

SUMMER 1963

VOLUME IV, NUMBER 2

NINETY CENTS



Poetry

NORTHWEST

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POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME FOUR NUMBER TWO

SUMMER, 1963

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POETRY NORTHWEST SUMMER, 1963 VOLUME IV, NUMBER 2

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For Theodore Roethke

May, 1908 — August, 1963

How speak of grief and joy commingled?—grief in our loss of his transient shape and joy in our nearness to his immortality. The reminiscent laughter breaks through our saddest musings, for he was one of the great metaphysic wits and mundane comedians of the age. Or we hear, again, the magnificent somber music of his voice. Its language is irresistible, in the memory and on the page. And so, as man and friend and teacher, was he.

Every audience who ever heard him caught fire from him. We roared, and wept, and wrung our hands. Something in all of us died with him. And something of him lives in all of us. He will abide in this marvelous, tameless, and despoiled Northwest which he lovingly adopted and described. The felicity and the particularity of his praise, whether of the outer or the inner landscape with its furred and feathered creatures, or of the beautiful young wife whom he adored, is the gift of his provenance to the world.

C.K.

FIFTEEN POEMS
after Lin Ho-ching

MAKING THE SCENE

One notable critic complains
my poems don't deal
with the larger issues.

I look at Mount Pilchuck
in spring, under a green rain
dripping from the eaves.

Well, there are some
would put the gull down
for not wanting to be an eagle

and the lizard
for changing quick as a wink.
From where I sit

new pine-shoots glisten
over Queen Anne's lace
at the foot of the meadow

and one day last week
a guitar-playing scholar
stopped by to copy

a song from a notebook—
anxious to get
the set of the words just right.

~

林
和
靖

PUT IT THIS WAY

The big news
walks only
down main street

not here
where the alders mark
time to a local

breeze moving
over the fishpond.
"Ni hao ma"

I drink
to the late afternoon
as woodsmoke

rises, blue
over green roofs
and the day

time birds come back
bringing
news of the sunset.

BEGINNING

Shoes echo, a sharp sound.
I hope for the best.
The bamboo clashes in the wind
like knives being sharpened.

As the moon goes
shadows move over the wall.
What a gasser this nature is—
nothing unchanged for long.

The pond darkens. Edges
fail. Night takes it all.

SPRING

Surrounded by
anything growing
I stop and think.

The crane stands
on one leg among
lilies. The bees go

bumbling in and out
of the flowers.
Wine slows me down.

I poke and prod
at the roots of things
and remember

too late how fond
the painters were
of stairs that lead nowhere.

HERE AND NOW

Winter—spring—daily
the house gets lonelier.
The big spruce shuts
out the world so completely
I welcome even weather
from the Gulf of Alaska
like an old friend.

Every morning the mirror
reflects more clearly
my withering sameness.
And though I pledge
a health to my health
nothing changes—the blood
thins out, the heart slows
loving only the landscape.

WEST LAKE

Exuberant, restless
Nature, itself unformed
gave form to the lake
and the landscape—
distinctive as
color on plain ground.

In April, the water
is jade green, clear
as a monk's eye.
Blue evening hangs
on the hills like dust
on a ripened plum.

The garfish moving
moves its shadow
on the whitewashed wall.
All things are one.
Gull's feather falls
to the fisherman's float.
Small wind. Slant rain.

Far off, the sound
of "Walkin' the Dog"

fading.

~

IN A GREEN LANDSCAPE

In April the clear pond
thickens with live green.
Wild plum-buds
burn at the branch tips.
The grass roots quicken.
Bright birds nest.

Thus an old man rounds
the inconsequent season.
I remember those early
poets, their odes and albas—
the air full of accidents.
How should I tell where
remembering them brings me?

~

MONTANA

Just over the border
a handful of stores
both sides of the road—
grocery, filling station, feed store
drug store, depot, tavern.

I wait on the platform
for the one daily train south.
The vapors of summer rise over the rails
and the dust shines, north and south.
From somewhere a black dog
is going home obliquely.

After three months
I still don't much want to leave.
Every day like today—acid & flat & spare
but with beautiful small signs
as August dies.

Now there's a fat blues
spilling from the door of Ed's Happy Haven
and the neon comes on
(before night does)
seeming to say to me Don't
go Don't go Come back

~

THE DIVIDE

I confess I get moony
when I see these
out of the way places.

Parked for a minute
I look down at
the clapboard houses.

Foot of the hill
I drink spring water
so cold my back teeth ache.

God! childhood!
how soon I forgot it!

STONE MOUNTAIN

In rainy weather
from this lookout
the mountain seems
held by the river.

No temple roofs
angles and curves.
Only autumn green
bleaching and dull.

Always the fisherman
always the changing
pattern of gulls
as they come and go.

Who'd think some
pipsqueak official
'd dare move Li Po's tomb
from this setting?

回
雁

ONE / TWO

Sumac and joint-grass
reflect on the clear pond.

Likewise the sunset.

So, as if drawn on a golden screen
two waterbirds take flight

toward one destination.

RICE FIELD

Black soil
green
rice shoots

thick water
in the roily
ditch

surely
a subject
for some

painter
the gnarled
farmer

spring
plowing

SNOW

Eight
a.m. with the doors
and windows drifted shut—
how could there be
any dust on the knobby sculpture?

The day
is as self-contained
as the life of a stylite—
pure as "Persimmons"
by Mu-ch'i.

Step
out and the sidewalks crack.
Brisk willows
don't budge in the snow.

Stone
sober this morning
I can't bear the thought
of deliberate action—not

with the world
so shined by the weather.

~

MORE SNOW

Last night the snow
smoothed over the landscape
not an edge is showing
neither hedges nor ditches
and cold cracked the fat
rhododendron buds.

In the morning light
the frozen canal
looks black as a cup of tea
and the ponds too.

Myself at a loss—
boxed in by the day
I take down a book
and caught by the hard
riding rhythm I see them
the armed horsemen
farther than Turkestan.

"An eagle floats by
almost touching them.

Their feet
are quite numb
in their spurs."

~

BOATING

Pale as a mirror the lake
seems a world without edges.
Trees become clouds and clouds trees
in a watery oneness.

Lured by that pure intersection—
blue hills and a stony shore—
the creek overflowing its banks
by the cabin, I tie up—

my flask of wine a fine forethought—
one with the world, for hours.

~

Eve Triem

Two Poems

THE GARDEN

He is Adam spading a gaunt garden.
The island and the lake in cloud
Move as a whited shadow, a ghost
Of a drowned city to aging eyes.
Until memory or escaping sun
Expose a violent boy stealing flowers.

The theft is the joy, not flowers
Tenting with scent a glass garden.
A violence of stones burnt in the sun
He drank, to his great thirst; to cloud
Reason. And felt the beak of the ghost
Spreading blue pain into reaching eyes.

Ashamed to confess a boy's iceblue eyes
Are the violence he kept of flowers,
He stuns thought with engines scaring the ghost—
A king raped by Death in the ritual garden.
His destiny disowns him. In flesh a cloud
A white deer eats quinces gold as sun.

Knowing the foursquaring facts of sun
He shudders at his lunatic eyes
Asking vivid alms of a lingering cloud
Condensing into a dance and flowers.
O young Adam moaning the blasted garden,
Plunge into honey—the god is the ghost.

Touch him not, impetuous Ghost
Who famined him from the womb for sun
In a world You made a sunless garden.

Let him be the deft spider (or hawk) for eyes.
Then will he show for You in flowers
Sweetening the dour delirium of cloud.

*Blue thief (where buried?) rend your cloud.
My twin, return! A city's shiny ghost
Adorning a great sea with neon flowers!
A man-seed grew in the wingwide sun
For God. The god is silent. Phoenix eyes
Observe the stark farewells to a garden.*

A boy roams the ghost-garden. A thick cloud
Ashens the gem sun to violent eyes.
His spade taps out a requiem for flowers.

EULOGY

~
This man, slipped low in his coffin
and pulled over sticks and weeds
(an acre lies no whiter),

with massed clove and sugar of flowers,
with camphor to keep off horror,
say by the book: *He was brilliant,
ripehanded, just, fervent to do.*

Let Him of the ivy and grapes,
and Demeter of the Threshing,
tell also: *Earth plowed for berry and melon
nursed hemlock, wormwood, nettles, instead.*

Assume, king or cat on a dungheap,
he escapes to a weather of silence.

But: if it's a clangor of witnessing voices,
if it's a Gate and a Scales . . .
all he brings in his heart
outweighed by one feather!

Richard Hugo

Four Poems

DUWAMISH HEAD

1.

That girl upstream was diced by scaling knives—
Scattered in the shack I licked her knees in
Where she tossed me meat and called me dog
And I would dive a dog at her from stars
Wind around my ears—violins and shot.

With salmon gone and industry moved in
Birds don't bite the water. Once this river
Brought a cascade color to the sea.
Now the clouds are cod, crossing on the prowl
Beneath the dredge that heaps a hundred tons
Of crud on barges for the dumping ground.

My vision started at this river mouth,
On a slack tide, trying to catch bullheads
In a hopeless mud. The pier was caving
From the weight of gulls. Wail of tug
And trawl, a town not growing up
Across the bay, rotten pay for kings—
These went by me like the secret dawns
The sea brought in. I saw the seaperch
Turn and briefly flare around a pile
And disappear. I heard bent men
Beg a sole to look less like a stone.

Beyond the squatters and the better homes
Stars were good to dive from. Scattered
In the shack I licked her knees in.
Diced, the paper said, by scaling knives.

2.

River, I have loved, loved badly on your bank.
 On your out-tide drain I ride toward the sea
 So deep the blue cries out in pain from weight.
 Loved badly you and years of misery
 In shacks along your bank—cruel women
 And their nervous children—fishhooks filed
 For easy penetration—cod with cracked necks
 Reaching with their gills for one more day.
 Last year's birds are scouting for the kill,
 Hysterical as always when the smelt run thin.

Jacks don't run. Mills go on polluting
 And the river hot with sewage steams.
 In bourbon sleep, old men hummed salmon
 Home to mountains and the river jammed
 With blackmouth, boiled in moonlight while the mills
 Boomed honest sparks. October rolled
 With dermal fins and no man ruled the runs.

When I see a stream, I like to say: exactly.
 Where else could it run? Trace it back to ice.
 Try to find a photo of your cradle.
 Rivers jump their beds and don't look back
 Regretting they have lost such lovely rides.

I could name those birds, see people
 In the clouds. Sight can be polluted
 Like a river. When this river asks me:
 Where were you when slavs gave up their names
 To find good homes on paved streets west of here?

I talk back. What are you, river?
 Only water, taking any bed you find.
 All you have is current, doubled back
 On in-tide, screaming out on out.
 I am on your bank, blinded and alive.

3.

Where cod and boys had war, a bolt plant roars.
 Sparks are stars. Next sunday, when I die
 No drunk will groan my name in spasms
 As he vomits last night from the dock.
 I have memories of heat upstream.
 Her arms and eyes had power like the river
 And she imitated salmon with a naked roll.

My vision started at this river mouth
 And stuck here (bullhead in the mud)
 A third of what could be a lifetime.
 The city blares and fishermen are rich.
 Tugs and trawls repainted slide to ports
 And perch found better color in the sea.

My fins are hands. The river, once
 So verbal, drifts with such indifference
 By me I am forced to shout my name:
 Backing up on in-tide, screaming out on out—
 River, I have loved, loved badly on your bank.

Scattered in the shack I licked her knees in—
 Beyond her, nothing, just the Indian
 I use so often infantile in dreams
 Of easy winters, five day runs of silvers,
 Festive bakes, the passing of the jacks
 To sand pools promised by the rain.

To know is to be alien to rivers.
 This river helped me play an easy role—
 To be alone, to drink, to fail.
 The world goes on with money. A tough cat
 Dove here from a shingle mill on meat
 That glittered as it swam. The mill is gone.
 The cat is ground. If I say love
 Was here, along the river, show me bones
 Of cod, scales and blood, faces in the clouds
 So thick they jam the sky with laughter.

GRAVES AT COUPEVILLE

When weather shouted at us: vagabond
We looked for weathered towns where men are strange.
Our clothes were older than these stones where words
Erased by moss are silly said aloud.
We had idols that the light deranged.
Last night's strangers could have been our friends.
The dead were singing slogans in our blood.

Think of walls your insufficient fist bounced off,
Walls your face ran down and couldn't stain
And I was turned away by smiling aides,
Couldn't find a job. Why a car so old?
Why the world so new, the men so knowing?
Don't the wounded find a use for mold?
We need no introduction to these plots.

That's the captain—lost his head to knives
Of Haidas. That's a smuggler and that
A sentimental fool. Read his epitaph:
Mary. We love one another still.
I'll go first. You mark my stone with lines
The south wind often writes on zany days.
Dump me in a river roaring for the sea.

We joke back across the strait at islands.
Men are islands. Haidas live in carvings
In stockades men turn into museums.
We never give old guns another glance.
Taste your tears, the lime of them, the liquor.
Give the foolish dead a second chance.
The weather hates our poses
But the sun deranges men with laughter.

WHAT THE BRAND NEW FREEWAY WON'T GO BY

The block is bare except for this five-story
Ugly brick apartment. Perhaps the bulk
Frightened stores and homes away. Age is clear
In turrets and the milk on window sills.
The new name and the outside coat of paint
Must have raised the rent. From the road
The rooms are yellow and the air inside
Is stale because a roomer, second floor,
In underwear, unshaven, fries a meal.

To live here you should be a friend of rain,
And fifty with a bad job on the freights,
Knowing the freeway soon will siphon
The remaining world away
And you can die unseen among your photos—
Swimmers laughing but the day remembered cold.

Rooms have gas. The place was in the papers.
Police have issued statements about cancer
And the case is closed, but not the jokes
Passing boys are drilling through the walls.
Top-floor renters look down floors of sweat
To traffic that might stop were they to go.
Some rooms are paid for in advance with shock.

If, when the freeway opens, a man afraid
Of speed still takes this road, the faded
Under New Management sign
Might mean to him: we are older too—
Live here—we'll never treat you badly again.

MENDOCINO, LIKE YOU SAID

For Robert Peterson

From China contra-boom-bang water
Jars the cliffs, spray above the roofs
Of homes on stilts. Boats and hotel rot.
Russians doubt a profit from the road
Or sea. Water cracking fathoms
Into sky, the grass that moves by green alone
When wind is gone, say be alive.

We say die. We say catch the world
Without the noon, only iron, wood
And clay and dated. See how the sad
Is best reflected in a face when albacore
Are weighed. Despite old poems and songs,
Women on the shore are far too tough
To be there simply waiting for the men.
The boats are in but no one plans a dance.
No two talk an hour after anchor.

The sea's a band. A far off clarinet
Is coming on. The ocean blows the grass.
Birds are driven landward close enough
To claim. We know we're weak and wrong
But music and another knee
Refill our eyes with a keen butane.

~

Jean Musser

Two Poems

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

As gray music moves us, we whirl in the smoke
Of endless autumn, spin forever in dark
Decays of splendor. When he and I last spoke
I do not remember. I think only of paper
When I see Paolo. We were scattered
In an ill wind, took root, then flowered in fever.

I remember long ago when I was safe and young
In my father's house, and the quiet stars hung
In long windows by the stairs. I lived among
Silver and bronze; the great hall clanked with the sound
Of goblets; once as a child I was astounded
To watch my sisters, dressed in damask, as they danced
A pavane. Then spring came, a conspirator, and knelt
In the meadows of Rimini. The shepherds lifted
Their horns to the pure air, and the blue ice melted.

Bridled in treacheries of iris, I saw Paolo's eyes
As I wed his brother. We walked with sheep and folly
Into the hills soon after. From Guinevere, it came to me
That the few who die for love grow from the same
Dark root as I, born in the bone of a broken time
When I swam, wet as a fish, in the sea of his arms.

Now all images of bells and colored glass
Have faded from his eyes. A demon incense
Rises from his shroud. Not far, black swans
Float over the gardens of death. Not here.
We spin, sulfurous and separate, though safe from fire
Since in the second circle, there is nothing to burn.
The past is conjured like an army of spiders. I know
At last there is no greater grief than joy
Remembered when every shred of it has gone.

SKETCHES OF ENGLISH COUNTRY LIFE

Largo: THE SHEPHERD

When birds chinted like chips of flint
In the boxwood day,
He left his wife, his boy, and went
Green and early

Toward the clovered sky, and drove
His sheep, laden
With winter's wool, and the ewes, knowing
Ever since April.

The shepherd paused, curved like a G
Clef forming
His quiet harmonies and then, one sheep
At a time, put cords

Around their legs and gently sheared
Each down to a bleating
Half-inch thunderhead layer of pure
White fleece.

Andante: THE GARDENER

Canna and lily, anemone and fern
Protected him for almost thirty years.
In the still geometry of formal gardens,
Silence swung from dark prongs at dusk since
Even the sparrows were still, and temperance

Determined the orchards where no tree
Bent with fruit. He pruned carefully,
Yet sometimes when he cut the grass, the green
Blood of being assailed him with a strong clean
Smell which drove him dangerously near

The quick of life. His universe was dark.
Wearing a shell, he dreamed of scars.
Then *she* arrived one moonlit night with her suitcase.
He hid in the greenhouse as she passed,
His hot breath frosting the glass.

*Love is a castle
Where the king goes mad.*

Capriccio: THE WENCH

She came like soot from a nearby Midland town
And knew from experience that any man around
Would notice her. Pinned to her slip was a five pound
Note picked up between trains. Straight, not without

Beauty, she was sure that few combined such speed
And cleverness with youth. She planned to prosper as a maid,
Meet rich gentlemen, and work in a house with wide
Lawns sloping down to a tranquil lake. Besides,

Most nights were free and Sunday usually. She loved
Old churches, processions, majestic hymns, and hummed
Them, eyes dark as a Spanish whorehouse. Her mother was
A mandrake root; her father was John Donne.

*I, who have never shed a tear,
Know that love is a crown which the devil wears.*

Allegro: THE GARDENER AND THE WENCH

They met before long, starting with the eyes;
Then quickly he found the nest of nails,
Crowning thorn thicket in the spring's white thigh,
Was tortured and deceived
A dozen times, knew the fires of hell.
Then the canna doubled, the fern went to seed

And the sun, like a yellow cactus, shuttled
 Across blue primitive warps of sky.
 Nearby a heifer died, and the troubled
 Grass was charred.
 By autumn, the wench was plump and angry,
 Avoided his eyes, then one day departed.

He tore out two trees, waited
 A fortnight, a month, and then when the first
 Snow covered the earth, he opened the great
 White frozen
 Doors, laughed to himself, then cursed,
 Mixed some weed-killer and left a note:

*The heart has a dome
 Where rats gnaw requiem.*

Coda: THE SHEPHERD

In spring again, the shepherd planted
 Melons in the loose
 Rich earth, and carefully handled
 The heavy ewes.

He followed the cobbled road in cool
 Dusk when the peach
 Sun set, and carried his bundled wool
 Like a heavy dream.

*It matters how you prune a vine
 And when the lambs are born,
 And love, I know,
 Is simply a green branch growing.*

Edith Shiffert

Two Poems

WILD PEACOCKS, PUU WAA WAA RANCH, HAWAII

The peacocks screamed as we rode a jeep through their mountain field.
 Eight of us jostled skin against skin turned our necks
 to witness each call from the deep sea of grass
 undulating grain heads pinkish and ripe in April.

Some of the heavy birds perched in ohia trees fluttered down
as we came.
 They stretched the peacock blue columns of their necks to lightly fall
 and long tails billowed iridescent archways between tree limbs
with fluffy red ohia lehua flowers.

One by one they called as we came and the warned birds
answered from farther away.

Jeep wheels crushed grass and pulled us up the stairway of lava stone.
 We ascended bumping each other like a nest of joyous rocked
animals excited.
 Bearers of sea-colored feathers spread on that high slope in sight
of the warm sea
 trailed elegant sheer-edged fans through tangles of ferns in the cool
mountain fog from the hidden peak
 as they cared to alarm one another of strangers in their sanctuary.

We shouted between the shrill bird shouts then
 were silenced by each vision of a disappearing bird
 running past the loose ends of pink-flowered passion vines
draped from the tree tops.

PLUMERIA PICKED AND WILTING

When is the silent moment of death?
A flower does not breathe.

First its sunset will go,
orange-pink and yellow
become a smoked twilight.

Coolness will change to a mere lack of heat
as the careful structure
of five joined petals turns limp, then stiffer.

But the fragrance
will stay just as once
it was when this clung on its tree
while I sat underneath all day
in the perfume and color
of all the branches in flower.

On my tongue I taste it,
cool, soft, too sweet.

Against my cheek I feel
the pointed tips are gentle.

I look, and even put it against my ear
in case music hides there.

I wonder if the snapped-off stem keeps what is vital
or if it is in the gaudy streaks of each petal?

When seen at a level from half-closed eyes
before it dies,
straight into the center,
it is a day's end, and a life's, the pure
fire brightening clouds and sea
just after and before each day.

It is a path
from nowhere to the hidden heart of the earth,
so far one becomes lost
and cannot return to where he was at first,
where, as the flower closes, one might be caught inside
a wilting and never realize he has died.

From handling just this one my fingers are scented,
yet still I feel the flower is being wasted
and should be enshrined or pressed or worn at my throat
until we both fall to the ground as colorless dust.

~

Dale Nelson

Six Poems

GRAPE HARVEST: STRETCH ISLAND

In October, the cutting month,
The vines darkened,
We creaked the narrow bridge
To Stretch Island.

Once, when the factory burned,
We had watched the grape-
Juice bottles burst and make craters
In the ashes the next day.

Now the grapes in the sunlight
Seemed ripe bosoms.
Their clusters fell before
Our rented scissors.

After I had paid, and turned
The car in the slender
Driveway, we left the island,
Severed from summer.

SESTINA FOR MILTON CROSS

[Mr. Cross, for many years the commentator for the radio broadcasts of the Metropolitan Opera, had a brief career some years ago as a newscaster.]

This is the latest dispatch from Cairo: the tenor
King is tottering on his throne; ambitious
Supernumeraries wait in the wings
To storm, with an outcry of cymbals, the palace.
Negotiating in recitative, the chorus
Seeks to avert the fall of the First Act curtain.

Here is the situation: before the opening curtain
(The musicians tuning their bows and the ardent tenor
Donning his cardboard crown), the knowing chorus,
Aware of the machinations of ambitious
Voiceless men, surrounded the palace
And practiced defiance to the columns in the wings.

During the prelude, the adventurers in the wings
Grew bolder, hopeful to seize, by the time the curtain
Rose, at least the canvas outworks of the palace.
Here is a bulletin: in Act Two—with the tenor
On his plywood throne and the supers, ambitious
But anxious, wary of the militant chorus—

The soprano who, after the opening chorus,
Was to give the cue for invasion from the wings,
Hesitated briefly, having been ambitious
To be queen; then, *forte*, sang till the asbestos curtain
Shook and the horde rushed in to seize the tenor
King. It raised an unmusical clatter in the palace.

The scene of Act Three is a ruined palace
Where, in the dissonant moonlight, the chorus
Laments. Out from the painted shrubbery the tenor
Creeps. He has escaped, and is seeking in the wings
Asylum until the fall of the final curtain.
Elsewhere it is reported that an ambitious

Basso is seeking to rally other ambitious
Men for a new assault on the palace,
Take control and provide a rousing curtain.
He cannot do it without the aid of the chorus,
And is lobbying the stagehands in the wings.
If he succeeds he will replace the tenor.

He does. The curtain falls on the faithless chorus.
Ambitious hands applaud it from the wings
But the crowd before the palace cheers the tenor.

~

SKETCH FOR A BASQUE GALLERY

[Three men from the province of Vizcaya in Spain stepped up to the desk of the Humboldt County clerk in Winnemucca, Nevada, on July 7, 1873, and applied for United States citizenship. Their names were Jose Erquiriaga, Juan Aldoniz and Diego Ferrara... the first Basques ever to set foot in Idaho, Oregon or Nevada. About 7,500 Basques now make their homes in these three states.
—From an article in *Northwest Review*]

Erquiriaga, Aldoniz, Ferrara
are names on a frayed page.

The pelota court is a parking lot
where Mr. Ubariaga, the banker, berths his Cadillac
beside a tethered Jaguar.

The banker knows the gnarled (perhaps
Etruscan) tongue but has tucked it away
with the cesta and the goatskin ball.

In the park, in the sweating summer,
crinkled men, in their old game, lift stones.

Mr. Ubariaga plays handball at the Y.

~

THE DIG

Indians fled there, when the wind buffaloeed them;
Drew pictures of what they loved, what scared them, what they
died of.

In the big house that used to be a dance hall,
Girls in shorts picked over that time's bones:
This was a weapon;
They used this to cook with;
This puzzles us.

We came in a station wagon
Hauling divorces and discontents
Like Moses lugging those damned tablets.
We iced ourselves in that river. It washed our bones.
We picked fruit from the trees and gorged on the ripening god.

The water climbed behind the dam,
Kicking the river's cold power into jolts,
Flooding the dance hall and the tire-track road,
Flooding the middens and the blown bones of our fire.

THE LAWGIVERS

Ambition hangs in the abyss of these two rooms,
Where tired men debate the water laws.
From the gallery's altitude the lobbyists look down
As zoogoers at a cage of crocodiles.

(Chaucer, a husbender of subsidies, wrung poems from wine
and hides.)

They come in the odd-numbered years to the lighted dome:
Those skilled in exegesis of the wills' tangles;
The farmers, clumping the snow from their boots in the cloakroom;
And the perched hawk, eagle almost, from the hills.

(Moses, bowed with government, strode from the darkness.)

EPITAPH FOR A DOUKHOBOR

[Peter "The Lordly" Verigin, a spiritual leader of British Columbia's fiery Doukhobor religious sect, was killed in an unexplained railway car explosion in 1924. His tomb at Brilliant, B.C., has been bombed repeatedly, presumably by religious dissidents. The sect grew out of a church schism in Russia, where Doukhobor means "Spirit Wrestler."]

In Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant,
Peter the Lordly lies;
His bombed tomb mirrors an ancient schism,
Tinder to prayers of fire.

Locked in the soul's grapple,
He, the denying Christ,
Died in the burning schism's shadow,
Nailed to the dynamited ties.

Jarold Ramsey

TEACHING: A DULL DAY

A gray hour, and no horizon
Between what you know and what you don't:
"Arctic explorers fear the 'white-out'
Most of all" (a page of photos).
Admiral Byrd lectures his huskies
From under a snowdrift, parka on backwards.
The mulets are mal et mute today;
Their sledge is withered by the lake,
And one bird sings (a ptarmigan):
"And so, reflected in this uh context,
Uh we can see more clearly the" singer's
Mind go numb and blanc, go huddle
In upon itself, a gelid oyster
Gasping litanies to the polar sea.

Two Poems

IN THE FOREST

In the forest
 down the cut roads
 the sides of them
gravel rolls
 thundering down,
 each small stone
a rock waterfall
 that frightens me
 sitting in my ditch.

I smoke my last
 cigarette rolled
 with bible paper,
listen to the stone
 cascading down,
 some of it bouncing
off my hunched shoulders.
 Above me the dark grass
 hangs over the edge
like a badly-fitted wig—
 10 feet above me.

I dream of the animals
 that may sulk there,
 deer snake and bear
dangerous and inviolable
 as I am not inviolable.
 Even the gentle deer
scare me at midnight
 no-one else for 100 miles,
 even the sucking snakes

small and lithe as syrup.

 The forest is not silent,
water smashes its way,
 rocks bounce, wind magnifies
its usual noise
 and my shivering fear
 makes something alive
move in the trees,
 shift in the grass
 10 feet above me.

I am too frightened
 to move or to stay,
 sweating in the wind.
An hour later
 I convulse unthinking,
I run, run, run down the cold road.

~

NOT MOVING

waterfalls
in so dark
& the noise

very much

the animals
undoubtedly
moving there
& waiting

rocks
rolling down
the gravel
cuts
of the road

there
bears be
pack rats (curious
to see) snakes
lizards

deer moving
among
the trees
quietly

also
on the side
of the road
me

smoking
nervously
at midnight
100 miles
to go

& cold
& afraid
on the side of the road

the only animal

not moving
at all.

~

Margaret Nordfors

OCTOBER'S CHILD

Some days light hurts his eyes.
Today the sky he sees is fine.
We both take stock of branches.
He sees them move
the way he sees me move,
his branches.

The white brick buildings, the falling
leaves we can watch from all
our windows. We leave his basket
where it lies
and gather yards. He lies
in basket-

white and brick-white, building
himself. I watch today with all
my eyes, my vision hazed
as his, see color.
Comfort has a color,
though hazed,

the color of my skin.
Newborn, he leans on flesh and bone,
is warm. What moves is my breathing
and gold leaves.
When he leaves he leaves
me breathing

cold and bare as trees.
If he is tired today seeing
the yards, such movement and color,
and the warm
light go, let that warm
my color.

Five Poems

Translated by Robert Sund

En fågel virkar fina melodier
i vit luft.
Det glimmar blankt
och en blå tråd
hänger stum i luften.

1.

A bird spins delicate melodies
in the white sky.
It glistens,
and a blue thread
hangs mute in the air.

Första sommarns kalv ser med blanga ögon jorden.
I hans stora svarta öga simmar molnet och vattubäckens skum
och vårens färglösa mygga flyr ur björkens gröna blad
att spegla sig däri
som var det ett av skogens blinda vatten.

2.

The calf in his first summer sees the world
through a glazed eye.
In his large black eye swim clouds and the froth
of a rushing stream.
A pale spring mosquito flies from the green-leaved birch
to mirror itself there,
as though it were a blind pool in the forest.

Trollslända
glitterkaskad
naglad vid ögonblicket
ett kors
omslutad av gyllene spasm
o förhåvelse
grögnistrande
på fältet av luft
saxande
tillvänd extas.

3.

Dragonfly
glittering cascade
riveted to the moment
a cross
the embrace of a golden spasm
oh vaunting pride
luminous green
scissoring
in a field of air
grown to ecstasy.

Mina tankar flyga som rapphöns
vitt skilda kosor.
Min dikt, min dikt
jag ser dig
en skymt
innan skogen och marken ta dig
i bredskyggig famn.

4.

My thoughts fly like quail
their widely separate ways.
My poem, my poem
I catch sight of you
a glimpse
before the forest and the earth receive you
in their sheltering embrace.

Vintern plockar åt sig
som en gubba-hand i fickan
bland tobaksrester.

5.

Winter rummages around
like an old man fumbling in his pocket
among scraps of tobacco.

~

Scott Greer

WHALE COVE

This little bay that shatters the sun into echoes
Hammers the day to a circlet of broken color,
Breaks the sea into pools and tongues of silver
Now laughing against the sun, now running over

Beaches of lava, sunlight and loneliness,
Profiles of granite and rusty salal,
Through empty arches hollowed over the water
To empty meadows strewn across the mouth:

Beautiful, formed of night and drifting color,
Diminutive harbor, holding no deeper story
Than accidents of light, the hours wasting,
Like foam, upon the quiet promontory.

I think of pennants, the parks where children play,
The stadia of Sunday and the people
Adrift on blue mirages of the evening
And all the chinese wind-chimes of the day,

For such is your place, along the brighter margins
Of abstract color where child and lover wander
Into a nowhere of leaves and light and space,
Into a harbor that extends forever.

Robert Krieger

Two Poems

SCRUB OAKS

They were lit and gusting,
Leaves gone lindy, whirled round their wicks
Yellow and brazier-blue,
Wet, fummy voices of drifters.
So we drove through that blur
Seeing scuffed colors run
(Even trash-oaks have days
Built of ropes and stress)
Careful to mark what suddenly
Passed us—would bits of them
Fall piecemeal like birds?
Would some do what they whispered?

Every tree has its crisis
Boiling across our roof till
We smelled wounded resin
As all of them tugged
At invisible weights—quickgold
Down to their polished knees,
Till we could no longer hold our own vertical

Hearing their moral hum through windows
How all is in flourish, patches and flourish,
Every leaf, solo, blazing it
In a rush of flags from a cage
Above roots humped like anchors,
The same smoky voices of drifters,
Delirious, like us
In reckless abandon at the edge of a field,
Talking of going and not getting away.

~

BY THE ENCLOSURE

Measuring animals makes anyone sad.
I study the buffalo
Confessing—I must—sure of his stance
Deep in the munchy grass,
It's simple to see a family resemblance.

I buy this wasting day;
I ask what do we hold in common danger?
Beside tall fodder clouds
Our heads knock against fences.
We wear our humps with similar ease.

For we're both here—aren't we?—
Two in buttercups at the unbusy edge.
He doesn't know, doesn't mope;
Watching him look like a holiday guest,
I clutch at my own kind of dread.

And sense his loss of a burning task
Trudging his pleasure to the end—
A shagged, unsettling thing
Condemned to the web's other side
For having no hand in the making weather,

No collar or rope, no bundles
To drag like a ball from place to place,
Old lump to be fed, ignorant—
I do not mean to malign him; no,
But nuzzling here remind myself

That lives cry out, do come
Unraveled pressed to nobody's charge:
We tire of noons and nights in the grass
Far from the sweat-pits of Egypt;
We long for less wages, more purpose.

~

Gerald Cohen

Two Poems

ADAM TO HIS BOWER

Look—there is no business at hand!
And to convince myself
I ran to be free
To chart a swinging way
Zigzag ahead
Down the quiet trail,
With no busy pulse
But the rhythm of approach,
The last hundred feet
From the motion of events
Down to the still beach.

I tripped—
The image that fell with me
Seemed a cowering in the house
As though one there
Waiting below
Geared the stepping down.

The door opened
Upon silence
Pressing in with me,
An open whirl
Closing out the trail—
With a bang
And a good hold
I arrived at hand
From a world real
Into one gold.

~

WHILE GROWING DEAF

*... le bruit des germes s'épandait en un grand baiser.
Zola, *Germinal**

These come floating by,
The grains I gave to you
Come back where I blew
A sac of words to sea.

Come back to skim the waves!
Scrape, teasing my lips
As though I hear you breathe,
Lapping the edge of the sea.

A sound breaks a bubble,
A puddle shakes and mocks:
Roots are cracking rocks,
Cramming lips in the sea.

Take it! Token of touch,
A chorus of mad gulls
Screeching at drifting hulls
A song to you at sea.

Half-way conscious, we hear
Only the great Sound,
Deaf as this wave-stunned beach,
Part of its thundering sea.

~

The Poets Translated

LIN HO-CHING (page 4) was an eleventh-century Sung dynasty poet. He was a great drinker, frequently falling on his face at the conclusion of a poem. He refused to work or to write for the government, and preferred to live at West Lake and raise cranes. Ho-ching was the name given him by a later Emperor, T'ien Sheng, and it means "the peaceful and quiet one."

RABBE ENCKELL (page 36), born in 1903, is Sweden's greatest living poet. He lives in Borgå, Finland, in a beautiful little eighteenth-century house put at his disposal by the Writers' League. He is presently cruising in the Mediterranean with his family, the trip being a 60th-birthday gift from a shipping company.

James B. Hall

SPOOR

I. Dog:

I say there's cruelty
Beneath tolerance and I say affection
Is the shoe that kicks your ribs

But to tell the truth I run
Beneath my clothes line of necessity
And thus avoid their grocery trips:

They park me with the car
Then bring back meat in paper sacks
Easy to rip—but always out of reach.

And I say there's cruelty
In those cans of doggie food
They fetch to me: suet and liver

Warmed but not quivering
Like good live meat tracked
Then killed by my own illicit teeth.

Oh, towards nightfall I patrol
Their shrubs and can pretend
To guard their eunuch flower beds,

And I've known some foolish dogs
Who yelped in fields beneath the moon,
But I would not advise it.

Coyotes skulk in those hedge rows
And kill all dogs very slowly—
When it's safe. And as for rutting

Why I know six bitch dogs
Within one hot mile of here
All easy to mount, and all spayed.

Still you have to live some way
So I have learned to lick a hand:
It's expected, and helps avoid the pound.

I say if dogs had hands for paws
We'd soon see who barks in pens
Near laboratories—evolution notwithstanding.

As for facts, I know my Vet is fast
(He's only in it for the money)
So a dog's life is that, and nothing more.

Meanwhile my creed is this: piss
On their roses every chance and live
To kill the Persian cat which sleeps next door:
A dog's life is only that, and nothing more.

II. CAT:

Why should I stir from my warm place
For all the world outside? I like silk,
And our rug with tufts of white is grace

Enough for me. What's more, my milk's
Homogenized and my basket's always clean;
It's true I simply will not sleep on quilts

And it's been years since any raucous, obscene
Flea shuttled through my well-combed fur.
You see, I'm certain things are what they seem

And so I smile and watch that little cur
Across the street—yes, smile—for *it* barks,
Defiles their roses, growls at food, is vulgar

Beyond belief. I say my own remarks
Confirm good breeding and of course
I do have papers. I say my thought marks

Well a sensual, Persian mind which the hoarse
Paws of Airedales shall not put down. It's right
That I should live forever, *sans* remorse:

*Give us our fish in our clean dish
Make ladies whisper, when we're asleep
Give us our basket, give us dry heat
Forgive us the dust which corrupts our feet.*

Oh, as for children
I've heard
They're a lady's delight,
But not—please—
By a Tom
Under shrubbery at night.

III. COYOTE:

The night
Stalks from these foothills
Mouth-dark and more silent
Than any cougar

But I
Am scabbed by ticks, my guts
Burn in the night thirst of rabies
And so, alone,

I die
Beyond my pack's old authority.
Yet once they harried the landscape
At my back

And I
Led them down the neon throat

Of suburbs and saw my shadow leap
like a scythe blade

Over fences.
There we ate filth from garbage cans
And broke the backs of Airedales
Where they whined.

Now I
See rabid visions of the night,
See certain, new, unleashed authority
To be seized by cunning:

Oh on
That day I shall command these hills
To convulse, to send out packs not yet dreamed
By grocery shoppers;

I shall
Lope howling down the overwhelming
Sky and shall upheave the pipes of sewers
from their graves.

That day
I shall be sleek as a tank car
Followed by the bitch pack running,
Each one in heat;

That day
No child or wheel-chair cripple
Shall escape this Joy you now see in me.
Until then, wait.

~

About the Contributors

By way of farewell to THEODORE ROETHKE, this issue is devoted to poets of the Pacific Northwest: Washington, Oregon, British Columbia. The plan was not to display the best poems of his best disciples, but rather to select work characteristic of this area, by poets well-known, unknown, and occasional. We have avoided, and will avoid, the imitators and the elegy-makers. We shall continue to encourage the young and inexperienced, the neglected mature, the rough major talents and the fragile minor ones, as Roethke the teacher was famed for doing. And from time to time the very best poets alive send us their work, because they sense that we are devoted—with a passion that Theodore Roethke helped awaken in us—to the community of letters.

~

KENNETH O. HANSON has returned to Reed College after circumnavigating the globe, with long stops in Taiwan and Athens. His book, *The Distance Anywhere*, is virtually completed. These versions of Lin Ho-ching were supported by a grant from the Bollingen Foundation translation project.

EVE TRIEM, the distinguished West Coast poet, makes her third appearance here. She has poems forthcoming in the *Quarterly Review of Literature* and in *Poetry*.

RICHARD HUGO, a founding editor of this magazine, has a second volume of poetry in preparation: *Death of the Kapowsin Tavern*. He and his wife Barbara are about to embark for a year in Italy.

JEAN MUSSEY is a graduate of Smith, with an M.A. from Western Reserve, and has done graduate work at Oxford and at Washington. Several of her plays have been produced in Seattle, winning her scandal, prizes, and acclaim. This is her first publication in *Poetry Northwest*.

EDITH SHIFFERT was also a founder of *Poetry Northwest* and an associate editor in charge of Far Eastern poetry. Her first book, *In Open Woods* (Alan Swallow), is appearing in a Greek edition. She is departing for two years in Kyoto, to teach.

DALE NELSON is an editor in the Seattle bureau of the AP. This is his first appearance in *Poetry Northwest*, and the first time he has published poetry in the United States.

JAROLD RAMSEY, in graduate school here, was born on a ranch near Madras, Oregon. He was a student of James B. Hall at the University of Oregon. This is his first publication.

JOHN NEWLOVE lives in Vancouver (B.C.) and was born in Saskatchewan. Several Canadian magazines have printed his work, but this is his first time out in the United States.

MARGARET NORDFORS had two poems in *Poetry Northwest* a year ago, and like several other people in this issue, has been a student of Nelson Bentley here at Washington. She was born in Alaska.

ROBERT SUND, also of our graduate school, is translating Theodore Roethke into Swedish. More of his translations of great Swedish poets will appear in our next issue. Sund is a native of the Northwest.

SCOTT GREER is from Otis, Oregon. He teaches sociology and political science at Northwestern. Two of his recent books are *The Emerging City* and *Governing the Metropolis*. Our friend Alan Swallow is producing his book of poems, *Via Urbana*.

ROBERT KRIEGER, who teaches at Portland State, is a former student of Theodore Roethke. His poetry has appeared widely, in *Poetry* and *Schooner*, to name two.

GERALD COHEN is another product of Theodore Roethke's writing workshop. He has a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Washington and has been teaching at Western Washington College in Bellingham.

JAMES B. HALL, whose magnificent poem, "Memorial Day: 1959," came out in an early issue of ours, is best known as a writer of fiction. Stories of his have appeared recently in *Kenyon* and *Sewanee*, and New Directions is publishing a collection soon.

By Our Contributors

The Hungry Lions by Joanne de Longchamps (Indiana University Press). One of the top half-dozen women poets writing today. Five poems appeared here.

Home for the Night by Robert Peterson (Amber House Press, 160 Amber Avenue, San Francisco). Almost a third of the contents appeared here originally. Haunting, ironic, funny, compassionate, sad poems; illustrated by Mel Fowler.

Highlights from *Poetry Northwest*

Poetry Northwest, Volume II (1961-62)

Numbers 1 and 2: Cover by Morris Graves.

Poems by William Stafford, Harold Witt, Joseph Langland, Donald Hall, Eve Triem, Thom Gunn, James B. Hall, Sister Mary Gilbert, and others. \$1.25

Number 3: Cover and four illustrations by Carl Morris.

Poems by Hayden Carruth, Vi Gale, John Woods, George Woodcock, David Cornell DeJong, John L'Heureux, Florence Gould, and others. \$0.90

Number 4: Cover and illustration by Jean Cartier.

Poems by Jean Garrigue, Kenneth O. Hanson, Joanne de Longchamps, John Tagliabue, Harold Witt, Charles Gullans, Richard F. Hugo, and others. Prize-winning poems by Hayden Carruth. \$0.90

Poetry Northwest, Volume III (1962-1963)

Number 1: Cover and illustration by Mark Tobey.

Poems by W. S. Merwin, Donald Finkel, Robert Conquest, Rafael Pineda, Brother Antoninus, Marya Fiamengo, Charles Edward Eaton, and others. \$0.90

Number 2: Cover by Fritz Eichenberg.

Poems by four leading contemporary Japanese poets: Hagiwara, Ito, Jimbo, Murano. Also, Constance Urdang, Robert Sward, Philip Legler, Hazard Adams, and others. \$0.90

Number 3: Cover and two cuts by Richard Gilkey.

Poems by David Galler, M. L. Rosenthal, Maxine Kumin, John L'Heureux, Eve Triem, Stanley Moss, Joanne de Longchamps, Robert Peterson, and others. \$0.90

Number 4: Cover by Mark Tobey.

Poems by Richmond Lattimore, Carol Hall, John Berryman, John Logan, May Swenson, Maurice English, Richard Kell, Peter Levi, Robert Kent, and others. \$0.90

(Volume I is no longer available)