



# **POETRY NORTHWEST**

**DOUBLE ISSUE: WINTER, 1960-1961**

**VOLUME II, NUMBERS 1 AND 2**

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**POETRY**

VOLUME TWO



**NORTHWEST**

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## POETRY NORTHWEST

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WINTER • 1960-1961

*Earle Birney*

### Six Poems

EL GRECO : *ESPOLIO*

The carpenter is intent on the pressure of his hand  
on the awl, and the trick of pinpointing his strength  
through the awl to the wood, which is tough.  
He has no effort to spare for despoilings  
or to worry if he'll be cut in on the dice.  
His skill is vital to the scene, and the safety of the state.  
Anyone can perform the indignities; it's his hard arms  
and craft that hold the eyes of the convict's women.  
There is the problem of getting the holes exact  
(in the middle of this elbowing crowd)  
and deep enough to hold the spikes  
after they've sunk through those bared feet  
and inadequate wrists he knows are waiting behind him.

He doesn't know perhaps that one of the hands  
is held in a curious gesture over him—  
giving, or asking, forgiveness? —  
but he'd scarcely take time to be puzzled by poses;  
criminals come in all sorts, as anyone knows who makes crosses,  
are as mad or sane as those who decide on their killings.  
Our one at least has been quiet so far  
though they say he talked himself into this trouble,  
a carpenter's son who got notions of preaching.

Well here's a carpenter's son who'll have carpenter sons,  
 God willing, and build what's wanted, temples or tables,  
 mangers or crosses, and shape them decently,  
 working alone in that firm and profound abstraction  
 which blots out the bawling of rag-snatchers.  
 To construct with hands, knee-weight, braced thigh,  
 keeps the back turned from death.

But it's too late now for the other carpenter's boy  
 to return to this peace before the nails are hammered.

1

# FRANCISCO TRESGUERRAS

Half out of your coffin,  
 Francisco Tresguerras,  
 You cast a wry look at us,  
 asking the way.  
 To the right and the left of you,  
 off to their Heaven,  
 their Hell, they go clambering,  
 all your squat townsmen,  
 certain of Something,  
 ignoring your question.  
 Only you are left clueless  
 no man for a queue.

Down here their descendants  
 avoid still your eye;  
 black mists of old women  
 and huddled rancheros  
 point the nose to the pavement  
 while round them your columns  
 rise slender and soaring  
 into reaches of grace  
 and trumpets of light.

They have hung up once more  
 all the clutter you banished;  
 misshapen pieties  
 pockmark the sheerness;  
 mock-blood of a god  
 drips from your dome.

Yet out of your fresco,  
 down on the lot of us,  
 Francisco Tresguerras,  
 still stares out the face  
 that is question and answer.

Your Heaven, your Hell is  
 half out of your coffin  
 still to be asking,  
 still the creator,  
 while the centuries move,  
 right left and right left,  
 from the vision arrested,  
 from the Limbo of art.

Born in Celaya, Mexico, 1759; died there, 1833. Self-taught architect, sculptor, engraver, poet, he introduced neo-classical form into the churches of his town, in opposition to the elaborate rococo style prevailing before (and after). One of his churches still preserves his mural of the Last Judgment, containing a self-portrait.

1

# HAIKU to a young waitress

With dusk I am caught  
 peering over the holly  
 hedge at the dogwood



## TRANSCONTINENTAL

Crawling across this sometime garden  
now in our chaircars like clever nits  
in a plush caterpillar should we take time  
to glance from our dazzle of folders  
and behold this great green girl grown sick  
with man, sick with the likes of us?

Toes mottled long ago by soak of seaports  
ankles rashed with stubble  
belly papulous with stumps?  
And should we note where maggoting miners  
still bore her bones to feed our crawling host  
or consider the scars across her breasts  
the scum of tugs upon her lakeblue eyes  
the clogging logs within her blood—  
in the pause between our magazines?

For certainly she is ill, her skin  
is creased with our coming and going  
and we trail in her face the dark breath of her dooming.

It is true she is too big and strong to die  
of this disease but she grows quickly old,  
this lady, old with us  
nor have we any antibodies for her aid  
except our own.

## ALUROID

Blurred in a blot  
of laburnum leaves  
panther taut  
the small Siamese  
has willed even her tail's  
tip to an Egyptian frieze.

But not her two  
sapphire burning blue  
pools whose planetary bale  
to the topmost wren glares through.

The silent ritual she brings  
they shatter, by their shrill  
profanities deny  
her lethal godhead till  
Bast in anguish springs  
her tawny grace at nothing

drops unfelicitous upon  
the powermowed lawn  
a staring failure  
chittering.  
Dish clinks  
and in a breath  
she is a fawn  
cat, house-intent.  
Bast's thirty teeth are masked.  
The terrible fires sink  
to almond innocence.

The wrens fly off to other deaths.

## TAKKAKAW FALLS

Jupiter, Thor, how he thunders!  
High in his own cloud somewhere  
smashes  
explodes on her upslant ledges  
arcs out foaming  
falls fighting—  
o roaring cold down-geyser—  
falls  
falls gyring, flings  
rain rainbows like peacock flights  
vaulting the valley  
His own gale rends him  
heads off spray-comets  
that hurl from her taut cliff  
shreds even his cataract core  
juggles it  
struggles—holds?  
falls  
ho  
like Woden  
Zeus  
down  
terrible the bolt of him—  
writhing past firs  
foamdrowned to skeletons—  
the hissing iced-nebulae whirl of him  
crashes  
batters unstayable  
batters bullthroated  
life-lunging

Tak-  
ka-  
kaw  
batters the brown  
throbbing thighs of his mountain

Out of mist meekly the stream

Milk-young he mewls in naked-green moss  
bruise-purple boulders  
Slickens to slope, pours  
silt-turbulent through pine, races  
whole to the Yoho, coils  
with Columbia, wanders  
the ocean tundra, climbs  
by sunladders slowly to  
storm  
glacier  
down to the  
spawning  
thunder

## *Harold Witt* Five Poems

### SOME LIVES

Some lives have ruined layers, Troys below  
slow mound barren meetings of the eye  
lie dump heap palaces, onetime walls—  
Cassandra chanted wildhaired prophecy,  
breastplate heroes clattered in the halls  
vivid burnings melted like a snow.  
Some lives are fossiled with a buried glow.



Some lives rise more Egyptian, slipped in sand  
 great shapes still visible though chipped conceal  
 tombs of faience, sarcophagi of gold,  
 jewel masked Pharaohs who in marvelous murals  
 are punted huntward, recognizable.  
 You see the very bone beneath the hand  
 that held regality; the lilled Nile

flows continuous, as green as real.  
 And there are lives like wrecked, conjectured Rome,  
 broken forum steps that lead you up  
 to nothing but a single perfect column,  
 alleys of headless vestals, a stone lap  
 that has no breast or face; you only feel  
 a certain glory vanished from the rubble.

And then in this sad chronicle at last,  
 this list of lives, come some of pinnacles,  
 structures windowed gold and dipped in dawn,  
 with swirls of glass and color being built,  
 harplike bridges to a rivered island  
 sapphire at night, not yet a ghost  
 of shattered splendor in a present past.

#### A FLOWERY POWER

A flowery power glistens pistils now,  
 petal and sepal wheel, into whose traps,  
 humming in honey, bees go tumbling down.  
 Monarch and Buckeye glimmer on the discs.  
 An ardent gardener, raying, sprays and stoops  
 to weed the wonder with warm, swelling wrists.

Basketing beauty, a spinster happily snaps  
 scissors that clip the season of its sex,  
 but more whorls open; white, licentious lilies  
 unwind their shimmering slimness on a calyx  
 and more bees paw, like stallions sensing fillies,  
 the airs of pleasure, pounding hooves in pollen.

The rose has gone to pink and red extents,  
 prinked as Antoinette or the Nile siren,  
 loosing from velvet sveltness believable scents.  
 And experienced cerei, like whores at night,  
 offer softness among sticks and stones.  
 Like much that's natural, this force depends

on seeming otherwise for its success,  
 on means of symmetry for crooked ends—  
 the mystic flower forks roots in moist manure  
 which we forget, festooning sentiment  
 with brazen daisies, praising nature  
 as if it were our eyes it blossomed for.

#### SUCH BIRD EXCITEMENT

Such bird excitement after their home's explosion  
 — bubble of clay booming on an awning —  
 the dog squealed running, a scent of embryos  
 attracted across lawns, tiger cautious,

the death alertness of the ready cat.  
 Looping, bereft in air, the nestless swallows  
 stunned by unbelief, kept circling back  
 and clung to oneness where now nothing was.

It even looked as if, if birds can kiss,  
they kissed with beaks, consoling, two alone,  
the last survivors of a natural chaos,  
then flew in restless circles once again,

hoping Vesuvius would unerupt,  
the roaring wave curl backward or time stop  
just before the granite mountain cracked  
and towns began to topple, rocks to rip.

Safe in her nervous nursery, another mother  
warned them away; because her structure stuck  
she had no pity on the eggless other  
who fluttered by her door and tried to look.

Then disappeared. After the cat had crunched  
those tiny spines, blind eyes and brittle beaks  
there seemed a sound of sobbing from a branch—  
as if such small unhuman things could grieve.

1

#### HERE IN HER HOT HAITI

Here in her hot Haiti tropically trapped,  
touched by her hand's sands, last seen  
swimming her naked as slow waves slapped,  
napping in palm fringed shadows of her sun,  
I wandered inward; blue with rain,  
she lavished pads and lilies on hushed ponds,  
finned abundance leaped her upward streams,  
I climbed her peaks of stone in delicate dawns.  
She was the final island I had reached,  
long voyaging, Columbus, de Leon,  
and, from the burning bay where I was beached  
I never turned my moorings back to Spain  
but stayed her native in a calm that charms  
the warm explorer after bone cold storms.

#### THE DOG I'M CHAINED TO

The dog I'm chained to, sniffing up the hill,  
stops me for subtleties nicer than my own—  
posts of perfume and attars of dung.  
You'd swear he smiles, mingling with the smell  
his own peculiars, leg up to the view.

He misses maples except their fragrant, smooth  
purposive bases. Lavishments of leaves'  
starpoints speckled yellows on pure blue  
quiver above his head, but the breeze reeks  
with cats and gophers he would lead me to

through creatured grasses I can only guess,  
whose spiders might be spices on his tongue.  
Blind to hugeness, alert for enemies,  
his pawed advantage always on the ground,  
this sensuous beast is gentle nevertheless.

He wheels a furry, bluntclawed leg at fleas  
and pinkly pants while I survey the sweep  
of golden vistas vague to canine eyes,  
then wisely rests, concernless at my feet  
if brightness fades or I philosophize.

1

*William Stafford*

#### Seven Poems

##### FALL WIND

Pods of summer crowd around the door;  
I take them in the summer of my hands.

Last night I heard the first fall wind outside;  
the wind blew soft, and yet I shiver twice:

Once for thin walls, once for the cold of time.



## NOT BEING AN ACTOR

In the wild we find animals various as thought;  
we call this wild wisdom.

Those animals became spotted the way  
we become distracted: we have a dappled understanding.

Orbiting all points, the inner ear  
implies a cone of sound intending to be heard,

And the scene so steadfast knows itself  
a scene still, till it folds into its being.

We should act only where we arrive,  
in a hard scenario, in checker light—

Or never act, but be.

1

## FLOWERS AND ROCKS

*for a botany-geology teacher*

Attentive to the air, returning the rain's touch,  
many soulwort flowers line our path  
and wait for botany to save geology:  
the green, the kind, the living to take the rock  
the way Scripture saith.

But in a way the earth's already a flower,  
for when the mountains grow Saint Snow,  
pacing their tops along, what can a poor man do  
but take this petal in his mind:

*return, apostle stones, and flowers too.*

For they are attentive, all. All root from stone.  
And all earth offers us we bring to meet the rain.

## MY NAME WILL BE SAMOSET

Drive spikes into trees and climb  
to see how big the wilderness is. Find  
paths, but then other trees. Fine!  
There isn't any end.

I want the wilderness back — it to be wilds  
we explore, not anyone's yard, even Einstein's;  
roads to lead nowhere, and — low when we speak —  
gibberish, native speech;

Thumb-prints on all the leaves:  
"Wanted, God, Dead or Alive";  
and I to be Samoset in a land  
explorers — being determined men —

Cannot ever find.

1

## HOMECOMING

Under my hat I custom you intricate, Ella;  
at homecoming I glance and remember your street.  
"What happened to Ella?" they ask, asking too fast;  
so I fold them off, thousands of answers deep.

"Nobody saw her after the war." We are driving;  
in front of the Union Building we stop and get out.  
You balanced one night on that step, then leaned.  
"There's Potter's Lake." And there goes our path down straight.

"Hello, Paul." "Howdy, Tom." "Glad to see you again."  
They shake. "It's been a long time," they bellow, "by God!"  
I shake. They sing an old song. I hunt a face.  
Every voice yells in my ear, "She's married or dead."

Oh all you revelers, back of the songs you're singing  
they have torn down Ella's house — you've forgotten it;  
and Ella is lost, who brightened all our class,  
and I stand here, home-come, to celebrate.

Under my hat I custom you intricate, Ella,  
passing the places, betraying them all with a wave,  
adding past dates and jobs that led us apart  
flickering into revolving doors, till I've

lost you. What happened to Ella? Where does she live?  
Remember, Tom? She's that girl we once spoke of.

1

#### NOT POLICY, BUT LOVE

Regarding river lights  
(my life has been variously lived)  
was just a quiet thing  
I sometimes did.

Those river lights have shone  
in a way to save our home,  
for beyond our jealous walls  
were lights, or dawn —

Calm lights, not policy  
but love: those river lights  
were love without intent  
lost in the night.

Through dark their pearlness poured  
far over the glistening tide.  
I watched those river lights  
with long regard.

#### THE TITLE COMES LATER

In my sleep a little man cries, "Faker! Faker!"  
and I tell myself mildly and seriously  
that it is well to listen;  
but in sleep it is that I evade: awake,  
I meet the whole weather of my life,  
cold and real.  
(The title is "Remembering, or  
Guide Your Dreams Awake.")

In sleep all dreams belong, correcting each other;  
but in blizzards of our waking all possible worlds  
are fighting each other.

"Every act in every dream deserves to live,"  
I tell myself, mildly and seriously:  
"accept the law that grounds your being;  
awake, asleep, or neither, everything belongs."  
But awaking from awaking, I am a little man myself  
crying, "Faker! Faker!"

1

*Sister Mary Gilbert, S.N.J.M.*

#### Three Poems

#### NUNS IN THE QUARTERLIES

Used as accents in a landscape or seaview,  
upright in merciful black on the sand's monotone,  
not even the devil's advocate could question  
their purely decorative purpose. Like fountains in Rome  
and eagles hanging over cliffs,  
they are all suggestion,  
posing no problem deeper than the eye.



But if the memory persist in asking why, an evening frolic  
 through slicker pages of the thicker magazines  
 where nuns drift in and out of nightmare scenes,  
 yields complementary answers, all symbolic:  
 Woman, the ancient lie, the unattainable mystery,  
 the apple high on paradisaal branches,  
 the history of heaven and hell, of fall and pardon;  
 innocence unmasked in God's own Garden.

Naive, perhaps, or else inscrutable:  
 like Mona Lisa or like Whistler's Mother?  
 The things they do not say are always quotable,  
 and unknown quantities reduce the other  
 terms to their just equivalent. Nuns are the fictions  
 by whom we verify the usual contradictions.

1

## TUMBLEWEED

Detachable. The mobile American par excellence:  
 rootlessness its survival, and the way  
 to permanence, an airborne transience  
 over dusty miles.  
 Gregarious in its origin,  
 perpetual distance wears it thin:  
 all sinew and fiber in a pulp-and-blossom world;  
 drier than sage  
 and less inclined to cling;  
 hollow as cactus but robbed of its reserves.  
 Not so dramatic, either, with shadow, spike and flower  
 crowning a hundred years with impossible bloom.

Tumbleweed lives by the day or less:  
 its route is rotary, its music motion, and it calls  
 from every river margin and wayside gulch  
 crying the wind *Take me. Of all this matted company*  
*most volatile and free!*

Freer than feathery dandelion adrift on hum of bees,  
 heels over head in bed of violable clay,  
 weightless and waiting  
 it courts the fickle air.  
 Patient among reeds, its seeds accept the sand,  
 abide in evanescence,  
 calculate on chance.  
 Its vagrancy vaguely sanctioned by radical elements  
 and good for something surely:  
 synthetic cereal —  
 better than seaweed! An active vegetable.

Tumbleweed, restless and windblown,  
 rises on breezy rhetoric to unspectacular flight  
 out of the billboard jungle,  
 out of the closed, airtight  
 cells of civilization  
 into the open plain: useless and fruitless,  
 homeless, helpless, lost  
 to dignify Becoming sprung from dust.

1

## A KIND OF RESURRECTION

Bruised by the wintry air  
 the Dead Sea apples hold  
 rigorously to boughs  
 from which the weight has rolled,  
 lean to the lengthening light  
 here in the tree's shadows.

Fused to the twig's bold spear  
locked in each open side,  
harvest dissolves in ash  
the dwindling season's load  
and reconciles in night  
the hale, the hectic flush.

Closed on its riddled core,  
impermeable to sun,  
flesh brandishes the thorn  
by which it was undone  
and wears the snow-tomb's white  
silence with unconcern.

1

## *Joseph Langland* **Three Poems**

### SACRIFICE OF ERIC

Missing our neighbor, we searched the empty sheds.  
We called his name along the iced creekbeds.  
Eric, we sang upon the rocky draws,  
Eric, and then we faced the silent pause  
With one ear cocked to the world.

Somehow, we knew,

But we kept pretense alive a day or two,  
Following any tracks laid out in snow  
Until we trailed ourselves in the moonglow.  
And all that time, in woods by the gravel beds,  
He stood in his swollen postures over our heads,  
Hanging, frozen, and swinging free in air.  
We stopped a few feet off, too baffled there  
To talk or move. Someone took off his hat.

Well, he was found. At least, we had done that.

Who got my neighbor there upon that limb?

All those dark faces murmuring at his back?

Who slipped the latest noose that carried him?

Did he? We looked; there was no other track.

Who quickened the thicket clutching at our clothes?

Did he? The woodlands quaked upon our cries.

And who could read the winter's tale he knows?

We saw that pale abyss, the unlidded eyes.

Who swung him out and downward from that bough?

Did he? For fear our hanging hearts would break

We cut him down. Who bears his burden now?

Who swings us all? Forbear, for Jesus' sake.

Toward those intolerable silences we came,  
And action saved us when the mind was lame.  
We tried some magic for an old complaint  
And bowed.

I thought some medieval saint  
Stepped gently from the wounded wood which bore  
My neighbor like a gargoyle evermore  
And gave him, with eroded hands, a crown.

But seeing it wasn't so, we let him down  
And carried him out across our bottomlands,  
The deadweight of his world upon our hands,  
And heard, and hear, in sudden solitudes,  
An old wind walking in our lower woods.

I call him my own neighbor, when I dare,  
But that's not easy, having come from there.



## SACRIFICE OF THE GREY WOLF

Trotting in wintry rounds of bleak intent,  
He hung upon the distant knolls and draws  
As if he sought each one of us, alone,  
Howling our very names. Our heads were bent  
Sidewise to hear him wail against our cause.  
We gouged his tracks and lost him. He was gone.

He should have kept his nature to himself,  
But no, he let it fray the winter air  
And trail along the bottomlands of sleep  
On the tall drifts. One night the limestone shelf  
Defended him with a cave we came to share.  
Another night he rode among the deep

Thicketed hills and gnashed our dreams apart.  
Next came his southeast wail. Next night the north  
Eroded ditch beyond the close ravine  
Sprang at the chill of dawn and froze our heart.  
At last, we knew a hunter must go forth  
To be hunted while he hunted. The icy sheen

Upon the crusts of snow broke underfoot  
And sifted downward in the winter's flight.  
Morning and evening stood in equal wait  
Upon the house of sleep, zeroed and mute.  
And when the stars sang out upon the night  
His shadow flashed beyond our barnyard gate.

We heard the westward wailing of the winds  
Under that threat, or over it. Who knew?  
Shivering, we waiting it out upon the stark  
Echoes of grey disaster, while our minds  
Hobbled the sheepyards with the crippled ewe.  
My sisters woke up screaming in the dark.

Wake up, wake up, we whispered. You're dreaming. Tell.  
And out of sleep-knotted hair their eyes still saw  
What young mouths mumbled, as if it came to pass.  
His tongue was an ashen grey where the comet fell.  
His tooth was the edge of world. His enormous jaw,  
The old abyss. And his claws were shattered glass.

Then up it stood, the manlike beast in the child;  
Inaudible prophecies rippled under its throat  
And growled in the flowery garden of their youth,  
Prowling their flannel comfort. Beyond those wild  
Peripheries of warmth, occasions gloat,  
Skirting their fairy woods with a grey truth.

Who howls at midnight from our bottomlands,  
Degrading us with watching, while the gun  
Stands with its polished eye inside the hall?  
Who cocked the safety for uneasy hands?  
Run to the north ravine. Who hides? We run.  
We aim, we stand, we wait. Is it nothing, at all?

Had the sly fiend but slashed across our gate  
And sunk his teeth into the heifers' shanks,  
Or ripped our ram to death and, dripping, fled,  
We could have settled then. But that grey fate  
Wastes our rest behind the bloodiest flanks  
Of frayed imaginations in our head.

A stutter out of the henhouse late at night,  
And all our nerves are cackling up on edge  
Until the cock-mad mornings strike them off.  
A bleat among our breathings, and the light  
Flickers the lamps and waves the bedroom walls  
With ghostly nightgowns under the winter's cough.



Out of the west, then out of the east, he comes.  
He rattles the corn-shocked fields and shadows the huts  
Of blackberry patches prickling under the snow.  
We rifle our winter buttons, shaking, all thumbs,  
And batter our wits. We jab our fists in our guts.  
For God's sake, take what you want! Take it, and go.

He took it, but early spring in the gorged ravine  
His fur was a ragged patch upon the ground  
And his belly split and stinking upon the fence.  
There the old shadows flicker over the scene,  
Although we stand, with the circling days, around  
The sunburst of a vast indifference.

There the nights walking at the grey wolf's side  
Steal out below the morning's upper rim  
Though all of spring go leaping in the wood.  
And there we live, where none of us can hide.  
I even think I'll be expecting him  
From the dark winters talking in our blood.

1

#### SACRIFICE OF A HILL OF ANTS

We gathered our winter wood in the middle of fall,  
Working with brush fires going, meant for scraps  
From spindly twigs of trees, and trimming bark,  
Fallen in chips of timber from the axe.  
This kept us tidy, and it kept us warm,  
And though it wasted upward in a flash  
Of crackling blaze too sudden for much good,  
At least, we knew it would.

That acrid smoke, mischievous in the wind,  
Drove us off from a tree we had felled, and I,  
Idling around with sparks, spied an ant hill

And red ants scurrying upwind from the fire.  
I teased a little flame upon a stick,  
Then bore it, flickering forward like a smile,  
And stuck it in the middle of their run  
For a little harmless fun.

Taking our spade, I thrust it at the top  
Of that small hill and cast it to one side.  
There an amazing city in all its crowd  
Of rapid instincts, wrinkled in ruts of time,  
Ran far beyond my innocence. Those dots  
Danced to the flashing missiles in their eyes.  
I submarined another underground,  
Watching them run around.

The way they seized their wealth and hauled it off,  
A frenzy of intention, I could tell  
They knew where they were going. Sure of forms,  
Those bright corrupted arteries were shed  
As if deliberate speed could save them all.  
How could they know what I was up to next,  
Arriving with a pitchfork filled with fire  
Upon their town entire?

In all their miniature wisdom, suddenly trapped,  
They ran off crazily for their cellar homes  
Under such sunlight that their heads went mad  
And twisted all the wits their world had known.  
They buckled in blood, rolled in a dead flash,  
And odors from their parching bodies rose  
Nut-brown below the cataclysmic pyres  
Of the afternoon's desires.

Then the wind shifted, so back we went to work.  
 Our young arms flailed upon October's ease  
 Toward oven breads and kitchen chairs all rocked  
 Back from the roaring stove on a winter's eve.  
 Chatting casually, snug in a chilly world,  
 We worked the pivot of fire, but a smoky dream  
 Rose from the miniature hill, and a thousand heads  
     Sang in their crackling beds.

*Allyn Wood*  
**Two Poems**

**CRANES AT ROTTERDAM**

Like dinosaurs reaching to munch  
 Ponderously yet delicately over the homes of Rotterdam,  
 The cranes mark inlets where waves of brown and delft splash land.  
 Inhuman things — swivels unbending,  
 Mantids of the small and arrogant heads,  
 They flicker their iron tongues, taking no notice  
 In the foliage of steamship signs, in the ebb and tide of us  
 Grey in our rain slickers like periwinkles.

We merge with the merpeople holding back the sea  
 Shouting their trident language. Have we come to see, only to *see*  
 Their waffle fields cross-grooved by aquarelle,  
 Spires and bridges on a pewter tray,  
 Warp and woof of grey-red houses eyed like dragonflies?

Historians may choose some formal motifs  
 For the life of Rotterdam, our time, this vacation year;  
 The cranes are not among them, nor the people wheeling to Land's End  
 Parking their bicycles to wave the ships each way  
 That the first-last rock of Europe seem not grave.

Nor the sun — consummate mutator —  
 Breaking these iron vertebrae  
 (Germinating the bales as they swing)  
 Nor the moment the cranes flare up like Eiffels of Delaunay  
 And the tulips on the Square flare  
 Red, yellow, arterial.

**WHITE ATHENAS**

White Athenas, disengaged and ruined,  
 Floating on couches from their parthenons  
 Cross low our Appalachians,  
 Haven of their countrymen  
 The quarriers.

They look down  
 Long uninvolved now — long  
 Done with deus ex machina,  
 Yet curious to see, from their retirement,  
 How others stir with the enlightened tong.

Too vigorous vapor to give birth  
 By other means than marvel, they  
 Throw matronly showers of rays to earth  
 Where the quarriers' children play  
 (Not yet too old to marvel, they —  
 At snow in sunlight from the fat white clouds).

Surprised, the Athenas find these neat  
 Sunday houses on straight streets  
 No closer to resolution's patch  
 Than keeping a watchful terrier by the latch.  
 Frail air their master, too; space at the gate beyond  
 In Doric plainness rising on and on.



John Tagliabue  
Twelve Poems

1.  
*Eiheji*  
Since  
the  
beginning  
of  
the  
world  
began  
the  
stones  
have

2.  
*The chanting of the sutras and the slow ceremony  
starting at three every morning at Eiheji*

The  
slow  
repeated  
rapture,  
the  
intervals  
of  
silence  
and  
ecstasies  
astounded  
the  
prologue  
to  
satori;  
the  
monk  
asleep  
or  
awakened  
was  
enchanted.

3.  
*Returned*

My  
room  
surrounded  
by  
light and shadow  
days and rain  
waiting for me  
like a tree waiting for a bird  
like a raft waiting for an Actor  
like a coffin waiting for a very tall King  
to take its roof off and say Heaven Now  
waited patiently like a wife preparing love and silences  
waited perfectly like light or life proceeding with songs.

4.

Adam lay in his cradle  
pronouncing the names of things  
Adam carried the tree  
pronouncing the sound of blood  
Adam chopped the coffin  
announcing the future  
Adam and Eve wept and sang  
and on the Oceans and near the Suns  
the Angels chartered the course for lovers.

5.

Islands drifting  
like sleeping whales,  
women dreaming  
like flying babies,  
clouds receiving  
like sleeping gods,  
mountains momentous  
like you now.



6.

*The sage advice of any moment*

Fish  
and fissure,  
clouds and coughs,  
rough days in the sun like bright words;  
age says sage.

7.

*Pleasure*

A bay  
the size of a pea pod  
as cool as a pea pod,  
also mountains,  
also parsley,  
also it's raining,  
what more now  
can describe you?

8.

*Calligraphy*

It must be easy to fall asleep  
in front of a book like this  
like looking at the summer night.

9.

Writing kanji;  
swatting fireflies;  
conducting music.

10.

*"Mu" means "non-attachment" or "Nothing", etc.*

Mu

Mu

said the taoist cow.

11.

*Natural Friendship*

The straw coat  
draws the fields and flowers  
as protection  
as he and his shadow  
walk through the rain or snow.

12.

*Aum*

The wind carrying letters  
like the seed carrying the Past  
like the suns carrying the Future  
like you revealing the letter Now.

NOTE: Eiheji is a Zen monastery in Western Japan.

1

*Donald Hall*

## Three Poems

KING AND QUEEN

*after Henry Moore*

As they grew older,  
the land which had grown wheat  
washed down the hill,  
and the river  
carried the land into the sea.

The priest with the horned  
mask, who brought meat  
from the altar,  
turned into a bird  
and flew among mountains.

The people of the markets  
who touched their heads to the ground,  
changed into clumps of weed  
among the gutters  
of the bare hill.

A galley which carried wine  
sank in the harbor,  
and a barge of hooks  
smoked and heaved  
to raise it from deep mud.

The King and Queen rule  
over the dark nation  
of thrones. As slowly  
as a river builds a delta,  
they have become still.

1

# THE FACTORY

That the belts move  
among grease

is the sun which stands  
on a farmer.

The air is a chaff  
of tiny gaskets.

1

# NEW HAMPSHIRE

A bear sleeps in the cellar hole, where pine needles  
heap over the granite doorstep, and the well brims  
with acorns and the broken leaves of the oak tree  
which has grown where the anvil rusted in the forge.

When my eyes close, I can see another summer:  
a bark of rust grows on the trees of the gas pumps,  
and the EAT signs gather like leaves in the shallow  
cellars of diners, and a wildcat waits for deer

on the roof of a car. Blacktop buckled by frost  
starts goldenrod from the highway. Fat honey bees  
meander among raspberries, where a quarrel  
of vines crawls into the spilled body of a plane.

*Vladimir Mayakovsky*

# ИЗ УЛИЦЫ В УЛИЦУ

У-  
лица.  
Лица  
у  
догов  
годов  
рез-  
че.  
Че-  
рез  
железных коней  
с окон бегущих домов  
прыгнули первые кубы.  
Лебеди шей колокольных,  
гнитесь в силках проводов!  
В небе жирафий рисунок готов  
выпестрить ржавые чубы.  
Пестр, как форель,  
сын  
безузорной пашни.  
Фокусник  
рельсы  
тянет из пасти трамвая,  
скрыт циферблатами башни.  
Мы завоеваны!  
Ванны.  
Души.  
Лифт.  
Лиф души расстегнули.  
Тело жгут руки.  
Кричи, не кричи:  
«Я не хотела!» —  
резок  
жгут  
муки.

Ветер колючий  
трубе  
вырывает  
дымчатой шерсти клок.  
Лысый фонарь  
сладострастно снимает  
с улицы  
черный чулок.

#### КОЕ-ЧТО ПРО ПЕТЕРБУРГ

Слезают слезы с крыши в трубы,  
к руке реки чертя полосы;  
а в неба свисшиеся губы  
воткнули каменные соски.

И небу — стихши — ясно стало:  
туда, где моря блещет блюдо,  
сырой погонщик гнал устало  
Невы двугорбого верблюда.

#### НЕСКОЛЬКО СЛОВ ОБО МНЕ САМОМ

Я люблю смотреть, как умирают дети.  
Вы прибою смеха мглистый вал заметили  
за тоски хоботом?  
А я —  
в читальне улиц —  
так часто перелистывал гроба том.  
Полночь  
промокшими пальцами щупала  
меня  
и забитый забор,  
и с каплями ливня на лысине купола  
скакал сумасшедший собор.

Я вижу — Христос из иконы бежал,  
хитона оветренный край  
целовала плача слякоть.  
Кричу кирпичу,  
слов иступленных вонзаю кинжал  
в неба распухшего мякоть:  
«Солнце!  
Отец мой!  
Сжался хоть ты и не мучай!  
Это тобою пролитая кровь моя льется дорогою  
дольней.

Это душа моя  
ключьями порванной тучи  
в выжженном небе  
на ржавом кресте колокольни!  
Время!  
Хоть ты, хромой богомаз,  
лик намалюй мой  
в божницу уродца века!  
Я одинок, как последний глаз  
у идущего к слепым человека!»

#### МАМА И УБИТЫЙ НЕМЦАМИ ВЕЧЕР

По черным улицам белые матери  
судорожно простерлись, как по гробу глазет.  
Вплакались в орущих о побитом неприятеле:  
«Ах, закройте, закройте глаза газет!»

Письмо.

Мама, громче!  
Дым.  
Дым.  
Дым еще!  
Что вы мямлите, мама, мне?



Видите —  
весь воздух вымощен  
гроыхающим под ядрами камнем!  
Ма — а — а — ма!  
Сейчас притащили израненный вечер.  
Крепился долго,  
кургузый,  
шершавый,  
и вдруг —  
надломивши тучные плечи,  
расплакался, бедный, на шее Варшавы.  
Звезды в платочках из синего ситца  
визжали:  
«Убит,  
дорогой,  
дорогой мой!»  
И глаз новолунья страшно косится  
на мертвый кулак с зажатой обоймой.  
Сбежались смотреть литовские села,  
как, поцелуем в обрубок вкована,  
слезя золотые глаза костелов,  
пальцы улиц ломала Ковна.  
А вечер кричит,  
безногий,  
безрукий:  
«Неправда,  
я еще могу-с —  
Хе!  
— выбряцав шпоры в горящей мазурке,  
выкрутить русский ус!»

Звонок.

Что вы,  
мама?  
Белая, белая, как на гробе глазет.

«Оставьте!  
О нем это,  
об убитом, телеграмма.  
Ах, закройте,  
закройте глаза газет!»

СЕБЕ ЛЮБИМОМУ  
ПОСВЯЩАЕТ ЭТИ СТРОКИ АВТОР

Четыре.  
Тяжелые, как удар.  
«Кесарево кесарю — богу богово».  
А такому,  
как я,  
ткнуться куда?  
Где для меня уготовано логово?  
Если б был я  
маленький,  
как Великий океан, —  
на цыпочки б волн встал,  
приливом ласкался к луне бы.  
Где любимую найти мне,  
такую, как и я?  
Такая не уместилась бы в крохотное небо!  
О, если б я нищ был!  
Как миллиардер!  
Что деньги душе?  
Ненасытный вор в ней.  
Моих желаний разнузданной орде  
не хватит золота всех Калифорний.  
Если б быть мне косноязычным,  
как Данте  
или Петрарка!  
Душу к одной зажечь!  
Стихами велеть истлеть ей!

И слова  
 и любовь моя —  
 триумфальная арка:  
 — пышно,  
 бесследно пройдут сквозь нее  
 любовницы всех столетий.  
 О, если б был я  
 тихий,  
 как гром, —  
 был бы,  
 дрожью объял бы земли одряхлевший скит.  
 Я  
 если всей его мощью  
 выреву голос огромный, —  
 кометы заломят горящие руки,  
 бросятся вниз с тоски.  
 Я бы глаз лучами грыз ночи —  
 о, если б был я  
 тусклый,  
 как солнце!  
 Очень мне надо  
 сияньем моим поить  
 земли отощавшее лонце!  
 Пройду,  
 любвищу мою волоча.  
 В какой ночи  
 бредовой,  
 недужной,  
 какими Голиафами я зачат —  
 такой большой  
 и такой ненужный?

*Vladimir Mayakovsky*

### Five Poems

*Translated by VICTOR ERLICH and JACK HIRSCHMAN*

#### FROM STREET TO STREET

Av-  
 enue.  
 Jewels  
 of bull-  
 dog  
 years  
 hol-  
 lower.  
 A-  
 cross  
 iron horses  
 out of windows of scampering houses  
 the first cubes leaped.  
 Swans with necks of steeples  
 arch low in the cabled traps.  
 In the sky the giraffe's drawing  
 is about to splash colors into rusty tufts.  
 Gaudy, like trout,  
 is the son  
 of a sloppily ploughed field.  
 A magician  
 pulls  
 steel tracks out of the trolley's mouth,  
 hidden by the clockfaces of the tower.  
 We are conquered!  
 Tubs!  
 Souls!  
 Elevators!  
 The bra of the spirit's unclipped.

Arms scorch the body.  
 It's no use crying  
 "I didn't want to . . ."  
 Sharp this  
 wrack of pain.  
 The stinging wind  
 tears  
 a tuft of smoky fur from the stack.  
 The bald streetlamp  
 lecherously strips  
 the street  
 of her black stocking.

1913

#### SOMETHING ABOUT ST. PETERSBURG

Tears slide shingle-down, down into drainpipes  
 scribbling fine lines of rivers on the palm;  
 And into the low hanging lips of the sky  
 Nipples were thrust, of stone.

When the sky was pacified it became clear:  
 There, where the tray of the sea glitters,  
 A drenched pilgrim whipped wearily  
 The doublehumped camel of Neva.

1913

#### A FEW WORDS ABOUT MYSELF

I love to watch how the children are dying.  
 Haven't you noticed the foggy tidal wave of laughter  
 Behind the tusk of sorrow?  
 And I,  
 In the reading-room of the street  
 Turned very often the volume of the grave.

40

POETRY

Midnight,  
 With drenched fingers touching me,  
 And the fence stuck into the ground:  
 With drops of the heavy shower on the bald spot of the dome  
 The cathedral was madly jumping:  
 I see Christ run away from his ikon,  
 The wind-battered edge of the tunic  
 Was kissed by the weeping slush.  
 And I am shouting at the brick  
 And I am thrusting the daggers of frenzied words  
 At the swelling flesh of the sky  
 Crying:  
 "O Sun  
 My Father,  
 Pity me — at least you do not torture me —  
 For distant roads are sopping up the pouring blood you spilled.  
 This is my soul,  
 In rags of a torn cloud  
 In the burnt-out sky  
 On the rusty cross of the steeple.  
 Time!  
 At least you, you crippled ikonographer,  
 Paint my face  
 On the almshouse of this monster century.  
 I am all alone, like the last eye  
 In the country of the blind.

1913

#### MAMA AND EVENING MURDERED BY THE GERMANS

Along the black streets white mothers  
 Feverishly lie prostrate like coffin brocade,  
 Sobbing into shouts about the beaten enemy:  
 O close, close the bulletin's lids!

NORTHWEST

41



A letter.

Mama, louder!  
Smoke,  
Smoke,  
And still more.  
Mama, what are you mumbling?  
See:  
The whole air is paved  
With ricochetting cannonshells from cobbles.  
Maaaama,  
They just brought evening in, bleeding all over.  
He held back for a very long time,  
Burly  
And virile  
And suddenly  
With a crack in his rugged shoulders,  
He burst, poor guy, into sobs on Warsaw's neck.  
Stars in babushkas of chintz  
Were keening:  
"Killed,  
O, my dear,  
My darling!"  
And the eye of the new moon frightfully squints  
At a dead fist clutching a ring.  
Lithuanian villages cramped to see  
How, hammered by a kiss into a stump,  
Watering the golden eyes of its churches,  
Anxious streets of Kovno cracked their knuckles.  
And evening is shouting,  
Without legs,  
Without arms:

"It's not true,  
I can still  
(heh-heh-heh)  
— kicking spurs in a sparkling mazurka —  
Twirl a blond moustache."

A bell.

Mama,  
What's up?  
White, white like coffin brocade.  
"Oh, leave me alone,  
It's him  
... dead ... gone ...  
O close, close the bulletin's lids!"

1914

TO MY BELOVED SELF THESE LINES ARE DEDICATED

Four tolls,  
Heavy, like blows.  
"To Caesar what's Caesar's; to God what's God's,"  
Yet where should  
Someone like this lion go,  
Where is my den prepared?

If I were  
As small  
As the Pacific,  
I'd stand on the tiptoes of waves,  
I'd cuddle and curl up to the moon in my tides,  
But where can I find a beloved,  
Such as myself,  
Who could fit into this infinitesimal sky?

If only I were poor  
Like a fat millionaire!  
But what good's money for the soul  
With its insatiable thief inside?  
Not all California's gold would suffice  
The runaway tartars, my desires.

Or, if only I were a stammerer  
Like Dante  
Or Petrarch,  
To go up in flames for One!  
To burn her in ashes in my poems!  
My words  
And my love —  
An Arc de Triomphe,  
Through which  
Mistresses of all times parade,  
Receding into distances without trace.

O if only I were  
Subdued  
Like thunder!  
I'd whimper  
And hug trembling this senile hermit of an earth.  
If  
I roared with all  
The power of my voice,  
Comets would throw up their flaming arms  
And plunge into the void in anguish.

I'd tear the nights with the rays of my eyes  
Were I only  
As dim  
As the sun!  
But, alas, as it is,  
My radiance is doomed  
To nourish the earth's skinny dug.

So I'll amble along  
Dragging my big bulky love behind me.  
O, on what  
Feverish,  
Hydrocephalic night,  
By what Goliaths was I conceived,  
So huge,  
So colossally oafy?

1916

NOTE: Born in 1893, Vladimir Mayakovsky became on the eve of the First World War an acknowledged leader of Russian Futurism. The bold, striking imagery of his early verses and their savage, emotional intensity placed Mayakovsky among modern Russia's foremost lyrical talents.

After 1917 Mayakovsky endeavored to put his poetic gift at the service of the new order. Yet his revolutionary marches, versified slogans and flamboyant eulogies of Bolshevism alternated with slashing satires on Soviet bureaucracy and increasingly anguished lyrics. In April 1930 he shot himself through the heart, only to be acclaimed, shortly after his death, as "the most talented poet of the Soviet era."

V. E.

Thom Gunn  
*Modes of Pleasure*

I jump with terror seeing him,  
Dredging the bar with that stiff glare  
As fiercely as if each whim there  
Were passion, whose passion is a whim:

The Fallen Rake, being fallen from  
The heights of twenty to middle age,  
And helpless to control his rage,  
So mean, so few the chances come.

The very beauty of his prime  
Was that the triumphs which recurred  
In different rooms without a word  
Would all be lost some time in time.

Thus he reduced the wild unknown.  
And having used each hour of leisure  
To learn by rote the modes of pleasure,  
The sensual skills as skills alone,

He knows that nothing, not the most  
Cunning or sweet, can hold him, still.  
Living by habit of the will,  
He cannot contemplate the past,

Cannot discriminate, condemned  
To the sharpest passion of them all.  
Rigid he sits: brave, terrible,  
The will awaits its gradual end.

William H. Matchett  
*Three Poems*

CUMBERLAND IN LOVE

Sometimes, mistaking the tree for his own —  
The welter of leaves  
FronDED between the sky and his window frame —  
Or mesmerized by patterns the streetlight weaves  
On twig-shadowed stone,  
He binds his limbs with tendrils of her name:

Clumsily, straining the atrophied nerve,  
The intractable stance,  
His hands unfurl, splay feet lift and fall  
As he circles the startled room in an atavic dance  
Till the candle flames swerve  
And the portraits join in mazurkas on the wall.

But when, afghan-wrapped, having exorcized the tree,  
He resumes his work  
(Not without dotting *t*'s and crossing *i*'s),  
Around his dispassionate features no metaphors lurk:  
His will, he presumes, is free.  
Beyond his leaf-sheltered window the shadows rise.

✓

CUMBERLAND'S DAYMARE

However firmly resolved, however reprovED,  
However reminded that effort is exciting,  
His mind is apt to wander twice removed,  
Escaping the book by which he escapes his writing  
(By which perhaps he escapes . . .

but he can't pursue it,  
Peeling his onion till there's nothing to it).



On hot afternoons, afloat between dreaming and knowing,  
 Washed by a softly lapping miasma of words,  
 He is sometimes swamped by a vision of what keeps him going:  
 The blatant profusion of poultry, the endless herds  
 Of cattle, milked and gutted, bloody and beaten —  
 The living hordes of creatures he's mangled and eaten —

Mephitic carloads, pipelines in and out,  
 Brains and livers, quivering masses of clams,  
 Steaming compost, grainfields, pheasants, trout,  
 Castrated yearlings, scrubbed pigs, sheep and lambs  
 (Corn-fed and over-, teat-fed and under-grown),  
 Their ribs and thigh bones stripped to flesh his own.

To some end surely, some talent beyond tooth and claw,  
 Surely potent with beauty (though ruled by refinement and tact);  
 Or is he merely that crouching cormorant maw,  
 Viviparous in theory but viviphagous in fact?  
 He closes his book and, paunchy, mawkish, grotesque,  
 Turns to stare at the blank sheets on his desk.

#### SET PIECE

The cranium threatened the clavicle,  
 The clavicle blotted the eye,  
 The iris shed its lights and bled  
 Till the ventricles sang to the thigh.

The geranium thrashed the clavichord,  
 The clavichord blasted the sty,  
 Stiletos soared through the nimbus and poured  
 Hosannas out of the sky.

Till lassitude throttled the leper,  
 The leper blessed the fly,  
 But the maggot's curse befuddled the nurse,  
 Whose shrunken breast set pale in the west  
 While the hero drained out of the spy.

#### *Bruce Berling* Two Poems

##### CHICAGO AND BACK

His father one week dead,  
 He fled  
 West, where he drank with cronies and tried to make  
 A neurotic blonde to keep his blood awake.  
 (But I don't know you, she said.)

Over the seventh rye  
 A sly  
 Fox who insured one life on every plane  
 Out of Houston, Texas, said, Yes, it's a bit of a drain,  
 But Time is my chief ally.

The city soaked like a sot.  
 He caught  
 A cold and cursed the seepings of the sky.  
 (They said, It's bound to let up by and by.  
 In a pig's eye, he thought.)

The third day, seedy, sore,  
 He swore  
 He'd never take another drink; said Screw  
 To Chicago, packed his bag, and flew  
 Home (where he drank some more).

## EPITAPH ON A FREUDIAN

He lived, erogenizing

nothing in particular,  
everything rather: lamp shades,  
bottles, the sultry colors  
of book jackets, light bulbs, ferns,  
everything beginning with  
*B and C and L, in fact*  
everything. *Let us, he said,*  
*find meaning in forms, in shapes,*  
*take for our truths only those*  
*the body puts its seal on.*  
*Let old Adam eve us in*  
*to thought.* So, for sixty years  
— the sleepless flesh prehensile,  
omnivorous — daffodils,  
Roman vases, match sticks, rugs,  
skyscrapers, hairpins, wheat fields,  
the Caribbean, Poland,  
Orion and the Bull, rubbed  
their bottoms on his bottom:  
a shack-up with life, a real  
doughnut and banana dream,  
till neuter death deballed him.

## Philip Levine Three Poems

### IN THE TERMINAL

The lights have faded in this waiting place;  
Although the clock whirs on, it will not sound  
The punctual arrival of the few.  
The many come, who part from no embrace  
Nor seek another on this alien ground,  
The final station we must travel through.

They sit apart, the landless and the lost  
Who have so lost themselves their words become  
Vague emblems of despair they cannot feel.  
And who can listen? who can bear the cost  
Another's sorrow brings to this night's sum?  
Outside the sky is turning, and the wheel —

The broken wheel of stars — cuts through the night.  
Faint hostages to fortune, we must wait  
For that calm ending they are grinding toward.  
One falls alone in the uncertain light,  
Or stands a moment stunned and desperate,  
Sounding one's name like any other word.

### BUYING WEAPONS

Beside the road the 105's  
Repeat themselves in ordered rows.  
I count the guns; a cold rain drives  
Into my windshield, and I lose,  
In a vague blur, false clarity.  
After a moment sight returns.

Here are the old forms: barren tree,  
 Long unploughed fields, and greying barns  
 Where now the smaller guns are housed.  
 The howitzers command the eye:  
 Portentous, waxed, blunt barrels raised  
 As though against some enemy;  
 Each one is coupled to its bride,  
 An empty mover; each resists  
 Time and the rain: mechanic pride,  
 Instilled in what is made, persists  
 Beyond the term which use demands.  
 I have come here to buy for one  
 I never met, rebuilt Garands  
 Which I will never touch. The gun,  
 The polished weapon aiming true,  
 I can admire — perfected skill  
 Which through the weapon will renew,  
 No matter why or what the kill,  
 A sense of human mastery.  
 What mastery? The rifle proves  
 More perfect than the sighting eye,  
 More perfect than the ends it serves.  
 Faced by these low untroubled hills,  
 This barren tree, the silent guns,  
 The knowledge of our thwarted wills  
 Sickens my conscience. I must turn  
 Down the next road, pass through the gate,  
 And make my purchase. We succumb  
 To what we call our mortal fate  
 Until the craft of choice is numb.

## THE WOLF CHILDREN

The little nameless ones  
 Who might have been Betty & Jack,  
 Who might have been children instead  
 Of wolves in a wolf pack —  
 At night they take the streets,  
 Moving on all fours,  
 Snapping at each other  
 And all the locked doors.  
 Prince has stopped his barking,  
 The garbage cans come down,  
 Their little teeth are clicking  
 All through the town.

Wait beside a hole,  
 Catch a little one,  
 Put him in a corner;  
 When his tantrum's done  
 Caress him like an infant  
 Whose errors are your own,  
 Feel his little heart,  
 Colder than your own.  
 He might have been John or Jack  
 Instead of the world's child,  
 Whose teeth are at your throat,  
 Whose yellow eyes are wild.



Nancy-Lou Patterson

## Three Poems

### THE NOOKSACK RIVER

*"Excuse me, Old Salmon; I'm about to eat you."*

The mountains lie like crystalline women,  
Rearing stony haunches, prone as does,  
And from their green ice breasts the riven  
Streams fall, wrung from milky flocs,

Down the stricken thighs of the talus,  
Among the shy valleys, down to the Sound,  
That old potlatch dish, bottomless  
As Tsonoqwa, the Cannibal Woman, drowned

Among cold plenty. In marginal weather,  
On the shimmering tidal desert, the flats  
Where insects raise mirages, tethered  
Hip to hip, lie the boats like cats

Asleep in the sun. Crouched skeletons  
Between the spinal driftwood, lost  
From the Salmon People, the net-racks ruin  
And peel. When Spring hangs her crest

On nude beach willow, the bleak  
Netting blossoms with bobbed vines  
That will gather the salmon up like sleek  
Grapes. Before the morning dawns

Indian women with eyes as black  
As the lightless river, crunch over clean  
Salty gravel, stripping the net-racks,  
Loading the boats; ghostly women between

The house-shaped driftwood, the foundered roots  
Of ancestral trees. Popping like clams,  
The engines gossip when the boats  
Are free and hurrying, shout in the rooms

Of the river, waking up the mudhens.  
Snuffing the motors, the women put out  
Tailboards and nets; the drift begins.  
Arcing as purely as a seagull's flight,

The soundless boats descend; their borne  
Riders bend, taking up nets recovered  
Like rainbows over the roller horns,  
Stripping the seaweed, bitter-fingered,

Paying chill coin for the Salmon Race's courtesy.  
Bursting from the stinging peak-papped  
River, the fish come, resurrecting:  
Arm-long Springs, burst eyes popped

And bloody gills as ravenous as mouths,  
Jaws terrible with sickle teeth,  
Bodies the shape of force, prowed  
Like vessels. Quicker than breath

The Humpies follow, steely and small,  
Rampant with injury, comic in death,  
And the Silvers, like hand-wrought jewelry, all  
Go writhing and flogging under the seat.

The drift completed, the nets aboard,  
The women sit as if carved, steady  
The tillers, announce with a pulled motor-cord  
Their return upriver. Beneath their sturdy

Denim-trousered loins, the salmon die,  
 And each skilled hand, ringed in fishy sweat,  
 Holds to a waiting mouth a wry  
 Small match flame, lighting a cigarette.

# FISHING CLOSURE

*"Fishermen will fish four days out of every week,  
 observing a three-day weekend closure."*

Rain down, oblivion, let me depart  
 Beyond the land's-end rocks, the seagull nest,  
 The rooted reef; let ribs around my heart  
 Unclose and loose their catch; release my breast  
 To washing salt. Come, ocean weather, start;  
 Let me go down beyond my knees to rest.  
 Between the boat and net where small fish dart  
 I sink the plunger's loud cup, lest  
 One fingerling escape. Work's best: worst, times  
 We lie at anchor, hours or cards, one like  
 Another. Now in night let me lie down  
 Upon the stones. Blow out, moon, let my dimes  
 Control the tide. Come, sea, let silence strike  
 On bone. Let me be drunken. Let me drown.

# A SINGLE SKULL FOUND IN A SALISHAN MIDDEN

Brown as a fallow pod  
 Bereft of milkweed's silk wonder  
 Withering beside the Old Smokehouse Road,  
 This skull, disembodied, under  
 The midden's limey sod,

Among the oyster shells  
 Curling like the sundried tide-spume  
 Layered with chalk and ruffled from the shoals,  
 Among the lucent cup-shaped clam  
 Valves each as empty as

Itself, some six feet down  
 Below the remnants of a fire's  
 Wasted kindling clocked with dying carbon,  
 Even below the flinted spears  
 And granite grinding stones,

With its loosening grin  
 Intact when the grassed knoll was dug  
 By a builder for a summer cabin,  
 Made an Indian, questioned, shrug:  
 "How did a skull get in

With the other debris?"  
 Taking half an hour to reply,  
 Folding his wrinkled knuckles on his knees,  
 Sighting raven eyes against the sky:  
 "Stranger or slave, I guess."

*Robert Peterson*

# Three Poems

## NIGHT AND DAY

7 a. m.

Waking hazards of broken friends  
 and incompetent cameras . . .

Fragments are all I have yet,  
 and eggs, cooking against time; .

—lit the gas gloomily, negative .  
to mirth. Wagner was cut off

for the news, and none of it good.

Endings and beginnings: Come closer,  
love; what light are we  
the center of?

(From an old poem:) . . . would rather  
have your coolest kiss  
than salt.

. . . and give you a young choice of green  
(new). Not bad.

In any event, Spring is no time  
to slumber —

4 p.m.

Gathering all of it  
up from the day  
in the shadow of the falling hill,

counting dogs, socks, flames, pills,  
and other positives . . . Oh, well —

open with a good number  
drop off to Sibelius.

## POEM NOT ALL MY OWN

*"A stray deer wandered out of the hills  
onto Stinson Beach yesterday. Apparently  
terrified by the crowds of curious sun-  
bathers which soon surrounded it, it fled  
into the surf."*

NEWS ITEM

*"That with one shot, so to speak, a man can  
kill two things. The bird that he is hunt-  
ing, and perhaps the hunter in himself."*

WRIGHT MORRIS

We teased it off the sand.

Not far, but it drowned. Sadly, the  
lifeguard went and got her.

For that doe, we should  
have done our weeping as we slept,  
then, sweetfaced,  
shot her.

1

## JEAN GABIN AS SHIP

In this plot he's a chef, falls  
for his stepdaughter, loses his  
best friend over it, etc.  
There's some killing, things  
finally get resolved, and he  
comes back alone to his kitchen,  
sadder, at the end.

But what he thinks isn't important.  
It's that smooth, well-trimmed walk  
between the big scenes  
I go to see. I try it myself  
sometimes when I have a need  
to be making, not love, but speed,  
with lots of deep water under me.



Ann McGarrell

## Two Poems

### PIER

I keep green glass because it is the sea,  
I hold its twisting light and all its sand.  
This sea is mine, to break or throw away.

That one beneath the pier moves with the moon  
and blinds our faces shut like arcade lights.  
COME ON beats laughter of a tickled fool,  
a nickel's worth of THE GORILLA'S BRIDE  
(the brute dies frustrate in a cardboard Borneo),  
a doll to drown (pink feathers in the surf affront the gulls).  
Your mouth turns up to laugh (I leave it there).

*Song:* tell me a solvent for the cat's long scream  
and win me from a ride to crazyland  
where blood and fur are stiffening on my hands  
I dodge the sun it splits like rotten fruit  
the painted horse rocks slowly much too late

How can I love you till I love this ground  
that quakes away? I want a hill of jade  
hard to its heart, cold through the hottest day.

### PICTURES OF BARBARA ON AN ISLAND

Sunblind I balance on a cliff whose edge is light.  
If I could see the humming air was all, I'd fall.

I lean into the warm, my eyes squeezed tight;  
my hands brown slowly on the ruined sill.  
This house becomes me as black dresses do —  
the splintered wood and glass and missing door.

Look, I'll be Chaplin and his Paulette, too:  
"It's Paradise," he says, drops through the rotten floor.  
She picks him up, steals fruit, winks, dances, weeps —  
I could do that. But the weeds the sea the sand  
blow lines across my face. I have to stand.

James B. Hall

## Memorial Day: 1959

### I

When the long iron boat spat us kicking  
On the beach near Mers El Kebir  
The sea birds twittered past our let-down  
Ramp and we ran laughing at a continent,  
Not one truly thinking he could die;  
But now I think of Elwood Matson  
Surprised that night in his own bivouac  
Hole, tent poles and his own Garrand  
Gouged through his blanket and his blond head,  
For a tank track foraged through the lost  
Field of his sleep.

### II

And A. C. Roten: often he danced  
On our tent ropes, and would sometimes sing  
Those low, cold Tunisian stars to sleep.  
Married, a picture of small girls hiding  
In his wallet, and lucky at reconnaissance,  
I did not think that he could ever be  
Only some rags at Senid Station, thighs severed,  
His throat screaming for its mother . . .  
And later Graysted, Kibby, Ethred, and Sidney Hines  
Died also by S-mines in the Riviera's green  
Unforgiving afternoon.

### III

Suddenly winter came upon us near Hagenau  
 And the season's old revenge of snow shook  
 The black intricate trees like thunder.  
 Beaton, and his patrol, in parkas white as breath  
 Vanished into those mumbling, low-hung boughs.  
 Later we found them in a shallow bowl  
 Of that forest, swaying, trussed in the wind,  
 Flanks maimed, and their heads drowned in the terrible snow.  
 After that we took no prisoners, fought much  
 Among ourselves with knives, became beasts,  
 But still, alive.

### IV

Now is this longest day of May again  
 And while the shrapnel rain rattles this window pane,  
 I thought to write some easy, formal thing  
 To say how those alive — being so — see on ahead,  
 And thought thereby to justify their sleep.  
 But oh when I saw them all once more, again,  
 I thought: no lies, to those who really died.  
 Instead let stand this hasty parapet of verse:  
 For A. C. Roten, Ethred, Matson, Kibby, Graysted,  
 Paul Sommers, Sidney Hines, John Halstead, and one patrol,  
 For they are dead.

## *Eve Triem* Eight Poems

### SUN AND AMIABLE AIR

Sun and amiable air  
 Suddenly, where had been  
 Cloud everywhere; and within  
 Cloud and cold a door  
 Opens: other callings to hear.

You've been washing the dark  
 Things of thought all the night  
 Of a lightless season; delight  
 Yourself in the white work  
 Finished, brighter than white.

Grass, the smallest petals  
 Yellow and underfoot blue  
 Are a speech of rattles  
 And cymbals breaking through  
 The washed globe to tell you —

To tell you to be their voice  
 Rejoicing that the nights end.  
 On the songs of willow wand  
 The wren-wing mornings rise,  
 The sorrow-washed hearts ascend.

### IN MOONLIGHT, RESTING

In moonlight, resting:  
 baring breast to the white  
 to cool a smart within.  
 Grief has a body

and it must be tended.

From the womb, through the life,  
Sleeping is my talent.  
In the nightly garden  
I slept well — heard visions.

Darling, such dreams! Be it you  
Or the Light among His lights  
That I chose for my fable,  
I wake and I love.

## LULLABY FOR GROWNUPS

quilt. It thickens so with fear,  
I scold them for their lumps of language: "learn *bird*; *think* to me."



Small they look from where I skitter;  
easily left (the muddlers) to fast  
in their peculiar forest.

Wiser, still wet of the first fountain,  
from my own verity  
can abstain; to come under their

NONSENSE — people comely but un-  
teachable. Winds (northwest) will dry  
my real tears, rock once my crying.

#### A GARDEN'S SECRET

Tall from the split emerald of trees  
The miles of fair atmosphere  
Are brighter than smashed glass.

In a small garden I watch,  
Taking the sun a water  
Beating an empty beach.

Garden. Neat as handkerchiefs  
Monogrammed by a bird's  
Curl of song under leaves.

Keeps a secret, won't talk  
Of the God who is nested  
Here, in the cool of time to walk.

Nile-azure lily, marguerite  
And roses, without my God  
Of garden, border a blind street:

O Alph-Omega which lends  
Me breath and power to feel  
The Ghost-Who-Befriends,

Be nearer than the bee  
Stumbling from petal to page  
To finger, O *Reality!*

With all made things, all desire.  
I am man, I must die.  
Catch me to Thy mind of fire!

#### THE LAZARUS CAROL

And so we are awake.  
Again the grave of sleep  
Is robbed of Christ the sun.  
We who hated our bodies,  
Our habits, our shabby names,  
Now we must sin no more.

A river of winter sunrise  
Like marred pearls or old paper,  
Counting the Solstice hours  
Flows from the side of a sun  
Nailed to a hilltop pine.

We are redeemed for this:  
To make choice shall we weep  
Without reason, or wake  
A dreadful reason for weeping.

Though the nations, ox and lamb  
Garlanded with herbs,  
Pretend that for a day  
They are ruled from Bethlehem,

The nations pile new weapons  
To build their hill of worship.  
They set a threatening skull  
In the straw of the Manger.

Not by nations but in single  
Risings are the living dead  
Baptized with the day-shine.  
Each of us is chosen  
For naming and praising the creatures  
So lonely in their beauty,  
Of the kingdom of creation —  
Or for nothing Christ the sun  
Had risen to the worlds.

#### WALKING OVER WATER

The cities bloom upon a root of evil.  
I watch the clock for tidings of the mood  
To walk the bridge and watch uncited light.

East, east, witcheries of riverglow  
Trans-shape the bricks into a cloud of dancers  
Horizoned by the copper din of drums.

The town, anonymous, mirage of park,  
(All trees in tubs of onyx, pomegranate lamps)  
Or a grove of quince with quicksilver dragons.

A boat breaks water into greater light  
Around, blown east, a roaming firefly  
Sailing the glisten as if it were grasses.

The over-under linger of the river,  
Unending water-waver . . . on the bridge  
I sing in the pollenless field of the dead.

With the Lyre constellation I look from land . . .  
That road so simply imagined for trucks with oil  
Flies, an angel of fire yoking the waters.

#### MY PRIVATE SAINT

Remembering my private saint  
I study metaphors for pain:  
of a garden's daisied nations,  
how they are as lost as asphodel;

of men, sea-islands and seas, lost  
as the roots of the Christly hyssop;  
and I toll the vanishing young  
across the no-flowing river of lead.

Look through the dark-glass, hearsay —  
rages for the untold, true Christ,  
or at my private saint (*who do  
ye say I am?*) teaching the owls.

O bleeding Maypole, unshading both —  
and neither — and *not* by knife-cross light  
they kneel the weeks of desert night,  
a raging love their only candles.

Midway a sun and a moon, Jupiter  
(third eye in the head of a saint)  
continues to see that garden-moment  
ticked quickly in a sky of time —

the WORD fleshed, or the man weeping?  
I touch gently my private saint:  
be remembered his lion-leading gaze  
longer than his stonestruck hands.



## About the Contributors...

EARLE BIRNEY is regarded, in many quarters, as Canada's foremost living poet. He teaches at the University of British Columbia.

HAROLD WITT lives in Orinda, California. His book, *Beasts in Clothes*, will appear in the Macmillan series this spring. He has finished a novel, and is at work on an experimental movie.

WILLIAM STAFFORD's work appears in *POETRY NORTHWEST* for the second time. The editors of the magazine will continue to print large wads of Mr. Stafford at frequent intervals.

SISTER MARY GILBERT, SNJM, is at Holy Names College in Spokane, where she has been a teacher of journalism as well as poetry.

JOSEPH LANGLAND presents us with three more poems in his cycle, "Haruspicing at Valley-View Farm," which this magazine proudly presented in its second issue. Mr. Langland is an editor of *THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW*.

ALLYN WOOD is the wife of a professor of Comparative Literature at Indiana, and has been published by *THE YALE REVIEW* and *THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY*.

JOHN TAGLIABUE writes us charming letters, sends us bales of extraordinary poems, and signs things, "Love, John," though we have not met him. He recently returned from Japan, and is presently at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine. We want to take this opportunity of wishing him a happy Valentine's Day.

DONALD HALL is an editor of *THE PARIS REVIEW*, and is responsible for the selection of British poets in the new edition of *New Poets of England and America*, co-edited by Robert Pack, out soon.

A note on VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY prepared by VICTOR ER-  
LICH appears on page 45. Dr. Erlich, of the University of Washington, is the author of *Russian Formalism*, a full-length critical study published by Mouton (The Hague), 1955, and has written numerous articles and essays on Russian literature. JACK HIRSCHMAN, his collaborator, had his first book published by Indiana University Press in 1960, called *A Correspondence of Americans*. He is presently at Dartmouth, but will be at U. C. L. A. next year.

THOM GUNN's book of poems, *The Sense of Movement*, was published by Faber in 1957, and in America by the University of Chicago Press in 1959. He wrote an appreciation of Ruth Pitter in our third issue which, Miss Pitter said, made her "cry with relief" to learn that her work pleased a young English poet.

WILLIAM H. MATCHETT is a professor of English at the University of Washington. His book of poems, *The Water Ouzel*, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1955 (\$3.00).

BRUCE BERLIND teaches in the Department of English at Colgate University. When we accepted his poem "Epitaph on a Freudian"

he wrote, "I don't know of any other editors who would touch it with a ten-foot banana."

PHILIP LEVINE lives in Fresno, California, has three sons, and has been published in *POETRY*, *PARIS REVIEW*, *THE NEW YORKER*, etc.

NANCY-LOU PATTERSON appears here for the second time, also. Since her earlier appearance, she has had a baby girl named Francesca. She continues to be a painter and a teacher of painting as well as a poet.

ROBERT PETERSON has been the poetry editor of *CONTACT*, the quarterly published in Sausalito, California. We believe that we are the biggest little magazine in which he has appeared so far.

ANN MCGARRELL is married to a well-known painter, and, like Allyn Wood, lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

JAMES B. HALL, novelist, short-story writer, poet, critic, art critic, editor, professor at the University of Oregon, seems to have earned that rare and honorable appellation, "man of letters." He and his wife and five children are spending the winter on the Island of Balboa, California.

EVE TRIEM, widely published poet, is presently living in Seattle. Poems of hers have lately appeared in *POETRY*, *QUARTERLY REVIEW OF LITERATURE* and *POETRY DIAL*. Her book is *Parade of Doves*.

MORRIS GRAVES, poet of painters, and native of the Northwest, has been living in Ireland for the last couple of years. At present he has fled from an unusually wet Irish winter to travel in Egypt and Ethiopia. We thank him for permission to use his painting on the cover of this double issue, and point out to our readers that it is singularly appropriate in view of Mr. Langland's poem, "Sacrifice of a Hill of Ants."

*POETRY NORTHWEST* regrets to announce the resignation of Richard Hugo as an editor of this magazine. The name of a new editor will be published in the next issue.



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