Poetry NORTHWEST !

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# POETRY NORTHWEST

\_\_\_\_\_ AUTUMN 1966

Mona Van Duyn

Three Poems

### A SPELL OF CONJUNCTIVITIS

The act of seeing a tree is the act of pressing an etched eyeball against the damp paper sky, carefully, carefully, and there it hangs, a fresh print.

An elegant frame of fur defines the start as midtrunk and the highest achievement as a slight tapering.

But how insistently it gathers itself together, forcing the multitudinous scratchings out of which it is composed into a perpendicular, a tree, recognizably sycamore.

One supposes that the three great cloudy balls hanging from its branches like fruit are not its own, but appeared from some imperfection of the press—though they match the frame and seem an arty improvement.

The dog leaps through hoops of fur, disappearing for a second into a cloud that clearly contains the fourth dimension. He reappears with a somewhat damaged solidity, with several legs that require an instant to rejoin their body, and three permanent patches of light on his black hide which may be the other side of the room shining through.

The faces of my friends are on balloons that drift and rise.

When they go through my ceiling I can only imagine how high they are going,

one hovering, one all pure wasteless lift, one snagging and coming free, snagging and coming free, all the way up,

one swelling, perhaps, in the light air.

They bounce around me, beautiful and unfathomed, a pirate with a gray patch on his eye, faces with missing mouths, as if this tenderness, that kooky wit were inexpressible. I want to touch them. How precariously they are delivered to my senses, and with what loss of self-containment!

#### CAUSES

"Questioned about why she had beaten her spastic child to death, the mother told police, 'I hit him because he kept falling off his crutches.'" News Item

Because one's husband is different from one's self, the pilot's last words were "Help, my God, I'm shot!" Because the tip growth on a pine looks like Christmas tree candles, cracks appear in the plaster of old houses.

And because the man next door likes to play golf, a war started up in some country where it is hot, and whenever a maid waits at the bus-stop with her bundles, the fear of death comes over us in vacant places.

It is all foreseen in the glassy eye on the shelf, woven in the web of notes that sprays from a trumpet, announced by a salvo of crackles when the fire kindles, printed on the nature of things when a skin bruises.

And there's never enough surprise at the killer in the self, nor enough difference between the shooter and the shot, nor enough melting down of stubs to make new candles as the earth rolls over, inverting billions of houses.

#### DEATH OF A POET

There was something obscene about wrestling that baby-faced boy, Women don't usually wrestle, except for a comic or grotesque effect, but this was a fight for my life—I recognized him instantly. I keep thinking how it must have looked, with him half my height, and so slippery with sweat I couldn't keep hold, even with my nails, and I'd hold his head back by the curls so he couldn't reach my own hair.

Once when we were locked together on the floor, his face was right under mine. I looked into his tea-colored eyes and saw clear through them to the blank bottom of the teacup. It startled me so much I let go and rolled away, and then he rolled on top of me. I felt his little genitalia pressing, cool, and hard as marble. It was only for a moment. What was dreadful was catching glimpses of freckles and a cute nose, and dimples at the base of each fat, fierce finger. All the while, as I said, it was a fight for my life.

My life—it was all I could have wanted, after I left home.

I held my spotted wand before the copulating world,
and it threw forth images ring-straked, speckled, and grisled,
so that I knew they were mine as soon as I saw them.

I believed in the power of words, both birthright and blessing,
and I worked hard, but with luck, luck in the skimming of experience.
I'd make a name for myself sooner or later,
and I could trust the men in my life to sit tight on household matters.
In some ways they are really more domestic than women.
I could always cope. I waited, at the rim of the well,
and they filled my glass, all the people I was attracted to,
and most of the pitchers that came out were meaningful and
brimming.

I was surprised at my own endurance. At one point I felt the gristle of his nose give in under my palm and his eyelids leak under my gouging nails. I would have killed him then, I would really and truly have killed him once and for all, if I could have. But he got loose a little and somehow touched me. After a minute, when I got my breath, I asked him his name. I was far enough in the contest and it was the thing to do.

I knew he wouldn't tell me, it would be embarrassing spoken out loud. But I had always known of him. I've felt intimations of that strength before, at home, in my mother's obsessed preference, her almost professional tricks, in my father's pre-empted eyes, which couldn't meet my eyes.

Have you ever really fought all night? All that I'd call fight took place in the first half hour. The rest of the time we were only clutching and wiggling a little, and even so I don't quite know how I managed to hang on.

Now that it's over I am blessed, if you can call it that—that is, I am of the world totally and helplessly.

What I fought for is gone, though I go on writing poems as usual. I am shrivelled in a secret place, though I don't limp.

His strength—I can't describe it—it was not muscular, in fact he felt soft under the sweat, like soft rubber.

But I believe in his power, beyond the power of words, beyond himself even, flexed in my own belief.

### Donald Finkel

(from Three for Robert Rauschenberg)

ONE: THE WHITE PAINTINGS

I always thought of the white paintings as being not passive but very —well, hypersensitive.

I
Erase a de Kooning, to see
if there remain on the paper
traces of sanctification.
What do you sanctify next?
After the first taste of pork on your innocent finger,
there is no rest.

You will eat crawling cheese, you will drink enough to be ill, you will coat your mouth with cayenne, you will stick needles between your fingers until you can't hold onto your horn. You will live to learn.

II

We call the fool divine who first discovered wine. Like Leda he knew exactly what to do in case of assault by a swan: hang on.

III

And we honor the first man to be gored by a bull to see if there would be anything beautiful left on the sand.

He wasn't let into Olympus for nothing. Like Pasiphaë he knew what he was doing.

We set up for him in the Plaza de México before every performance a Coca-Cola bottle ten feet tall.

TV

There is something in this that reeks of the Eternal Feminine: this cool, hypersensitive white, like dawn with only a few uncertain stars, this maidenly submission to the Muse, like a temple virgin.

Assaulted daily by the god who comes disguised as a stranger, the painter turns from being man to being human, a tourist on whatever continent, in whatever cafe, talking about nothing but painting and hanging on.

V

Mother is sorry for what She did the day the galloping ghost was laid; Junior bellows in his bed, Father's taken a powder.

Mother is sorry for what She hath made in a whimsical instant She almost enjoyed; Mother regrets having made Father mad at the sight of Her glistening udder.

The moment was magic, bully and maid played out the ancient rite and said whatever they say when the ghost is laid and the maid turns into Mother.

Mother is sorry She made the Bed, it never did her any good, he flew away before She could; and so did Junior.

VI

To paint a picture that has "the dignity of not calling attention to itself": it is to stand for hours on end in the rain like a pool of water, thinking of nothing but painting; no mean accomplishment for a natural man.

I try to imagine the poem aspiring to the humility of prose, the poem saintly enough to be content to call attention to something beyond himself; I contemplate the word holy enough to hide his light under a trade-mark; to say, Coca-Cola, to himself, in a natural voice, over and over and over.

### Franz Schneider

### Two Poems

### THE SECULAR CITY

In the city by the sea,
Golden girls climb
To steep-staired apartments
Like a choir of angels
Ascending to heaven
Over Jacob's ladder.

Their arrival is past treetops Where congregating in cages They warble their hosannas over Scotch from Waterford glasses Before they feast on breaded Lamb, cabob and rice pilaff.

For dessert: Black espresso And slides taken in Europe Which throw on pale walls Seas, sunsets, and drunken boats Crashing through blood-red Barricades in the sky.

Compline surprises them in bed, Their temporal thighs tucked in Well out of harm's way (How sweet the moonlight Sleeps upon this bank) And hairdos glowing in the dark Like a thousand crowns of life.

#### CONFESSION

In middle-life
I met a girl
In a foreign town.

I laughed.
I cried.
I spoke softly
In her presence.

I returned To tell The moon What I said.

It was
An impossible tale.
At night
Love and words
Look different.

My wife Heard nothing. It seems She fell asleep, Worn out.

The mind is full Of broken syntax.

### John Haislip

### Three Poems

# HE SHAVES HIS FATHER DURING THE LONG ILLNESS

1

He laid the razor to your cheek. Your room was clean, your body washed. He asked, how close? You answered, near. He said, the fever's passed away; And you, it's fall, the tree is bare.

T

When he was done and you were smooth He walked outside, and felt the moon. She arched her back across the field, Then turning toward the house, he saw: The sun, its torn and bleeding claw.

### THE AFFAIR

T

At five months they heard its heart. And then at four: that strange birth Which neither one could understand, It was that weird and that contorted, Their lives twisted and quite broken.

II

From the dead child: insolent stares. How like their willful assignations, They could not even kiss the coffin. A weeping weather came and squatted, But out of pity, it would not knock.

POETRY

### A DAY AT THE BEACH AND A DICTIONARY OF GEOGRAPHY

T

Here there are no dells,
No dingles, dales, or burns
Where woodchucks chuck and call
Where cool arbutus trails.
Nor downs, defiles, or deltas
By those names. A donga
Is a wadi is a nullah is a gully.
These we have—also ravines—
But inland, across the pass.

II

The onion weather peels.
The sun exfoliates the dunes.
The swells and swash, the plankton
And the benthos drift ashore.
The nekton orbit down in their milieu.
A charted wind-rose, blown across the sand,
Flourishes from yesterday, but faint.

### George P. Elliott

#### A WEEK'S CROSSING

The first evening their talk stepped them
Into so formal a garden
Of invitation that, had they undressed
The moment their conscious eyes spotted it,
They'd have ridden each other the winding ways
For a while, parted with sweet tears;
But they talked through that moment.

Next day he felt, in her voice's rise, She too was wondering where they'd danced to. He kissed her half-turned cheek good-night. Which way out to take? He inspected her For preening twists of the neck. Flirtatious inflections, simpers, moles— Reliable flaws. The best he could find were dubious: Her eyes teased him, but with veils of consciousness Dangerous to draw; the flaunt of her voice, The grandiloquence with which she moved, Were too much, but too much for what? "Her lips pout," he thought, "for indulgence. I'll indulge by letting her conquer." Faults so insubstantial, hard to name. He didn't allow his hand to caress her Till the fourth evening, when it had to. When her breast had to rise to his hand. Their mouths became a kiss, whatever the moment. What difference did it make how vain she was. How carefully he'd located ways to the exit? In? Out? They undressed, all right. Nothing elegant about that embrace: They shut their eyes, and exploded Out of the moment into each other. Next day, inside out, lying averted, They cried a little, not sobbing, Feeling but not naming what they had made.

On the sixth day she said, "We are gods."
He laughed at the excess. "Don't," she murmured,
"I mean it." The truth of her voice,
Whatever it was she meant, moved him to her
And into her, that the whirling dance
Of his motions became hers;
And even on the still bed, gratified,
Wherever their bodies touched they were.
His arm went to sleep; he shifted up on the pillows.
She tilted her head back and gazed at him.

12

POETRY

NORTHWEST

13

Her parting lips were delicate now,
Perfectly sensual like a baby's,
And her eyes naked. Whatever it was
He saw in her mouth and upturning eyes,
It pulled my face to yours till we were blind.
My lips overheard you whisper
That, for the first time, you were afraid of words.

All the same, next day when we landed,
Ordinary cadences gave us all the eloquence
We needed for a liberty in the world.
We no more bothered to guard our words
Than we arranged when to meet again,
But trusted the strangeness to come,
Confident we had been given—
How to hold?—
Open voices and a sexual home.

### Kenneth Pitchford

### MOVING OUT

Our neighbor downstairs is moving after wishing us ill for more than a year. At first he played his Bellini operas just for fun but later because it shook the whole house when we were trying to read or write or make love. He said he'd exchange his silence for fifteen hundred dollars.

Tonight my wife, unaware, lies asleep upstairs while I sit here—with a butcher's knife on our oak table and a bucket of water in the vestibule—waiting for him to climb the stairs and set another fire against our door.

Why should I care? We didn't pay money we didn't have. We ripped up our floorboards and blasted him with Bartók.

I used to be a Quaker pacifist, long ago, in college. I think of Jews with bowed heads walking naked to their death. In the packing plant I worked at, lambs were hardest to handle. They didn't fight back. They didn't believe in evil. One blow of the hammer settled it. Certainly, I am a coward, but still, but still, if I am to die that way, some will die with me.

Last night Malcolm X was murdered while our neighbor set fire to crumpled newspapers at our door.

Malcolm would not have gone to the crematorium like the lambs, though he stood unarmed at his last podium, preaching a new doctrine that in time might have led him to love or thereabouts.

I have this knife. I am brave as a Quaker lamb no longer.

This morning we went out down the stairs; I tossed burnt newspapers through the stairwell, kicked at the dogshit he'd scattered through the hall. My wife helped, trembling. All her life so many people had claimed to love her, thus excusing the atrocities they cheerfully performed upon her: mother, father, lovers. Her answer was to strive to love them back.

Now she struggles to share my hatred, too, who has not seen lambs hoisted by their hind legs to the moving rail, who wept for Malcolm's murderers, God, may this knife tonight rust unused in my hand, no fires be set against the love we struggle to share in spite of all our time's murderous cowards. Listen. I hear his footsteps climbing up our stairs.

### J. Edgar Simmons

#### REMINISCENCES AT THE ROLLER DERBY

I

lapping lake Dawn cows clobbing toward the house philosophy padding beside me in the lonely rooms where the caged bird sleeps though the skies pearl. I lay down book, pencil, and cup for I have begged enough through the dark hours and now I would through my window. the kingfisher flutter the ditch detonating the night a minnow grabbed alive and the hound-running dieseling trucks the blue road. Kingfisher minnow and now a cock sting the vans shine a blast outblasting their oily horns see there the trucked lettuce glister and roar on.

II

Dawn and I write hearing now the tinkling of the caged bird's bell hearing too the wind —God's brassy whispering through the chain links of the front porch swing or is it the neighbor's riding the swing terrier in joyous rock. sounding God in fang and claw and I remember summers and childhood and that same sound signifying beyond hot blinding walls unseen the Family. This dawn the chains creak a dark wrv song so spirit warming it obliterates all obscene strokes. Now at the rooster time tinkles resurrection

ghostly on my gallery.

### Morton Marcus

#### INCIDENT

I am going to tell you what happened.
The dog is in it, the blindman,
the butcher picking his teeth with a match,
and a street skinny with afternoon.
Not that you asked to hear, and, maybe,
won't want to, but you've been circling the crowd,
pirouetting on your toes as if you did.

What's difficult is how to start. With the dog? the blindman? the match scraping the molars of the butcher? Begin with the afternoon that began with the morning. Or begin with the moment you arrived at the scene. heard rumors, wondered just what you were doing when it happened: scratching your thigh, shifting unpleasant thoughts in your mind like seasons in the hands of a god; for it is about you, this story, in the end: it is to you the dog is dead, who tugged the blindman seven years along this street the same blindman crouching in the doorway now. his hands white, the fingers smooth, fragrant with shadow and empty of sight with the loss of the dog.

The butcher standing near the cop propels the match about his dentures with his tongue, admits he cleaved the dog in two because he hated it and had to kill. Possibly he saw it as a side of beef which somehow got away; and for seven years it haunted him, a dream that passed his shop each day, guiding, helping the one he really had despised, the blindman, who didn't even know he chopped, sweated, watched him through the window of his shop.

Maybe he'd seen the blindman's hands one day, so smoothly cool, unlike his own, which bore the teeth marks of the cleaver and the knife. Or tired of snapping matches with his teeth, he may have simply wanted anyone to populate the ice box of his day.

Shadows lengthen, and you can tell the afternoon is tilting on toward evening.

The dog is dead beneath the sheet; blood tightens on the sidewalk where he lies.

The blindman wears his hands like gloves along his legs, squats silent in the doorway, looking at the pavement he can't see, and maybe listens to the butcher, who grins, talking with the cop.

Well, that's the story, all I know of it. You can forget it now, or bring it home wrapped carefully in your interest to open fold by fold in the dark quiet of the apartment. Fold by fold on the table, until a loose jelly emerges from the wrapping and glows in the dark. Sit watching it. Poke it. Smack it. Squeeze it, its green light defining the black interior of your room. This is the light the blindman sees by. touching his way toward home; the light the dog watched shaking in bones, in water, in the blindman's fingers on his snout. the light that finally cleaved him to his death. This light the butcher lived with seven years, and lives with now, spreading paper on the meat, switching the light off in his shop. This, the light of an afternoon fallen beyond the buildings and their lives.

And us? We have only the story between us, speech, the movement of hands. We say goodnight,

separate, walk narrowing streets, who have become each other's story in a tale told by another somewhere beyond this street. The dog is in it, the blindman, the butcher, and the speech of two men winding like luminous taffy in the dark: a soft thing, a departing light, a presence they shape with their going and bear beneath their overcoats like hidden burdens, although they carry it more like children than contraband.

### Adrianne Marcus

### Two Poems

#### BECOMING THIRTY

Tied to my tongue, I count, articulate. Where should I place my heart's forgiving? I am diseased with choice words, an endless weight of syllables.

And in the dark, a rain of stars, fitful markings on the sky.

Am I the same, that cross, one blaze of night, with no deliberation but to burn and take.

Late, late the light that drives through stone, this conscience pocked with moss; the world goes silent to its own estate and burns.

### A FORMALITY OF LOVE

So locked in ice your body burns. The frozen flesh of your mouth, splinters of teeth, even the buried steel of your tongue coming up through the ice, wary as a fish.

### Dabney Stuart

### **EXCHANGE**

It's always there, like the drone
I hear when I pick up the telephone,
Steady, uninsistent, satisfied
With never having made a vow or lied
Or done anything, in fact, but been
Around, ubiquitous, yet mine.
The wish to die, I mean.

It's always there, like the drone
I hear when the voice at the other end
Hangs up, having said it all
For once. As long as I hang on no other call
Can break through to me, standing alone.
I have to dial to hide that constant tone.
The fear of death, I mean.

### Patricia Goedicke

### Two Poems

### TO THE VIRGINS, TO MARVEL

There have been
many reluctant virgins
and several dragons seduced
by this poem, I said,
And the haters of poetry all
jotted it down in their notebooks.
The appeal is universal; I myself—

Christ, what a howl of laughter!

Is it possible the haters of poetry
were taken by surprise?
Without knowing it for a fact I believe
I had been thinking of myself as nothing more
than an ordinary piece
of stage business.

My hair is gray and I wear glasses

Nevertheless! The figure is still there:

bosom, thigh, abundancies of flesh—

What did they expect?

The virgin and the worm are more than mere rhetorical devices.

Speaking frankly, there are no excuses.

It is all personal,
the live body of poetry always seduces.

#### OUT HERE BY THE SPRINGHOUSE

Out here by the springhouse on a wet day
a red starflower breaks through the ground
And the bell rings Russia —
Yevtushenko adored,
Voznezensky surrounded by ten thousand admirers—

But here we are known as weeds,
wild crab and witch grass mostly to be ignored.
Dodging raindrops,
riding the misty fields of art
we think of our brothers and feel lonely—

Isolated, split up, separate seeds flying
one in North Dakota
ten in Maine
Though the clappers of our tongues go swinging
from the Steppes of Russia to the Great Plains.

## J. M. Murphy

#### REED

His father dead, Reed left the attic room where years ago (exotic histories of stamps and unspent coins) the boy's dreams were blurred as static on his bedside radio,

and bearing the freight of twenty years below to the red and narrow room he shared as a child of four, arranged the artifacts of his careers in several stacks on the bed.

A booklet, "Cancer," and a microscope revived his dreams of medical research, who failed first chemistry.

A sheaf of scribbled cases (Hi-Glo Glass Works vs. Jackson), reams

of legal foolscap, the notes desisting in the middle of the word "inequity." A plaster cast, the Prince of Peace, its base inscribed Resist All Evil. "A riddle,"

his friend said on that *dies irae* when Reed, shaken by the wind of high decree, left the seminary.

The record of his military service, Navy. "Stark, Reed Y.

Applied for OCS—washed out. Transferred to basic training and advanced to seaman. Released inactive...."

Dreams were best. Action would spoil the plans, the boy's sacred coins. Rain

clouded the parlor window while his mother eyed the screen.

The storm had fouled the set with cotton-candy forms.

Her tendered hand was cold to his kiss as the relic of a queen.

### Carol Bly

### **Two Poems**

### IN THE GARDEN AT YARDLEYS

Some ideas are huge
And cannot be loved:
There is a shock, like the cold
Our knees drew from the stone floor
At Easter.
Still, the mist in the garden is simple,
The little apple tree's lids are closed,
Its leaves glitter with rain,
And the grass suckled all night and is full.

I know if I glance down at the small snail His wet mark on the paving Will be an enormous window to the center.

#### THAXTED

For Jack Putterill

On weekdays the beautiful censer Is a silent volcano: Tourists creep about the church Like islanders, on bare feet. The vicar's vestments on their hook Hang like magic cloth between moons.

The huge tree in the meadow broods On the mist in its roots, And the mist over the grass is like the ghost Of someone good, who has been killed. In this church I am drowning softly, Full of my ancestors—apes and shrews— While, from the dead, odorless under their plaques, Old ideas go up Like the pure mist of the meadow.

### Jack Anderson

#### THIS MELANCHOLY

This melancholy, these darts, your instant coffee. They say this will keep going on, that if this keeps going on it will only get worse. The mob threatens the prosecutor. The mob is threatening to prosecute. A sickly sweet taste, irrelevant as scattered feathers. returns each night to my mouth like a cancer unfolding in some expensive liqueur. I could call it the scoreboard, politics, or the air, but that would be too easy and only part. It is only part of the air and as for those other chicken runs, well-

Let no one take away the possibility of resonance.

Your old pants are flapping at the top of the sky. I am glad of that.

### John Unterecker

### A TASTE LIKE SALT; A BRIGHTNESS LIKE THE SUN

(Collioure: March)

#### T

The shadows under flaring mimosa imitate cork-grove shadows, But over all shadows is the huge shadow of rain. It sways in a casual sardane—right, left; Left, right—beckoning, backing, inviting. Say that we accept the invitation: that the slate Kiss of rain carries us to the wet sea—the lift And slop—and that we hesitate where the patterns of rain Mar those undersea, most alluring, densest-of-all shadows.

#### II

It is here between two wet worlds on a grey day that the flare of mimosa—useless on the hill—is most needed, Its bright musky attack rooted in shadows.

But, of course, there is no roothold where one grey surge meets another

And the restless, diagonal streak of gulls—paths
Cut through a wet dance—rides and slides.
Undersea, the long processions of fish glide
To a quiet music, wrecked when gulls smash their sky.

#### TIT

I think of dry vineyards rimmed by mimosa sunlight
And, huge above the vineyards, Canigou's white signal;
The stiff patterns of sheep in the vineyards,
Their abrupt shadows jogging beneath them like black cut-out sheep;
And the hot blare of sun, that inventor of shape
Which walked with us in a serenade through January-blue air.
Who wouldn't call it two villages, two worlds: drenched in a rage
Of the various shadows, where the heart's dance is a dance of light?

#### IV

For now the rain lifts swirling off the hills to gild them in a flash More transient even than the shatter of mimosa that rides the gullies, And the streets—running gold—run gold. We are sealed In light. Until from the sea, rain swings back: a benediction Of mist to return us to the grey, wet street.

No, it is most needed on the hill, the gold

Statement of mimosa, so that we may walk the double world where, pale,

A grey dance beckons and a golden dance invades our flesh.

### John Williams

#### LETTERS FROM ROME

#### I. THE CATS OF ROME

Scrawny, cautious, unloved, they walk in the ruined elegance of stiff bones. old fur, and an ancient city. Most often one sees them at a distance: in the weedy pits of the Colosseum, or flitting in the Forum with a Caesar's ghost, or curled up in churchyards like the conscience of the rich. Most intelligently fearful of what is not themselves, they have a strange monomaniacal dignity of trying merely to stay alive as if that were somehow necessary, a good. In stubborn secrecy, like an essential force, they live in catacombs and subterranean places, are neither tame nor wild, will not be touched by any hand, and look at strangeness around them as if it were passing.

POETRY

#### II. THE VIA VENETO

One takes what one can get from this Italian air, that is dense with particularities of what has been, is, and will be. The Via Veneto, our mother whore, lies open and indifferent to the joyless assault of corrupt children who fondle the nightmare breasts and perform their dreams with dead faces.

Two miles away, in a Caesar's forum, the daughter of an august God gave her ripe flesh to passing strangers. Now the white marble rots in the sun, the blank steps and pillars fallen to chaos: this is the barren crib where the slut of time, who gathers us all in her art, lay once, and lies, and will remain.

### William Keep

#### UNDER LABORATORY CONDITIONS

Find something to put over the mouth.

That'll do: anything to keep the pressure in.

The wind plays tricks with bodies this time of year.

I speak from experience, the wind

Plays tricks with bodies.

You think you know it all, well—watch her stoop

Toward the light, how the light flows

Into her; not much you can do about that:

Exposure. Sometimes you think you better not move.

That's the wind's trick playing with the light;

But see how, leaking, she holds the pressure in!

### Harold Witt

### Two Poems

#### COMMUNION

Welch's Grape Juice—and I'm prousted there—to Christ blood Sundays tinkling in the trays, a hymnbook incense hovers on the air where flesh was spongy Wonder Bread we ate, symbolic cannibals, I in my teens, pimpled and slicked, and talcumed not to reek.

The ritual is sterile, quick and neat.

We take the cruel communion's crustless pill good Presbyterians cut behind the scenes and now His body's eaten, wait until the minister says "Drink ye all of it" and wash His murder down with something sweet.

### THE SPIDER FEEDERS

I didn't realize it at first, but what we were waiting for, imprisoned in that place, was to be fed to the spider—someone on the staff suddenly stood at the door and one or two at a time, we disappeared.

Science fiction, of course—it couldn't be happening—I felt my eyes shut tight yet I had seen, somewhere beyond, as the door was opening, attended by silent nurses, a shining machine,

and glimpsed inside, like fate, the hungry spider reflecting, from eight bright eyes, all of us caught in concrete rooms as if in gossamer, whiling away our stay without much thought.

Few others noticed until I began to whisper This isn't a palace of leisure, it's a plot. If you don't believe it, try saying no when your name's called. Those polite servants will drug you and drag you out.

So some said no—they, too, had heard the screaming—and the formerly simpering lackeys needled them limp. Then all of us saw the spider's horrible feeding, the monstrous machine with its victims being dumped in

and sucked by the spider until they were nothing but skin. We hid after that, and tried to escape from the trap. Though wherever we went the servants kept coming in, all of us got together and secretly planned,

since humans had made the machine and humans could stop it, a daring revolt against the ones in command.

We bloodily fought and thought we were winning at last—the spider inside the machine grew visibly thin...

until—I couldn't believe it—some of our own, not able to end the dream, became the new leaders, and the rest of us joined them, to be, out of fear without hope, instead of meat for the spider, the spider feeders.

### Vern Rutsala

### THE STUPID MAN

With day nearly gone I begin to move.

Mired in slowness my heavy feet shift in the dance of rocks, the tune so slow no one has heard its end.

The shuffle, the dogged step and I am in the world, blinking. Running through me is the sense of hooved creatures trying to tie knots, their labored efforts

wince in my wrists. I am a whale, some huge thumb groping for its hands, searching through my sounds for a voice within my anchored tongue.

I push my weight into the numb cold looking for an ever darker night where the sun never asks the eyes to see and I may live

by touch and nudge.
My fathers lie
deep in tar pits:
the terrible reptiles—
Stegosaurus, Diplodocus—
all buried in spite
of their armor, their spiny
backs, the heads of bone.

### John Tagliabue

#### CAPTAIN VENEZIANO

It's not shaking out the mop, he is?

No, no, that thing there that he keeps tossing back and forth so that it touches the wet stone by the slightly tossing sea from which it came is magical, is marvellous, is strange, is mysterious, may even still be alive, it wouldn't be exactly right to call it a most marvellous witch—
it, the source of some of my squirting (because of its ink)—

it's an octopus!!!

also because after it gets tossed about that way its many soft legs fatly superbly

hanging, dear creature of an hour, wet mystic described by Minoan pottery, one of the great wonders of the world, parts of it are bulging like some sort of prehistoric sea dirigible,

certainly it *is strange*and in its way
astoundingly beautiful

after it gets sufficiently
moved around on land
and in the frying pan

### I probably

in a few hours
(Helios is now going down by
the sea missing one of its occupants!
one philosopher and writer who wobbled there so knowingly)

### I scribbling cannibal

orange with the sunset right now and though praising it-and-sunset-and-sea will probably enjoy eating it.

It's not shaking out the map, he is?

John Woods

Three Poems

### AFTER A DAY'S FISHING

After a day's fishing, shrugging up the palms of sunfish, grandfather cat, horned shad (too, the river clean, but holding the tree's, the city's rinsings), the worms, doughballs, cruel flies thinking of bites, then a long gar flounders in my dream, clashing his armor like one of England's Henries, cutting the air with purpose clear as the front door of a butcher trying to forgive meat.

"Lent! Lent!" I cry. "Friday, old reminder of tails." And my waking woke me sweating in the loose coils of my bed.

NORTHWEST

Old gar, you will never leave your mail and come to sleep with me, evolving to my white hand, eager to fondle, write, and break the backs of bluegills over gunwales.

#### IN THE TIME OF APPLES

In the time of apples, Love turns away again. Your face has closed a door. As green light darkens, My eye forgets to know. My voice has taken root Where the lights are out.

Trees leap up thinner
And fall before my eyes.
My fingers know as much
As they will ever know
Except that thing the orchard
Leans at last to say.

I forget already
The woman of your face.
The thunder of the fruit
Falls through your voice.
Here on this window ledge
Something you owned goes strange.

I will not say that autumn Explains this apple time. No one owns an orchard Since Adam loved the world Enough to let it go.

### MOVING TO THE SUBURBS

I should have been the ragged Earl of Cotsford with the finest cellar in all of Disneydom.

Beef and beer on the sideboard, sullen retainers, etc. I live on a street where you couldn't ban a bomb, where the whole neighborhood is a sigh of Relief, with more thin cats than you could shake a stick at. The sun doesn't go down, the night comes up, when you can hear the plumbing repel all boarders. I don't have enough Art to rosey-up the garret. If I cross my legs it's a religious revival.

Dear Ex, my collars and cuffs are waiting their turn, my sox are on their last legs, shoes not fit to be tied. You always were a great gal with the needle.

On the horizon, I hear yellow bulldozers, growling the text of the Mayor's Commission (Whatever graft lets peter down to nickel their slots). Come and get us, bun-headed lady from Smith, I see parks and high-risers in your eyes. I can see myself lost in endless corridors, knocking at the doors, saying to the napkins and slippers, please let me have some of your processed cheese.

Well, I'm heading for the suburbs, with a wife waving a hanger at my descending pants.

Drooling awake at two a.m. before a test pattern.

### Ronald Silliman

### MUSIC MINUS ONE: THE LOVER

officiously, he read his words of love. the mirror would not smile, the telephone was not listening, the floor looked out the window. timidly, he read his words of love. the hours of one day can only stretch so far, before the sharp lines beneath both eyes snap.

silently, he read. the word dies in a day like a moth, but the paints are ours for a time.

he did not know color, the lines were uneven, the shadows too long. night fell and he climbed back into his arms and legs, lonely animal eyes with wire lips. viciously, it begins again.

### Stanley Cooperman

#### CAPPELBAUM'S FRIDAY NIGHT

Figprojected ments of leaves on skin, like canvas stretched between our arms, a soundtrack paved with snakes or dry jelly-beans, lovers picking their teeth with

crucifixes, and on the other side of vesterday's rib a lullaby for everybody.

Why should we remember

it?

I mean why should we look for hyacinths inside our socks? When I open my mouth, the sun comes down with a million bugs I can't even see, with legs and invisible hairs running around my lungs, and even your name is a puff of vibrating space.

It's not that I hate the taste, but why make a megillah out of blue gumdrops, or reasons for the sound of a grape squished between my fingers?

Why should I manufacture candles when I tumble through the world dancing on the wax

from my own beard?

POETRY

### John Alexander Allen

### Two Poems

#### THE BUTTON

I wake each morning to a different set Of threats in the mail: eviction notices And bills marked "Please!" in red. A pale bridge partner twitters by my chair, Where the radio ruminates unsavory news. Each night, in a different way unmade, I try to sleep in a different unmade bed.

Why then, dead in the dead of night, last night, Did I walk the halls, long after my eyes Had set? Why poke in closet and trunk? Because, in a wilderness of bric-a-brac, I lacked the wherewithal to sew a button on; And found, in a bureau drawer, a needle; sunk To the bottom of a chest, a spool of thread.

Into my lap I took my coat of no particular Color, tied a knot in the thread, and thought: I cannot make my bed, yet I can lie in it! With that, between two stitches, like an angel Rose my heart and chanted: Bill collectors, Though you dun for nothing less than all I own, blest be your unforgivingness!

While neat and strong I sewed, it seemed
The daughters of the morning sang, at dawn,
My husbandry. And though the grave
Antagonist, whose only trump is doom,
Appeared, when the sun was high, to press my bell,
He could not repossess that handiwork!
In time, a stitch in time will save us all.

#### THE DEATH OF UNCLE DAN

Has anyone bothered his head about Uncle Dan Today? Not Sonny. On the roof, he's sending Messages, by wig-wag, to the scout Across the way. Nor Mamma. She has flung The bedroom window up and, shaking a mop, Appears to be purging winter out. For a moment, She communes with blue, and then with green—The lawn, where Sister spends a penny's Worth of thought on anyone, a man, In the way of conversation, pleasant enough To come and carry her off. The twins, Who chattered daylight in, are at it still.

I ought to be sad about Uncle Dan. He hasn't Taken a whiff all day of this delicious Air. I can't remember his step on the floor, Or even a tap on any or all of the four Walls of the room he's bound to call his own—A spot he seems to treasure, dim as it is, That seems to be cut exactly to his measure. On the table in the hall, his mail Piles up, neglected. I wonder whether his ship, Whatever its cargo was, should it appear In port at last, just when he least Expected it, could rouse his spirit yet.

Oh, Uncle Dan's at home, but not receiving; Done with hatching plans to no avail, With dying to make a living in a calling Still unknown. No one drags him into The conversation now. Cat's got his tongue. Isn't a man entitled to be alone?

It's not an accident, after all, that he hasn't A TV in his room, or even a phone Or radio. In fact, he lacks a proper Knob on the door. And what's to be done Is now to be done with Uncle Dan, whose room Is the only one in the house without a window.

Keith Abbott

#### SIDESHOW

(after Rimbaud)

very tough queers. several have stalked out your arenas. without needs and in no rush to mirror their bright tricks and tunnels to your minds. what ripe men! eyes empty like the red and black nights of summer, slabs pocked with gold sequins; deformed faces, leaden, hot; hoarse burlesques! the cruel strut of gaudy drag. some are young—how would they work on Cherubim?—endowed with sly voices and a few hidden purses. in the town they parade buggering, tricked out with scrofulous elegance.

violent Paradise of the panting grimace! not to be shoved beside your Fakirs and other staged farces. in patchwork routines like anything out of a bad dream, they fake heroic romances of criminals and of idols, more hopped-up than histories of religions. Chinese, Hottentots, bums, idiots, jackals, Molochs, old deliriums, slant-eyed cretins, favorite poses of mother they cram with slouches and caresses of beasts. they would reap new scenes, love-sick songs. confident clowns, they quick-change place and person and pocket the crazed grins. eyes burn, blood chants, bones puff, tears and red dribbles run. a minute or a whole month their clowning or terror hangs around.

I alone fondle the key to this savage sideshow.

#### Czeslaw Milosz

Translation by Suzanne Brooke and Matthew Zion

#### HAPPINESS

How warm the light! From the rosy bay
Masts like pine trees, ropes are lying still
In the early morning mist. Next to a little bridge
Creek-water dripping into the sea, the sound of a flute.
In the far distance, below an arch among the ruins,
You see small figures walking:
One has a red kerchief. There are trees,
Battlements and mountains in the dawn hour.

Zbigniew Herbert

English by George Gomori and Matthew Zion

### THE BOTANICAL GARDENS

This is the boarding school for plants; it's strictly governed like a convent. The grass, the trees and the flowers grow in neat rows, without vegetative exuberance, avoiding any unauthorized kissing with the bumble bees. They are at all times inhibited by their Latin dignity and by their exemplary positions. Even the roses press their lips together. They dream about herbals.

Old people come with books and fall asleep under the drowsy tick-tock of the sun-dials.

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#### Miron Bioloszewski

Two Poems, translated by George Gomori and Matthew Zion

#### POEM

"O, if they were, if they were to take away even the stove . . ." My Inexhaustible ode to Joy

I have a stove that looks like a triumphal arch!

They take away my stove that looks like a triumphal arch!!

Give me back my stove that looks like a triumphal arch!!!

They took it away.

In its place there remains only a bare and barren den a bare and barren den

And for me that's enough a bare and barren den bare and barren den bare-an-dbar-ren-den bareandbarrenden

### JOYOUS SELF-PORTRAIT

Don't think that I'm unhappy. I'm happy, because I think. So think, that I'm happy.

Consciousness is a dance of joy.

My consciousness is dancing
before a lamp of rain
before the peelings of a wall
before the grocery store where the cabbages meet
before the mouth of my friend who is talking
before my own unexpected hand
before the uncarved statue of reality—
in the luxuriousness of the best entertainment
and of the most sublime ceremony
inseparably
my consciousness is dancing.

And when the dance breaks off in the manner of every ball of yarn I'm going to the sky— where you don't feel anything where I was from the beginning before I came to be where I will be to the end when I won't be anymore there—there the joy is indescribable

And that's all.

CZESLAW MILOSZ, born in Poland in 1911, is a professor at the University of California. MIRON BIOLOSZEWSKI, born 1922, lives in Poland. MATTHEW ZION and GEORGE GOMORI are young poets and translators living in the San Francisco area.

#### Anne Hébert

### **Deux Poemes**

#### UNE PETITE MORTE

Une petite morte

s'est couchée en travers de la porte.

Nous l'avons trouvée au matin, abattue sur notre seuil Comme un arbre de fougère plein de gel.

Nous n'osons plus sortir depuis qu'elle es là C'est une enfant blanche dans ses jupes mousseuses D'où rayonne une étrange nuit laiteuse.

Nous nous efforçons de vivre à l'intérieur Sans faire de bruit Belayer la chambre Et ranger l'ennui Laisser les gestes se balancer tout seuls Au bout d'un fil invisible A même nos veines ouvertes.

Nous menons une vie si minuscule et tranquille Que pas un de nos mouvements lents Ne dépasse l'envers de ce miroir limpide Où cette sœur que nous avons Se baigne bleue sous la lune Tandis que croît son odeur capiteuse.

### Gwladys V. Downes

### Two Translations

#### A LITTLE DEAD GIRL

A little dead girl

is lying across our doorstep.

We found her in the morning, curled on the sill Like bracken touched by frost.

Now that she is there We do not dare go out, This pale child in her frothy skirts, shedding A strange milky darkness.

We try hard to go on living inside Without making any noise Sweeping the room Organizing boredom
Letting gestures fall as they will At the end of the invisible thread Touching our open veins.

We are scarcely alive at all, so quiet That not one of our slow movements Reaches to the back of the limpid mirror Where a sister swims In faint blue moonlight As her heady odour grows.

~

### NOS MAINS AU JARDIN

Nous avons eu cette idée De planter nos mains au jardin

Branches des dix doigts Petits arbres d'ossements Chère plate-bande.

Tout le jour Nous avons attendu l'oiseau roux Et les feuilles fraîches A nos ongles polis.

Nul oiseau Nul printemps Ne se sont prix au piège de nos mains coupées,

Pour une seule fleur Une seule minuscule étoile de couleur

Un seul vol d'aile calme Pour une seule note pure Répétée trois fois

Il faudra la saison prochaine Et nos mains fondues comme l'eau.

#### THE PLANTING OF HANDS

We had this idea Of planting our hands in the garden

Branches of ten fingers, Little trees of bone, A sweet border.

All day long
We have waited for the russet bird
And the fresh leaves
On our polished nails.

Neither bird Nor spring Has been caught in the snare of our severed hands.

For a single flower A single tiny star of clear colour

A swoop of a calm wing A single pure note Uttered three times

We shall have to wait for the new season And our hands melting like water.

# About Our Contributors

Mona Van Duyn, the well-known poet who lives in St. Louis, is currently visiting various parts of the United States on a grant from the National Foundation on the Arts.

DONALD FINKEL, whose new book, A Joyful Noise, was recently published, is a Guggenheim Fellow in poetry this year.

FRANZ SCHNEIDER teaches at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

JOHN HAISLIP teaches English at Oregon State University.

GEORGE P. ELLIOTT is the author of numerous novels, short stories, articles, and poems.

Kenneth Pitchford, whose poems have appeared widely, has recently sold a long novel.

J. EDGAR SIMMONS teaches creative writing at the University of Texas at El Paso. MORTON MARCUS lives in San Francisco. Other poems of his will appear soon in Massachusetts Review and Kayak.

ADRIANNE MARCUS lives in San Rafael, California.

Dabney Stuart's first book of poems, *The Diving Bell*, was published this year by Knopf.

PATRICIA GOEDICKE lives in Athens, Ohio.

J. M. Murphy was killed in an auto accident this fall. A book of his poems, with an introduction by John Logan, will be published in December.

CAROL BLY lives in Minnesota. She is the wife of poet-critic Robert Bly.

JACK Anderson is news editor of Dance Magazine and has published poems widely.

JOHN UNTERECKER, the well-known poet and critic, teaches at Columbia and was a Guggenheim Fellow last year.

JOHN WILLIAMS, better known as a novelist, is the editor of the new Denver Quarterly.

WILLIAM KEEP teaches English at Western Washington State College.

HAROLD WITT has been a frequent contributor to Poetry Northwest.

VERN RUTSALA teaches at Lewis and Clark College and is working on a second book of poems.

JOHN TAGLIABUE'S new book of poems about Japan was published this fall by Kayak Press.

JOHN WOOD's third book of poems, *The Cutting Edge*, was published this fall by Indiana.

RONALD SILLIMAN, who is twenty years old, lives in Oakland, California.

STANLEY COOPERMAN teaches at Simon Fraser University. The University of Nebraska Press will publish his first book, *The Day of the Parrot*.

JOHN ALEXANDER ALLEN teaches English at Hollins College in Virginia.

KEITH ABBOTT lives in Pacific Grove, California.

ANNE HEBERT is a young French-Canadian poet living in Montreal.

GWLADYS V. Downes teaches at the University of Victoria.

HELEN BULLIS PRIZE: \$100

Richard Hugo, for "Five Italian Poems" (Summer, 1965) and "Three Poems" (Autumn, 1965)

Previous Winners

Hayden Carruth (1962) John Logan (1963) Donald Finkel (1964) Mona Van Duyn (1965)

THEODORE ROETHKE PRIZE: \$50
William Stafford, for "Four Poems" (Autumn, 1965)

Previous Winners

Carol Hall (1963) Richard Hugo and Kenneth O. Hanson (1964) Kenneth O. Hanson (1965)

