POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME TWELVE NUMBER THREE

AUTUMN 1971

THOMAS JAMES
Four Poems

ALBERT GOLDBARTh
Two Poems

RICHARD SCHRAMM
Two Poems

GARY GILDNER
Two Poems

TESS GALLAGHER
Two Poems

MILDRED McNIECE
The Ladies of Greater Detroit Have Tea at the Art Institute

PHILIP LEGLER
Local Story

JAMES B. HALL
A Clutch of Dreams

ALEXANDER KUO
Returning Home after a Trip, I Find I Can't Remember

SONYA DORMAN
Some Observations

T. J. HENIGHAN
Spring Song

JOHN ALLMAN
Operation

JOYCE CAROL OATES
How I Became Fiction

HAROLD WITT
Two Poems

WILLIAM DORESKl
Two Poems

Published quarterly by the University of Washington. Subscriptions and manuscripts should be sent to Poetry Northwest, Parrington Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts; all submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscription rate, $3.50 per year; single copies, $1.00.

©1971 by the University of Washington

Distributed by B. DeBoer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N.J. 07110; and in the West by L-S Distributors, 552 McAllister Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94102.
Brendan Galvin
Four Poems

Stuart Friebert
From Humble Beginnings

William Minor
Midwest

Jarold Ramsey
Three Poems

Lewis Turco
Three Poems

Thom James
Four Poems

Wooden Horse

All by myself I tied the braided rope
Around your gigantic neck, hoisting you
Over the garden wall. You are cold and steep:
A monolith of oak, an ice-built ship.
You contain the last gift. Embossed on your thick brow,

One carven whorl balances a star.
Wine-colored, adamant, you watch me run
Beneath your forelegs, brief as Gulliver.
Your sculptured mane, thick as a hill of fir,
Is wound with wooden fruit wiser than stone.

Your head is reared. I tap your heavy flanks
With a dry stick; you rumble like a shell
Casting its echo back. My spearhead sinks
Into your raftered belly's softer planks.

I scale one foreleg's knotty pinnacle.
Scrambling across thick withers overgrown
With oak sprouts, I approach the massive halter.
Bronze scales snap and click in a light rain;
Their cold patinas catch the cuticle moon
Which rocks in the stiff crook of your left ear.

I enter the frozen oracle of your mouth
Where swallows built a nest of wet broomstraws.
Your nostrils are a citadel for bees.
The air, stiffened to silver, vibrates with
An insect hum. I poke the angry hives.
Your time come round, the raw eyes deepening,
I share your difficult fountainhead of pain.
The indolent serpent coils in the sun.
Till now, the air was redolent with warning—
Emblems spilled from the mouth of Laocoon.

I no longer fear your secret, it is a gift.
With the alien blood flooding the tight vein,
Your eyes, once worked by sticks, contain the sun.
I find you laboring, the hoofprint soft,
No less familiar, in a wooden dawn.

HE

Again and again I have painted the autumn flowers:
The goldenrod shreds over my father’s bureau.
I am at home among the ladderback chairs

And muted pigments, the mauves, the tablets of stone-blue.
It did not even hurt as the last dandelions
Frayed, losing their hard, redeeming yellow.

I recall the pitcher of lilac, a thistle’s bones.
The dead tighten their eyes behind pear boughs.
Age whistles at the tender golds and greens.

The wicker lawn furniture went from bad to worse.
My mother’s silver candelabrum
Vanished in a rubble of petals fallen loose,

In unstrung leaves, twigs suddenly struck lame.
My bedclothes are a panoply of vines.
Death gathers like a ferment, post-flowering time

In the unpainted, sketched-in gardens,
On the sky’s clear wash of ultramarine.
The tongues of summer fall in the penciled lanes.

JACK

This is the village of stormclouds.
I have reached it by myself, tugging the bean leaves.
I love these altitudes.

The bean stems sprouted, groves
Of them, a forest of pea-green sticks.
The clouds were loose white scarves,

A bevy of fleecy ducks
Over my mother’s kitchenyard all fall.
The villagers took pitchforks,

Rakes and scythes to haul
Them in. I climbed. My mother shrank into
A calico-skirted beetle

And disappeared. Washed blue,
Now the sky bellies like a circus tent.
How small things grow,

How weighted-down. The firmament
Is a blank blue pond of forgetfulness.
This sun has grown blunt
In its caved-in pumpkin face,
Yolk gold once. All the yellow bean leaves touch,
And clouds are froth, too close

For comfort. My knife sticks
In the green bean crotch. I wait up here to catch
The first kiss of the axe.

THE STONE SEASON

In the greenhouse things are happening—
I am all thumbs. They are splendid emeralds,
They work against this withering,

A world outside white with cold,
Frost manipulating all the leaves.
Mixed in air, bigger than a wheatfield,

A mossy fragrance. Things come alive
After centuries of drowsiness—
It is like opening a grave,

Exhuming the competent, the serious,
The fern uncurling its swan's neck,
The cabbage opening like a rose,

Durable blossoms that will never break.
I am the sorcerer's apprentice.
I am wide-eyed, I watch things wake

And stiffen under countless panes of glass
Where the old magician glides in a dirty smock,
Tuning the roses in, coaxing the lime trees,

Which wait like children in the morning dark,
Each with a name tag, twelve displaced persons
Whose nerves grow sensitive to the old magic—

Buds swaying out of ancient bones,
The brown bug waking in the table top.
I stretch my arms into a stone season.

Albert Goldbarth

Two Poems

VILLAGE WIZARD

Begged by a novice-wizard to display the secret
of his craft, Waziri demonstratively kept silent.

 Asked to perform at the Merchants Bazaar
a feat never seen before, Waziri came
with a dozen coins in his purse and left
with a dozen coins in his purse.

Requested by the husbandless maid to conjure,
Waziri concocted three gifts: a flask of lotion
scented with spice; a beaker of potion
made with grapes; and a potent amulet
wrought with pearl to wear on a necklace
between her breasts when she bared her breasts
to the waxing moon. Even her husband
called it magic.

Paid to recite a spell for sleep, Waziri
began his life story.

Told to foresee the Emperor's future,
Waziri closed his eyes.

Ordered to exorcise evil influence
from the royal heir at his birth,
Waziri cut the umbilical cord.

Commanded on pain of death to provide the impossible
virgin speculum for the Queen, that fabled mage's mirror
so pure, it would have imaged nothing—not its maker,
not the air, and not the darkness—before her face
reflected there: Waziri stared at her despairingly
and wept a tear.
THE DEATH OF THE PRINTED PAGE

1
I awoke to an inaudible stutter: the consonants
already floating into moonlight or grime, keening
their singular claps of wisdom: once more, once
only, the sharp crack of k’s and j’s like a firing squad
and the round air of b’s rising skyward, ghosts released
with the last breath. The shadows of w’s in flight
fading across my skin. It is cold, a time for migration.

2
Fruit of knowledge? Last to go, the p’s burst
from their drying pods. This is a pun and a metaphor.
That was a pun and a metaphor.
Caskets: lower
case t’s scattered the floor, then even those grave
markers disappeared. The grand thesaurus of silence.

3
The books? Shaking off their jackets,
curling their spines. Some going easily, willingly
perhaps: my extensive collection of porno
steaming into a vapor above the bed: the real thing
at last! But it was the last, and the reticent paper
backs lined up against the wall without reprieve:
well, what could I say? Or how could the words in my throat
live honorably without birth certificates? Only the vowels
now, a wail: of ooo’s and aaa’s in a wordless dirge.
When I looked again, the silent e
vanished, at the end of life.

4
We can only comfort their final hours.
This repayment, however small: to hold the last anthology
of English and American Literature. This is the finish.
Turn to the start. Whisper the hymns of Anonymous.

And now when we talk across the oceans, no speech
reflects in water. We cannot talk to mirrors.
And now no living page is left with living contents, or ever read.
Of course this is silly.

Richard Schramm Two Poems

THE TOMBS

I have come to talk with them
at the edge of the field. They ask me
to sit and the light drains from my hands
in the old hollows of the copestone.
A dark pocket of earth, rock-slump,
a few shrubs, even the goats avoid it.

I can hear them
puzzling over their bones,
which ones to go walking
and their hair fallen in the corner
growing by itself.
When at last they come out
they bring a few scales of moss
to show me where they are standing.

Down the road vagrants huddle by fires
their backs turned, mouths hardly moving
pretending there is no food.

It is already night in the fresh cuts
on the face of the stone quarry.
The rock pool glides in blackness
and the water wanders off somewhere
all night
hoping for something to come back to.
THE LANDING

Always they have a way
of avoiding, whether by motion
slower than mine, speech crofted
on darker tongues, or by simply
tending to themselves openly
near the water's edge

so this passage with
night locked in windows and the chill
air feeding itself over the fields
in half-light is little different
from the day that would have woken
had I stayed.

The boatmen are wrapped
in light shawls, behind me a cook
squats poking coals in the fire.
None of them watches the town slip away
or looks at the house I grew up in
banging its shutters.

Where are we going,
I ask, but sudden wing-beats clamber
through the air, morning birds rush
shoreward and the name from our prow
ripples in their wake. I lean into
river wind arcing

grasses in the shoals,
plumes rise from my head, my hands
have almost forgotten their worry,
but when I look in the pale wake
I see a school of faces like my own
lapping in dark water.

Gary Gildner

Two Poems

XMAS

1. Deck the halls with git.
2. Git the halls.
3. In a gitfall, stick out your tongue.
4. Remember when gitfalls were bigger?
5. For grandmother: a warm, practical git.
6. For Bing: a white git.
7. For that man on the go: a go git.
8. Git comes in all sizes, including No-return.
9. Git is color blind & lays down its arms.
10. Jingle git.

BURN-OUT

In the vacant lot
next to Eddie's Sundries, two young bruisers

forty feet apart, in heat,
burn a baseball back and forth.

Dry, I step inside
for beer.

The cooler's empty; Eddie's widow lifts her eyes
from Maeterlinck's Life of the Bee—

she knuckles the sweat on her lip
and calls the Hamm's man a son of a bitch.

I nod,
she lights a Kool

and sighing returns to her page.
I leave.
Outside, the boys have moved in
a dozen feet. The game is serious,
speechless, the ball lands with an oily smack!
It takes me back. I remember
how red my palm got
when I caught the ball too much
in the pocket
instead of the webbing—
and once so hard in the lower gut
I urinated pink for a week.

Suddenly one boy yells “You mother!”
and makes a wild heave over the other’s
head. It hits and cracks
the plastic PEpsri sign sticking out of Eddie’s.

They scramble.
Eddie’s widow’s face
appears behind the screen
like an engraving. I can’t tell how
she feels. Then
the Hamm’s man
pulls his truck up, jumps down grinning.
Eddie’s widow steps outside, she’s wearing
yellow bedroom slippers sporting
dandelions. Shading
her tiny eyes
with the bee book, she blinks at the street,
then at the sky.
Several seasons go by.

The Hamm’s man, loading his dolly,
throws her a wolfish whistle.
But she is still blinking—trying to make sure,
I think, the sky isn’t kidding,
and that her eyes are in OK,
and that the voice saying
“Save it, lard ass”
really belongs to her,
and she to us, whoever we are,
before it’s time to go in.

Tess Gallagher

BELLS IN BED

The church across the street was sending them out,
great St. Bernards with Bibles in their teeth when you failed in your prosperity of sleep
to let them in, they burst through and caught us
in our bed. What clamor! what wagging, redemptive
kiss was this, to come in with a pounce, tongues flapping, “Renounce! Renounce!” not to allow our sweet overlapping. Dear Saint I said you, give
them the last crust of bread and send them on, but they were too well trained to eat and though it was our last, they put up one ferocious howl for more. Love, be all the world to me,
I begged at last, or let me hide in the rock
of this embrace, prayer-deaf and wholly placed.
In this Yukon of the soul throw back the covers to the wildwood beast who laps our feet, let bed
be hymnal, our bodies song and all the blistered lips of this Sunday morning race one love-bellied toll ringing glory! glory! until we fall, fleshless and fleshly into dreamless arms.

COWS, A VISION

Some monster bird, the barn flings its shadow across the field to the walnut grove. The cows with milk-worn bodies muffle its cry, the cry of riverbeds gone white. In the rafters the wings of swallows breathe over eggs like eyes. If the sun falls on them they must open and fly. I was born that way, some beak of light lifting a straw.

The cows were never born. They came with the land, with the bucket hanging in the well, with the iron bed and the empty cat who slept by the clock and ticked only to your hand. You took it all because it was the cat’s dream or the clock’s or the empty bed waiting. You filled everything, the barn, the bucket, the bed, even the empty dream and then you built yourself a front porch where, of an evening, you could sit down to bullfrogs and rusty owls.

It was up to the cows after that to keep things going. Their mouths were always faithful, turning like windmills the heavy heart of the moon. For a moment toward dawn or dusk the cows pause in their work and a secret moon swells in them, threatens to carry them over the barn and away. When we die, I tell you, that moon will find its stars and nothing will keep them down. You aren’t worried. For you there is only more good land.

Mildred McNiece

THE LADIES OF GREATER DETROIT HAVE TEA AT THE ART INSTITUTE

Ladies, just back from St. George or Jamaica, members of long standing in some society of roses, or archaeology, have gathered for tea in the Court of Diego Rivera, which is temporarily closed to the public.

Striding in a handsome awe, they tour the forge-and-factory hall in rows of splendid staring, pausing here or there to whisper lovely, isn’t it lovely? at something in the cauldron of the wall.

Then turn to Sunday things—like talk, or watching while two workers from the corner florist create a centerpiece, of sorts, bending a spray of bare branches this way & that in a bowl of dead leaves.

Civilly, they crowd around and smile, reflecting in the pool like paleblue flowers, murmuring isn’t it lovely? at the boys—there being, really, nothing to choose between one eccentricity and another.
Philip Legler

LOCAL STORY

It was after it happened that his picture appeared in the paper, but all of our town agrees he wandered in sometime during the night when we were sleeping. Entering our neighborhood, what could he think hearing the cars go by, seeing the street lights, feeling the shapes of men about him, wishing he might return. Imagine his surprise coming upon our storefronts, sidewalks, houses. Maybe he stood looking into our windows. I wonder where he slept that night, whether he dreamed. Daylight comes, of course, and over on Terrace Drive a housewife found him rattling the garbage cans. My God, she screamed—calling her children, phoning the police, telling the neighbors. It was something to talk about. Everybody from blocks around soon gathered, mothers in housecoats bringing their children who'd seen them only in zoos, even their fathers back from work. It looked like another street sale going on. By the time he'd climbed a maple tree across from Mrs. Kolski's, three police cars arrived, lights flashing, sirens wailing to the curb. You would have thought some criminal was loose. The man from the paper shouldered in, dropping his camera, and Mr. Carlson's terriers jumped at the tree trunk, clawing and barking. All of us watched him there in the leaves, with no place to go, watching them taking aim and firing. Sprawled, held for a moment on his final branch, he rolled off, dropped to the ground below. Then, as the paper reported, "Patrolman Yeats administered the coup de grace." And that was the end of it. We mulled about for awhile, not saying much. I guess that night most of us slept as usual, had few bad dreams, fewer second thoughts. Whatever threat was there we'd push from our minds, out of our neighborhoods, beyond the city limits.
James B. Hall

A CLUTCH OF DREAMS

The forked path in the woods
Dreams of a crossroads,
A perfection in concrete, dividing
This valley into four equal fields;

The shoat at the slaughterhouse door
Remembers a fine, white gate
At the barn-end of a meadow
And corn calling with the voice of a man.

Waterlogged, the orange liferaft
Drifts on the wide-eyed Pacific
Then sinks, still dreaming of atolls,
And the new crew roistering ashore.

And I, on this forked path
Of dreams, I see fine white gates
And I ride this orange-raft world
Downward towards coral, where all dreams end.

Alexander Kuo

RETURNING HOME AFTER A TRIP,
I FIND I CAN’T REMEMBER

I can’t remember what goodness was
returning home

after a trip: I take a walk
in the park—

two doves locked in flight
are flying
to somewhere, a child continues
to shovel
sand into the stillness somewhere
at the edge

of his world, and a few
couples are
walking their hands in the wild
wind. I turn

and, facing the vacant air
leave my flaws
to their weeping: the echo
of loose bones
decaying cemeteries away
reaches me

the enemy’s drying blood sticks
in my skin

mathematics break, words
fall

apart, and a vein of silence
fades

in the still whiteness forming
behind me.

I am going to go away
now

and never again wish
for less. 5/10/70
Sonya Dorman

SOME OBSERVATIONS

1
like roads
slopes run both ways and you have a choice
of how you'll take them
  down is a frolic
  done like an otter's belly dance
on frozen snow and up
isn't always the work it seems
  up to birth or a new hat
  love's ladder or a last dream
down the long pitch to sleep
bliss at sea bottom with shells
or galaxies of electric fish
  slopes keep promising more
  than accomplished peaks

2
get up
get up the worm turns
at the surface after rain
  fish run up the river
  like rain drops or like tears
get up it's dawn in the garden
  where many mouths are busy
  among the beans
  where the lively bait is singing
voices inaudible as air
get up this morning once again
  to watch or catch
or cry for fish pouring up the river
for their lives like you and me

3
turtles
create in a closed vault

4
curls
sculpted into numbers like
  nine and two
even like three
  on the heads of holy warriors
  on their horses' necks
all over the plaster frieze
which time has done to a nicotine yellow
curls thrive between bulls' horns
  on the napes of bulldancers
  ringlets  lovelocks  kisscurls
see none on the furred bee who goes
direct to the flowery pouch

5
work
is the hand that feeds me
  in the dust of new graves
among the awful trees loaded
  with fruits
or the long slope where potatoes
  boot-colored
  never stop growing
on rainy days five new words
are printed on my brow
the ghost of my work
pressed between pages
is how you may know me

T. J. Henihan

SPRING SONG

The sky's on fire,
All the doors of the city unhinged—
The old lady with the green umbrella
Forgets to feed the birds.

Spring,
While fish brighter than coins
Slip under a mulch of soapsuds
Past town sewer junctions

Downriver,

And a branch
Balances a moment on the drift
Between two notions
Shoving an unexpected root
Into the middle of the morning—

Each tree stumping the city,

Creaking and shaking
Like a dream reassembling itself
After the tired skullduggery of echoes,
After the napalm and the lies,

Skyward—
A blind child dances.
Men in their prisons look up.

John Allman

OPERATION

The dwarf nurse takes my temperature.
There's a pencil in my mouth. Already,
I'm eating my words, when she turns
to my five-year-old daughter dressed
in white curtains like a bride. It
doesn't matter, she's the doctor: here's
my new jelly-bean heart stuffed in a
thimble. I'm the cat mewing in doll's
clothes, ready to die, and she blows
into the thimble to bring my heart alive,
tells me I can't move, only babies cry.
I'm in surgery on the bathroom floor.
The green light darkens on the wall.
Am I in Bellevue? The medication trays
rattle in the hallway. Tug whistles
are moaning on the river like old women.
The dwarf nurse winks. She adjusts
her brassiere. My daughter is counting her
fingers. A gong sounds. "Calling Dr. No."
What have I denied? I'm marked with
lipstick, sticky X, and spit. Physician
with my wife's brow, my brother's grin,
she's digging in, unclasping my sternum.
I'm an open ship's hold taking cargo of
turtle hearts and she's lowering
her thimble on a thread into the hole
closing slowly like a cat's iris.
Someone is flushing a toilet.
The nurse sprinkles sugar on my stomach.
A cat rushes up and licks it off.
Everyone nods. The PA system plays the wedding march.
My daughter puts a monocle over the open wound,
slips skin around the edges of a glass hole. I'm
finished, I lift my head and see into it. I can
look into the picture-window egg of my soul
where snow falls forever on the tiny house.
Joyce Carol Oates

HOW I BECAME FICTION

In the hospital I take care to walk
as if no destination threatened:
I drift with the cool metallic odors,
the creak of carts, the gala energy
of nurses arriving for duty
at eight A.M.

A yeast has arisen in my body.
Somewhere, a stranger’s fate is being prepared,
to be typed out onto a form.

My body, see it is eager to please! and innocent
of its own yeast, its poisons and ungirlish discords!
Its product is being carried here
in a brown drugstore jar, prepared
for strangers who will not show offense.
They will charge fourteen dollars.
They will type up forms.

Death will not be simple, say the wheel-chaired
men, khaki-colored with the inertia of the wise.
They are mild beasts now, eying me.
{
Don’t stare at me, I am not fiction!
Not your fiction!
My body is a girl’s grown-up body, tugging
at their pinpoint eyes. My clothes are miserable
with the strain of possessing
this body so early in the day.

The men’s eyes are fixed to me. But no darkness
would recover them, no alley make them male again—
Don’t look at me, I am not fiction—
They were men once
but there is no proof of it now.
Unreal now, they brood over old skirmishes.

Like them I am drifting into fiction.
Like them I will be injected with heat and ice.
This morning, sweating, I await my fate
typed out onto a green form.
What further fiction is being imagined? What fee?

Harold Witt

THOSE VEACHES

Something was wrong with every one of those Veaches—the
mother stuttered, the father lost his jobs,
Doretta swiped things from the five and ten,
no one at Jefferson got grades
as bad as Bob’s—

Rosalie had a baby but wasn’t married,
Paul was in reform school, Jake in jail
or serving out a sentence more likely than not;
none of them bothered much
about little Dale

dragging his germey blanket, the snotnosed brat,
and sucking his thumb, his diaper halfway off,
while Grandma smoked a corncob on the porch
and who knew what young silken leg
mad Grandpa watched.

They were a genetic disaster like the Jukes
we later read about in Psych 1A—
hare-lipped, knock-kneed, pigeon-toed, given to fits,
but a rich lady on Lemon Heights
adopted Dale,

had his lip fixed, sent him to private school—
and at age twelve, he preached a sermon in church,
choosing as his text “The Golden Rule.”
with an angel tongue that made stone pillars weep.

MRS. GROOK

Whoever could compute from tons of paper clips, from red marks; "Please see me!" from skylarks struggling through the parenthetic lips of Mrs. Gretchen Grook, from rulers in her tone measuring—ta tum—sublime soliloquies and Wordsworth's daffodils like asterisks on stems—

program an IBM with how much sinking dread of boredom in the tome opened with that hand she wore the topaz on—

who in a sterile room where bare statistics hum, feeding the machine, could fill out sunken Keats she bled to skin and bone

and unearth what was done when dumpy in that dress ruthless Mrs. Grook shot nightingales down with bullets in her look—to come up with the sum of those she turned away from love of poetry those chalkdust afternoons.

William Doreski

Two Poems

HIS ODE TO LOST ELOQUENCE

Roaches rise from the plumbing to hunt him down and drag the crumbs away. Disgrace embitters the earth at his feet. He's somehow lost his balance and the foam shushing below waits for his fall. Dogdays and blackdays and Fridays are past. Calendars flap in a sky of untold pages.

The roaches are brave in anger. Pencils sharpen on his eyeteeth. His rage swats the insects back. There's bad blood on his breath and horns pushing up through his skull. Far from here, far from haunted houses where frost coughs in the furnace rooms spaniels call in the ferns, lost at dusk.

Last night as the traffic faded he placed a candle on his desk and prayed for poems to rain through his sleep and prod the morning into sprouting genius. He tossed all sweaty with doubt and dirty sheets and woke just at dawn in time to see the candle flicker out and puddle sadly on the floor.
The morning came and went
and rain
guttered the streets as he waited
for lightning
to gun him down.
His tongue screwed up to shape poems,
then half-relaxed in silence.
He swore.
The rain parted
to show the sun half-drowned
in a maze of pastures
burnt screaming by the wind.

Roaches rise from the plumbing
to rip him into a meal.
He only asked for poems.
Chains sing
as they ascend the stairs.
Shivers rend the window
where he waits.
The calendars are useless now.
Night dominates
and his silence drones on,
shaming him back to sleep.

NUDE AS MUST BE

In the undressing the rock must appear.
The rock is a sign of the times.
The rock speaks and strips to make a poem of rock.
You are nude always.
Even the rock-poem is no nuder than you.
Speak at will and save your thinking for the last day.
Under every rock lies a worm.
Under every worm lies a word.

When did you last see yourself?
You've bagged out like an executive in his dotage.
Save yourself for the process, the carving and chipping.

You know what it's like.
A sign of the times, a thickness in the dark waiting to
leap when no one is aware.

In the undressing the poem must appear.
We both have waited long, our hands on zippers and snaps,
chisels ready to go.

The rock swelters in the sun.
Its dreams are in its nose.
Its face burrows in dreams.
It snores through its poem.
It can kill anyone.

Mike Magee

OUT OF SEASON

Winter slows us down toward sleep,
we burrow deep beneath our covers
dreaming of our private seasons.
We wake each day with weary eyes,
creep out to eat our daily bread,
arrange our collars in the mirror.
Today echoes the day before,
the empty stomach of the fireplace,
the ashes of too many winters.

Outside the life is marginal,
the morning sketched in charcoal,
branches lean as spider webs,
the wind stripping the throat bare,
knifing beneath the collarbone.
We hold the breath inside our lungs
and store up speech like kindling wood.

We stir the coals that flare within.
THE PERVERT

The police searched for him in bars
and old bookstores in Rock Island, Illinois.
But he was everywhere, like the evening hours.

It was a cellar that held him in the dust
and with the warm terror
of fingers groping in the darkness of a glove
he escaped: now running, now walking carefully
in daylight as a salesman, or a widow’s lover.

He is too old for such disguise.

Now the depth of water attracts.
There is the pleasure
of release. He is floating downriver at last,
with an impeccable sense of nostalgia.

Neighbors, parents, the bald sheriff’s deputy,
occasional articles of violence.

Photographs appear to him
not without pain, of leafy parks on the Iowa shore,
schoolyards buzzing
with girls in long dresses. Now they grow old
on the riverbank, and have forgotten him,
the man who walked among them.
The other children died.

He sits down. The raft shrinks.
He believes in loneliness, he knows
he is to blame.
His fingers worry deep in his pockets.
Chana Bloch

ENVY

When I touch it it has the shape of other men's houses. My face sticks to the window like frost.

In the grate a fierce hot flower, spending its colors. Some race of men, ripe with fire, leaving me behind. What swells in their pockets?

Their room is a pool of amber. Furs stroke the air. They are dancing, what triumphs? They laugh by turns, you can see it ripple their pearly throats.

They last. I have to watch, to grow fists to bang at the wrong. Nothing opens. Nothing will keep me warm but my own skin.

Brendan Galvin

THE PAPER ROUTE

All hair, The Hair was wading back into his fen, one warty hand around a blonde all skin except for fronds diaphanously sketched. He was the Nazi pilot who cracked up, turned hirsute by the vapors of the swamp. Those Sunday 3 a.m.'s gave me half-hours for feasting eyes in juicy comic strips.

Stars through the office window's patina of dust went winking off. Meanwhile I sandwiched brides and wars between Mandrake and Dick Tracy, loading my fishmonger cart till it could drag me down a hill, its four-foot iron wheels rolling like tumbrils through the empty town.

From under the stone cat squatting on a porch I scooped the weekly change, folded in a usual bread wrapper—mark of the mystery subscriber. For the lady in whose breath I reeled weak as grasshoppers corked in empty pints, I dropped a World.

Elk's Lodge, Old People's Home, dodging a three-legged dog like a running stool.

Coffee and donuts building below the heart, during church a stained glass sunrise turned my sight to tears. I prayed to printer's ink greasing my palms, for fray of paper under fingernails, asked for an arm like Christ's to reach that third floor porch—the paper drifted down in parachutes.
On the edge of town, cows lowed. My nemesis, the man with the umbrella, phlegm dripping from his nose like Jack Frost's icicle in thaw, turned from the cart as I came through a yard. A paper clutched under his overcoat? One Adviser short, the last house on the route would get a Globe.

And back in bed, The Aztec Queen, indecently attired, shot with me into sleep via outer space.

BRAIN AT THE ACADEMY OF LIVING ARTS

Got there early.

Women the color of preserved baby shoes kept trying to knock Bear down with their big eyelashes. Athens, says one. Rome, argues another.

They were blowing up the president of the Academy. Bicycle pump in his belly button.

More air to the bow-tie, said the lady with big glasses on.

He's very high-powered, she said to Bear. What do you do?

Big eyes, she had. Bear kept his hands at sides. Organs collapsed inside.

Rub my ass on trees? Can't tell her that, Bear thought.
Eat blueberries and sleep? Nix on that, too.

Bite the hand, Bear said. Feeds me. Oops. Slipped out. Bear's hand over mouth too late.

What they call you? asked she, smile all hung out.

Stud, Bear lied. Stub, laughed she, tha's cute.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS UNDER SURVEILLANCE

Stoma alert, the maple reports in first:
he is dreaming of faces
shadowed with thorns
of barbed wire.
In his living room
an angelfish measures
size and frequency
of his groans.
That sirloin he ate
for dinner
is busy mapping
the intestinal track.
And off Greenland
a pod of right whales
slap their flukes
with laughter.
They have just heard from percale
his dreamed-up sexual kinks.
His wife's alligator purse documents
her hand's travels
through his pants:
the tragic quest
for dollars;
and the last wolf pack

knows time, place, and date
of every haircut.
At breakfast his watch-strap sends them

a seismograph
of his pulse.
A grapefruit squirts.
He is marked. Nothing

will let him go.

THE INVISIBLE ANIMAL

Awake to the July moon
over a woman's flesh, I have heard you
stamp the earth before a place
I rented with whiskey.
What did you spare me of?
Your crown of bone?
You could have had her—
I with no weapons but fly rods.

Where did I first feel
your hidden breath on my back?
On the sun-burning trail
to Great Pond, where a hush
from shuddering scrub
sent me hot-footed home
without an excuse for my father?

I have looked long into leaves
for a sight from the shade,
for a snout darker than shadow.

Is your breath a benediction,
or the smack of a feral lip
attuned with the rustle of oaks?
Do yellow pupils register,
then cancel us
from an unConcerning brain?
Or are you fleet
as a night pond over skin?

Stuart Friebert

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Many of them live
and buy manufactured goods.
Cement, teepees, chriscraft, windmills.
Thirty-eight freight cars are loaded
and rolling toward Manhattan, Kansas,
where a federal inspector marks them
with quick-drying harmless purple ink.

And their families appear
under pen names, sons give up
law to direct the anthracite miners' strike in Pennsylvania, while
daughters stand under mistletoe and
forfeit a kiss! (Did you know it grows
on other trees besides apple?) Indians
trail electric power lines, chewing
cottonseed, young Geronimo learns

army magic from a stolen chart,
drops his eyes, an arrow is found
and placed on cool leaves, the frost
bites, three bullets are popular
with holiday visitors, the country
is America in the opera by that name.
A seed mill pickup rumbles by.
Morning shakes me up, evening lets me down.
O brave St. Lawrence, seaway breeze and time . . .
how thirty years go round!

3
O midland heart, Armorica!
Midwestern people, poor, decided, pure
—opposed to travel anywhere—
ever go crazy, they just stay there.
Desolate I've been, thank God.
A moral edge in this, my age
and edgeless morals. The puny sweet morass
of shoveled snow, well-clipped grass.
My neighbors have a flag, American.
It's big as any make of car, or girl, and hung
just like the sun, each day.
The age is lubric, sad. My flag is gray.
I fail for lack of faith in what,
unfurled, the flag unwilling knows: tomorrow.
The blind white art
of baited laundry lines.
And under every stone—an Indian, buried.

4
Depressing that was. Not entirely true.
My neighbors will make do.
When first arrived I crazed
from Western cities borne, she called thrice
(risen to babies, observed
my brandy, light, and book)
to see if I was ill. I drank my fill
of raw solicitous humor, rural,
and said, "I am not well,
but getting on." The choice comes down to this:
making do, or moving on.
Backyards are filled with snow and inner tubes.
The rape, silt, self—that goes unknown!
Here, arson is of value. It destroys
the sight, the shingled sky,
of Superworth, Old Main, and Mill. That rape
scares less than sirens in the mind.

5
The world’s imperfect. Yes!
Justice presides, for nothing deserves to last.
I’ll buy that too, but add
nothing desires to last.
My favorite walk in town
is by the railroad tracks. What’s new?
Late autumn. Queen Anne’s lace,
black-eyed Susan, all the girls, dying.
The milkweed pod, so full of seeds, and Santa Claus
(as girls call seeds, sown), butterflies,
the lovely Monarchs—dying.
They’re seed starved. The pods are full, but seldom
open. Sumac covers, poison red, the hill.
And rails, cantilevered tips, chipped,
rusted. Trains pass still.
What’s natural? None
of what lives here cries out for my defense.

6
The ideal? Natural? A noonday bar, drunk.
A farm wife sings, “O Born to Lose”
to my guitar. Boilermakers!
Yet fingers work, still. Her husband,
frost of hair,
tells how his silo burst. Who calls the terms?
“There’s nothin here to do but drink
and fuck,” a foundry worker says. I think
his language apt and follow, carefully,
his will. As do the slow fire faces
up and down the bar.
It’s still early. My cravings are occasional,
part-time silo, empty,
up to fill. I’ve tried to be wise.
I longed to take the overview.
But what of rotting barns, pain in the eyes,
and auctioned tractors?

About the rink, the barricade of snow
(crude circle, shot from a hose, this morning)
tonight’s abundant skaters go,
their clever cotton buttocks backward
swing beneath the light
that overhangs, and star’s accord.
I also go, a frozen leech
a scarf around his neck and gallows bound,
onlooking me, old man,
three times and thirty years gone round,
so firmly etched in ice.
Beyond the pond, on stable glass
a fisher squats, drinks beer
and his small slot pulls a small blue gill.
Eyes demented, small, absurd,
he glances at the shacks of other men
and saves the fish.

8
Thirty below.
I walk the streets, good backward
skating, small time, small town, man.
The asylum, the poorhouse, and the jail.
I pass them all
and tip my hat, for I have been
not yet but nearly in.
I’m full of wild respect for these
and other buildings, in my too small town.
Down by the river berries, dead,
look as if they know
the frozen river’s not yet turned to rice
from late snowfall.
I have made peace with cravings that,
occasional, are common, easy, natural.
I wonder where to go tonight
before, Midwest, my years turn home.
Who are the trinity of eggs left behind in the abandoned ant hill but waiting bravely?
Me, myself, and I

SEEING WARRIORS IN THE SUBURBS, HE IMAGINES THE HOME OF LAOTZÉ

Let it be a small steep country with few people, the friendly gathered in villages, the rest holed up in high places. If the people value their lives as parts of the country they will migrate no farther than creeks or cicadas. Let each child be given an immovable rock that will be his for life to care for. Let the man-shaped tools be hung out everywhere convenient for spurning, let them gleam with disuse. If there must be ships use them for coffins under the hill, if there must be autos park them with motors idling on the Frontier as trophies for Mongols. If there are firearms let them be used for plumbing and music. Let everyone behave like targets. Let the people knot cords instead of writing, let each man and woman and child wear belts and sashes of poems, best read with the fingers. Let them relish their food, knowing its whole history. Let them fashion their clothing like birds, animals, fishes. Let them open their houses to the moon. Let them forget one custom each year and invent three new ones, with feasting and dancing. Though the villages overlook one another and the crowing of roosters and barking of dogs can be heard nigh in the air blowing over a ridge let it be so that a man may grow old and die all in his village without having to confront a stranger or be a stranger.

ANATOMY

What flies through the forest without shaking a leaf?
My voice

What stumbles all day over the hills upside down and blind?
The nails in my boots

What hides under the bed each night waiting for their bones?
My boots

Who are the pitiful Siamese quintuplets forever doing curl-ups in bed?
My toes

What are the visors of the obsolete warriors too proud to look at each other?
My fingernails

What marks time barefoot at the edge of an acre of breasts?
My thoughts

What is the fruit impossible to swallow that has cried No! No! too late from the very beginning?
My Adam's apple

What is the rudder that would work fine if only the boat went backward?
My will

What rises to every occasion, runs away with itself without legs, yearns to take over the whole country but must let others do the talking and has no flag of its own?
My sex

What tries to be everywhere at once and keeps failing a little more and finally goes home to its pudding?
My blood
A PILGRIMAGE TO DIRTY JOHN’S

Dirty John Hardman is dead,
of acres of junk the master, sheer junk
so precious no one would dare to appraise it
where it lies like layers of Troy by the road
to Alfred, New York. Knowing full well how we give
with all our hearts “more laud to gilded dust
than to gilt o’er-dusted,” he lordly suffered his neighbors
for fifty years to build this shrine to the god
Jetsam, each family piously carting its tithe

of rat-chewed horse-collars, chamber pots, engine blocks,
gunnysacks, stuffed foxes, dome-top radios
haunted by the news, bassinets, birdcages
sifting full of allergies, haywire complanters,
chiffoniers, jardinieres, kewpie dolls and hubcaps,
the stymied Model T’s that brought them here—
from each house according to its means, even,
the is said, children and pets as vestals.

Now complete, inextricably interlocked like a cipher,
this Chichen Itza of Yankee Industrial Knowhow
lies dreaming of shining Ownership and Purpose,
and within his shack in the center, John Hardman’s
Midas imagination no longer burns to see
the ultimate buyer arrive in a 1937
Packard hearse cut down to a pickup
and the whole mouldering midden rise
sold in the golden air, and the fields beneath
burst into cornflowers and hollyhocks!

Lewis Turco

Three Poems

THE WEED GARDEN

I am the ghost of the weed garden.
Stalk among stones—you will find me
remembering husks and pods, how crisp burdock
coches in the moon for every passer.
I am the dry seed of your mind.

The hour will strike when you dream me, your
hand at the sheet like five thin hooks.
I will wait for you in the old vines rattling on
the wind, in the ground-pine. I will show you
where rue has blossomed and eyebright,
mother-thyme. You must name me Yarrow.
Bitter vetch shall catch your step as
you follow, hearing the stars turning to crystal,
sweet lovage turning sere, adder’s tongue and
Jew’s-ear at their whisper. Nightshade
will consume the beautiful lady.
Dwarf elder, dodder-of-thyme, I
am the thing you fear in the simple of your blood:
toothwort in the dust, feverfew, mouse-ear,
sundew and cup-moss, tormentils.

THE WORM

Some call me Ouroboros:
That-Which-is-Its-Own-Sustenance.
I am the chemist’s worm, things in a circle,
Air and Fire, Water, Earth,
a mouth of darkness devouring

its own bright tail. Sarsens for
my spine, scales of blue stone, I wheel
upon myself, and nothing is consumed. All
wisdom and all matter: these
are mine. You may transmogrify

my image in the dark glass
of your mind—I may become the
worm in Eve's fruit, asp at the breast, Wyvern in
the tower, hissing out of
Merlin's spell; nevertheless, I

am the hermetic dragon
Ouroboros: all things in One.
You may not transmute my elements unless
I die. Where will you bleed me?
How shall you sever everness?

I am The Worm Who Lives,
each thing and All: water of life,
torment's fire, wind-breath, stone and soil from which these
green things spring. Ouroboros.
Look inward where I coil in blood.

THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

It is the Age of Aquarius;
Taurus is quit of it.
"Aquarius is the butler of goddesses
and yeuuth them a water potte."
The bull is drowning in his labyrinth—

the sea has returned. The servant pours
Earth's primal blood into
the earth. There is no way out. The Pleiades hiss
like dying snakes in the libation.
"Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea," and now the ocean
swallows the little pigs

like sausages; Taurus gore the tide: "The butler
done it." This is the age of waiters.
In the roaring kitchen there is much mirth:

the butler is making the maid. They
have sacked the winecellar.
Aldebaran, the old baron, lies buried in
the ooze under his castle. The bull
is afloat and cannot paw the black mud

where glory lies buried. The seven
brilliant sisters ride on
Taurus' back, weeping for darkness as the waters
rise to his horns. Electra is lost.
Atlas, the father, had grown old, and he

has fallen. The world is adrift. Where
is Pleione?—locked in
a turret, railing at her skies. The water-
bearer has finished with the upstairs
wench. He has eaten and drunk. He pisses
down a drain hole, and the maid giggles.
Urine mingles below-
stairs with the bull's last spuming breath. At last the house
is theirs—the butler takes another
snort. He winks. "Shall we 'ave at 'er ayyne?"

The castle is adrift among the stars.
About Our Contributors

THOMAS JAMES, a previous Poetry Northwest prizewinner, lives and teaches in Joliet, Illinois.

ALBERT GOLDBARTH, who lives in Chicago, is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop.

RICHARD SCHRAMM's first book, Rooted in Silence, will be published by Bobbs-Merrill in the spring. He now teaches at the University of Utah.

GARY GILDNER has had two books of poems published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

TESS GALLAGHER is a recent graduate of the University of Washington writing program.

MILDRED McNIECE lives in DeKalb, Illinois. This is her first published poem.

PHILIP LECLER teaches at Northern Michigan University. His second book of poems, The Intruder, will be published by the University of Georgia Press in 1972.

JAMES B. HALL, the well-known novelist and short-story writer, is in charge of one of the experimental colleges of the University of California at Santa Cruz.

ALEXANDER KIHO teaches at Northern Illinois University and his first book, The Window Tree, was published this year by Windy Row Press.

SONYA DORMAN lives in West Mystic, Connecticut, and is working on a second book of poems.

T. J. HENDRICH teaches at Carleton University in Ottawa.

JOHN ALLMAN teaches at Rockland Community College, Suffern, New York.

JOYCE CAROL OATES, a winner of the National Book Award in fiction, teaches at the University of Windsor in Ontario.

HAROLD WITT has recently had two portions of his Winesburg by the Sea published in pamphlet form by Hearse Press and Best Cellar Press.

WILLIAM DORISKO's pamphlet, Running the Bitch Down, was published this year by Barn Dream Press.

MIKE MACK is a graduate student at the University of Washington.

STEVEN ORLEN, on leave from the University of Arizona, has been traveling in Yugoslavia and the Pacific Northwest.

ROBERT STOCK's first book, Covenants, was published in 1967 by Trident Press. He has finished a second, Some Signs Visible before Judgment.

CHANA BLOCH has taught Hebrew at the University of California at Berkeley where she is working on a Ph.D. in English.

BRENDAN GALVIN lives in New Britain, Connecticut, and has published in a number of little magazines.

STUART FRIEDBERG, who teaches at Oberlin, has just finished a third book of poems titled Waiting for New Laws.

WILLIAM MINOR teaches at Monterey Peninsula College in California.

JAROLD RAMSEY teaches at the University of Rochester.

LAWRENCE TURCO's first book of poems, The Inhabitant, was published this year. He teaches at the State University of New York at Oswego.

News for Contributors
to Poetry Northwest's Donors' Fund

Poetry Northwest is happy to announce that it is the recipient of a $500 grant from the federally sponsored Coordinating Council of Little Magazines. Since that amount has been given to us in the form of matching funds, every tax deductible contribution in support of Poetry Northwest from you, our readers, will be doubled until we reach that figure.