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**PriZed Awards**

are given annually by *Poetry Northwest*, thanks solely to the cultured and charitable handful of people listed above. Nearly all of them have supported us from the very first. Without them, *Poetry Northwest* would not be sailing into its seventh year. With more of them, we could have art reproductions in the contents, not just on the cover, as we have done occasionally in the past. We think it important for our magazine of poetry to look beautiful, to match its contents.

---

**Sister Mary Gilbert, SNJM**

Four Poems

from "A CATCH OF SUMMER"

I

Half a league from Custer Drive
in a cabin 10 x 12 on a corner of the old Fort
the poet takes a stand. One blue and one green candle
below two high-screened rectangles in the double brick wall
keep the dark from being total.

EXPLOSIVES: No SMOKING warns the sign
by the heavy metal door and the patterned wooden door inside
says how far the firing line has retreated
behind the pine-brushed peace of a summer afternoon.

The cabin turns its back
on the highway and the railroad track.

Unlocked through intervals of armistice
the doors swung to. Driven by wind or dark he stumbled in
to find a troop of tumbleweed taller than any fear
and twice as volatile: an arsenal of deprivation carried to
infinity. And winter on the way.

He did the ordinary things by day: no sudden gusty word
to sweep the hordes from cover; never a careless match;
none but invited guests; and for the rest,
a padlock, sturdy, to divide the In from Out.

---

**THE EDITOR**
You see him there, framed in illusions of the open door, 
lock in his pocket, hand upon the key 
declaring his final war.

Aggressors with brooms, trespassers on private dooms 
he sends astray: through anthill, skunk hollow, 
up unreliable stairs; into the tidy jungle 
or the tangle of years, while he waits 
patient as any mole, for the dark to disappear.

II
Sundown. 
And the Great Northern Crane 
comes whooping through the valley 
where I train my eyes to take their cedar 
poled beside flatcars of butterfly-yellow 
cats crawling to the wormwood farms.
I feel the cold compartment 
of the Western Fruit Express 
in its too green wrapper cut low by evening 
nuzzling the Cushion Ride, and guess 
the terminus of all those trussed-up dreams, 
technicolor Henry Fords, engineered 
towards extinction by an orange diesel 
and hordes of coal-black coal cars.

Fluting through the unmined night 
I carry the burden of the railed rejoinder, 
crouching with my kind in the crumpled 
echoes of a cry on wheels 
and deliver the almost men.

III
After the whirlpool flowers 
caught in bright buckets of song, 
after the shaken summer 
and berries dark on the tongue; 
after the final burning leaf 
and before it goes out in snow 
we walk through our private distances 
into a no-season you will not find 
on any calendar because the ear 
has never heard its name.

I drop a small stone into the well 
of your loneliness and watch the ripples 
widен where the still sky 
drowns in your silences. Fallen 
or struck, the morning floats 
at our feet and though we do 
not pick the strayed 
mock-orange we remember, it hangs 
on the air like a forgotten 
number or the first fall.

In clump and thicket, tree trunk, burrow, 
yard, the wild things sleep 
kept by the house they guard. The collie 
fleeceed and warm, playing dead 
on the fog-chilled ground, abandons 
any dream of skunk or flying 
needles for the chipmunk frozen 
on logs, that scolds and entertains 
and plugs every hole with the essence 
of pine till the cold blows over.

Let them all live, the dog 
says in his sleep. And we do, 
no longer afraid of our shadows 
on the ant-embossed stair 
to the echoing wood, knowing 
how sheer the winter lies 
on the pitch of a roof engineered 
for explosives, now beamed 
toward the tunnels of light—like the poet 
who pondered the summer and won.
IV

Michaelmas rings in the air
and the rain of that fallen brightness,
petals that darken the mind
though the ground is too dry to sustain them.
"Who is like God?" and the little ones
fade into dust that denies them.
The road winds and the hills curve
outstripping the keenest glance
towards alas or he-loves-me.

It will not serve—today or any day
on the green banks of forever—
that up in the succulent garden,
tall and tended, the gold-eyed glorious ones
bear kingly witness.

No. I will stay outside
in the doomsday weather,
the round of ruin that knows me
and brought me here. Courting
the wide lost lakes
and the wind's reverses. With the brimstone leaves struck down
by a sigh or a silence.

I shall go on falling in a subterranean
autumn plunge through the echoing
space with the petaled legions.
Everything falls from grace:
stars, empires, sparrows.
I move in the swordlight play
of that downward journey.

~

Richard F. Hugo

Three Poems

MONTANA RANCH ABANDONED

Cracks in eight log buildings, counting sheds
and outhouse, widen and a ghost peeks out.
Nothing, tree or mountain, weakens wind
coming for the throat. Even wind must work
when land gets old. The rotted wagon tongue
makes fun of girls who begged to go to town.
Broken brakerods dangle in the dirt.

Alternatives were madness or a calloused moon.
Wood they carved the plowblade from
turned stone as nameless gray. Indifferent flies
left dung intact. One boy had to leave
when horses pounded night, and miles away
a neighbor's daughter puked. Mother's cry
to dinner changed to caw in later years.

Maybe raiding bears or edworms made them quit,
or daddy died, or when they planted wheat
dead Flatheads killed the plant. That stove
without a grate can't warm the ghost.
Tools would still be good if cleaned, but mortar
flakes and log walls sag. Even if you shored,
cars would still boom by beyond the fence, no glance
from drivers as you till the lunar dust.

~
INDIAN GRAVES AT JOCKO

for Victor Charlo

These dirt mounds make the dead seem fat. Crude walls of rock that hold the dirt when rain rides wild, were placed with skill or luck. No crucifix can make the drab boards of this chapel Catholic. A mass across these stones becomes whatever wail the wind decides is right.

They asked for, got the Black Robe and the promised masses, well meant promises, shabby third-hand crosses. This graveyard can expand, can crawl in all directions to the mountains, climb the mountains to the salmon and a sun that toned the arrows when animals were serious as meat.

The dead are really fat, the houses lean from lack of loans. The river runs a thin bed down the useless flat where Flathead homes are spaced like friends. The dead are strange jammed this familial. A cheap fence separates the chapel from the graves.

A forlorn lot like this, where snow must crawl to find the tribal stones, is more than just a grim result of cheat, Garfield's forgery, some aimless trek of horses from the stolen Bitter Root. Dead are buried here because the dead will always be obscure, wind the one thing whites will always give a chance.

~

POETRY

AT KEATS' STONE

I'll never know, and you Keats here down cold, that poem of poems, whatever word is bomb. Despair is carved too clear. Two laurels climb too lovingly two pines, and beyond the wall Roman traffic screams. Be bitter still. All signs point to Shelley and to Goethe's son.

Keats, I couldn't bargain for a corpse. Can't even rhyme without a gun. The pyramid that gleams beyond the graves means sweat and sweating here because you went out young without one symbol of a high romance, only enemies and germs, I kick the stems of flowers men forget to tend. Never has day fragmented quite this wildly and never has my throat forced on me such a wild neutrality. God, whip me child again and let me cry.

Look, no tears. The pyramid's a fake. Ladies go to Shelley, Krauts to Goethe's son. Just you and grass, and really only you in this green corner, hear both cars and wind, know how two laurels hug the pines. And you forever warm in centuries of dirt, despite these words bitter black on stone, are white words tough enough to end a poem—some final line of stone saying Keats again?

~

NORTHWEST
THREE PORTRAITS

When you remember Antigone did not want to go into the earth and that law or no law she treasured the corpse of her brother, you know that the truth is, no one can lament enough, if you think of everyone's losses, the bulldozer of history, the way space forgets us. Lament has its place. We have not been screaming enough.

And Cassandra delivered in front of that door, held there, worked up to raving, and then—unable to stop and unwilling but ecstatic—taken by the action over the threshold, and screaming where the blood is:

God!—the plight of us all, caught up, whirled, not even realizing that story! We have not been screaming enough.

Sometimes to escape that frenzy I turn from it and think of Buddha. For centuries he has been thinking about how to vote, or whether. Afternoons he notices the shadows, but they are not sharp. He does not approve or disapprove. As we gyrate he has become stiller. Finally with Buddha there will be—or won't be—the state.

I vote for him.

THE LESSON ONE SPRING

One spring when I was a boy Cow Creek strummed barbed wire the tune of a flood: "Coming through Hutchinson." Then miles of rain did, and once it started on basements it got everybody. People without any give disappeared, but shaky chicken coops could swim.

As usual, proud boys directly suffered; proud girls had a longer story, ending with dolls far downstream sprawled with decorative debris: they thought society could float, ended with muskrats that learn principles only through their whiskers.

I've learned since that trains, autos, tragedies aim at proud people; rivers at flood look for them; little snags in words tease their pronouncements; blue light glares up from the ground and scares them with proud shadows, helps them know pride, avoid it. Pride hurts more the more we do not know it.

I visited Cow Creek last summer. It is tame, held steady by an overflow canal. But I held a stick deep in it and felt again its treasured little song.
THE QUAKER AT THE WORLDLY COLLEGE

I learn like a limousine, Sir Wisdom through the frame of history; but, "A cigar won the war—so much for war," my father said. And I hold all he gave, here in the mansions of my head:—

"Hear the snow on its one big foot never asleep in stillness, or shifting fingers of its one light hand, one branch at a time to find the coldest arch to wait more time than stone can wait—that softness can freeze the tiger's foot."

Such flakes my world comes by, that my pacifist father brought, now touch and arch. The day grows out of them, and the space any form can find. Where under one gray arch last night my college filed late snow I can almost understand what flakes can feel as they visit the stone so late that shadows huddle there and wear the lamps' cape.

I study every morning to live all I have read: learn the storms, touch crystals out, and wait for all the new day is to mean. "Wind can finally teach the rock," my father said.

David Wagoner

WALKING IN THE SNOW

"If the author had said, 'Let us put on appropriate galoshes,' there could, of course, have been no poem...."

Let us put on appropriate galoshes, letting them flap open, And walk in the snow. The eyes have fallen out of the nearest snowman; It slumps in its shadow, And the slush at the curb is gray as the breasts of gulls. As we slog together Past arbors and stiff trees, all knocked out cold At the broken end of winter, No matter what may be falling out of the sky Or blowing sideways Against our hearts, we'll make up our own weather. Love, stamping our galoshes, Let's say something inappropriate, something flat As a scholar's ear And, since this can't be a poem, something loud And pointless, leading nowhere Like our footprints ducking and draking in the snow One after the other.

LIGHT, AND MY SUDDEN FACE

I am the man whose heart for four days lost in a cave beat when the water dripped: I was found, and the water stopped, never to start again. Now even the cave is lost where the lost, in order to hear, held the whole breath of the earth.
AN OLD MAID AT NIGHT TIME

I am nervous but alert under the elms,
past the half-lit street and secret lilacs
where the sexmad blacks and frycooks hide.

My armory of intricate trinkets (beautiful
like all my things and sharp as my bones
that years ago scared my flesh away) is ready:
crotch-level from my waist hang beaded
crotch-level from my waist hang beaded
scimitars; under each armpit, acid
scimitars; under each armpit, acid
in a faience vial; stiletto heels
in a faience vial; stiletto heels
to stick his instep should he grab
to stick his instep should he grab
me from behind.
me from behind.

I glitter through midnight
like a malice of fireflies.
I glitter through midnight
like a malice of fireflies.

Each night, taut as the sheet I wait.
I stare where the cat stares
Each night, taut as the sheet I wait.
I stare where the cat stares
but no one is there, only air,
but no one is there, only air,
ever air.
ever air.

One night I'll hear his drag-foot on the stair
and in the circle of the night light
One night I'll hear his drag-foot on the stair
and in the circle of the night light
see that mansard face and sad damaged fruit
see that mansard face and sad damaged fruit
and I'll cry out to him:
and I'll cry out to him:

Born to a dark place, we die in sunlight
Come to me on this white desert
Born to a dark place, we die in sunlight
Come to me on this white desert
Rise mountainous above my body's
Rise mountainous above my body's
shadowless mesa.
shadowless mesa.

Give me a shadow, O my love.
Give me a shadow, O my love.

TERMINAL

At that time I took trips
that brought me to stations
At that time I took trips
that brought me to stations
at midnight. Though I knew
at midnight. Though I knew
their names, still they were
their names, still they were
alien in smoky light.
alien in smoky light.

Or arriving in early
morning at four or five,
Or arriving in early
morning at four or five,
perpetual shadow fastened
perpetual shadow fastened
below black eaves
below black eaves
and darkened tired eyes.
and darkened tired eyes.

No one met trains
at such hours. I taxied
No one met trains
at such hours. I taxied
alone to a shabby building
alone to a shabby building
to sleep on a chilly bed
to sleep on a chilly bed
in hollows worn by strangers.
in hollows worn by strangers.

How long the day
was in coming through
How long the day
was in coming through
rain-spattered windows.
rain-spattered windows.

Even when I turned
from the old places
Even when I turned
from the old places
the room at the other end
the room at the other end
was always hostile
was always hostile
and whatever the season
and whatever the season
the climate cold.
the climate cold.

~
MANIFESTO

My house faces the north.
On the front lawn
patches of snow still lie
long after winter has gone.

Buds on my flowering trees,
by the same token,
keep their green bindings tight
when others break open.
And through the lulled summer
how slow I go—
slower and dumber than
the seed I sow.

It never grieves me much
that angles of the sun
defining freeze and burn,
the geometric line,
the geophysic turn
are not in step with mine.

AROUND US

If I knew the day of my death
I would wait by water:
not beside shallow silt-carrying river
not glacial lake
with its bouldered bottom
but miles deep depths
off land in mid-ocean.

My inland years, high above shores,
lean to salt current and longer tide
implicit from their beginning,
A phrase which will rave
Or will swing like the black
Bat’s wing, or will grow within,
Round as a wen, and so become
The rubber detonator, soft in the pocket,
Armed, quivering, ready to explode
The infernal mirrors

Of all the keepers
Of our poetry in poetry’s Managerial Age.
Now the class bells ring and Keats
Writhe again beneath a New Instructor’s
Well-trained sneer, or a pedant leers
Above the works of John Clare’s
Giddy hours

Smiling the kill,
“Gentlemen: could he really, if mad?”
Soon the Tartar fullbacks’ overriding
Thunder shall benumb these corridors
As they come, repentant and sly, to examinations.
Good sleep takes the knitting girls,
And no one reads.

Comes now the hour
Of conspirators for outside the door
The student poet stands, conjuring
Still the forbidden delicacy of flight
With last night’s poems concealed
Beneath his sullen leather jacket,
These muddy cyphers

Pried last night
From underneath the terrible boards
Of memory: the Viet Nam night attack
Against a jungle’s automatic weapons
Or the week his brother died so slowly
Of pneumonia, in a cold farm house.
His poems are here

Lorita Whitehead

Five Poems

LITTLE KILLER

Who’s to say that a bat or pelican flies better
or think either can be lovelier in this weather
where, angled down lack-lovely through the fog,
dragged by a hair of the wind or pitched to a bog,
they dive. You could be both if you tried, Mr. Heft;
considering proper paper-flowered walls, your chest
of wispy neon-lighted hair, or your blue eyes
mild as milk, blinking orange and green above the prize
whose cries died neat in her small white teeth.
Fog glows pink and blue about her knees
while you, a mincing maniacal bird, with shiver and chirp
like dodo, bat, and pelican together, conceive of weather.
SPORT AMONG CANNIBALS

Death would be a sure lover, constant to the last orgiastic cinder, but we cannot love her.
We stake all on the chase of that cow-eyed girl, that citified yet pastoral whore whose cheeks like major red on billboard paper, once seen will cure; she'll fill our sleeves with opiates and oranges.

How we dreamed of towers!
Flat-chested and ratty-haired, she out-whooped us to the top of every knoll; then jeered back, an undersized and spindly armed Medusa, “Here! I told you!” When she became no more than a garish shape passing by a door she could still lure us into the night, her look full of images: surmounted crests, luminous towers, the air like a nest spread for burning and trumpeted wheeling flights.

Even now that rag-rustle of her knees whispers enticements of new things to come: a peace, a chorus after battles like a hymn, but one in praise of what we left undone and lost. That is queer kind of dignity for love.
Death, that black woman, would still grow us wings; we refuse. The girl passes; we must play the game and lose.

~

MOTHER SINGING

Oh, those stark nights, the endless highway turning like a deadly desert snake under the headlights, under my innocence!
Only then was I sure of you, my mother, where I sat between you, you and him.
Dad tapped the wheel with his ring and drove too fast, so much the fat, the quick rich business man.

But when his voice ran bumbling basso profundo under his blanket of skin like a good natured marble, I almost loved him. But loved him more that he hummed, letting us sing:

Low and harsh from the cigarettes, your head swaying while your finger twirled in the dark the hair at my neck, while you leaned and grinned with the chorus, hugging my comrade's shoulder, proud (for once I was sure) of my harmony, of the free ease with which we met in the old songs; child mine, my mother, flapper, born only to sing, even then as a jack rabbit rushed his blinking worm-eaten life at our wheels, in the night, the miles, I felt you there, I felt I almost knew you, and I knew that I was lost in nowhere, lost in you.

~

RETURN OF THE DAEMON

Floating jelly-slick, the word again crawls up, loosens again and sprawls on last season's prophylactics, bald umbrellas, soleless shoes, a palpating bloom returned to the wintry beaches of the ear.

The same year after year I stand, watching tide bear it in, hear the rush of children shrieking to the strand, the stamp of drunken feet around the glare of that translucent form reared up in air.

But crones like me are slow at our amens. When we come tonight to bend our knees, all ritual fires done, it will only be to swing an axe into the gaudy hulk and strewn it, limb by limb, back to the sea.

~

POETRY

NORTHWEST
A WHALE FOR SWASHBUCKLERS

Limbless, arched through the fluidity of things, we dive almost to touch. Porpoise-lithe you laugh, swim away. Dazzler and torment, fish-angler, thus grotesque, harpoon-knighted, see me plunge, heave in your wake, buffoon among fishes! So goes an old fish story, farce well played but out with our years: sad tails no ships bring in or tides wash home, not a home. But fathom this, fish-priestess, I am glad: had you paused mid-current for passion, tea, God knows now I'd be pater familias, fat, with flat domesticated teeth (plankton foddered), bewhiskered as catfish! So full throttle, dainty; let us play. Test thus this doldrum calm, that cape-reefed shoal, or, mid-Atlantic, clefts which open heady horrors under me; so let me grow old-salt tough and scarred, hindmost and rolling, heartdown Host for fishes! Thus packed with joy and life-deft, Love, let be: lone, the crusty lover of a moving thing, till mammal lusts, their last gushed high are done; settle me!

Pete Winslow

Seven Poems

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Mother never came this far
Into the cave of anxiety.
There was no bomb back in Idaho,
Or later Portland, and after that
The depression cottage in Seattle.
No extinction threatened, just poverty.
One could concentrate on necessities—
No doom lurking in the milk, the cranberries,
No insect armies waiting at the gates.
It was a simpler time.

Mother never came this far,
To where a thousand Hitlers are hiding.
Obsequious, treasonable men
With red, white, and blue hearts.
Edging toward the pushbutton room
In the sinister twilight
Of the good old days.

TIME

The pain in my stomach
Is the sand running through.

WHO LISTENS TO ORPHANS?

It's dark in a cage at midnight.
The smell is terrible. 
I can't even walk around for fear of stepping in something.
Soon I'll have to wrestle the lion for breakfast again—
I'd like it well-done just once.
Sometimes they don't even bother to kill it.
The lion takes care of that; he's meaner than I am.

It's dark in a cage at midnight
But there's nothing to read anyway.
At least I can stop being embarrassed for a while.
All day I'm expected to make love to the lioness
While people stand around taking home movies.
I pretend I'm sick to conceal my inadequacy.
They probably think I'm queer,
Well, I told them I wasn't a lion when they brought me here,
But who listens to orphans?
TRAPPED IN A MINE

The first day there was no sound
Except for the hummingbirds whirring
Over the clover in the pit of the mine,
Far from the surface of the real world.

The second day in the bright sunlight
Clouds were demons in the hideous sky—
I dreamed of my home in war
With its gnomes and crones
Adjusted to darkness, not this awful blue.

The third day a child without scars
With a curious face unwrinkled and alert
Brought me a bouquet of daffodils and iris,
Pansies and crocus, the witches of underground legends.

The fourth day I was mad with thirst
And peasants so weak they were actually kind
Brought me wine in a crystal decanter,
But my thirst was for pools of stagnant muck.

The fifth day a girl came to my side—
She caressed me as I cringed in despair of rescue,
She lay with me that night and rubbed my skin with oil,
Took the sex I was unable to withhold
And left me a stinking garland of kisses.

The sixth day, insane in the cool green meadow,
I ran to the corners of my prison and screamed
And the mountains mocked me with serenity.
I shrieked as girls in their cities offered me love—
O the torment of their comforting fingers!

I rambled off incoherent, sobbing, and fell into a coma
To awake this morning in the black hospital
Home in the sacred landscape of night and hunger
Where the wizard turns you to dust for a thought
And escape is into the solace of slavery.

THE FIRE OF THE CITIES

Suddenly, after three poems, the last one not read but absorbed,
I recaptured the fire of the cities.
I had looked around me and written off another stupid day,
But the literature of the city flung itself at me
And the sounds of the city were with me,
Its confusion, its ecstasy, all in the poems I read.

Unscholarly poets with mysterious names,
Names of Russian Jews, Greeks, gypsies,
Wine-soaked poets with police records,
Timeless as trade routes
But meaningless outside the poetic underground of cities.
I see them, the undiscovered talents of the world
with names that are poems,
I see them in tangled workrooms, evoking demons;
I see them—they get little ones or drunk ones
Discovering influences in a babble of jazz, sex or occult lore;
I see them commune with their imaginations in cluttered corners
Inhaling city wisdom, shouting into their typewriters.

I smell the curry of their makeshift meals,
Minds closed to food, only the city nourishing them.
The baby is crying; I see him carried naked into noisy parties
Where discussions hang in the air:
It's an incision into consciousness,
A wound never closed.

This is the city. I feel it
Though the poem lies before me in absolute immobility,
Its form a mystery,
Its images swimming before my eyes,
Unread, undiscovered.
Yes! I stole the unread poem and wrote it myself,
A cry to evoke the cry of the cities.
THE POEM CONTEST

You challenged me to a poem contest
And got cut
For I wrote about chocolate pudding soaking up cream
And all you had
Was something about history.

---

CINERAMA

The reason you can’t see the top of this poem
And have trouble following it from one side of the page to the other
Is that this poem is written in Cinerama,
A comparatively new process invented by Walt Whitman.
We are working on eliminating the seams.

---

David Ray

Three Poems

THE APPROACHING TRIP

"Every time we part I feel older, tougher,
and more determined to be with you
for a good life," you wrote once in a letter
and now as in the old days you were never
so close as when you left
waving from the small window of the air
liner and me flapping and waving as you became
abstract; so I've decided this time,
leaving, it is to be ever more close to you—
to get high enough to perceive
in that seat of the common carrier
what we are, what has been slurred

---

or lost in the last months, what we fear
in each other. If the plane touches
ground back in this old town again I will step
down and embrace you fearlessly.

---

REFUSING TO WATCH YOU LEAVE

Those elbow people get us.
They were there all the time
Of course, in the coffee shop
And on the train and in the rooms.
They stood around the newsstand
When we got those papers. Recall
It? Then we went back to the room.
Some love. That view of harbors
And Burts Resale. The things that
Stagger up a hill. Gravestones.
I've journeyed with you, flown.
Rich, fluttering imaginings. Why, then,
Drawing on your gloves and getting
Up, do you say to me "Glad to have
Met you"? After all that, that nothing
We had: You say we didn't have
Or rather say nothing at all,
Unaware even of this writing (at
This writing) I saw you, lady, saw
You turning to me whether you chose
To turn or not. Rise and leave
But you do not leave me. I have you.
And take you with me where I go.
ON A DARK AFTERNOON

Out the window the sidewalks
and somewhat of an audience
wait for us to join him.

The forest is still dark
to its very edge.
The bird is still silent, holding
his cold breast tight.
And the dark eyes of hunters
going on glowing.

In twenty years he found nothing
to replace those messages
he had learned.

The flyer looking for his friend
found only craters on a hill
and the war remained a lost war.

He looked. For twenty more years
he looked, but found just
repetitions of the lessons he had
learned, all in a quick season.

He'd died a thousand times, ten
thousand times; and then he died
and stopped dying
and his friends thanked god and said:
At last he's stopped dying.

We open his book like a Bible.

~

Eve Triem

Three Poems

ANOTHER VOYAGE

Yearfall, thinned vermilion, pledge of voyage.

Dazzled as by all beginnings
and arrogant for joy
we cut the flowers in the threatened garden
to gild our cabin.

Where our own wishes fail
the wishing trees add intenser sound,
lifting their black shapes naked of ornament
for swifter running and for brighter speech
beading the precious word on the single thread.

Where the trees fail, blue unfrozen birds
weave the thread into a wider sail
sailing our heart-held wish
into the still waters of white cities
lighting the edge of a rough ocean.

Mirrors of green moon and hill green in winter
the city stands, we stumble to the loved
and lava earth, throwing seeds of marigold
to bind us to our home—before the little suns bloom,
surrendering to another voyage.

~
AT THE BACK OF THINGS

I

The backs
of buildings to sleep in
deeper
under palm & eucalyptus
a moisty dusk.
Too prickly
for me to climb
without tearing flesh,
a monkey-puzzle tree.

The underside
of understanding
also striped—
(the shades pulled down)
aslant with fireladders
the two-colored bricks
face north
into song.

A finch
Concise compact of theme
neck rosier than brick
block after block
sprinkled with a syrup
of his notes—
is at the heart
of the matter.
As exile is the scream of the heart.

II

Officebuildings
barricade the sky,
all the way round
are striped with façade,
a glittering stare.

So much I need,
to know!
Did I start
at the wrong end: front or side?
In a dream the angel
of finch or palm
may have come
to explain
the rooms filled and emptied
and who is thrown out
with the crumpled carbons
and orange peel—
just when the “something exciting”
(a tradewind stretches
the backs of flags)
has the birthright
to begin.

FLOOD

Through all windows and where a door was
the river comes in. Whoever is
overturned by the smell of marsh grass
and heron-cries, I like it, I like it!
To help the river over chair and table,
give it the best bed, and see in fireflies
the lamps I paid for, is easy as milk.

Roofs crumble, cows drown in the tree-snags,
and the wired towns yell and flame into char—
that troubles my joy. The streets had been straight
and dry so long! From a drought older and longer,
my stems in a well, my buds beginning,
I ask place and people to breathe and forgive
a river that had no choice but to flow.
It wasn’t like that. Like what?
Like finding sentiments evaporable
Or love a silence you could wander in.
There is a bit of mind that is not there
Except for music. It accompanies
Dreams that are not like that, but more like thoughts
At night. And when it stops accompanying
Not even a bus’s brand of bumpy humming
Can take the quiet out of you.
I took a bus trip with a rider once,
A rodeo man, made of dying friends
And lonely relatives: a traveler,
As wandering eyes are not, who had a girl
In every depot, and a broken neck
Besides that, to contend with. Brace him up,
I thought, and he will tell you.

It wasn’t like that. Like what?
Like white Othello with a southern accent,
Whose courtships were, at best, a lesser danger.
He told me as a surgeon would that broken
Flesh spilled blood constantly before him, but
That that was part of it. And that he was
Nineteen, had never thought of bullfighting,
Or rather, never thought of it like that.
I thought of horns and peril, and he thought
Of nothing. But I blazed upon him, strong
As strangeness, clearly not himself, clearly
The passioned, unimaginable eye
Of the mere interested. I believed
That he was braced for pain. His brother died
Of riding motorcycles. Did he die
Of tragedy or of absurdity?
I asked.
POEM

Tell me, tell me again
Where the frozen fugue lies
Where the tainted green goes
Submerged in its glitter
the lost song leads the last
and picks its darkest
past the frosted underside

~

POEM

track the night—past
the slow burning amber
my gourd rots—sudden
as the worm
the ragged knife rattles—
rattles, and circles the hour.

~

PROCESSION

sun on wood
—leaves, hold up your hand against a fallen sky
light quarried through a green stem—
eastern slumber
take, take the

word I carve—
carry the stone page
back—the moon's borrowed gold on—
from one moon to another unlit

~

David Summers

FINALE MILLENNIUM

Ruth! Ruth! Is it safe to sleep yet,
Ruth?
The silence of your eyelids suffices.

We chose to enter sleep in shadows
Where black buildings move within the room—
Ruth,
I am afraid of tall empty bottles
Looming harmlessly on that plaster.
Doubtless the moon floods the bathroom floor
And strange objects strike the porcelain;
The drapes are fainting in the vibrating corner,
The chandelier, crushed upon the ceiling.

Will we wake up to shadows?
(Enacting fingers)
Shift upon the wall.)
Will we have to
Watch the dark forms gather and prepare?

You alone will hear it, the plank on the outside stair;
A rattle on the porch; the quiet latch.
You will hear above the hinge, the weather vane
Squeal and cease.
And we shall rise and wait.
The candle will approach.

The black rungs
Will stretch and scatter from the banister,
The cabinets cast upon the flowing rug;
Persia's rivers bear dark flowers, down
To the bright crack below the quaking door,
Which opens.

Will we concentrate upon the floor?
And watch the flame spread the charcoal Zion
Between my slippers and the suspenders on the chair?
Will the figure smirk and beckon others?

I am afraid of hearing the stern final
Clack of spectacles upon the shimmering mahogany—

Ruth, will we be led away?

~

*Sandra McPherson*

**Three Poems**

**RETURN FROM HUNTING**

In Garberville three dust-unclean,
the hunters, smiled a muscled deer
shot hairless under evergreen.
The hunters made a short career,
a heavy portage of the beast
for keep in human hemisphere.
Fraternity of four increased
a fine buck comeliness among
three men. The hunting week had ceased
but triple beard-wild jowls were tongue
of kin to what the buck had been,
some red young springing outdoor lung.

**THE BULL**

The bull is born
bovinely
and sets his sheen and bulk about
like a valley.
A dumb-confounded animal because
his speech would roll
profoundly
like black ball-lightning. Bulges
in his eyes now.
He is set
like a frontispiece and still with
a parlor peace.
A fine bull,
he is not exhaustive just
bilious. This
convened-one,
idled in the statue-forming
air, is facile
and serious.
A son of thanks and worship, he
fires exactly
and if he
does regret, regrets precisely.

He has a big
behind of
Psalm war and truce. He is coping.

~
THE ICON

Some one old Russian knew
that red skies
are what you ride against

and bluegreen dragons
what over,
gold badlands what into.

But that white horse is
a power
of right, a real romper

that'll get you there
he said.
Now you princely rider

keep your arm back and high
a pursy
smile forever and your

halo over your head
all the way
down the back of your neck.

It can't hurt he said even
if the sky
turns blue, the dragon dead.

* * *

David Sandberg
Four Poems

BLACK WOMAN

beautiful you
are fragrant
dark song

tall as
the tree
of night

softer
than wind

blowing
down stars

~

IKON

blue
stocking-capped
two
old men
bending
like flowers
in the snow
talking
slender
lines of old
italian
songs
to each other.

they make
a sound
like music
like old
iron
rusty
knives in the wind

~
THREE BIRDS ON THE LIBRARY LAWN

for W. C. W.

I

to my surprise

just as i

watched

the pigeon

about to

pounce

on the bread

crust an

everlong-

tall long-

legged girl

crossed

the lawn

obscuring

my

view

II

the pigeon

walking

on the grass

is charged

with

poetry.

there is a

music

in his

arrogant

strut

and another

music in the

elegant

black-coated

old woman

bending

to feed him.

III

the sparrow

biggest

crumb tightly

held in his

beak

bulled his way

through the

crowd of

pigeons and

flew just into

his arc the

beak opened and

the crumb fell

into a

pool of

startled

gold

fish.

POEMS FOR JUDY

The Silence

the only proof

of living

is the act

itself: sung

softly in

your hair

the song of how

we love is

at once quiet

and brutal

like

a flame.

Morning

together

we are so clean

our sudden singing

lengthens

into warm hills

of music

through the open

window

a fat sun

turns your hair

orange.

Evening

dizzying

this huge wide

love. we

ride

to places

taller

than

mountains

of song

to come

crashing

down

brilliant

arrows

in the dark.
Definition

there is no more
for us than this:

a quiet time, a
song like wind in

white daisies, bright
crystal birds in

wintertrees, noise
of cars passing

in the street out­side our window.

~

Ed Leimbacher

Two Poems

THREE MESSENGERS IN TWO BLOCKS

I
He greets the passers-by with Christian tracts—
a slender chanting Negro in gray wool
coat, shapeless hat, eyeglasses—and reacts

with equanimity when some coarse fool
tatters the Old Paths Tract for spite and shoves
two Judgment warnings back at him. His rule

golden, he smiles. Though earth must burn, God loves.

II
In yellow snapbrim and knife-olive suit

the study second black accosts us with
newspapers and dark mockery. “Strange fruit”
to him means black men hanging whites. His kith
are Muslim now; his fist grips his kismet:
“Muhammed Speaks.” Equality’s the myth;
reality, his eyes that say, “I hate.”

III
Flag sagging, Lady Patriot gags, snorts,
then gestures wearily. Her navy blue
spells war; her chalky face courts last resorts:

Gettysburg, Flanders, Guam, and Dien Bien Phu,
vacation spots she recommends. “Sir, buy
a red poppy from the VFW?”

G.I.’s, abort! War’s only truth: we die.

~

OUTLINE OF A BRIEF, DISCOURAGING ODYSSEY

The brawny, briny shipman floats and rocks
in two dimensions, in four directions, of water—but always homewards. Always he talks
of the years-away place; nothing else matters.
Salt-crusted mouth still shapes her name.
The boy’s name. Home home: home.

Aging fast, changed in appearance, he burns
through several ships, various friends, civilians
who offer assistance or hindrance. Other amphibians
stare, aghast at this callousness. He scorns
men, beasts, gods, must make it alone.
Are the obstacles imaginary? He naked sails on.
At the end of the line-dark dolphins' road
a shimmering woman weaves days of her life,
unravels threads of her nights. The dream of the rod.
She walks among cattle, seasons, holds a leaf
in her hand to raise the boy and fight off wolves.
Though light blinds her, she sees only seawaves.

Tell the man-boy who his father is . . .
Seething at uselessness, enveloped in strangers and women,
he abandons the sea. Begotten of no man
he thinks, while empty years inhabit the grass.
But sons will remember, and beggars and dogs meet,
when fathers finally disembark, wet.

Ragged, raging, the shipman enters his kingdom.
If he smiles and draws back the bow of destruction,
does he know that ahead lie blood, reunion, boredom?
Unleashed, the arrows pierce man's imagination
for all time.
Wife and son wait in the window.
Why am I not a hero?

---

**Helena Dyer**

**AWAKENING**

I never knew, said the man not dead,
That light could be so light;
Why didn't you tell me (to a friend) that
Light moved—as memories slip across the
surface of water?

I feel like a ship blown by nothing but
Mind, another thing than myself—
Something winged: this dance is something new
For clay feet. I've left the reasons behind.

Why am I quiet when I should talk?
What wonder, that wonder should be so silent!
Cleaving the shadows was painless and slow;
White waters of a river washed over me with
light.

I can wait, I pause, on this unsheathing.
I am grateful for
The windless sun that stays still as I move
Toward another me.

---

**William Dunlop**

---

**WIMBORNE MINSTER**

There, on our way to Devon, and the sea,
We stopped for lunch. The hulking Minster lay
Bemused by sun, and all the town, that day,
Yellow and soggy, like a pear, with heat.
My father shivers, pushes back his plate,
And freezes Wimborne Minster.

An apple core,
A fox's mask, a dead tobacco smell:
The doves brew slumber; and a mellow bell
Burdens the air, beats twice. Life, life is short.
Outside, my father lifts a hand to tilt
The brightness from his eyes.
Whom should I meet
In Wimborne Minster, if I went there now
With just that slant of shadow on his brow?

My father cursed the winding coast-road. We
Were on our way to Devon, and the sea.
The Catch

All morning fishing
we walked in Willow River
where salmon hovered,
passed to their death
upstream. Eggs
and cast words fell
on barren rivers. I saw
salmon spawn below,
the fat trout doze.
My husband’s father carried
cold words in wicker baskets.

The salmon fins away from spawning;
his eggs hatch birds.
He will not jump at flies,
you catch him with an egg.
He snaps it up in fury.

His voice turns swift and long,
I wish toward fish in stone.
The egg we hover over is within me.
We move to deeper water
and still no calm.
Crossing through that wind
I slipped from water slick
to water wet, down in stunning water.
Who sent me deep?
My boots fill up like caves.
The current cannot bear
my heaviness away.
To walk in this loud water
would be as strange as flying.

The Catch

My eyes could see
there were no fish.
Light swam down green
to shape dark stone.

In a fall of rising bubbles
I breathe deeply this element
I know from my own lost year,
then slowly swarm up cliffs of light.
My hair runs down to water.
I am caught by the shape of his hand.

Must I accept this strange father
lying belly to belly with stone?
Some gentle fish pooled within fins.
Pull me up, father, wet and quivering,
if I slap on your granite then and now,
remember you could not catch me
as I once fell and am still falling
into slow water.

Chicken Killer

The golden bloody chick
lay among dusty strawberries.
Its neck twisted into a crook
the dog took in her jaws and shook

until the black eye grew wide
as cedar boughs at dusk.
The down that tickled her tongue
burst soft in my breath,

and I saw beyond the garden
the farmer cursing our dog
who pell-melled into the bushes
her whole mouth dancing.
Once my brothers and I went charging into the neighbors' chickens. We banged the soft exploding bodies with our great rocks.

Stuck with gobs of guano feathers drummed in our hair and Father, yelling Heathens! chased us down the lawn where the neighbors' bristling bitch charged from the edge of azaleas and tenderly captured his leg. We yelped with sudden joy and, phantoms, hung from the bed as mama bandaged his ankle. Our criminal hands stank of hens and our pockets were warm as eggs.

I nestle the half-grown chick into black depths of our cellar, hiding from Father the feathers trailed by the child and the dog as we ran down the farmer's lawn where I dreamed that violent summer he stabbed me with his shining fork and ate me, drumstick and all.

Narrow little girls know the bear. He's their father, the ass. How embarrassing to discover one pair in the throws of clover, or the monkey hurling berries through the bars. Mothers can never explain those organs. Hurry! Hurry! To the bears! Those beasts, too carnal in their concrete, protected by a screen. You don't have to feed the bear. He eats the park; sweats through the confusion of tomato pie, hot dogs, leashed dogs, kids pissing on trees. There, beyond the rock, the sensitive Mott Street boy, his tongue in an ear. The girl, over-developed from tacky Roman blood, is too young to have her skirt around her breasts. Her laughter frightens birds.

From five to six the treadle-worn track over the green to grey. There is sadness in the odor of their breath. Mrs. Kowalsky ate a fat sausage and burped a balloon full of gas. The great hacks of the East, each soft as a winter-killed flower, go home. The bear goes for yesterday's bread. The park is for sweeps of Monday, and the monkey on his mate. And you, you know who Cadwalder was, that plagued hero with a vision, now dead as granite but glad.
RED CLAY WOMAN

Nancy-Lou Puttersoe

She is like the old men starched by dry air, swept in the vagueness of age, a skin abstraction. The locust peeling past her window stirs the dust. She, once loved and cut with the cotton, is tired in the town. A woman born in the heat; milked of her jasmine clay.

This woman, mother of nine long weaned and firm, bathes in the drift-wind. All are settled but the last, that dancing-eyed boy bright as the morning silver and gone. He never settled, lost to East and North where no South boy belongs.

A soft tongue taught his body to love the women in his wine. She prayed he was good. Saved his clean-faced smiles, those old laughs tasteless as hay that country girls live on or dream.

This flashing wisp of her mind once brought a woman bright as a jay. The air was hard for mother was unpainted. A quick stop, five-ten minute dollars, a smile waft in a wave. Still she waits silently rocking, humming through her eye. As flowers turn their season, her thumbs twist time, trace the scar-laced fields of strawberry hair and clay. But the drift-wind son is gone, lost to the East and shadow of her dress.

LUMMI INDIAN WOMAN WEAVING A BASKET

Nancy-Lou Patterson

The pliant inner bark of cedar trees (I have to search for that; the biggest stands are gone) is strong: the mountain grasses please, and I can move my hands among the strands as fast as gulls can dart among the catch, and find the ends unseeing. Patterns crawl like trees between my fingers’ needle-patch as serrate buds spring up from forest fall, or low as runner-vines and scarcely seen.

On my high shelf the bigger baskets sit where my grandmother put them fresh and green, each one so wide a child would fit in:

the weft she formed is darkened now. I’ve read her spirit-taught designs by fingertip through spider webs, and in the night the dead warp cracks as if the baskets stirred in sleep.

I had no time to search for spirit speech nor fast for visions, when my children filled my basket womb, eleven, each on each, and yet my fingers move as if I had.

~
Vi Gale

Four Poems

PEACHELLWILLOW, THE TREE THAT KEEPS THEM WARM

Round as a lariat goes the talk
cinching Bill, Jane, Sharon from Boston.
Bill jilted Jane; moved Sharon to his ranch house
shaded in peachleaf.

Poor martyred Jane took it in stride.
Sharon grew lonely, him tending his spread,
took to meeting the foreman out near the pond
under the peachleaf.

What's more, this Sharon, foreman in tow,
ran back to Boston. Bill won back Jane—
married her too—one morning after he
chopped down the peachleaf.

The lariat twirls, grey smoke curls
up from old wood on the ranch hearth.
Out near the pond an old stump dies
sprouting green peachleaf.

GREATER BINDWEEED

Quidnunc Uncle Knut brought things on himself: orphan cats,
fickle women, lovable characters,
a mania for cowboy songs—
all of which he generously shared
when he lived with us.

But no treasure like the scourge he transported in a lunch box
of damp moss for thirty miles
and set loose in our flower beds.
I see him now as he raked,
led, watered, coddled, and coaxed.

And I see myself, three gardens
of unwisely salvaged plants later,
tugging at skeins, untwisting hanks,
digging and yanking incredible coils
of fragile white glories that bind
me to uncles, impulse, and plague.

IN A LOUD WHISPER

Unheard from. You are dead.
Swedish flower you are born.
—Beginning of a friend's letter

Yes. The wind roars
from the east flattening
the rudbeckias, scaring the goldfish.
A friend is missing in Viet Nam.
My family finds me impossible.
The students do
as I do and worse.
The aged cat is gone.
Gardens depress me.
Old comforts are cold and I am full
of death, loss and denial.

I'm speaking only to me.

—
Along melodic lines, Vachel, they have a new jazz now since you blamed the saxophone. No longer hot or cold its complex tom-toms take the theme at times. When delicately mad the horns go out they catch Van Allen rings around while steady as it mounts, the swinging pulse, the solid going-to-the-sun, backs shaded tones that echo non-vibrato. Vachel, when they like you set out to correlate they borrow comet-forms you came to curse but lay it coolly on the heart, lag-along, and let a drier cadence rock the head.

~

About Our Contributors

SISTER MARY GILBERT, SNJM, appears here for the third time. She is spending the current academic year teaching at Seattle University.

RICHARD F. HUGO, a founder of this magazine, had five poems in the last issue. He teaches at Montana State, in Missoula, and has been reading his poems on the Pennsylvania Poetry Circuit.

WILLIAM STAFFORD, the leading poet in this area, has a new book of poems coming out this fall, The Rescued Years (Harper & Row). He lives in Portland, Oregon.

DAVID WAGONER, who was in our Spring issue, also has a new book of poems due to appear soon, Staying Alive (Indiana). Dave teaches here at Washington.

BARBARA WILLIAMS lives in Seattle; her poems have been printed by The Trans-Atlantic Review and Inland. First appearance here.

MILDRED WESTON teaches at Fort Wright College in Spokane. This is her third time in Poetry Northwest.

JAMES B. HALL, the well-known Northwest writer, has a new volume of short stories entitled, Us He Devours (New Directions).

LORITA WHITEHEAD, a former student of the late Theodore Roethke, appears here for the first time anywhere. She lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

PETE WINSLOW, another former student of Theodore Roethke, is now living in California. His third book, Monster Cookies, from which these poems are taken, will be published soon.

DAVID RAY also appeared in our Spring issue (edited by John Logan). His recent book is called X-Rays, and was published by Cornell.

EVE TRIEM, distinguished West Coast poet, has a new book, Poems, designed by herself and published by Alan Swallow.

JAMES RAWLEY had a poem printed here while he was a student at Reed College. He is now living in Los Angeles.

SHIRLEY SAUBER studied with Sister Mary Gilbert at Fort Wright College in Spokane. This is her first publication.
DAVID SUMMERS is a student of Robin Skelton at Victoria University on Vancouver Island (Canada). First appearance anywhere.

SANDRA McPHERSON lived in San Francisco when these poems were accepted; to our pleased surprise, she is now studying here, with David Wagoner. First appearance, and first publication.

DAVID SANDBERG, a Northwesterner now living in San Francisco, made his first appearance anywhere in our last issue.

ED LEIMBACHER appears here despite the fact that his name is now on our masthead, so we wish to point out that these poems were accepted before he became our Editorial Assistant.

HELENA DYER is still another former student of Theodore Roethke. She lives on Mercer Island, and this is her first publication anywhere.

WILLIAM DUNLOP appeared in our Spring issue. He has published widely in England, and is teaching at present at the University of Washington.

FRANCES McCONNEL studied with John Logan when he taught the Poetry Workshop here last Spring. She has been published in the Atlantic Monthly. First appearance here.

HERBERT W. GOTTFRIED is a graduate student at Montana, where he studies with Richard F. Hugo. First appearance anywhere.

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON is published here for the fourth time. She is director of art at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, and mother of four children.

VI GALE, who had three poems in our last double issue (Vol. V, Nos. 3 & 4), also has a new book published by Alan Swallow, Love Always.

WESLEY WEHR, author of our cover design, is one of the outstanding Northwest painters whose work is shown at the Seligman Gallery, Seattle.