village house at their base,
Then lunge maybe a mile on out
And up a thousand feet, breaking

In glare to form this barren place.
Always in glare, at any hour
Of day, these rocks have guarded the neat
Curbs and planted trees of the village
From strong winds and thrashing waves ;
In heavy fog or on moonless nights,
A beacon is lit, as though to remind
Not only the passing ships but those
In the little rooms of what is there.
As often perhaps as tourists have sighed
How disappointing to find the sea
Concealed by rock, their hosts have added,
Whose children were out of sight, blinking
As though they expected them to hear,
How many sons had climbed the mountains
Behind and done well there, which partly,
No doubt, accounts for the reason why
The children, as they are old enough,
Go to the promontory for
Their picnics, and partly why elders feel
Obliged to object. The promontory
Is the one place they feel they owe
Some debt. Year after year, torn dolls
Lay on its rocks, beer-cans and butts,
Dismembered flowers of a species
That climbs the cliff. To understand
The town, you must go way out there
To where you can neither swim nor fish,
Must stare as far as you can (which not
Many attempt) and not return,
Though, scattered among the town's most wretched
Souls, a few will mutter they know
At least themselves, with vast contempt.



THE HARBOR

*"I am here, more than that I do not know, further
than that I cannot go. . . ."*

—Kafka, *"The Hunter Gracchus"*

Some day, the spell would break. It must. It would.

I should not always lie, having to watch

Those freighters pass—dreaming their rusty plates

Grew thus and so, moored off a magic stretch!

Meanwhile, perhaps. It was a better way

To pass the time—fresh air and plenty of sun—

Than near my home that money had so betrayed.

I even stroked the pier when the day was done.

But before that, I had dreamed harbors at Delft,

Venice, Camelot, Baghdad, Joppa, and rode

Even the nameless mouth led Kurtz to glory.

Over my skeptic's eye all harbors flowed.

From here, how simple to dream oneself the King

Of the Golden Mountain! His sacrificial heir,

Happier now, I wished on my Queen's ring

To see my father before he died once more;

And promised I would not wish her there. But did.

Oh, I should have shown more sense! A common freighter—

Common as day had grown—at its moorings slid.

Magically rusted. I stroked the chilly pier.

Years later, I learned not all ships touch their port;

Learned how Ulysses, outwitting all his schemes,

Left home once more—till I believed I believed

Strange harbors were not more strange than inland dreams.

Cloistered, my father gibbered I wished him dead.

During those days: fresh air and plenty of sun;

But nights I hardened a sentimental head

On black sail fare heard sobbed on the waterfront.

Left on the Naxos of a shore known well,
Each Athens dim, true as those hulls that chance
Rust everywhere, I prayed that the god's black sail
Would bear down and bless my life's drunk abstinence.



Stanley Cooperman

Four Poems

VALMIKI TO THE BRAHMIN

That your fingers be feathers
To blow in the wind,
That the horns of your fathers
May crack in your mind,
I give you this song.

That the crystal of winter
Be color of blood,
That the beasts of the summer
May swallow your God,
I give you this song.

That the bone of your eye
May warp in the moon,
That your woman may lie
Quickened with sun,
That children or vermin
May feed on your tongue,
I give you this song;
I give you this song.



THE GYPSY

Beware fat Persians
He said, trembling pizzicatos.
Beware the other side of the mountain
Where pigeons come and go
Dreaming of pomegranates and stars.
Avoid ripeness.
Remember the echo behind your face
And the sweet fang of love.

I waited.
He fingered my name.
I thought of other leaves
And mouths more fragrant than his.
Therefore,
He interrupted,
Leering at someone else:
You will be crucified
On silk.

~

FLYLEAF

And we went down to the sea in slips
Wandering blankly among oranges and moon-breasted maidens,
Tall masts and toothpicks hewn from limbs of gold.
O ye Professors Emeticus, scufulous puffballs—
Remember the sweet fleece of prepublic heroes and radiant gods;
Remember the sailor adrift with multiple eyeballs.

Rubber-eyed between grave rocks we went singing
Under the syllabic moon and ever-contracting sea;
Tigers and trumpets fell on our southerly
Quaking the horizons of flesh, and you my bold
Hurled an eversharp against impossible serpents,

Furled the horn of your brow and appled where you stood
Declaring commonality of fruit and fire.

And we went down to the sea with blossoms
Casting our petals before tides and the pneumatic wind,
A rainbow of broken fingers ringed about our throats.
Hear O Noncum Digits camp-scholaring the moon,
Crotching tales and variant editions—
Remember the Goddess of tangerines and tongues.



THE DAY OF THE PARROT

It was the day of the parrot
When golden girls fell from the east
And your arms could touch the Sunday of the world.
Feathers or wings trembled on Coney Island Avenue
And there was fire by reason of Mr. Antonio
Who waited for lobsters and small fishermen,
Trading both at gentle profit:
Those claws
Became sesame cakes and custard afternoons.

And we leaped to the roller-coaster, quaking into life,
Feeling our flesh open like a pod of gibbering sun.
The blue ocean tilted far below,
Paused,
Dropped astonishment on cotton-candy surf
In the shape of small boys or Rabbi Benjamin
Since both had cast sins of unusual substance
(Whispers of eternity or September dixie-cups)
Into the jello-tumbling echo of the sea.

Later Mrs. Stoll baked and sweated beneath the poolroom
For Congo cossacks who picked their teeth with lightning;

HONEY, I HAVE TO PUT YOU DOWN

Leaving behind all my valuable documents
in your cozy apartment I already
called my happy Home, ran all the way
to my cold dark flat saying

the passionate nickname I invented
in your peppermint bed to keep us holy
—which eventually became only
the name of a humorous swift bird

I had long loved—next noon
wrote you a long letter
of farewell, delivered in person
lest you need help

clarifying its obscurities,
stroked your back as you read
missing my last opportunity
to strangle you into my own state

of absurdity; and as you had not suffered
the previous night, but gone out
riding Halloween with another prince
in my pumpkin, and were in your own way

weary, I picked up all my papers
and fled to the movies, stayed on
Love two more days observing
all the rites and customs even

after I discovered all the other
Tom-Dick-Harrys until last night,
in a welcome mad dream of medleyed
dog-yaps, shredded sails, horns and

plummeting birds you finally dropped,
belly-up, kicking, and naked

as a vulture's beak, into a fathomless slue
of blooded orange juice without vodka
far from all perfume, men, and music. . . .



WET DAY AT THE YACHT DOCK

This magic bar, where lovers
meet in summer to lunch like doves
and watch the bay float, now's
just any socked-in pub
wintering its local queens and jacks.

In June it's nailed
to optimistic air and going broke
on dice or getting nearly drunk
is half the fun; but now
the first drink sulks in the glass,
glum waiters talk of rain.
They know tonight, like an old oath,
will be spaced and slow. Less
the San Francisco lights—gone
in fog—the room's eye is cold.

By ten I've switched from gin
to beer to saké, then I'll sit,
late as a cat, on a coast I can't see
but will bet on—matching gulls, my luck
the weather's. And leaving, suddenly sober
in the honed wind, enough to know
my own state's changed;
sleep alone and long
by ferns, moss, and fresh water
through the first storm.



Lewis Meyers

Four Poems

WHAT CAN BE GRASPED?

Out at the tricky intersection, oil trucks
Stop dead on dimes. I listen in:
That squealing halt, whose pulse-beat doesn't catch
As if, at the ringside of a fight,
One's head and shoulders rode with every punch?
Kafka's nerves would snap.

Ill at ease, I chain-smoke cigarettes
Yet suffer less at the drop of a hat,
Or a child's scream, the decline of Adam.
Sober and glassy-eyed I find the time.
I slouch around the room, I pink
The dresser, the senseless bed. . . .

What budes cedarwood? though all else reels
Antiques that hulk like Stonehenge, like cold trees
By grazing moments eaten only partly:
Day after day (I'm bumped by horseflies, fires)
The sun keeps its distance just the same
Only at night is nothing enough.

Until I land in the thick soup of deep sleep,
Sequentially, I lose my solid grip:
A whispered voice is bawling out my life.
The pillow rips; I reach its pitch.
I tear away from all I held that held my hand,
And nothing stands its ground.

~

FOR YOUR LONG LEGS

What a slaughter. I'm amazed at the pears and apples
Spitted by sun inside the wooden trough,
The human ash, the ivy dripping on the picket fence,
Your failing smile, my face

I'd like to get the butcher where he lives
Who hangs our meat up by the heels
That sacred cow, that prick.

For love of you I hate the cutting edge.
For your long legs and my short breath,
I'll plug the moth-torn blue with a green thumb,
With scotch tape.

And yet, dear bone,
You sit and knit as if you fixed it all,
Or sew the world into a needlepoint
Until I foam, bubble and spray,
Impatient with your handiwork.

Yet now the sky's illimitably white,
That possible egg,
I turn to jelly when I turn to you.
And still I turn. I pause advance listen
Poised between the dew of morning
And the damp of dark.



THE NEW HUSBAND

The sun won't rise. Snow soft-soaps
The yellow-shaded parlor windows.
I needle my wife's sleep upstairs.
I bounce her loose hair, loop it like a rope.
Half of her sleep shies back
When her name is called.
She speaks to the pillow slip.

She says what? I think how
Up the block
Our mutual friend mumbles Brooklynese.
His cat sobs in the closet.
Probably his hi-fi's red light
Stared all night.
I know that eye spot-checking a heavy life.

I've stood rooted in big rubber boots
Too. My grudging shadow weighed a ton.

But there's nothing half-hearted about her beauty.
She crooks an elbow; the suave edge
Of our wool blanket nuzzles
Her nipples. When she mops her brow
I see a first, opalescent sun.

I sit on the sill and drink her in.



WAITING FOR MONDAY

You've seen me these late Sundays.
The night sky is a nun's hood and bat wing,
Disparagingly
Shading my yellow pencil's line of fire
At my table.
I scribble out my life, my beige
Kitten heaped on a shoulder-blade, light
As a swab of cotton.
What have you noticed?
Can you tell a needle scratch of red ants
Threads my thighs?
My restlessness won't let me be.
I'm all nerves.
I'm not that whale of a poet, coolly
Racking his long cigars in umbrella stands.

(Or does he sweat them out?)
But I bite a cigarette from the pack;
I tear the cellophane as if it veiled
My thoughts huddled like empty milk bottles
In a dim kitchen.
This dull distress, it's due as usual
Only to having reached the weekend's edge?
I lean back on my heels,
Winching at the morning's clamping fog
Or cold sunrise.

~

Phyllis Rose

Three Poems

SEAGIRT

Sunlit Seagirt, Atlantic girdled land,
Laid the salt scene of one young summer spent
With a worried aunt. Finding me ignorant
As troubled girlhood fell away, she planned
Cold lemonade in a dimity crowded room
To teach me party airs. But the wise boys
Walked off with riper, prettier girls with poise.
O careful aunt, my style was never bloom.

Your friends, the colonels and commanders, praised
My gracelessness, remembering their own
Brash mastery of innocence. They'd known
Maturity too long. Mere youth amazed
Or pleased their cooling appetites. But I
Nevertheless grew up that summer, down
On the grainy sand, fingering slippery brown
Seaweed, rough shells, green crabs. I spent July

Learning the Jersey shore, when sunlight, slant
On the empty beach at morning, failed to draw
The slumbering lovers. (Afternoons I saw
Them though, voluptuous and confident
Of their warm, lovely limbs against coarse sand.)
Puzzled by lovers, shy of my clumsy speech,
I found the solitude of Seagirt Beach
Sufficient for my aimless need. My hand

Learned textures, sounds of the steady sea
Rang in my ears, the comprehensive light
Of water, sand, and sky dazzled my sight,
Body responded to that energy,
And I learned how to love the earth with all
My quickening senses. Summer gone, I went
Inland again, no longer innocent,
Sea-mastered, aunt, made woman by that fall.



PENELOPE

After Wallace Stevens

I

The years were never easy, but the first years
Of the long war were easier, while she waited
As common women waited, when, like them,

She could perceive a thin, invisible line
Between her mind and the Scamandrian plain
Where common men joined battle under him.

There was a season she could say his name
And no one noted it or blamed her for
Those fair, particular syllables because

His name was on the tongue of every woman.
Continually she overheard her servants
Saying "Ulysses," washing the heavy linens

He had lain in with her, buffing the cups
His mouth had touched. At such times she would shape
His name and mildly pass among them, keeping
Herself immensely silent, marveling
To come upon this crafty public man,
Wily Ulysses, still unknown to her.

She waited then as common women waited,
Wondering whether to her as to some others
Time would give satisfaction, bringing him home.

II

After the war was over, waiting became
A world of meditation. She drew back
Into the savage dream behind her eyes.

She never said his name. Her serving women
Did not speak of him. Their husbands home,
The Scamandrian plain receded from their minds.

She waited. If she touched his name written
On household things, she would become abstracted,
Wondering what was the one so named, and where

Was he, really, outside of her mind, now Ilium
Was taken, the great warriors all dispersed
Who had with him seized arms ten years before.

She dreamed he lay in Calypso's arms, or someone's,
But that did not matter. Calypso, dreamed,
Quickened no jealousies. Imagined winds

Over imagined oceans hurt no man.
Mere theoretical accidents touched his image
Only; he escaped in the end chimeras

Of her brain. Safe in the dream he came
Continually homeward. Rarely was her mild
Apparent patience troubled. Yet sometimes

Ulysses was announced. Her women spoke
His name again. Nearly believing, she
Proceeded to the hall. Coming from dream

Carefully, she beat back the actual body
Of her hope with hammers of her heart.
They slandered him. It never was Ulysses.

And yet the coming of some common man
Worked on the central terror under dream
That he would never come, that actual death

Had taken him, or that a true Calypso
Held him prisoner. But her speech was even
Over the strange excitement mastering her—

"That man is not Ulysses"—glad to shape
Unblamed the marvelous syllables of his name
Out of her own impassioned meditation.

III

She became changed. She braced her name to his.
She remained "Mother" to Telemachus
And "Madam" to her servants, but, the dream

Taking her gradually, she assumed as well
A pure serenity. She kept apart
From the riotous laughter of the hall, staying

Within her chambers, weaving upon her loom
A shroud for old Laertes who, in the vineyard,
Mended the trees—ten apples, thirteen pears,

And forty figs. Although the insolent wooers
Wasted the substance of her husband's house,
She made the syllables of her own name a dream

Equal to his, and so evaded them.
When they presumed to call her down among them
She obeyed patiently, but a silence fell

Over their barbarous clamor. They observed
Amazed her excellent mortal clarity,
And no man dared articulate her name.

Is it Ulysses that approaches from the east,
The interminable adventurer? The trees are mended.
That winter is washed away.



SUMMER INDOORS

Out of the brilliance where the sun streams in
Through one wide open window, at a desk,
I read grave histories or study thin
Scholastic arguments, leaf through grotesque
Impulsive Gothic fiction, or translate
The metered Greek and level Latin prose.
Ranged in the shadows, books, inanimate
Against the wall, are fixed in heavy rows.

Here every afternoon where leaded panes
Refract the summer light that breaks in schemes
Of color on oak floorboards, darkly stains
The shined mahogany, or softly gleams
On cherry wood, I write in silence. Wind
Stirs the curtains. I am half aware
Of summer out-of-doors, undisciplined
Abundance of green leafing, humid air.

Wide hazy blue of sky above thick trees,
Tall elms and heavy maples, bristling pines,
Stirred in the light wind. Yet I turn from these
Toward summer darkness where my mind assigns
Itself to learning, willing not to look
Outdoors at sunlight. I am satisfied
By the black craft of letters, by the book
Under my hands, illumined from outside.

Frank Jones

Two Poems

THE WELCOMER

On rubbery sand she lies,
Ringed by thunder eggs,
Foam tickling her seaward ham.

Every half hour by the tangled clock
A weedy visitor rises
And vanishes in the water.

When the next one leaps the stones
To penetrate her wisdom
She sighs;
It is always the same man,
And he never knows.



WAY BACK WHERE

Wind lifts the shade;
the house gasps and sighs;
time lies open.

Straw seats creak;
in a soot-specked pine-blur
the Boneshaker hurtles home.
Nitwits in Reos and Auburns
cruise for evening girls
down summer avenues.

Is the serious blonde
who liked to neck on the sofa
reading that album I gave her?

Now I hear Shelley and Yeats and Waley.
Only poetry is where I have been.
The rest is mumbling dust.

José-Maria de Heredia

Quatre Poèmes

L'OUBLI

Le temple est en ruine au haut du promontoire.
Et la Mort a mêlé, dans ce fauve terrain,
Les Déesses de marbre et les Héros d'airain
Dont l'herbe solitaire ensevelit la gloire.

Seul, parfois, un bouvier menant ses buffles boire,
De sa conque où soupire un antique refrain
Emplissant le ciel calme et l'horizon marin,
Sur l'azur infini dresse sa forme noire.

La Terre maternelle et douce aux anciens Dieux
Fait à chaque printemps, vainement éloquente,
Au chapiteau brisé verdir une autre acanthe ;

Mais l'Homme indifférent au rêve des aïeux
Écoute sans frémir, du fond des nuits sereines,
La Mer qui se lamente en pleurant les Sirènes.



LE RÉCIF DE CORAIL

Le soleil sous la mer, mystérieuse aurore,
Eclaire la forêt des coraux abyssins
Qui mêle, aux profondeurs de ses tièdes bassins,
La bête épanouie et la vivante flore.

Et tout ce que le sel ou l'iode colore,
Mousse, algue chevelue, anémones, oursins,
Couvre de pourpre sombre, en somptueux dessins,
Le fond vermiculé du pâle madrépore.

Charles Gullans

Four Translations

OBLIVION

The temple ruins top the promontory.
And death has mingled in that wilderness
Heroes in bronze and marble Goddesses
Where solitary grasses shroud their glory.

Sometimes an oxherd, leading his beast to water—
Who on his conch-shell pipes an ancient burden,
Filling the calm sky to the sea's horizon—
Lifts his black form against the endless azure.

Maternal earth, sweet to the ancient Gods,
Each spring turns green—vain eloquence—the small
Acanthus on the broken capital.

But Man, indifferent to his fathers' Gods,
From deep, still nights without a tremor hears
The Sea lament the Sirens with her tears.



THE CORAL REEF

The sun beneath the sea, mysterious hour—
Dawn will suffuse the coral forest soon,
Which mingles in the depths of warm lagoons
The beast that blossoms and the living flower.

And all that's stained by salt or iodine—
Algae and moss, anemones, sea-urchins,
Pale madreporum upon its wormed foundations,
Deep purple strata in complex design.

De sa splendide écaille éteignant les émaux,
Un grand poisson navigue à travers les rameaux.
Dans l'ombre transparente indolemment il rôde ;
Et, brusquement, d'un coup de sa nageoire en feu
Il fait, par le cristal morne, immobile et bleu,
Courir un frisson d'or, de nacre et d'émeraude.



LA SIESTE

Pas un seul bruit d'insecte ou d'abeille en maraude,
Tout dort sous les grands bois accablés de soleil
Où le feuillage épais tamise un jour pareil
Au velours sombre et doux des mousses d'émeraude.

Criblant le dôme obscur, Midi splendide y rôde
Et, sur mes cils mi-clos alanguis de sommeil,
De mille éclairs furtifs forme un réseau vermeil
Qui s'allonge et se croise à travers l'ombre chaude.

Vers la gaze de feu que trament les rayons,
Vole le frêle essaim des riches papillons
Qu'enivrent la lumière et le parfum des sèves ;

Alors mes doigts tremblants saisissent chaque fil,
Et dans les mailles d'or de ce filet subtil,
Chasseur harmonieux, j'emprisonne mes rêves.



A UNE VILLE MORTE

*Cartagena de Indias
1532-1583-1697*

Morne Ville, jadis reine des Océans !
Aujourd'hui le requin poursuit en paix les scombres
Et le nuage errant allonge seul des ombres
Sur ta rade où roulaient les galions géants.

Splendid, with scales surpassing bright enamels,
A huge fish sails across the branching coral,
And in clear shadows, indolently prowls.

Swiftly, the stroke of his fiery fins runs through
The darkened crystal, motionless and blue,
A shudder of gold, emerald, and mother-of-pearl.



THE SIESTA

No sound of insects nor marauding bee.
All sleeps beneath huge trees oppressed by light
Where the thick foliage strains day to night,
Sombre as velvet, soft with moss, and green.

There high noon roams, riddling the darkened glade
And through my half-closed eyelids, drugged with sleep,
Through the red veins, its stealthy flashes sweep,
Extending to obstruct the sultry shade.

And toward the gauze of flame, woven in rays,
The fragile swarm of butterflies now sways,
Enrapturing the light and scent of leaves.

My trembling fingers seize each strand of light
And in the golden mesh, so subtly bright,
Hunter of harmony, I bind my dreams.



TO A DEAD CITY

Cartagena of the Indies
1532-1583-1697

Sad City, once the queen of all the Seas!
Now sharks, untroubled, trail the mackerel runs,
And moving cloud extends but shade where once
Were giant galleons rolling in your lee.

Depuis Drake et l'assaut des Anglais mécréants,
Tes murs désespérés croulent en noirs décombres
Et, comme un glorieux collier de perles sombres,
Des boulets de Pointis montrent les trous béants.

Entre le ciel qui brûle et la mer qui moutonne,
Au somnolent soleil d'un midi monotone,
Tu songes, ô Guerrière, aux vieux Conquistadors ;

Et dans l'énervement des nuits chaudes et calmes,
Berçant ta gloire éteinte, ô Cité, tu t'endors
Sous les palmiers, au long frémissement des palmes.



Since Drake and the English heretics' assaults,
Your crippled walls in blackened rubble sink,
And Pointis' heavy shot shows, link on link,
Like dark pearls on your neck, their gaping faults.

Between the lapping sea and skies that burn,
In the drowsy sun of noons that never turn,
Warrior, you dream of old Conquistadors.

Through desolating nights that, warm and calm,
Cradle your darkened glory, you drift the shores
Beneath the long, slow trembling fronds of palm.

José-Maria de Heredia was born in 1842 at La Fortuna, Cuba, the son of an ancient Spanish family. He was educated in France, where he lived most of his life. In literary circles he allied himself with the Parnassians and was the favorite disciple and chosen successor of Leconte de Lisle. He published very few poems until 1893, when the collection *Les Trophées* appeared and was immediately accepted as one of the major accomplishments of French literature. His poems display Parnassian characteristics: circumstantiality of setting; language of exotic vividness and variety; diction drawn from modern science (the poem "The Coral Reef" was based on Darwin's book on the subject), history, and ancient literatures; a mastery of poetic forms, especially of the sonnet; and rhythms of distinctive sonority.

C.G.

THE FABLE OF THE CAT AND THE PEACOCKS

The round, the sofa-colored cat
Preserves intact that feline wit,
That simple stare on the absurd
Long tradition calls her art.

At her post beneath the sun
She will not see a grander bird
Than blue peacocks that shine and strut
In vain decorum round the yard,

Affect a pose in avenues
Designed to honor peafowl in.
Less pretentious with their kin,
Each stabs a lizard through the brain:

Reptilian bird, contrived pavane.
Unstrung, they twirl before the cat
Who walks her beat, a summer lawn,
Avoiding passion's feints and dung.

Then, rears the monster, the argus-eyed!
Spreads wide by rote the child's display
Of casuistry, like playing cards
That give the novice hand away.

Contained but drab, the cat departs.
And still with racket-tensive throats
The peacocks bandy across the walk
A tennis ball of outraged squawk

Until the noon-day sun looks down
To pause before such idiocy
And quiver, quiver in the pond
Against small logic's vanity.

Curled in shade, the cat defends
Some sense, allows us to appraise
How far such hue and cry extends,
How such peckish beauty ends.

~

Albert McLean, Jr.

HOMO FABER

Lightly rusted by June dews
It lay among the sweet fern.
We had been clearing here
Throughout the spring, and one day
Noticed we were short an axe.

We felt the loss,
And then we felt the guilt.
We were obliged to our axes.
They met our grip as man-to-man
And gave us swing for pivot.

Perhaps those axes knew
Our plot of pine, beech and birch
As we could not—had deeply struck
And sent back news along
The tempered blade and trembling shaft.

Even more, the day's proof
Of our labor—the trimmed trunks,
Stacked cutting, and lines
Of whittled stumps—showed not our hand
But axe-mark, blade's-stamp everywhere.

We did, of course, restore
Our prodigal to the dignity of axes,
Sanded the grey-rot from the stock,

Redeemed its steel from rust,
And felt at ease again.

For in our axe is all our art;
We are but implements that find
It work to do. Can we be honest?
Not axe alone was lost and found;
We severed men reclaimed our world.



Ann London

SONG FOR FIVE FIGURES IN A TAPESTRY

The Trouvere: Love's a lay, a lay, *gaude*,
Love's a lay,
Song and gong make pretty play
To mandoline and taboret,
Gaude.

The Lady: Love's a lilt, a lilt, fa la,
Love's a lilt,
Smile and wile that I may tilt
My jumping jack upon his stilt,
Fa la.

The Knight: Love's a grief, a grief, alas,
Love's a grief,
Quest and geste and for reprieve
Perhaps she'll give her silken sleeve,
Alas.

The Jongleur: Love's a jape, a jape, down derry,
Love's a jape,
Quip and clip Brown Joan asleep,
Then leave her plundered and aweep,
Down derry.

The Monk: Love's a woe, a woe, *credo*,
 Love's a woe,
 Wish and flesh go jig below
 To end our *in principio*,
 Credo.

All sing: Love's a catch, a weal and woe,
 Love is welaway,
 So sing we all with spring's new breath
Dies Irae, and Dance of Death,
 So sing we all
 Gaude.



Stanley Moss

Two Poems

CASTLE OF THE LITTLE SERMON

I

You could only be in Italy.
 Beyond the windows cornered with marble roses
 A villager carved for a Borgia Pope,
 Above the tower thrust up to a stone sky,
 An old falcon the color of the walls,
 Whose race adapts most easily to castles,
 Half blind and alone, chases
 An imaginary field mouse across Latina.

II

Nothing that was saved remains:
 A dog in the courtyard too old to bark,
 An iron bridge shadows the roots of olive trees,
 Betrayed, a cat in the moat licks itself.
 Chains that rotted heretic and slave bone,

Gossip now of archangels and martyrs,
A headless angel
Sings with collars of bees about his throat,
Three kingless donkeys stray on the hill.
Every man's back breaks.

III

Down a tower passage
I follow a Gregorian summer,
Savior of insects, to a Christ scraped on a wall
By a boot-nail,
Flies humming about in search of a carcass.
Scraped on a wall I see some Liberty:
"January one fifteen-thirty-one
They took the irons off my feet."
Old guests and old hosts in hell and paradise.



OFF TO THE FAIR

Barbed wire and ground glass,
I take to the main event, cutlass
And shield axe and gun I pack
With knife and razor strapped to my back,
An acid bottle with a zig-zag edge,
An eight-inch pipe, a trusted sledge,
Drill, ice pick and tiger fang,
Gunpowder and boomerang,
Six Cobras, and two Great Danes,
Surgical scissors and iron chains.
My bright armor now complete,
Crashes to my lady's feet.



Vern Rutsala

Two Poems

MEETINGS

Some of us wait for them
imagining a clerk somewhere
with gentle fingers cross-filing
the index cards that we are ;
but nearly all move like moles
through the world—sleepwalkers
nudging the furniture of life
and finding strangers dozing
on the couches. But few meet
even in the dark, no matter
how many walk in their sleep,
no matter how blind
they pretend they are.

In the marble deserts of train
stations where couples part and limbs
are torn from family trees,
thoughts dwell perpetually
on empty beds and chairs,
those gifts of absence.
Or boarding planes each plummets
in imagination, leaving only
lists of the dead and next
of kin ; or escaping such fates
returns to find his dog an enemy
and only strangers at his table.



THE COUGH

Lately it's awakened me
at night—
a noose pulled tight
or a hand, taloned and warty,
around my throat.

A cough, like the hook
of a winch in my chest,
reeling me into
the grit-strewn light
of three A.M.

I feel that something
is loosening—knitting
is unraveling,
glue is letting go,
boards are shedding their nails.

Something is trying
to wrench me awake,
someone is trying to speak.
A person—voiceless, alone—
kept hidden within me.



Joanne de Longchamps

DIONYSUS

*"And if there is no god of wine,
there is no love, no Aphrodite either,
nor other pleasure left to men."—Euripides*

1.
Anonymous lips and hands
in the long-limbed forest, the winesalt sea—
Where feeling reels, you reel me in
and, spinning, I do not drown.

A double-gift I understand,
the two-edged thrust of *thou* and *me*.
I ascend to you by going down,
spilled in the yes and no of wine.

2.

By trough and peak of drunkenness,
the scooped and caving wave,
I travel to a land that never was
or failing that difficult farness, float
until your diving hand
claims me for sleep, a dolphin boat
whose mast is looped to vines,
to grapes and moving stars
that stain the sea with light and wine.

Madness is a measure of my peace—
Harvesting the sea we sail
white tides that flow toward Greece.

3.

Man adored is briefly Theseus:
the labyrinthine lust-chase won,
his heat turns inward to self-love,
to bold and private honor.
Woman, lover,
discover that a hero travels cold.

Hopeful Ariadnes held at sea
cry *lucky* if an island intervenes
its green between love's failures;
a Naxos to repair the grief
and shed the cold—
Abandoned by a king, enfold the god:

You of the green fruit,
the black goat,
the flowery name—
And wine and blood are colored as the same.

4.

You are the thick vine plundered of its fruit,
proving your endless lives,
your strength in a grasping root.
From cutting cold, the death by knives
you rise and reassemble, shape
again the hand-like leaves, the elbowed branch,
tendrils for the honeyed grape.

Keep me from the winters made of grief—
Cut back, my flesh will bear
no further garlands—Your immortal leaf
will be the green emblazonment I wear.
For this a god is killed
and still must live;
that love goes hungry and is filled.

5.

Terrible and gentle god,
I tread your balance—
If too great order stifles,
too grave disorder kills.
Discipline and license,
the lessons of your ardor—
In a twofold giving
my donor and destroyer.
And what is broken does not mend,
what is spoken makes its wound.

6.

Your face, Dionysus, the inexorable
visage of necessity in double
image: rapture, tragedy.

Rousing flesh is ready flute and drum—
Those that wine and dancing cannot warm
freeze to their falling bones,

downed by the feet of revelers,
furred and frenzied winter-dancers
racing to high peaks and pleasures

with back-flung head and upturned throat
follow as panthers beneath your yoke,
follow your glowing wand

where beasts come down and the lion's child is charmed
and given suck, white breasts unharmed
and the cradling arms—

In your glance the endless tasks;
death and renewal, a thousand masks
for hunger's pantheon.

The lightning of your eyes,
Dionysus—
and who denies you, dies.



New Books by our Contributors

SISTER MARY GILBERT continues her autobiography with a second volume, *Later Thoughts from the Springs of Silence*, published by Bobbs-Merrill (\$3.95).

EDITH SHIFFERT (sometime Associate Editor) has a new book of poems, *In Open Woods*, published by Alan Swallow (paper, 75 cents).

EARLE BIRNEY has a beautifully produced new book called *Ice Cod Bell or Stone*, published by McClelland & Stewart, Toronto (\$3.50).

JOHN HOLMES

1904 - 1962

THE MESSAGE

Not even Yeats' mediums rapping the table
in the cold-eyed room at midnight were able
to raise the veil and suck a message through.
But the dream persists in which a letter from you
waits for the postman. A cat burglar, meanwhile,
rifles your pockets in the old fashioned tiled
bathroom at the secret end of the upstairs hall.
Whatever you might have said he wads up small,
swipes the loose change, and flushes the evidence.
John Holmes, the dream's at my expense.

Would it have pleased you that the *Times* obit
called you poet and renowned teacher of poets,
and extra cops were ordered up the Hill
to steer the summery crowds who came to chapel?
We squared our backs obediently and chewed
on the gristle of reverent platitudes.
A man deserves to go out on his words:
"It is my own death I count kisses toward,"
you said, in a snug old rhetoric, remote
from the gagging coal that caught in your throat.

Thinking to slip my message past the bored
impersonal divider who stands guard,
I played three angry sets of tennis on
the afternoon we read you out of your bones.
I felt three blisters coming up at deuce
and popped them ceremonially for their juice,
insisting, in a way you'd understand,
on the Mosaic right to give my bad red hand
in penance for my own death left behind
unchosen, and to keep yours raw in mind.

MAXINE KUMIN

About the Contributors

JOHN L'HEUREUX, S.J., is "teaching at Boston College High School, studying English at Harvard, and composing verses in subways." We printed five poems of his a year ago and hope to go on printing him forever.

EVE TRIEM is a San Francisco expatriate and unresigned to living in the rainbelt of Western Washington. Eve is always marvelously attired, as lady poets ought to be (we think). She had eight poems in our fifth issue.

DAVID GALLER is a well-known poet who lives in New York. Macmillan published his book *Walls and Distances* in 1959. He is new to *Poetry Northwest*.

STANLEY COOPERMAN, who teaches at the University of Oregon, is surely the only poet living or dead who has contributed to *Playboy*, *Rogue*, *Swank*, *College English*, and the *Modern Language Quarterly*. This is his first appearance in *Poetry Northwest*.

ROBERT PETERSON also appeared in our fifth issue. He lives in Mill Valley with a new Danish wife and stepdaughter, and his book of poems, *Home for the Night*, will be published in the Spring by the *San Francisco Review*.

LEWIS MEYERS lives in Ann Arbor and spent the summer having hepatitis and winning two prizes (in poetry and essay) in the Hopwood contest. This is another first appearance.

PHYLLIS ROSE says she should be called "sparsely published." She has four children and a Ph.D. from Wisconsin. She is now teaching at Milton College. Still another first.

FRANK JONES is head of the Department of Comparative Literature here and teaches English as well; he has translated Brecht, Euripides, Gide, Goll, Lucian, and Prévert. His poem "The Welcomer" is, he tells us, a rendering of a work by Knarf Senoj, the *doyen* of the Tired Romantic Movement in South Kurdistan. We would have printed the poem in the original, but it consists of a series of inaudible clicks difficult if not impossible to transcribe. However, Dr. Jones wishes to state that the poem really needs to be heard in Kurd.

CHARLES GULLANS had two poems in our eighth issue. His book of poems, *Arrivals and Departures*, is being published by Minnesota this month. Charles has left this University for the University of California at Los Angeles and is much missed.

TRACY THOMPSON has been printed in 115 places in the last two years, everything but *Hudson*, *Kenyon*, *Sewanee* and *Poetry*, he tells us.

ROBIN EVANS is a Reed College graduate, spent a year in Grenoble on a Fulbright, and is presently acquiring a Ph.D. at the University of Washington. This is his first publication anywhere.

ALBERT McLEAN, JR., is transplanted from Maine to Kentucky, where he teaches literature at Transylvania College. This is his first time in *Poetry Northwest*.

ANN LONDON was a founder of *Poems in Folio* and has helped out on this magazine on various occasions. (As long-time subscribers may have noticed, we editors and associates never print ourselves in *Poetry Northwest* while editing and/or associating.) Like Evans, she is a Ph.D. candidate here and last spring won a prize in the Academy of American Poets contest. Unlike Evans, she could also model for *Harper's Bazaar*, if she cared to. (No phone calls, please.)

STANLEY MOSS is an art dealer in New York, who looks, as *The Observer* once remarked, "like a Roman Emperor in a mohair suit." (They said a lot of stuff about us too, but you will have to look it up because modesty forbids.) He is the new poetry editor of *Commentary*. He's new here too.

M. L. ROSENTHAL is madly illustrious. Among eight thousand other distinctions, he teaches at N.Y.U., wrote a book on Pound, and has a critical study called *The Modern Poets*. He is a former literary editor of *The Nation*.

VERN RUTSALA teaches English at Lewis and Clark College with William Stafford, two good pieces of evidence that the Oregons are going to take over this magazine if we don't watch out. He has been published in lots of magazines, but not here till now.

JOANNE DE LONGCHAMPS, making her third appearance here, has a new house in Reno: "I walk in new rooms, learn new trees and house-tops from the windows, listen to a great owl that calls from somewhere, and begin to breathe life into surfaces. . . ."



When we sent a heartbroken letter to MAXINE KUMIN, asking her to write a small tribute, for us, to the memory of JOHN HOLMES, she responded with a big poem. We bless and thank her. And we take pleasure in announcing her new book, *No One Writes a Letter to the Snail*, which Putnam's is publishing this month.



RICHARD GILKEY, Northwest painter, gave us illustrations for our third issue. Now he contributes the cover, a painting called "Table for Poems," and two cuts—one of grapes, one of a pear. Having won a number of major honors in art, he recently had the distinction of being left out of the exhibit of Northwest Painting at the Seattle World's Fair.

Helen Bullis Prize

Poetry Northwest takes great pleasure in announcing the Helen Bullis Prize for the best long poem or group of poems to appear in *Poetry Northwest* annually. The judges are the donor (who wishes to remain anonymous) and an editor of this magazine. The prize of \$100 is given in memory of a former poetry reviewer for the *New York Times*, a friend and contemporary of Harriet Monroe, and a friend to poets everywhere.

HAYDEN CARRUTH receives the first award for the groups of poems appearing in *Poetry Northwest*, Volume II, Numbers 3 and 4. The second award will be granted to a poet chosen from Volume III.

Give Us for Christmas

IF YOU HAVE ADMIRERD past issues of *Poetry Northwest*, if you have friends, if you like our editorial policies and wish to encourage us—please renew your own subscription and send gift subscriptions to cultured friends and relatives.

Gift subscriptions will begin with the Winter 1963 issue, which will contain poems by RICHMOND LATTIMORE, JOHN BERRYMAN, CAROL HALL, JOHN LOGAN, MAURICE ENGLISH, ROBERT KENT, MAY SWENSON, RICHARD KELL, and others.

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