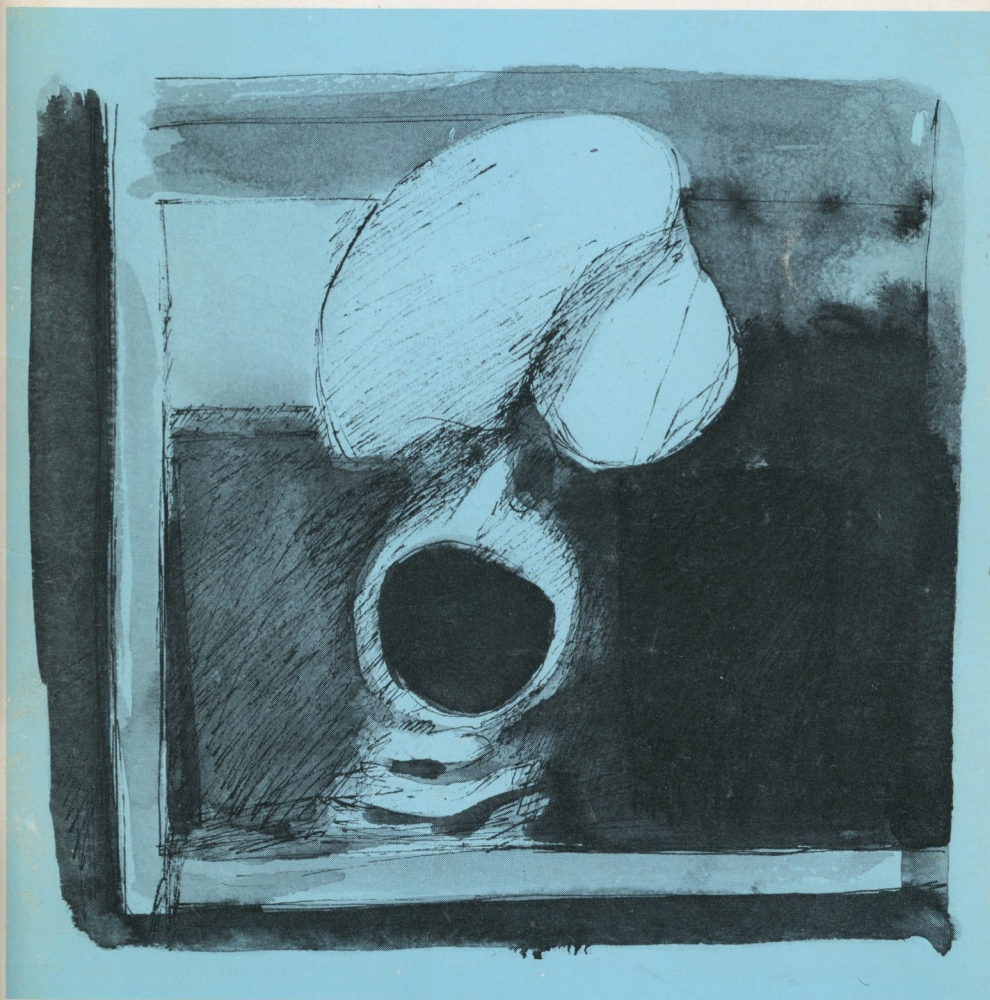


# Poetry

NORTHWEST



WINTER 1966-67 / VOLUME VII / NUMBER 4 / ONE DOLLAR

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POETRY NORTHWEST    WINTER, 1966-67    VOLUME VII, NUMBER 4

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# POETRY NORTHWEST

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# POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER, 1966-67

*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 wrenched 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 Stolloff*

### 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  
 un hoped 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  
 tuck 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.

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?

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.

~



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.

~

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.

(o

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.

~



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

~

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.

~

Two Poems

STARLINGS, GULLS, SPARROW HAWK

Quarrelsome, sociable, homely, the flock creaks down  
On the burned-out lawn  
To crotchety 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.



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.

~

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-rubber ball which I have in my trouser pocket. The pressing of this ball actuates a detonator inside the flask I carry in my pocket. It's the principle of the pneumatic 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.

~



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.

News men scurried to cover the scene,  
tumbling thickets, whooping vulgarities,  
and routing the rocks too late to record  
anything but unpicturable laughter  
from the heart of an impenetrable forest.)

~

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:  
barring 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,  
then 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.

~

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.

~

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.

~



Two Poems

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!)  
ropes 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 :

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 ?

~

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 winery 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 sulk  
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.

~

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.

It marked no spot  
in thought  
for turning home

gave no protection  
no sensible direction  
through the air.

The shape of it  
moving my eyes  
leaves no term for where it falls  
would not help me dodge  
the blow of it  
hitting me. Here

it is posed  
by the touch of one hand  
it does not need.

Dark veins of it work  
with the way in of leaves  
taking time to print the air  
and the light in it  
shows like a puddle clearing  
to clouds going on with it.

I want one word  
without safekeeping  
like deep leaves and water. Near me

my daughter asks  
for the puzzles. My wife says  
there is no time now  
and questions me  
about doing what I promised  
in the light left. "Yes,"

I answer out of habit  
turning to wonder  
where I keep my balance.

~



## 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      every where  
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      bushes      disk,  
flashing "help" sign "help"      light      there were  
pink bushes      "help"      outside

~

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

like bubbles up  
the side of this stiff house  
whose mobile stars  
have horoscopes to spill.  
The islands roar,  
though dimly, and the chilled  
foams of the bay  
spell messages. It seems

we cannot read them yet.  
We have no names  
for near arrivals,  
gravid but at odds  
with plenitude :  
the edge of time alerts  
but does not solve  
the riddle of our hands.

~

*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.

~

## CITY

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.

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. NITCHIE 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 FLAHERTY, a graduate of the University of Iowa, teaches at Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh.

RICHARD R. O'KEEFE has published in the *Antioch*, *Sewanee*, *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 of 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.

ROY VILLA, a painter as well as a poet, is currently having a one-man show at the Crypt Gallery in New York City.

ROBIN SKELTON, 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