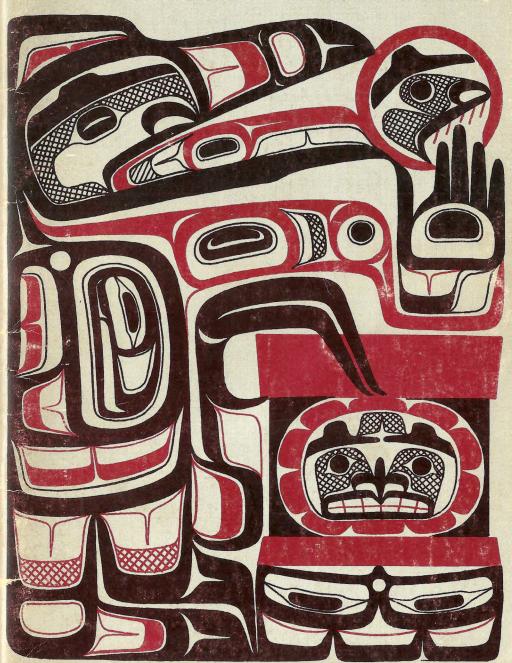
POE/FJ NORTHWEST

WINTER 1969-1970 . VOLUME X . NUMBER 4 . ONE DOLLAR



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Cover from an original drawing by Bill Holm, Lecturer and Curator of Education at the Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum, Seattle. It is titled "Raven Bringing Light to the World," and about it Holm says:

In the midst of his transformation from the grandson of the owner of light to the bird Raven, Yehl, the Tlingit culture hero, raises the moon to the sky with his hand while he grasps the lid of the chest containing the sun with his raven claw.

Holm, a white man, has been called the best living Northwest Indian artist by prominent authorities.

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POETRY NORTHWEST WINTER 1969-70 VOLUME X, NUMBER 4

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POETRY

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POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER 1969-70

Eugene Ruggles

Seven Poems

LINES FROM AN ALCOHOLIC WARD

They lock us up when the sun drops. I keep the senses of five walls that begin to sweat. Across the yard they let the insane walk the dark. Any dance of distractions will do for a hand with nothing hard to hold . . .

I outshoot them all at pool and then shovel my share of coal into the television stove. I can either crown myself with checkers or I can be alone beneath the skirts of a shower.

A man comes this far without courage until he opens himself to find he's a door between two winds, facing a space that's draining, that he's come nowhere, and unable to close.

Though I wrap myself thick with more Rocthke and Blake, behind the pails of coffee it's cold in sleep.

Now there's only the moon.

A full November moon. Nailed

in the corner of a barred window and my hand a yard turning dark.

HITCHHIKING INTO A SPRING STORM IN THE MIDDLE OF OHIO

Near this gravel road a wind is opening the heads of trees. A branch of lightning breaks, clouds come together like boxcars. Glad the only ride in sight is a plow dug into the ground I lift my collar and walk, the sky packed around my face thinking of Sherwood Anderson when he forgot who he was. To my right, cows with their calves are folding themselves together like a herd of flowers. They move as if the storm were a barn above them. Their eyes cover me as the rain begins nailing green against dirt.

WALKING DOWN AN ALLEY IN DETROIT ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

Beneath a lean-to of shadows Negroes hang over four checker players and a rusted barrel lifting smoke around a coffee pot. October circles easy in the alley, inhales, is lined with old heavy clothing.

A few blocks down a Chevrolet factory shifts into its second gear of human bodies. The quart bottle climbing from hand to hand leaps once more, and refills as it sinks beneath the ashes.

When an old man reaches out his dark face packed with scars and clears the board in one move, laughter opens against the brick like a match, like iodine, burning along the Detroit River.

GLIMPSE OF AN OLD MAN'S DEATH

I see him reel near the cliff and fall through a hole in the ocean air—his white face yanked from the night like a tooth.

THE ROOM

It's thirty below for me this January. The skin drifts and the winter moves nearer. I know the sun breeds in a flake.

Just outside a street climbs upward sloping into buildings, the floor of this room is level except for shadows planted in the wood.

The warm quart of wine is gone. I pull the floor up over me, as one wing of moonlight comes down to me—a fog in trousers.

There are never any tracks left the following morning when I leave this room, the door opens like a vein.

A HARNESS

My mother is churning butter between her knees on the porch of the farmhouse, there is no sound of the steps, only a small boy dragging a harness heaped around both shoulders across the short grass.

She wonders about her brothers, the ones still setting out from the fishing village in Nova Scotia pulling old nets, the boards, their lives, the holes shining in them.

The harness spreads open behind the boy. Small bits of darkness fall out of it.

It has hung all winter in the barn weighing as much as the boy, older than the horse who will pull this summer through it. He listens to the dust behind him turning over on its back, its underside burns in the Michigan light. His shoulder blades unfold in the leather. And her hands moving above the churn look to him like two pieces of water if they could feel pain again, gathering together what is left of the morning's milk. As far as it can come from the empty road empties into her lap. The thick smell of the leather begins in the bones of the boy's mouth, as he lifts it over the knees of the old hired man who will rub oil into it.

LOVE'S MIGRATION

6

I lie above you in bed feeling again the great bird explode up from the nest in my back. The sound of wings beating leaves and twigs down through my blood. Though already returning and folding deep in the hollow between my ribs, when this season changes shall we stay and search the land and beat the bushes with a stick to make it rise. or simply be there to remember this beauty it scatters in us . . .

Thomas Iames

Three Poems

SNAKEBITE

Now I am getting light as cotton candy— Out of the two red holes in my heel Infinity pours, goodbye to all of me. It was pleasant to watch my leg begin to swell; An incredible headiness washed over me. I didn't feel a thing. The color of a bluebottle.

The sky hit my skin like water from a pitcher. I remember only a limber brown stick Without any fangs, then the cool white stretcher Where I became part of an unamusing joke And the sun became a singular gold adder. Which gathered its constricted shape and struck.

First I dream of wool, and then of water, The bridge gone out under my footsoles. Sleep eddies under everything pure as a colt's star. These ladies in white speak a mouthful of bells. They let the sleep rush out of me like air Out of an innertube, smudging their white walls.

Watching milady through the wrong end of the telescope, I suck the glass pencil at noonday. Here is a pale horse, they say; this is his stirrup. I ride on my own diminishing. I grow gray In the mild contagion of my sleep. The light spreads its thin skin and grows muddy.

They feed me through tubes and comfort me with needles. Where are the nubile, white-winged ladies Who populate these immaculate halls? The young men who view me have sulphur-blue jaws That do not complain. They bring me bottles Of adamant, they move quietly as butterflies

And are upon me when I least expect it. Everything I leave behind is ubiquitous, Even the undependable broad daylight Which grows thinner each time I raise my eyes To watch the centuries stream from my foot And the whole world rock backward into place.

NORTHWEST

GANGRENE

All morning I have been turning into jade. Ambushing the semiprecious bone, It takes me in my swivel-bed

Where I watch my toes go out one by one. A Victorian lady changes the sheets every Sunday, The pigeon-colored nurses leave me alone

With clouds fingerprinting on the grapeskin sky. I nestle in these white, icy hillocks
As the nurses clip me clean as a boy.

I am inattentive to their deepest looks. Now I have whitewashed walls and a white pitcher, Armloads of white, virginity that speaks.

Light blunders in rich and gold as beer From a world where people wake and kiss, Images shaken free on dark water.

I await the syringe, its needleful of brightness, As my leg yields to a century of stone. I am a fossil, hugging its dry rose.

I wake slowly, just at the outskirts of pain. A light-winged lady rushes off into the dark, Her beacon red as my garnet tiepin.

Nobody minds me at all now as I suck Greedily at darkness, its flaky soot Blown in at the window crack.

A mouthful of honey. Under my bedlight I am a park statue, I am all verdigris, Tenable as an old penny. Tonight

Nobody stops at the door. In the hospital garden The moon rises like a white button out of a bed Of brown chrysanthemums. Sickness

Begins to mount me like a bright counterpane, Intractable and ripe as a middleaged bride, And my head goes under. Dark is a sudden kiss.

THE POINSETTIAS

I have grown accustomed to the pallors of stone. The scalloped, tissuepaper sheath disclosed Brightness like an inflammation.

They packed me off to blackness, sleep-crazed, Riding an armory of potent needles Toward a dark I hardly recognized.

A clear balloon, the intravenous bottle Bobs on its rubber string, nursing The sting under my skin. Death-rattle,

Whimper, sob, and whine vibrate along The corridor walls. The poinsettia petals flare, Each a forked red tongue.

Hell is a blue light. The devil's granddaughter Turns me on the rotisserie, Broiling my juices to a vapor.

Light returns, a punctual mist crowding the eye. Infection stews in a region behind my eyelids. My veins bloom blue as the sky.

My belly stitched with a tough black thread, I am snug as a turkey. Love is a wound that will happen. Veteran ragdoll with split sides,

A woman coughs her stitches open Across the hall. I count the four brown prongs Of a crucifix. Bright petals deepen,

Collapsing on the bureau top. The dinnerbell rings, All whiteness. I am the virgin bridegroom, white, Chastened by these hot tongues.

The birch outside my window, in a snowy light, Stands in a waist-high drift, austere, complete, Essential as the edge of sleet.

A GOOD FOX

The fox ran, everyone ran after. The fox's care: he drew out the pack, he ran so we ran with him

Glimpsed red on the field, he ran to his wood, to his own cover, the light trembled across him. He ran into holes, under leaves, across water, ran in the open, everyone ran

Water never tires over the stones, it is the stones are milled down.
The fox never tired. He worked at running.
Not for fox but for the running we went, the fox knew it. Under the star he lay down, he knew he was nothing we wanted

We knew he was fox, running out on the sly fields, we knew he was red meat and bone and nothing but fox. So we ran, we just ran, he with us

And the fox runs alone, peers through bracken red against red, slinks to the house, appears by the hedge, no one after him

We tired of the game, fox, we tired of your red slash on the skyline. We tired of your pause and turn and run on with a shake of the head. We tired of nothing but fox, we learned better. We tired of nothing but fox, but a good fox

SKULL

Worms, moles, water and grasses have brought down the mountains—the landscape presses its messages. The hurts come together, the eye opening on light, a shrill of insects

flooding the ears, the paranoid skull. Let it all go down, blue water of lakes like prayer in the rocks, bracken, sticks, the woods and the shivering creatures invading the threads, the warm cells, the bone canals weepy with blood. Pain raises its monuments, the dead thick as porridge in Flanders go down. the villages make do with an obelisk. Let it all go down the voices cry on under the helmet. The stone image presents arms: it was there it was real-motion of shoulder. too long in the sleeve, the set jaw. He writes postcards, sneaks through wire, he crouches again in the muck, he envies the dead brother and the snails, he trails home like a black sulking wing fresh from nowhere, the dreams ready their sights and their knivesnothing now but this blood, this cry out

Let it all go down let it all go down till the bone hood shatters and the roots break in

PERSISTENT NARRATIVE

The speaker opens his mouth. The lovers lie down together. The boy is sent to the war.

The last train leaves the city.
The sky clouds over with ruin.
The animals step back into shadow.

The speaker opens his mouth.

The fields are trampled by horses.

Children crouch down in the ashes.

Survivors wait at the frontier. Two armies meet in a forest. The lovers take off their clothes. The speaker opens his mouth.
An earthquake topples the belltower.
The boy lies down in a cornfield.

Soldiers patrol all the streets. The grocer has run out of flour. The girl dreams of a wheatfield.

The speaker opens his mouth. Now the woman sweeps out her house. Now there is a christening.

The ship enters the harbor. The girl waves her red scarf. The lovers cry out in their love.

And at last it is still. And the speaker says I shall begin. The children are all asleep.

Elizabeth Libbey

Two Poems

POINT RECONCILIATION

For Kit

This is the ocean we mention—iron steps, the beach, till its watcheyes tow you loose. The gullman will come holding bones on his arm, a heavy tongue to lick you clean, his seastar bag to put you in. What marks his mask among the turning rocks? He rolls a dark moon on its beam, his coat is like your breath—death is on his feet like stocking silk. You would sink if your ship reeled off nine miles toward a street you didn't know. You'd see him on your wrist, nailing down the pilings of the wharf—fish him in and wait for what tide could take to the moon. I've seen him sitting in the fire of the river.

Who is the woman drawn in ink against his mouth? She leans across my shoulder, smears a river on her ocean etching, blacks the sky in cinder—makes me in my eye, a gullwing blue, a bubble on your dancing waterfire.

NEW YEAR

Outside your glass: daffodils early by the warm stone of your porch, horses you don't own, nosing grass, winter hay uneaten. Is this another year for us, a first plane in from the east on ice? We hear engines hot over our mountain, wake the coals to red. Flames thread our eyes together, hold the mountain back to corners of this house. Flowers folded on a shelf will last. I dream that stems grow like spring to our bed.

Pete Winslow

Three Poems

BARRICADES OF WELCOME

Welcome from the Kiwanis and Rotary
Said the sign by the road block
Welcome said the mayor
Locking all doors with the key to the city
Each motel had a sign that said welcome
But the wind whistled through the rooms
And there was no furniture
The Chamber of Commerce gave you a map
Showing the way out of town
An angry mob carrying welcome signs
Chased you across the city limits
You could hear it for miles as you ran down the highway
An insane cry of welcome welcome
You were well on your way to learning the language of
the place.

WHEATIES AND BEER

Wheaties are terrible with beer But there isn't anything else to eat And I'm hungry

Two things I always seem to have Are Wheaties and beer It was inevitable they'd get together

So I am having Wheaties and beer And reading about Bob Richards Director of the Wheaties Sports Federation

He says, "There's no limit
To what a man can do
If he believes in himself and works hard"

That's right, he can eat dry Wheaties without sugar Washing them down with beer By the refrigerator light, nude in the cold.

ACID HOTEL

I'm stretching the imagination in the acid hotel The doorman has a piece of it The chambermaid has tucked some into the beds The bellboy has suitcases of it everywhere There is imagination in the swimming pool, leering at the ladies There is imagination in the lobby, like a sleeping bum They'll throw it out soon And there will be imagination on the sidewalk, threatening to go out into the city Soon only the suburbs will be free of imagination The doorman can't hold the imagination It's running out his pockets as he opens the door for people Who are affected with imagination and open it themselves The imagination is getting out of bed Dressing and going about its business The swimmer imagination has irradiated the water with ideas The towels and bathmats are wet with imagination Imagination is getting into the food The steam on the windows is imagination The flag on the roof is waving in the breeze of imagination

Imagination goes into mass production
Watch out foreign countries, there are airplanes of imagination
The suburbs are under siege
Tanks of the imagination are going ahead of the infantry
Beautiful spies of the imagination are crossing the lines
They are showing their legs in the bars of the suburbs
It won't be long now
Children are taking imagination home to their families
Imagination is knocking on the windows of old folks' homes
Women are running shrieking from the clothes of imagination
they find in their closets
Imagination is gushing through huge holes in the city limits
And in the acid hotel
Amid celebrations of the triumph of imagination
A man nobody looks at checks in with a suitcase of despair.

John Holbrook

A CLEAN SWEEPING

If not by chance then as luck would have it, area dogs are showing well in residential districts. Even the farmer who loved his cow as much as he loved to kick it lost a leg. A week ago a local doctor spent the day off prescribing noise for curious tourists, though no one really gave a good hoot. And on Main Street, two flights above it all, desk boys were doing it with fans again, this time like Marines training for control. God's honor.

Saturday, the Woman's Auxiliary painted the park rocks green and the hydrants red. High spots hit the sun and the wind got the dickens. Sunday was another ball game, a real shocker. It was the Hip Sirs against the Title Seekers and their managers for a case

of cold beer and a couple of girls out on their first base picnic.

Although news that Moscow admits it and agencies better than blue chips are questioning existence, wheat and corn are on the skids, hogs are sliding home, beef's at the end of the line, and goobers, a la Alabama, are fouling out, striking for perspective experience. Across the board, hand bags and hat pins are in demand. In Hungry Horse, Coram, and Ronan, featherbedding's exclusive. In Poland, metals are mutual, on top once more in gleaming engineering.

And so, after a good day's catch, the very latest up to date, ends up wrapped up and fine in the crunch of cold fish cuts.

Dennice Scanlon

DREAM HOUSE

I've read, in dreams a house is a symbol of yourself. Mine are pieces of pipe railing, stairs settling under the porch mining trucks pass. A road is bad for chasing dogs. Bigger shovels took the lawn, mother, her lilac to a different yard and father not missing flowers.

Thirty years it was red against a closet of empty barrels. Above our winewood, rugs that weave people who creep and call through hollow teeth. "Are you the builder, hand on my shoulder, my hand the fortune? Will you trade?" I tell on noises in the morning, the drone of gas in a stove. Lie or games the same. Faces burn out.

I recall the woman, a patterned shopping bag with oranges, talked of night and ghosts are really trees that never grew. "Can you case a spell?" "Such a nice girl. You'd like

a plum." I'm still small at the dry bed of a stream. Crockery and water. I bring this heebie-jeebie to make a creek and sail the cup until it breaks. If one stick was left to pound where foundation's dirt, what ritual would bring bricks back, a wet spot on the sand?

What is a house? A claim to life you own? All you can give to be torn down? Change. New frames are strong. Marble. Scotch. Do you save the oldest rocks for last to see if staying was better? The blade is closer now and someone drives this hearse without a face. I don't know why we go so fast until cheekbones form or our eyes begin to match. No sound of trucks like my heart against a hundred springs.

Wesley McNair

LEAVING THE COUNTRY HOUSE TO THE LANDLORD, FIVE YEARS LATER

For D.M.

Outside, the landlord undertakes the landscape While he waits. He is ignoble In his t-shirt, jiggles A little above the taut power Of his mower.

But he gets things done.
When he puts his chain saw once
Into our shade tree, it twists and falls.
Its branches look up startled
From the ground.

Inside, I curse him for coming. It is in the dining room. Blank walls undo the voice of my anger; You look up from naming boxes And shrug.

Behind you on the wall a hook has left A hole open like a mouth.

I half see it, the way, taking out

Boxes, I notice your writing thin as tendril And misspelled.

His family drives in.
The car is in love with size,
Wanders into the front lawn by our truck
And stops: its chrome grille tips and grins.
There's the big wife

Who came at supper once when light was amber On our table and our books lay Behind glass in another room and the cats Riffled their bright fur, telling us how She'd fix the place.

The children watched her flat voice hang In the air. It was as if they were dreaming She was there, they were so awed. Closing a door on upside-down dining chairs, I, too, am dreaming.

And the dream goes on. It will not stop; I can't awaken. We are still moving out of the old cape. In the front yard another tree Has foundered. It leans on one side like An exhausted fish;

The family outside seems underwater, Moving onto the floor of the new space. Slowly, the boyfriend is bumping the strange, angry Saw against a branch. Blue smoke blooms And rises.

The daughter is pleased—her sane Skin wavers in the light. The wife Is too big: In a kinder dream She might lift slowly upward Carrying her clear

Modern window planned for the upstairs Far beyond the upstairs. But here She just remains too big And does not budge from earth. Meanwhile, the landlord

Judges in his baseball cap the calves Of the boy, how well they know A motor. He is at home With enterprise and things that go, And when he shouts

Commands that drift sleepy as bubbles, Inaudible above the raging saw, We both can hear them say: "You are awake. And what you've dreamed Are your five gentle years."

Gibbons Ruark

Two Poems

NIGHT TAKES US

Night takes us out of doors to a newsstand Where I squint through smoke At the headlines: Peace Talks At A Stand-Still, Still A Slim Hope For Miners trapped underground by land-

Slides and multiple explosions. Your eyes Rake the candy rack For the brightest wrapper as the pained eyes Of survivors take My breath and hold my gaze in a vise

Hard on the picture of their suffering.
The sudden widows
Waiting to be wives, the mothers waiting . . .
I feel your hand close
On mine and we are in the cold and going

Home, slanting up the street to walk between Dark dormitories. You are laughing and looking for unseen Children in the trees Who answer back with only your own keen

Laughter. "Daddy?" "What?" I'm trying to see The miners crawling

For breath in the tunnel caving . . . "Daddy?"
Tunnel collapsing
Like a blown lung, trying without any

Luck to get clear to one of them only
Tearing heat from his
Face that clings like a death-mask . . . "What?" "Daddy,
Please, listen to this.
I laugh and laugh and my voice comes to me

In the air." I tell you it's an echo.
"You laugh and your voice
Bounds off the wall and travels back to you.
It's like the noise
Of your laugh is a rubber ball you throw

Against the wall." I laugh to hear my own Echo, but we are out In the open air where you break and run Ahead of me shout-Ing. I take a cold breath as you fly down

The walk, leaving behind you in your track Your single laughter Rising on your breath, which in this black And endless weather Will not come back to you, though nothing holds it back.

FINDING THE PISTOL

Dragging a rake through the layers of my sleep Blown down like leaves in a dream of weather, I haul to light as through a developing water Something the child has never seen before, Though she knows it clearly for a kind of weapon. It is a snub-nosed pistol, gray and scabbed with rust The color of blood or the leaves that covered it. She fondles it and turns it over in her hand Until I see it batten on her knuckle Like a damaged finger and she cannot let it go. She aims it at me out of every bush And I can hear the hammer clicking like a shutter. Someone is taking a picture of me.

It comes up smoking through the leaves of water And smiles down at me from my father's gallery. I never saw till now the thing I nestled in my hand And pointed like a finger at the camera. I never knew before who took the photograph, Who lost a heartbeat when he heard the hammer fall, As it will no more than once or twice in our Overlapping lives, on an empty chamber.

Marilyn Hacker

EXILES

Her brown falcon perches on the sink as steaming water forks over my hands. Below the wrist they shrivel and turn pink. I am in exile in my own land.

Her half-grown cats scuffle across the floor trailing a slime of blood from where they fed. I lock the door. They claw under the door. I am in exile in my own bed.

Her spotted mongrel, bristling with red mange, sleeps on the threshold of the Third Street bar where I drink brandy as the couples change. I am in exile where my neighbors are.

On the pavement, cans of ashes burn. Her green lizards scuttle through the light around torn cardboard charred to glowing fern. I am in exile in my own sight.

Her blonde child sits on the stoop when I come back at night. Cold hands, blue lids; we both need sleep. She tells me she is going to die. I am in exile in my own youth.

Lady of distances, this fire, this water, this earth make sanctuary where I stand. Call off your animals and your blonde daughter. I am in exile in my own hands.

Ernest Sandeen

WHAT TO DO AT THE END

There ought to be something quick to make a life nearing done appear.

Maybe a maul to crumble the slag away in one stroke and release

a dance in granite. Or, a veil to whip off so I can see.

and without my antique face on my daughter's eyes, can say to her, look.

Hurry, my son is talking statements, statements, and I hear nothing

but questions. Like doves they brush the window with leafing twigs pilfered

to foretell his years still deep in the tide. What to do with lives

that begin and end shaped like water. Here I am my boy,

can you see me my girl. All I say is quick quick and like

any drowning child I can only tell quick means alive.

John Mella

Two Poems

DEFENSIVE

Now cars come out in the evening With their lights out

Planes skim close to the buildings
With pictures of pilots' faces glued in the windows
"We are going to try
To touch one as he goes through"
Shadows struggle like children moving upstream
A moon makes motions through a roof
Like a man signaling that he is about to be drowned by water
And stars drop without resistance into some tar smeared over this window

At the end of a street
Some cars glide to a halt
Their lamps are painted with black hands over them

Fields of skeletons Heap themselves higher To frame an answer

SOLITUDE

"I wash my combings down the drain because (I know you will find this hard to believe) the fish get lonely, and I have no need for them anyway.

"In the corner which is empty and which no one visits I let my shadow stay. It is blue at the edges and trembles when you look at it.

"Now that the dishes are done I am careful to get them dirty again since the cupboard doesn't mind being empty.

"And the rug—that floral design: I have preserved it for you by walking over it for all these years. It has become yours.

"For you, especially now you are gone, I indent the pillow with some care. The deep crease, where the head has slumped over into sleep, could surely have been made by no one else."

CROSS-COUNTRY RUNNERS

Sir, we came to your forest dressed in white with our pure speed held back for the finish, came with only love of the clock and the underfooting and the other feet.

Sir, like whirlwind tourists of London, Rome and Paris we came, did not turn to follow the possum down a side path or our inclinations deeper into the darkness.

Forgive us, I swear the dazzling sense of things more durable than ourselves didn't hit us till we rested against a tree near the gymnasium.

AFFIRMATION

24

The young boys roll down the hill, laughing like crickets. The grass submits to them. They take its color on their white backs. At the bottom, enthralled with their bodies and their dizziness, they look up at their mother who has imagined they have just tumbled from her womb into a world less dark. She applauds. They play dead as stones, then suddenly burst into boys once more, running up that long slope to where they began. Beneath a tree, stretched out with my dog, I spread apart the grass and kiss the earth.

POEM FOR AN OLD LOVE

A smooth sheet frames my face. I settle a bent back along the long warm warp of your body: a common arc, a kept ritual.

I order myself to your breathing held in by the curve of your arm. Nothing stirs but your breath and outside the snow is falling.

I follow your feet in snow. You track stepping stones that take us a long way to wherever it is we're going.

Old poems sung to disorder would celebrate muddled sheets, unsettled snow, the quick insistent heat that touch discovers.

The familiar weight of your body keeps me in whatever shape you make. I follow an ancient order to a beginning, bent like a rib to your breathing.

AFTER VISITING A STUFFED APE AT THE JAMES BRINKLEY NATURAL HISTORY WING

If I stand just so, I can see myself growing out of a dead ape's skin.

My head blooms a bright peony where black hide pounds pink at the chest.

This glass box plays odd tricks.
Grant's Gazelle, Coke's Harte Beeste;

tacked on names spell out cut heads. Even the walls in this room are named for men. From where I stand in this fur edged lace the trick seems simple: know what you're called.

But old ape, they've left you whole in cold glass with no name in sight.

You stretch out the wrong hand claiming me with a dark sweep,

in safe from moths and disturbing flies, but I've been in that glass cell

and saw the head of a warthog speak in lumps so ugly I did not listen.

The walls charge in on a lowered tusk; I knuckle down to the African dead.

My bones grow thicker, my brain case shrinks. I stand thickset with extra ribs

an ungodly target. Names ring out like bullets to fix me for someone's room of oddities.

I am linked with an ape who has a flower for a brain, whose heartbeat is in the head of a woman.

We stand waiting for what we're called.

John Judson

THE LINEAGE OF INDIAN PONIES

I have felt the moss pulse in my left arm, the woodsmell covers my thoughts, and in my laugh, the stain of bittersweet caught in barbed wire. But there are still the ponies.

Mornings, when the wind comes out of the cottonwoods with that silver delight that occupied Huck's laughter, and I hear the sound of the applause

mounting at the Royal Nonesuch,
I have visions of a prize carp,
a puffed-up raw fish made dandy on a plate of dandelions,
its smile a carpet bag full of wild flowers,
its long hair ratty as a stamped field
left by Evangelists on Friday.
But there are still the ponies.

And on Monday, blue after the sleep of the Sabbath, when the lone ghost of my father rises in the snow looking always toward that leak of daylight, the hum of his voice snarled in Whitman's beard, trapped under fields and fields of evergreen, looking always toward the mountain,

there are still the ponies: their thighs full of hurtling cloud, their gray rage spawned by the sun and my daughters, their eyes: my sons, champed by visions of dark green valleys on the moon.

Joseph Beatty

A PRAYER FOR THE LIVING ROOM FURNITURE OF THE MANSIONS OF HEAVEN

Let there be deep armchairs no one remembers
Ever buying. Let them collect objects
Offhandedly, beads and bracelets, embers
From last winter's incense, the unpolished bishop
From grandfather's chess set—in the holes
Under the cushions—and, under the sagging bottoms,
At least one marble, a king exiled from the Bicycle
Playing deck, his corner marked by a thumb
Into a crease. And more. All of these lost heirlooms,
In principle, recoverable. There being eternal anodyne,
Settling into heaven's living room,
In finding, here and there under our feet, time.

David Zaiss

CHILD'S PLAY

All the other girls wore sleep Over their heads, dreams raining asterisks In blue water pastures. Yawning, Between your fingers, you can't remember Stuffing the furnaces with sheep and doll's Underthings, the walls holding in sharp Fist-sparks like passels of nebulae.

I am working tonight on rocks
Dull as mind trying to walk
Past the sleeping lions. You have lost
Weight, a false dusk spooking surf.
As I sculpt between ribs
For the right eclipse, and Aquarius
Lassoes ship-thick mountains
With webs of spittle,
Brightcap Bringer of Wood nods.
The animals above are impossibly quiet.
The sky's cook skitters into the cottage
But our ears against the wall
Flash grins from an ogre's gut.

The fire we begin to see
Is alive with people upon the wide grass
Waving questions in the stems of pale
Daphne and sour lilac. We say
We have gone around the day's island.
They become stars. Then
In short sibilants like stalactite
Your memory is created out of the earth.
I inch a boat
Of finespun fossil and crisp hair
Parts of whalebone and white head
With a pink doll for bowsprit
Toward the burning fields between your thighs,
Bragging, putting red where it belongs,
Shuffling my feet through the broken glass.

The clock counts itself and bells. Rockets knife the morning, sweet

Toothless beast on top of breakfast.
Rolling like cowboys following cows
To the smell of water, what have we done,
Wordless in the air, dream-hungry,
With the wildfire we put to bed?
I wake you to mainland
And birds' nests, a touch
Of child's play in your eye.

Morton Marcus

FROM "THE SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAIN POEMS" from "SOME CHANGES"

I
Today steps out of my life
as easily as it stepped in.
I am a doorway
between the absence of one room
and the lack of another.

With every step
I stream from my body.
By the time I reach
the top of the hill,
I'm a brook
flowing the other way.

3
Between the stone and the leaf there's an absence with my name. I fulfill the meaning of water merely by being here.

If I am the earth who is the water?
Each of my teeth says a different name.
Yet I am the name

not spoken.
A little rain,
a little wind.
You have not seen me,
yet I am here.

5
I am beginning to be in several directions.
The wind sniffs me, the water nudges my fat. A procession of corners appears at every turn.
I swarm into silence.

Paul Nelson

CARGO

Sourmouthed with coffee, you steer the road like a disconsolate tanker off again to Alexandria with the same sullen cargo.

At the crest of the hill you are a skin-diver swaying over the village, drab and huddled as brain coral in a silt-storm swept up by the passing of great fish.

Everyday you can almost see something you want from here, something to catch your breath and dive for. But instead you circle slowly, drift down like a hesitant gull to the town dump, find everything dreaming and damp.

Here are rooms like coral pockets, networks of living things, ghosts at least of a fine old city. Like the last man you cruise knowing it isn't Alexandria, though you'd set out for there; no delicious odor of natives seeps into the streets. It is merely Atlantis.

But at night the zeal of these houses eats you. Austere in nightclothes local hierophants wrap you in electric eels, call forth the Mantas with Khala and fishes of Bosch to tremendously mouth YES OF NO. The seahorse questions your eyes and by dawn all is settled but the silt and your dour remains.

You spoil for such average nights, don't you? But you keep to morning and the stern, civilized wake of desire that fouls your mouth as you run on crusty gut to practical Egypt.

V. H. Adair

NOTES FROM THE MENTAL HOSPITAL

MANIC VALENTINE

What the heart was, we shall have to examine.
All the red paint had been spilled by a landmine,
The violets gangrened and the roses ruptured.
The lollipops and the lacepaper turned
To a ballet of skeletons hanging up rags.
The pair of doves, when you came close,
Was something a dog left to bake in the sun.
The ribbons pulled out of a corpse; the pretty
Inscriptions hardened on the outhouse floor.
And now for the heart—was it potholder? coinpurse?
Or hydrogen gadget in a bomb-bay? Fasten
The flap with a kiss of bubonic spittle;
Send it to the world with a sigh, unsigned.

Paul Hunter

SABOTAGE

I shout to keep my mouth open, hinges working at concrete foundations the flesh pours fast asleep with the worst blueprint in mind I've ever spotted, nothing light as the night sky, nor even rotten hearted like trees downed in springtime, nor so lovely feeble as a late leaf's skeleton, no

this is some war contractor's notion I'm waking up to, how you make a body last the run the human race breaks down to a divine snail's pace the moment hats are off and the air all clears of dark smoke signals and flashes that meant well for shooting pictures and the hard sell that boxed me and billed me later,

here I go, voice cracking out of hatred, through cheap plywood and bone forms I just set afire, guards guards I call, come on in quick step with me, shoot your scatterguns off first in warning at the roof of this warehousing, let it leak some stars, charge the boss's den right past me, blast away my sockets' lit cigars.

Daniel J. Langton

A POEM ABOUT MY LIFE

I would find the road, and then the house, Trying to look neat. "Well, there you are; Before we start let's have some food." Blue water pot, red faces, and white arms. "Pay for my time, the other things don't count, Materials and such. I have a hand That all can read. I'll show you if you want,"

So we would talk of price, my city fingers
Moving round the air, more strong than tough,
Making it seem to be right there already.
"We need it soon. This very day."
I nod, to say I know, for he has sought me out,
It was the name he heard, he says,
When he went into town and asked.
We sip at coffee with the bargain struck.

They place a table near the well's green edge
And I line up my pens, the way I do.
The children come and watch me work,
Led by the boy who means to do it too.
I let them stay, and let them see it
As it comes along, and hold it up
And, since they're young, show them
With what care I joined the reason's edge
And how it fit, just snug and fine enough,
And how it seemed one thing when first you looked
But when you looked again it seemed another.

Finishing as the children fooled around, The parents back and walking toward the well, Ready to read, and time enough to see. I'd hand it over, and I'd watch his eyes.

And then he'd read it out
And they would ooooohh and aaaaahh,
And then he'd pass it round
And they would pick out best
And next to best and so, the boys all fine,
The girls as grave as teachers, waiting
To see it grow inside them
Or to be of no account.

They'd fall to quiet, looking one to one, I'd stand up then to go, and we'd shake hands, I'd start across the yard in yellow light.
Turning to fix the gate, and not too shy, I'd call across the evening, "Tell your friends."

HEARST CASTLE

The hills look like green visors from the squat terminus. You must not eat an apple or smoke in this strange principality whose legionnaires, the bus drivers, protect a daily ceremony that does not take place.

No one lives here. This is not a place but a condition. Only things are real: the cushioned vestibules, the onyx plinths, ingenious joists the previous occupant built to hold the past like a reliquary.

From his master bedroom over the cabildo, as in the Pacific history strained and spread, he saw his grand pools and menageries studding the hillside like accomplishments. He built no balustrade for ghosts to throng.

Each morning, on the hard nether slope, a few puffs of a donkey engine take ten thousand dollars' worth of mercury. At Christmas time the corporation still comes to kill the succulent wild deer.

BALLAD OF THE TOY TIN SOLDIER

In the casement window of a provincial shop stood a toy tin soldier erect upon his shelf.

He loved the dancer in the high window, but she never looked down; drop by drop her image formed in his heart's tin.

Did somehow the goblin Jealousy unlatch the casement so the soldier skirred out like a leaf? Who is it that lurches into the dark toy shop, dribbling a thin trail of rust, like blood? It is the toy tin soldier.

gimpy, one-eyed, back from harrowing the sewers and the water rats with his hairpin sword.

The moon turns everything to camphor: at her window, high, he sees a wax white dancer with little glass eyes.

Gary Gildner

HAROLD FOGEL COULD BE ANYWHERE

The girls of St. Mary's school were given in puberty three all-embracing (legal, religious) rules.

One, do not wear patent leather shoes. They reflect your underwear.

Remember the man who looked at his face in the pool too long? Dead as a cat.

Next, never forget to take a newspaper when later you go on a date. In case he should ask you to sit on his lap there is his napkin!

Question? Oh, you understand; thank you. Three, after filling

the tub sprinkle the surface with talcum. This will, believe us,

eliminate visions when getting in. Now, one more thing before you go: God

in all His glory made the trees and they are good and even necessary.

But from vast experience we know that little boys can climb them very fast

—especially when little girls are walking down below. So remember, please

keep fast around the neck, not to mention elsewhere too.

John H. Stone

IN THE BATH

I believe what you are

as you rise over the two-kneed camel.

the whale's belly,

and the five-toed sloth drowns without a struggle.

Treacherous, you lap my nose like an island. Deeper, there is a double roar: the sea in the shell, the red cells looping in the brine my mother made.

We are all swimmers, inside and out.

Water and salt sustain us till the spit of the last trumpet.

The sound you make leaving is the suck of animals down a yortex

a sound learned in the long canal.

Now one-thousandth of my daily skin is gone, grown, gone again.

I will leave a ring where we last met.

Terry Reid

FOR POETS GRADING FRESHMAN PAPERS

I sit in front of my class, a Sergeant Handing out the mail: "I have read All your letters. There is nothing But bad news. No one has enclosed A naked Goddess; your mothers Are all dying, your brothers And sisters have all been raped— You might as well burn them." You look Through them anyway, fingering them Like last week's girl friends, knowing All the while you learn nothing From strangers. "You have your orders, Men." My soldiers march out mumbling In single file to die In Dorm Number Three, Medbury, Houghton House, over a bowl of beef stew.

I let them go, look out the third floor Window. They are not quite ants: They move through the grass like summer Brushfires in Kansas and Nebraska.

Let us call the role: Theodore
Roethke from the grave, Reed Whittemore,
Poets of the Academic Community,
Repeat after me: "No we are not nothing
Without our soldiers, our uniforms."
We only await court-martial,
We wait for some naked Goddess
To take off our stripes, our tin
Hats, for all of them, for all of us
To undress each other and dance
By the death of our own cold fires.

POEM TO MYSELF

All day I waited and nothing came no one told me

Now alone with far below the night swimmers shining in a splash of voices the broken words of my own voice have carried me into rocks to the dark mountain

FINAL SPEECH

we shall look away no longer
we shall be afraid, but not hide
we shall be the ancient children
who will die in the black stones of the rain
and be born again over and over
we shall touch the grass
which grows anyway
whether loved or despised
and the trees, taller than arms or cities

we shall each live the dream planted deep in our flesh before birth

I will remember you as young and certain alive and endless in the myth woven only for you

the patterns of your children dancing, crossing the night

Kenneth Salls

SCHICKLGRUBER DANCES WITH THE RABBI from "FOUR POEMS AFTER ADOLF HITLER"

My teeth are stolen, dentists refuse me. I have sat for twenty-three years alone in beer halls, decomposing. Old burgomasters show me maps of underground railways, color snapshots of expansive, thick-walled haciendas.

I must nod and gesture to animate my charcoal body, a sideshow barker's attraction: a Nordic Golem carved from twelve million kidney stones.

I am bankrupt, I pawn sacks of epaulets clipped from the shoulders of boy lovers, lovers who once oiled my boots with slick death.

I dance, my feet smoulder, I am exhausted. My blood aches of benzedrine.

I dream, standing on depot platforms, waiting for that piano wire song, that quick, red refrain.

Robert Hersbon

Two Poems

THIRD GENERATION HOT NIGHT

I can't get comfortable no matter how I lie Everything sticks The dirty sheet loves me but I want to sleep Digging in the wet sand where the boat is buried
The sky is dark green
I know what we will find
I kiss the fat girl everywhere to encourage her to help but she hesitates
I may have lost my power here I am terrified of my fury

I could wake up get up It might be better outside

The streets of Boston which I know to be New York are also hospital corridors I can't find you I was late and you are gone My best friends are discovered to have been in town for months and they never called me Why didn't you wait? When I find you slowly slowly pour black ink on me

I am wet lying here hot
Something scratching at the window screen
is in my chest
There are children in the other rooms
They dream of lions and desertion
faces in the light fixture
I thought you laughed in your sleep
The weight between my legs is intolerable
I can't get comfortable
no matter how I lie

You'll have those nightmares too my father told me Fear and rage will make you scream He was shaving I was watching He said it casually just mentioning a birthright He remembered his own father's screams His hard little father At 5 o'clock this morning my hands were on your throat I thought I was screaming No you were screaming I was moaning you said but I thought I was screaming My hands were on your throat

My father has also promised me third generation stomach pains

OPENLY EXPRESSED AFFECTION BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY UNIT

then i call the children back into the dining room

you're a very lucky little girl you know that why don't you give your father a great big kiss for what he's done for you today and don't forget your mother and say honey have you got one for me too and you son are you too old to kiss your father sure go ahead go ahead and your mother what's wrong with your mother sure go ahead and missus why not give your husband a kiss too sure he's a good fella sure go on dad kiss them all you can be proud of what you've done for them today go on sis give your brother a kiss go ahead boy kiss her again sure and they're all chasing each other around that table kissing each other and hugging each other and kissing each other and kissing each other sure kissing each other

believe me harry that's one sale that'll never cancel

James DenBoer

THE QUAIL

For Herbert W. Gottfried

Parkman tells us that the Algonquin local gods, or *manitous*, sometimes "assume human proportions; but more frequently they take the form of stones, which, being broken, are found full of living blood and flesh."

]

The gray quail peck along our fence-line, perky and quick; when the dogs range along their noses into brambles and under the pines eaten by red spiders, the quail whirr everywhere at once.
They follow their piping into the air.

Two geldings gallop under the live oaks. The bitch slinks under barbed wire to chase the mule, who turns back suddenly, head low, lips curled, and the dog slides on its tail in the wet clover. I stoop to roll a stone into weeds; it could cut tires in our rutted road.

Manitou, manitou of our sixteen acres, the trees rustle high overhead when you pass; you crack the mule's hoof. Live oak bleeds red at the core, and the eucalyptus breaks its branches in the night—awake, I hear the wild doves muttering on the wires.

2

In a stone, my blood lives and beats in my ears; dark and thin, my flesh feeds on itself—manitou within, local god, break open through my eyes! Like the quail, I will rise up out of the cold ground, singing; will dance on the soft earth.

POETRY

Mulch of our bones, stone ground, worked by red worms, turned with humus, black dirt of the orange grove, I put my boots lightly at angles on your skin. Our world is a stone.

My Mexican friends—Johnny,
Bebe, Pedro, Chazzo, Uncle Bob—
bounce in the old truck
into the drive. They pop
the tops of beer cans
and flash their teeth
in the red tail-lights.

The truck bed is lined with quail and rabbits; spots of blood shine on the stiff tarpaulin. The truck radio plays loud rock:

The Sunshine Company, "Wondering why again." Eric Burdon and the Animals. The Stone Poneys: "I ain't sayin' you ain't pretty, I'm just sayin' I'm not ready...." The Grateful Dead.

The quail, gray stones, bleed slowly from their beaks; the dogs whine at the tailgate. The cold of a beer can noses up my arm, and we laugh under the stars, the Spanish moon. Indian faces like gods with moustaches.

The stones in the drive turn under my feet, going back in, and I lie in the dark—like a root, it tightens itself to stones.

Are there many like me, who will not crack? Who will lie low, because we do not want to die? Who love with this grip

of the dark on our hearts? When the whole begins its necessary fracturing, opening the earth along faults

to its living center, shall we be there, singing and dancing in the white fires? How many know how we wish to open?

Manitou, manitou, god of stones, god like a stone, one day I threw a stone and knocked a quail, warm gray stone, to the cold ground. Stunned, it lay in my hand and prayed in its beating throat. With a heart like a stone, I broke its neck, and pushed my knife against its breastbone. Manitou, manitou, blood warm as sun-bright stones spread over my hand-light as gray feathers, light as gray stone, I rose over the earth, over the orange grove, the stand of live oaks, above the sycamore and ticking eucalyptus, above the gray stone of myself, and broke against the air.

AT THE EDGES OF THOUGHT

Slowly the branches lift and sink, The wind sighing, pressing, tirelessly moving Like a thought refusing to think itself,

And the ivy stirs at the porch-edge, The steady wind pushing at the edges of thought, Pushing at the window talking in its frame

Of all it is asked to endure. Pity the house, Pity the trees, pity the unresting wind That heaves and holds the flat sail of the house

Upright. Turning its backside to the wind, Mule in a storm, ribs sticking out through The stretched paint,

The wall stands and creaks, Saying nothing, at least nothing very important, But saying it anyway once and for all.

THE GHOST AT THE MANHOLE

Thoughtless and speechless breath, The unbegotten steam Is standing like a man Upon its sole of iron. And seems to watch the cold Encroaching on the street As I do. Both of us Are temporary, both Of us are merely heat Finding shape that holds Itself up for a while Under the light that drains The blood from everything, Interrogating all Existence with its cool And fierce dispassion. Sour Ferments become our stuff. And so I almost wave In passing at this ghost

That hovers over foulness. Brother, I say to it, Passing this pale column Of nothing or next to nothing.

THE TREATY BY FORCE

"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

Angelic spasms, and the gravity with which These daughters spread their thighs like lopped-off wings To let the weight of emptiness into their wombs Are all in the story, I suppose, and yet the terror is unchronicled— How they must have flinched, more than from any man who At least was clay no matter how heavy he lay upon them. Not like the vast bright faces wrapped in calm Nothing could darken, nothing diminish, And yet when the gods stoop down over the animal shapes, The yielding clouds of the girls, the staring breasts and the bellies Soft with the power of the helpless, they are afraid Of what they cannot become, the woman, the horse-leech Turning all blood to its own length until it stretches To the waters under the earth, swimming forever Round in a ring, a circuit on which the heavens float like a film-The angels betray themselves in their lust, in their terror, Stretching out the rainbow delusional wings Over the great cow, cow-eyed.

BARRAGE

The long disorder of the guns Lifting and coughing at the sky Says nothing but itself, until It tells a village it must die,

No sense to what it says, no sense To what it does—only noise That answers any question, builds The universe that it destroys

Against the backdrop of a cloud, For it reduces everything Like Plato to a form of smoke And in the smoke cold angels sing.

POETRY

About Our Contributors

EUGENE RUGGLES of San Francisco won our Helen Bullis Prize last year.

THOMAS JAMES of Joliet, Illinois, won our Theodore Roethke Prize last year.

KEN SMITH was born in Yorkshire. His first book, *The Pity*, was published by Jonathan Cape in 1965. He now teaches at Slippery Rock State, Pennsylvania. ELIZABETH LIBBEY is a senior at the University of Montana.

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