Cover from a wash drawing by William Ivey, the well-known Seattle painter.
Winfield Townley Scott

Five Poems

BLACK BEAN SOUP WITH HOTDOGS AND HARD-BOILED EGGS

In honesty—in speech—in love
In what have I not failed
So far?

Dick's wish to "live at the pitch
That is near madness":
Not perhaps so difficult—
To fail of it
Can also make a madness.

Dreams in the oversleep
Offset the sanest sunlight
And I am bald and gray.

We hauled ourselves up
Under poverty-stridden years
To which the title of this
Refers—a party meal;
Sherry added if cheap.
When we were young,
Often angry, rarely unhappy
Then.
Muriel announced us:
“Breathe-in experience:
Breathe-out poetry.”
What we still mean.

Karl’s way at the moment:
It liberates him. It permits him
To use his life. It is
What we all want.

As Bill once wrote me:
“Damn the transitions!”
My pulse today supports the
Short line,
but these hesitations
I take from kinds of music
Whose helpless uncertainties
I do not like, and yet suppose
They indicate something real.

It is not good to write poems
About writing poems—
A decadence, a possibly
Terminal disease.
Yet I turn—against
Colder, younger customs—
To remind you Josephine’s
Taxi driver said
—Or thought he said—
“Even in my heart
I can feel your heart beat.”

These I have named
And others.

We have spoken
As best we can,
Better maybe than you or we know
So far.

RITUAL DANCE

“Suppose,” she whispered, “this were the last time,”
As I knelt in the darkness and leaned in
And lay there hardly long in the deep way
Of waiting for her and me until slowly
Each wondering if it might be the last time
We moved together and apart, apart and
Together, up up in the din of night
Driven by more than us, by the one that two
Become in the ritual dance; become!

After many refusals—hers more? or mine?
And even after a thousand acceptances
I always suppose: Is this the last time?
Now shall I watch for or go look for her?
After the terrifying need to touch,
What else worth touching now? And is this death
The one I dreaded? or just a little while?

~

THERE’S NOBODY LEFT...

There’s nobody left to strip the two of you naked,
Stitch you into one wrap of sopping leather,
Roll you out to the hot sun where you would burn,
Dry, shrivel and in time find smothering merciful.
Secret lovers on weekends you cautiously—each of you—
Outwaited obligations that as it happened
Royally fed and clothed you. Now there’s nobody
Left to take jealous vengeance, unless it’s the Lord
Who claimed as much—which may not interest you
In this inherited house where you’re precisely together
As you said for so many years you longed to be.
“Alone at last”—that’s an old joke about bridegrooms.
Well—here you are: you lady lamed by a stroke,
You sparse-haired gentleman leaning limp at the fireplace;
And there are three meals a day and occasionally tea
And there are the birds to feed and the weather to watch
To keep out the cold, and the TV Guide to study;
Neither of you with wit surviving to learn
Always to drink too much at the same time and thus
Avoid irascibilities which are inevitable
Between the barely sober and the dreamy-dramatic drunk—
These barking irritations grate in a room
Sweetened with photographs of each other’s children,
Wherever they may be now at their adult business.
Early to your beds, for it shortens the day; if it lengthens
The night, you’ve become accustomed to the trouble of sleep
And can lie there wakeful with the same penultimate question.

IN THE LAST DARKNESS

In the last darkness,
Earth rolling eastward,
Venus high, remoter;
Slow on the foothill ridge
White graph of day;
I awake in the valley
To watch the steady dive
Of my beach of the world
Curve the long arc over
Under the pulsing planet
That yet refuses sun.
Nothing nothing nothing
Known of the morning, not
Even if that furious pulse
In its moment still to beat
Is the star’s or mine.

THE TWO-FACED DAY

Whether to stay and let it go at that;
Or rest and then go on. There’s a temptation,
So many staying; drowsed; shade under trees.
Now I can go to bed with mysteries—
Whodunits—who does it?—who does it?—
And after murder find new ways to sleep.
The sun spreads wide the southwest morning
Though thunder clubs the northeast black and blue:
Dead poplars like witches’ brooms bleak in the clouds.
While shutters of the sky are wrenchd and tossed
I gnaw at the bones of what I thought when young.
Marrow I get? or juices of my chewing?

In gardens kept for me by other people
I live and still remember the last lines
Of an old song and I murmur them over
Thinking to reconstruct it all from them;
Thinking to sing it all to the two-faced day
And so go on when once it comes to me.

Carolyn Stoloff
Four Poems

THE BLIZZARD OF THIRTY-SIX HOURS

I
Torn, it shredded, fragmented the shoveled
walked on hard below the lookers in cages, beyond the sellers,
or outside, where, blizzarded in its smell, sweet as cold,
weathered shoppers there to be out, not
knowing what of scent, stockings, belted to put on,
clipped to the hearing, or shade of red
to speak from they wanted, walked,
or called to four-wheelers already full
of wished to be tucked in not
having been forced out but drawn
by the blizzard, making it play, each sheeting new, continuous,
soft silence to penetrate, to track now’s emptiness
past into, as the boxed watchers unfamiliar with checked
accumulation of wind, inching hand’s passage,
moving cribbed up as any other fogged luminosity
would have done them, or low number,
who not outing to meet it not slipping on arm warmer
chest muffler, wall of cloth with window or long
hollow foot against wet, moved about in their own
central chill, hidden against it all,
against such a thirty-six hours.

II

Surrounded by its continual foliage, its fall,
passage in which fragments relate as rags to an ideal sheet,
as two suggest one that releases two, three,
four, a millennium of particles,
accepting the bed of its fall
as an unnamed river that is not
except full, or other than its changing filler,
not the earth’s street
not the walls of buildings but space,
thick as an empty glove reversed holds the hand
it held, holding the hole
without end or beginning, full
of empty to be snowed into, house
holding it out, in the stuffed brain of us,
its shreds of cold, white,
useless against red blood, we hear them laugh,
bitten out there, believing they know the snow.

BEYOND THE ZOO

On an occasional Sunday in spring or autumn, clothed in my
librarian’s gloves, I visited the zoo to hold out palmfuls of cracker
jacks to the llamas and white-tailed deer.

In the dark it seemed important to hold on to the crushed crackers,
but it was a mystery to both of us (myself, the giraffe) how, in my
search among dusty velvets in the storeroom of the theater, I found
myself with a full fist.

“Surprise,” a meager word for the effect on me of his appearance:
luminous, dignified. On a small scale with a soft nose, something of
the sort could have occurred without tangling the cables. This was
unhoped for. A flame rushed through my limbs.

“All this,” I breathed, “to one with so little cash. And they
don’t travel well.”

Perhaps this was the dividend from my judicious investments.
I looked sharp. No, it was not a camel. A camel is a father,
a giraffe is a chapel, and a more unbundled beast would be dif­
ficult to imagine, though, like the rest of us, a giraffe has a pit,
or a stone, in the middle.

Oh, I would have lifted him from the track of his presence to
pluck in my nest pocket, or swallowed his length into the cage of
my pelvis stuffed with straw so they could not bleach the spots
or send him to college, but he was too tall.

Would he permit me to reach up and hug a thigh?

Slowly I opened my fist and stretched out an open hand with
the crumbs from my neighbor’s lunch.

But my gift was not leaves.

I have placed on the short horns of his shadow a veil of fine
lace. I leave his unknown name in the prayers of my church, remem­
bering a sunrise cannot be possessed, remembering he could have
killed me with a kick.
LOVE ME OR NOT

I came, full of Chopin
knotted with flowers,
to this room where an odor of ashes
clings to wood and leather.
Love me or not, tonight
is a black
daisy, opening.

We have closed our books.
Our heads rest
against rough upholstery.
Not a thread of wind
no thud of pine cone to bruise
the naked darkness.
I may lose my mouth, or slip,
a bee, into the moon
if you lean over me.

But the smoke of your breath
hangs between. Birds
roost still
as beads on a crib as the huge
ant with a bright grain
of sand in his mandibles
crosses the night.
These lips will keep.

As you walk me home chatting
population explosion,
juvenile crime, taking pains
to post your property,
to hold no gun, I'll open
my yellow umbrella
against the black
petals' falling.

When the sun jells and the earth
rolls from my chest
may I whisper: We spoke
one tongue in the towering night
though scattered, babbling
food for war
though I find in my fist
a crushed newspaper.

~

ACROBATICS

One last push,—I'm up!
At the buffet they mill and chew
as I strain to maintain altitude.
Look, look! I gasp.
Heads tip, jaws drop.

Frappé, frappé, sur le cou de pied,
balance, balance, glissade, change.
I leap to display my sublime elevation
and repeat the routine:
ta ta TA, ta ta TA.
They shut their mouths on the caviar.

Dizzy from splendid postures
with which I delighted air
I fall, fumbling with the string.
The wings will not open!
The professor sits, lips pursed
legs and arms crossed, eyes fixed
on a distant star.
Three Poems

MORNING ON A MICHIGAN FARM

Morning is moving together. 
Placing our window where 
apples gallop in a red herd, 
above grass rising like dust. 
Morning is this moment of wind 
imagining the sound of blue, 
and the light remembering.

Half awake I hear the land 
and sky strolling apart. 
Half with you I move from under 
the blond shed of your hair. 
And wake to find my way 
like the light remembering, 
into the clearing of your eyes.

28TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Following the tongue prints 
behind a fat mob of words 
and dressed 
in the finest cut of lust, 
I run at the top of my life

with this miracle for a map 
and drunk as the dirt, 
spilling my pack of gifts 
I dance 
with twenty-eight years to burn,

into a nozzle of sun 
and a thick spray of day.

THE FIRE AT MIDNIGHT

for my son Adam

A mile west the Pacific pulls 
at the load of moonlight lifted overhead. 
Inside our potbellied stove 
flame is praising a log, at times 
like Autumn untying a tree. 
We live in a small place 
miles from anyone in these woods.

You are nine months tonight. 
Just half the length of time 
when your mother and I held 
for an instant, the force 
spinning through us. 
That takes our breath away. 
And that later 
when the walls had returned 
was rubbing your lungs together 
like two sticks, until they caught.

Now from the wooden crib 
that I built last spring 
you are crying and reaching 
toward me. And all I know 
is the glow from the fire upon you; 
that lovely 
you release the light from me. 
Outside the great trees 
toss and stamp in their stalls 
eager with green even at night. 
I rise and go toward you 
and reaching down, with the wind 
bending branches in my back, 
lift your beautiful heat upwards.
DEATH-TRAIN

“Deportation Rumanian style consisted in herding five thousand people into freight cars and letting them die there... while the train traveled through the countryside without plan or aim for days on end...” —Hannah Arendt

I
The first thing is limbs freeze, lips clench, the liquids of the ear collapse. . . . Winds that whisper to nurses, a wheel drumming softly, the car sliding deeper into a valley.

II
The woman who dreams in blue—coals, sky—a child dazed in her womb, slips home through the woods, the cool haze that falls over ponds.

III
The train sinks like a root in the night, itself, a thing free of the sun, the sun stifled below the horizon, black face of the flower that is abandoned.

IV
The truth is the first dies choking. Someone embraces the next one. Each glazed eye closes, a fist.

V
No feverish spider halts in the air. I open the door on a passing tenement, the last locked ghetto—bas-relief: the blue figures rigid in a web unseen; stunned, as cut into the metal of a new coin.

VI
The train is stumbling in a Carpathian valley. . . . Trees that firmly weave, like the few yearly mourners. . . . From the stiff bellies of mountains, the lilies that bear the primitive seed stagger to the rail.

In the twilight, the resisting kneel in the dust. A body shivers like the tense corpse in a furnace. The long camps—do they exist?
Richard Snyder

THE ABSURD

Albert Camus, 1913-1960

Petit-Villeblevin is not even known for modest local wine. It raises trees and January weathers of cold rain far from the wealthy sun, that coin of his bright realm, whose warm laying on of hands he knew as pagan pleasure when he kept goal for the Universitair d'Alger. The Facel-Vega is a modish car which rich men need to speed and blur their lives; as finely tooled as modern violence, as all our machined memento mori, it became for him—the poor boy become our goal keeper—ambush by the absurd. He took the train to his nostalgic sun, and then a friend offered to drive him north into the damp moral mist again where his clarity was crushed, his lucidity winked out by a tree's triumph over steel. His return ticket was in his pocket. O, Saint Jude, Apostle of the Absurd.

C. H. Hejinian

ARThUR

Arthur out walking saw the bread & butter lovers, a two-headed four-armed drum & bugle corps, that’s what they are. matched like salt & pepper or the arrow with the bow, eyes & nose, arm & leg, the Roman equivalent of our ham & eggs, they are soap & water, they are shoes & socks; Winslow (writes Arthur later), they are all that any chick and I are not. a pair of golden lovers swinging two by two, why they swell their lips with kisses.

(0 ain’t it love, though.) they are Castor & Pollux foot by foot on the stone, prosciutto e melone, hearth & home. they are Cupid’s weapons borne in Cupid’s hands, and our Arthur now is shot up by the gold of Rome; and old Etruria’s russet blush has taken Arthur’s heart. may Zeus stay away, says Arthur; let him go not disguised (behind pencil, black notebook, and tourist’s eager eye, great-browed and large-waisted) as Arthur, who is to have all Rome before he must go home.
Lorry Goldensohn

CONTINUITIES

O Sidon O Tyre, your gifts are in all the museums:
your beauties still stocking the shop windows:

look at our ladies about their business

of seizing decoration,
their fingers on your glassy drops,
your seals and chains,
their armored shoes pocking your marble steps
up, down, up, down

looking—

nothing is enough for them.

as they move:
they are getting new being,
new beauty
to coat their lips,
soften their shoulders, and
contrive their dim breasts:

new—
as they tack, and glide in the city,
getting, getting and getting

~

Benjamin Saltman

AS I DINED OUT....

"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."

Beginning at a square of light,
the morning window,
when I lie with rancorous mouth
under the sandwich of the day,
three telephone wires and a sparrow,

beginning because the day begins,
because dreams like sick bees stumble from my eyes,
because a man has more than hands and hates the ignorance of his room,
I waken and will eat!

This day is meat for me.
To have the moon a plate
I have a body that will die,
sinking below the bed in raveled wings
in the crusts of many bodies.

Driving in the morning at high speed
I lick the curves of the road; in greed
I send motorcycles like insects into fields,
I devour, I eat stones, I starve
not for power among the night stores,
not for power alone. Death takes my legs,
I swim out in shadow,
my bones are pale doors opening
where hedges lunge like sharks,
where the streetlamp turns flowers coral.

~
George W. Nitchie

Two Poems

STARLINGS, GULLS, SPARROW HAWK

Quarrelsome, sociable, homely, the flock creaks down
On the burned-out lawn
To crotchet around humpily looking for things,
Their air-borne grace gone,
Grumpy and self-important little cripples
As they are. Above,
Three gulls hover and swoop, their impersonal mew
Of hunger or love
Or perhaps challenge dropping down like a summation
Of a grace and poise
These others have no notion of, given up wholly
To numbers and noise
And confusion. Later, the short cry, short and plaintive,
Of the circling hawk
Has sky and lawn to itself, the solitary who
Does not need to talk
Or dance or quarrel except on his terms, who can
Neither love nor fear
Either gregariousness or stately hover. There are
No other birds here.

~

NOVELIST

He knew, of course, that the old man was possessive,
But not that he had never loved his wife.
That explained everything; and the jiggle and shake
That the whole thing gave when he had recognized it
Was all the proof he wanted. The truth was in it,
With the dogs and the children and the small shortcomings
He could look at here because they were not his own
And because, like ratchets and governors, they made
The thing work. The attractive young physician
Who believed in neither love nor science, the girls
Who believed in nothing else, and the bored boy
Who wore himself out in the effort to believe
In anything—God's creatures, life's creatures,
But mostly they were his creatures; and because they were,
It always took him by surprise to find in them
The maverick quantity that denies its maker,
Preferring the sweat of its own fictitious brow
And fighting to keep its secrets. All he could do,
Almost, was to watch, like an insecure demiurge,
And wonder, "How will it come out this time?"
The absurd, the beautiful, the merely awkward
Drove him as he drove them. He knew them
Only because of what they made him do,
Driven, like them, to see, to see, to see.
Theodore Holmes

GUARD IN THE ART GALLERY

Displayed in all the trappings of the state,
Badge on his breast, gun at his side, braid on his shoulder,
He is stationed there to protect its treasures:
Those moments of human grandeur at whose happening
It was occupied elsewhere as with a crime
And whose vision it felt only as another day
On which the machinery of government did not break down,
It now renders priceless by an expression of the people's will.
He stands surrounded by them framed upon the wall
Like accusations of his sin, having to protect them
From the popular hands like any virgin with her skin,
Almost as the retribution of his purgatory:
Stationed among the masterpieces by considerations
For their preservation that never concerned them, he is bored;
They look down at him from the walls as windows cut in heaven,
Through which appear the terms of his own Judgment.
He watches the people as a measure of the assurances
They have given to provide for the security of their looking;
His fixed stare is a knot in the net they have woven
To keep the pictures from their lives, inside the walls of the museum;
And when they leave is the assurance of the one to the many
That not so much as the mark love leaves has passed between them.
They come out from the guard's gaze to the gaze of the city;
It no longer sees the pictures on the walls,
And is not returned by the people.

Dennis Saleh

POEM FOR THE PROFESSOR

"... I am seldom out in the streets after dark," said the little man, impassively,
"and never very late. I walk always with
my left hand closed round the india-rub­
ber ball which I have in my trouser pock­
et. The pressing of this ball actuates a
detonator inside the flask I carry in my
pocket. It's the principle of the pneuma­
tic instantaneous shutter for a camera
 lens. The tube leads up—"

—Conrad, The Secret Agent

I imagine him to have
long fingernails and I eat a lot
of jello. If I thought I'd
see him in the street I'd carry my
fresh fruit strawberry to the
window and peer out, but am content
to sit staring at a few
lines, noted in red: "What is it you
are after yourself?" "A
perfect detonator. . . ."

This stops the
spoon halfway to my mouth as
I try to imagine the instant
caught dangling between finger's
twitch and the report—and see him shiver,
red in my jello.

I'd like to walk
behind him, watch nothing block
the way between stuffed olives and margarine,
watch nothing give pause to the
man with the hand—in some market, and
then out into a street: to
follow power where madness leads it.

~
Douglas Flaherty

Two Poems

THE MAD STORY EXPANDED

There was a mad man,
(convention demands we classify him...
acutely neurotic tending toward schizophrenia,
but being sound in his notion
of compatibility, he married,
And he had a mad wife
(whose eyes were mirrors of inverted reason.
Chairs, table, lamps, were fastened to ceiling.
They encamped oriental style on the floor
where they ate, loved, slept in laughter.
And the children were mad besides,
(dancing hand in hand from morning
to nightly sleep on hay-covered boards
beside the family's flaming red horse
with telescopic sights for eyes
and a sword of defense as a nose.
So, on a mad horse
(sprouting his retractable wings
and bowing like a butterfly for the children's
ascent of harps and flutes
amid the smiles of their morning glories.
They all then got on,
(holding hands and displaying affection
by innocently tugging the horse's mane.
One girl, daisies blooming from her head,
fiddled the ribs of the wings,
striking a lolling summer sonata—
everyone playing impromptu by turns.
The horse sprang, hedging fence and bush
in support of the human tidings.
And madly away did ride
(into the neighboring woodlands.

PONCE DE LEON

Not so much by age, but the deliberate
hardening of mind turns us boldly for the grave.
It need not always be written this way:
baring a climatic dryness in the plot,
a spring ripples fluvial through the eyes;
the throat parches and the trouble inside the head
points the dusty boots in the wrong direction.

Sweat salted his armor; mosquitoes sucked his juices.
Tolerant, with the half-benign smile of a martyr,
he allowed the landscape, the sun, the switches
to exact their tithe from his flesh, his blood.

Like any Judas and Jesus the guide smiled,
than took the silver. He knew the inside track
how to lead a fanatic in circles by plodding straight.
If he were to receive the sacrament, ever,
that day in the sere jungle was not his day.
In the desperation of his beard, dismissing the guide,
he suffered the cruel shovel of his sword blade.

Alone with the heat, mosquitoes, squawking parrots,
allusion burrowed like water. He began digging,
digging himself, hunter and haunted, beyond dreams.
It was solid ground he was really always after.
Richard R. O'Keefe

RAPE, THE PAPER BOY

Rape, the paper boy, is on the make. He knows when to deliver and can be Counted on. Part of the nation's promise (late Evening edition, that comes all over my porch, Frantic as headlines, promptly at five forty-five), Rape gives himself to circulation. He Knows free enterprise makes America Strong. He himself is counting on the Church-And-Chamber-of-Commerce Medal, engraved With his name, Rape, for Junior Citizen. Rape, the paper boy. He stands six feet Two, in the seventh grade, one finger curled In permanent obscenity, stiff from Carrying the papers. He yells the world Into the seven-cent ears of the world— All caps and flashes—crises, coups, and bombs. Swollen on Sunday, his special sections, some In color, loom innocent of the crimes They carry. He's the paper boy. If you weep Over him, your tears will sog him into pulp.

Barbara L. Greenberg

AS A GOOD MAN

I see you as a good man walking inside a pack of dogs. In willing witness of your perpetual beginnings I know you now as a good man, keeper of his own kennel. The dogs are familiar with you, they are all tongue; they lick your cheeks, paw moistly toward your heart. You let them love you through their sickly teeth. And when they sharpen on your bones, you let them. The yelps, the growls, the wet breath on your groin, the vermin on your trouser legs. You let them. Like butcher's meat you acquiesce—and grinning, you let them game you into bloody dog adventures or hound you through the labyrinths of your kennel. But tell me again, tell me and I will try to believe you, how on some windy mornings with the pack behind you through miles of open meadow. Yourself. You, leading.
impossible to describe
because his tongue
sticks to the roof
of his mouth
always a boy,
drowned in the snow
always a woman,
moon in the snow
impossible to describe
because your huge tongue's
frozen to the roof . . .
impossible, and who would
be there to tell?

A TALE OF SNOW

once a boy rides
his sled in the snow:
a lady, her huge moon-
white coat under the huge moon,
quietly, rapidly slides
in her horse-drawn sleigh
along the streets, stops,
and this boy (for fun!)
oropes his sled
to her sleigh's runners.

rides off across cities,
deserts, plains, the world!
and always the cold
follows her, and always
the horse-breath
like a cloud in his face!

the boy cries, and
this moon-white woman
leans over, lifts him up,
tells him, lady, "lean
your head on my shoulder
and sleep, lean and sleep"

when he puts his head
against her, he falls
into snowdrifts, drowns, freezes.
when he puts, he falls
the cold like warm coals
like the foamy sea:

ROOMS WITH WHITE GULLS

all those who belong to no one
belong to the sea
who can otherwise explain
the roaring in the ears,
the long, heavy heartbeat,
the salt taste of tears?

like the shell
and the ear lined with pearl,
they shall come to know in time
the intricate turnings
of the logic of desire,
the odor of their tears will gradually
resemble the winey fragrance of the sea,
their souls, nourished on
flame and irony, will wave
like sea grass in the delicate pull of the moon
and once all night the wind will blow through the windows and those who belong to the sea will dream of white gulls in their rooms in the morning papers covered with narrow, bird-like writing will be scattered everywhere

~

James Rawley

LIKE A HIGH SCHOOL

Like a high-school English teacher looking down on a pun, he dissects the stream with his foot, steps in it twice, pulls mud over his arches, dams it up. Ripples put star-shine on his toenails; he denies their consequence, tacitly moving to a more real estate: evaluatory, sun-struck, trapped into light. The clean, hard line obsesses him. He steps out of the way; he says, "So much less for the Mississippi."

~

Harry Martin

PERSHING SQUARE

The harvest is past Summer is gone And we are not saved —Jeremiah 8:20

Among the fleeing streets Where Beethoven the blind man sulks Wild-eyed saints bring the good news Of retribution, and the blood of the lamb Stalks the general's holy army Singing for sanctuary.

Dark flattens the grass. "Finking Mary, Finking Mary" cries A bearded child, "Mary the Fink Lays cops."

The jeer of night parodies My ghost's soft edges: I cannot sing.

People flow Darkly within the square, faces Unopened, unsigned by the oracles Of a dozen seedy messiahs So disconnected In the neon air.

I sit and watch Pigeons haunt the shattered crickets In gutters final as the moon Not at all alarmed by the legless man Who marches among them In cries of little wheels.
Neysa Turner

DEATH OF THE CIRCUS FAT WOMAN

Bundles of bread and fat
peaches and beef
these small bones carry
till, cumbersome and waddly weary,
this hill goes steep
and time is north.

I am a whole earth
piled on one small stone.
Now suddenly, buttocks and bone—
we all fall down.

A continent shaking to dust,
and I spread slowly, ground on ground,
a mountain of want
quaking to rest.

And then, thin silver—a dime of a girl—
I will arise.

~

Will Stubbs

Two Poems

THE ROCK

I cannot say where
on earth
I picked it up.
THE BURIAL OF PFC. M. J. NEMCHICK

from his letters: "I'm worried about going . . . but I'm proud of what we're doing over there." Then "I hope the war ends soon for the sake of these little children. They're such sweet kids." Then "I'm going on a special mission, but you're not to worry about me. God will take care of me."

Every time is the same time
the earth there open a while
with our waiting not saying
how love comes out in the air

one boy finds the most to see
because he misses out on the edge
forming here he takes it in
pulses like a box

this-way-and-that looks
leave a tense for nothing to do
a standing around the sun
flashes from steel no signal

is meant or lost from the dark
bringing no one knows who is
here the body will remain
like the center of a nail

wondered about from time to
time the dead are everywhere
at once the skeleton keeps
as far from weapons as it can

wind beats in broad stripes bright stars
the priest is the idea
we were driven to the body
is offered to the vision

in a fly casting shadows
we leave without history
we turn our cars on the truth
is how we get home from here

Irene Schram

VISIONS FROM INSIDE THE CORPORATION

There was a scarlet breast bird
and you were dipping a branch into the water
the pond was beautiful, and I lay my
head on grass beautiful

This was a dream on a day
stolen from the corporation
strawberries
were dreaming pink hair onto me
I was a leaf on a pink bush

The trees slip aromatic shadows
onto me
I listen to the shadows
Every morning I go
to the financial district to work

There was a sandpiper
I held a flat stone in my hand to
throw through the glass to make a window
the corporation's windows are sealed

I am carefully making a sign
to hang on my neck,
wordless, it is a single bent-glass refractor-
mirror disk, light-maker flashing purple
pink yellow violet pink bush disk,
flashing "help" sign "help" light there were
pink bushes "help" outside

~
Lawrence Kramer

Two Poems

THE DIME STORE MAN

Inventory shows
bolts of cloth,
forgeries, breakage,
greasy sacks of change.

Demand and supply,
Laurel and Hardy,
wreck every plan;
the transfer to Phoenix

will never come.
He waits for burglars
chopping through the roof
to blow the safe for petty cash.

Shoppers, browsing,
slip items
under their coats;
he disappears in shrinkage.

AT HOME

Mother gasps in bed
with her beloved illness; Father
has hung himself up with his suit.
They have cheated death.

She rises
after her three-day migraine,
pulls us together, fills
our plates, lets out our cuffs.

He moves his merchandise,
the store turns over,
unbending sons fall away,
he reorders.

A son jerks and presses weights;
twirls her in the air
until she screams in laughter;
a yelling crowd carries him off.

James Doolittle

BALL-PLAYER

Sure, I take chances.
I like to hit the tackle
across from me
with a quick uplift
of the arm
and yet with a relish
by twisting the wrist
just under his throat.
A gurgle is reassuring.

The pads clatter like
clamshells on a string.
I inflate myself to win
or walk through crowds
with easy rhythmic shoulders:
I am ready,
the tackle may come
from anywhere.

At half time I get fresh
bandages
and drink water
from a premeasured cup.
But I have secret lumps
of sugar, tucked away,
a gift to myself.

After the game
I shower
and peel off the
emblems of glory
in cakes of dirt.
I whistle
light and accurate sounds
which echo
in the tiled shower-room.
I am like a new car.

Clothing is comfortable;
cotton or shaggy wool are light.
I carry my football bag
which rattles like the bones
of someone else.

After the game my girl
waits in a convertible;
the radio rocks
and windows are cranked
from clarity to nothingness.

We drive to a hill
over the dark city
and make love
like concrete
rushing down the rattling
chute,
into
the quivering form.

I take chances.

---

Roy Villa

WINDOWS

There in the darkness
a soft blaze of men
turn on their lives
before me, slowly
shaking out of some secret
life that has stalled
and remained hung forever
in a fall of silence.
And I see myself
reflected in the panes

before me, a slow dissolve
into darkness that eats
all my visible self alive,
the motion of my life
suffused by shadow, browsing
slain lawns and streets
and rising up to sleep
or die in those rooms
emptying with others into night.
Others, moving unstalled and deep

against the sick swarm
of themselves. Others settling,
finally breaking off
to float through their chairs,
through windows, through streets
and lawns—transported,
beyond rooms burning
their unmixing slowness,
to only one way of moving
through a common wonder of silence.

~
NIGHT BEFORE BIRTH

Tonight the sharp
indefinite edge alerts
each wakeful finger;
houses of the moon
contain wrong planets;
the great bear's a dice
whose bulk imagines
corners on the wind.

Should ridicule
assess the nervous point,
and chart delusion,
we'd sail no more far;
the clouds are islands
overcome by beasts;
the bay is scooping
moonlight in both hands.

Sing, cries the Summer,
drunkenly on heat
with draggled finery
of rippling leaves;
but who would risk
the silence between notes
that leant upon this
sweating balcony?

I have a theme,
but so have seas and stars.
So has the Summer
bubbling in its gloom.
Our harmony's at odds;
a lover's shirt
shines dankly in the dusk
and giggles come

David Cornel DeJong

Two Poems

EGALITARIAN WORLD

I came to this wharf
to sink in my wishes
every ship anchored here,
possibly to hide in
drunkenness a belligerent
self and to defy any man
coming along wielding
a weapon of dignity.
But there are no ships here; there is only a black and white dog sidling up apologetically, and I must restrain a threat to shout at it rhymed banalities about dogs, culled from a vellum-bound anthology edited by a female missionary.

We huddle together, dog and I, as if compressed or importuned by everything around us. A uniformed cop comes and takes a leak against a post, tosses a cigarette into the water and wishes me because of the dog a furtive good evening, and we talk about August, the sultry month, as if she were a common aunt from Boston or Pawtucket.

We leave the wharf, we three together in equality, and every ship which should be sunk may sail beyond my interest tomorrow, because something, somewhere prescribed this tableau with a dog and two innocuous men and no one cares to undermine it or the figures in it.

The torment is the town, the rattling of breath through it a familiar catarrh, and here I pace across the lot on which I plan to build a house on stilts, to scaffold what might be indecency. I am a seer of a man you understand, and what exposes me are your members not zippered away because I am more translucent than your hunger.

Pavements it has to be emptied upon, to flank with latrines but canopied over, where the cops can shout: Stand up straight, aim high, or be indicted and embroiled. I shall answer solemnly as a witness of self, but may make of one of them a brother-in-law, to bugger and cheat and go out fishing when my license expires, or put my daughter in his bed to make him old, but warm, legal and pliable. All this my city will not understand and asks me for donations of old coats and shoes instead.
THE ONLY CHILD

The girl's mother
dances alone in the attic, white hair
floating around her face
like a rayon bush.

The girl sits
in a field of wheat
and the moon zooms over
her shoulder.

What does it matter
if the low broad back
of her favorite ox
reminds her of fog,

she barely hears her mother's shrieks
drifting woefully
over the wheat,
and the ox is only an ox.

Miles away the sea
sprawls on the shore.
The girl rocks back and forth
and tears slide down her cheeks.

Out of her mouth
come her mother's screams.
And butchered by the flying rain,
her favorite ox drops at her feet.

All her life it will be night.
Bad dreams
will be her meat
as she rocks in a black light.

Joann Cattunar

MONTAGE

for Bruno Bianchi, Olympic swimmer, killed at Bremen,
January, 1966, aged 22.

I
You were lost eight days before your death
savaged the margin of my flesh
and stayed. The call that sent my heart
in flames replays the tangled circuit's
marrowed ash. The TV stares like Yorick's
skull: Wallace Beery goes on taking
off his shoes, Harlow moves her shoulders
and her lips let fly, ghosts call to ghosts,
make love and hate, while taxis sizzle in
the street of the world before our birth
—daggering to Leyte, Dachau, Dallas—
The Late Show gathers at my chair: the quick,
gesturing, beautiful, and dead.

II
No one talks about my dreamer, my uncle
who watched his father and the sun
hang fire, while the harvest smoked
in the field. No farmer, he would sit until
the birds leaned out of trees. He sat, and
sits, and farms the silence still.
Now when headlines ladder my heart, cut
glories shut my eyes, and the dark shrills
at the southwest corner of my dream,
his fingers drop at my wrist, his blood drums
me awake, and I would sit this one out.

III
Cecilia's Day three years
ago, the afternoon,
the week, the year was Friday:
stop sounder death drove us
out of the hill town, down
from the worrying drums.
Our youth slung in our bones
and croaked, "Promises are
never kept—but one."
The speedometer wagged
at 90 and we raged:
like anticlimaxes
we teased, out-
sang, outsexed shot sure death,
shot youth, and bulleted
to our Thanksgiving.

IV
Cousin, this Michigan
evening, though the ringing
seasons narrow
to my heart and my lip
runs cold at the cup
Cousin, I cannot grieve
the snow
is falling like a
celebration
and the moon reclines
though innocence
lies behind my
clapboard face
wide-eyed in the shadow
of walls swollen
with screams
snow moths
at my flared
fire and I feel
your youth
rattling my bones
though we have
our errands (I
walk off your death)

and I come upon
my upward marching track
like some grade-B spy in
a grade-B flick staring
at my mind for some reflection
of my enemy—and hear only
my own steps following me down—
your voice
climbs in my throat
I feel your arms thrust
nerve gathering gold
see the pool beat
by your heart brim
in a thousand eyes
and I swear
this morning of the streaming
sun, to gather for the fête
of May, to outdance,
outdistance ribbon-cutter,
cross-country death
and keep the
promises that lean
out of my flesh and sing.

About Our Contributors

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT's Selected Poems is scheduled for publication soon
by Macmillan.
CAROLYN STOLOFF has published poems in most American literary magazines.
She is also a painter and teaches art at Manhattanville College, Purchase,
New York.
EUGENE RUGGLES is a merchant seaman who lives in San Francisco when he is
ashore.
DAVID ROSENBERG, winner of an Avery Hopwood Prize at the University of
Michigan, is teaching English at York University in Toronto.
RICHARD SNYDER, a former Fulbright student at Trinity College, Dublin, now teaches English at Ashland College in Ohio.

C. H. HEJINIAN was born in San Francisco and lives in Brookline, Massachusetts. More of her work will soon appear in Approach, Forum, Chelsea, and Laurel Review.

LORRY GOLDENSOHN was born in New York City and lives in Plainfield, Vermont.

BENJAMIN SALTMAN is a graduate student at Claremont College.

GEORGE W. NITCHE teaches English at Simmons College. His many publications include a book about Robert Frost.

THEODORE HOLMES'S most recent book of poems is An Upland Pasture, published early this year by Vanderbilt University Press.

DENNIS SALEH is a graduate student at the University of California and has published in a number of literary magazines.

DOUGLAS PLAHERTY, a graduate of the University of Iowa, teaches at Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh.

RICHARD R. O'KEEFE has published in the Antioch, Sexscne, Chicago, Minnesota, and other reviews and is teaching English at Carnegie Tech.

BARBARA L. GREENBERG is the wife of a surgeon, a graduate of Wellesley, and lives in Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

RALPH Dickey was a student at W. D. Snodgrass at Wayne State University.

JAMES RAWLEY, who lives in Northridge, California, last appeared in our Autumn 1965 issue.

HARRY MARTIN is a Catholic priest presently serving in Central America.

NEYSA TURNER is on the staff of the New Psychology Center, Los Angeles.

WILL STUBBS lives and teaches in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Recent poems have appeared in Epoch, Island, and The Transatlantic Review.

IRENE SCHRAM, who lives in New York City, last appeared in our Spring 1966 issue.

LAWRENCE KRAMER is a graduate student at the University of Iowa. This is his first publication.

JAMES DOOLITTLE is a graduate of Lewis and Clark College currently serving a year in VISTA, the domestic peace corps. This is his first publication.

ROBIN SKELETON, the well-known British poet and editor, teaches at Victoria College in British Columbia.

DAVID CORNEL DeJONG in 1967 will publish two new books of poems, Deciphering the Elephant and Still Traveling on Sunday, and a novel, Stay Alive, Eleanor.

MARK STRAND teaches English at Mt. Holyoke College and is preparing his first book of poems for publication. His work has appeared widely in magazines.

JOANN CATTONAR, a graduate of Vassar and Cornell, teaches at Western Michigan University.

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The Editor