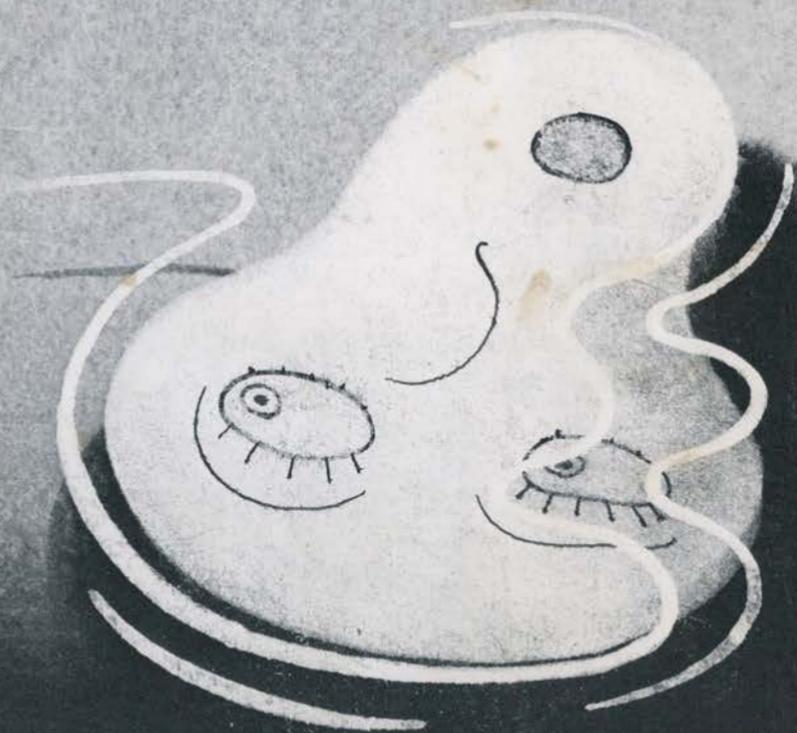


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Poetry

NORTHWEST



POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME SEVENTEEN

NUMBER FOUR

WINTER 1976-77

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POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER 1976-77

Stephen Jaech

DYING ON MY FEET

He is prepared to write about the well-arranged bowl
of fruit which sits on his desk like an old woman's
hat, yes sir, he is. But his radio brings the Twelfth
Street Birmingham Gospel Revival; it wants to be louder,
as loud as the radio goes. Brother Cleon says he's
seen, hallelujah, yes sir, he's seen the clouds of death
in the sky over Alabama. And you've seen them too.
The time is coming, coming tomorrow like the storm
over Alabama, yes sir—we'll be on our knees, I want you to know.
I want you to be there, I want you to see the horses,
the horses in the sky, yes sir, do I hear it: the horsemen
are in the sky over Alabama and the drums are thumping
hallelujah, and I want you to know, yes sir, to know
that it's all going down on the sword of the horsemen.
And there's only one way, the way is on your knees—can I
hear you speak with me—the way is screaming, yes sir,
screaming for the blue robes which we'll wear, and the horses
in the sky over Alabama don't trample the blue robes,
no they don't, yes sir, let's hear what's beneath your chest.
Let's hear the drums which are pounding hallelujah,
I want you to know about the final splash, yes sir,
we'll swim off, we'll be swimming down the river which
flows into the gulf which spills into the ocean which pours
into the sky, the sky over Alabama, which mixes into the
Milky Way which opens, can I hear you say, which opens
into the rotunda of endless domes, yes sir, do I hear those
hooves clop?

And he found himself in his shabby apartment, and he took
a crisp bite of an apple, a firm red apple, yes sir, he did.

FOREVER

Let's keep leaving forever.

Two lovers unraveling at the ends of their rope
wave goodbye, a hand
seizes the throat, the intestines, though everything
led to this and I let it and half wanted it,
rolling up the car window.

Let's keep leaving forever

the way the soul
lifts like a second skin
over the stopped corpse, hovering there
as the first body beneath the glow
condenses into opal, breathless
as Arizona; then the light keeps lifting.

We were made for it. Frontally planed,

eyes which focus only at a distance,
the unnatural bone-twist of looking behind
the way ducks naturally sleep on a pond,
fear the long shadow that continually tails me
will turn me to stone.
Or the sideways flow
of furred hills and abandoned cows;
each face, each friend or stranger,
blurbs by like factory smoke.
We keep on leaving forever.

Let's. Palm against palm,

despite myself I concentrate on
touching you. It begins
all over, this urge to remain
in one house like a clean heat upon herbs.
If this too should end—
let's keep leaving forever.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HALF OF NEW ENGLAND

The 30-ton flywheel with an internal flaw

cast to specifications—
calico piles up on the floor like ribbon candy.

The looms set odd against even
when the walls started sawing—
2, 4, 6, 3, 5, 7.

Oh those Utopian diagrams! windows
repeating the long brick walls
of the red mill like recurrent dreams
that leave you dazed at dawn, but near midday

You bolt upright—rowhouses and grand
boulevards of elms—

Two salmon sent
to potential investors
so thick in the spillway below the dam
in March you could walk across on their pink backs.

The elms fall into their own gravity
cut to stumps or dynamited
into black holes. The windows
are bricked in or fitted with plywood.
The cable of the wrecking ball
pulls taut against its reluctance.

All gone! Make it new!

Slick slick, up go the instant walls,
cinder block washed with pastels,
so uneventful the entire length
of the turnpike lies there in a coma unblinking.

Who loves the valved voice and turned spindles,
Who hates all disembodiments
and doubts—
Who could contain these contradictions,
or embrace these multitudes?

CREEDMOOR: THE LOCKED WARD

I ask what she needs
write it down
she can't
her penmanship's
a five-year-old's
hair cut close to her head

mother wants a boy
and who doesn't

weeping into a balled-up tissue
next time bring tissues
and shoes
would I buy brown shoes?

tell mother to call
where is mother
tell mother to forget it

two fat women
in the immense dayroom
waltzing arm in arm
the boy who borrows cigarettes
behind them
singing a hymn

I can't buy shoes
without her feet

she'd give me
her feet

I'm thinking of my wife and daughter
I want to leave

bring tissues

between the casement windows
the young woman laments
her abortion at 20
who really had none

what happened to the dog
did you put her to sleep
where is mother

I look across the room
at the unused pool table
cues lined up dusty as WWI rifles

small voices weeping
in my throat

smell cooking smell
canned peas and carrots
Salisbury steak

thin gravy voice
of the old school teacher
playing old songs
at the piano

the fat women
trotting in a circle

the boy with crinkled knees
saying his doctor
will never change

asks me for a nickel
asks me for a pencil

O it's time
traffic is heavy

the bridge-tolls up
I live across two rivers

I've filled
her shopping bag
full of Kools
cookies soft candies
a new robe

love to the family
don't forget love to the family

THE MEASURE OF A DACHSHUND'S JAW

You seemed miles above, Frau Kissel,
yelling down the dumbwaiter shaft,
"What you do down there!" letting
your empty dogfood cans clatter toward us.
You seemed miles below, your voice
rumbling into the furnace
as we stole kisses from the super's Marge,
coal dust on our pants. O the whites
of your eyes, Frau, yellow as rest homes,
awful as grandmothers falling into liquor
stores. You shambled past Mendel's newsstand,
fingers flicking in and out of his money-box.

Halloween, you held pennies in tongs
over the stove's hot jets, threw them down
into the alley where we sang like beggars.
Convert to St. Vitus, your touch trembled
like raw eggs in a river. You stretched neighbors'
curtains on your rack of needles, 10¢ an hour.
You clomped on the roof like Mr. Angelo
with stroke, shouting commands at pigeons,
letting loose your dachshund. We saw you
raise a fist to your husband in the sky,
his biplane breaking up over the Argonne,
ripping through calendar pictures of France.

And when you broke your hip on super's
icy sidewalk, no one brought groceries;
did your laundry; walked your dog
the level of a snarl. We left dead mice
at your door: heard you cry out
like the crazy lady in subways.
And months later, after your dachshund
bit Marge, you were yelling at the ASPCA truck
parked near the hydrant; dog biscuits
falling from your bag; money in a white
sweat sock that you swung like a club
beating the air, bruising whatever bruised you.

Richard Blessing

Three Poems

LINES FOR HER LEAVING

Say she leaves you.
A thousand days and pain
is second-hand,
sentimental almost,
a father's grieving
for a child's lost ball,
Next the nostalgias,
the house where you grew up,
that sort of thing,
sadnesses sweet as birds
filling November's empty trees.
One day you'll wake up peaceful,
like a tiny village
with a famous cemetery.
It is winter. The tourists
have all gone home.
When you learn the language
you will find
there is no word there
that says her name.

FREE THROW

for Richard Hugo

It's up to me. I toe
the line like a February
swimmer. The nation stops.
Someone coughs in Medford,
Oregon, and the dark goes
shush. Father hunches
forward. *Go on, boy*, he says,
go on! Mother's eyes hide
in their holes like crabs.
They know I'll fail. *Jump*,
says the hoop. The glass board
says, *This is your goal, this
is your life*. The dark applauds.
A pyramid of ice grows
in my belly. My hands stutter
deaf-language for good-bye.
I lay it all on the line.
I leave my sneaks, loosen
their lying tongues.
I leave my jersey,
and the number of my blue years.
I leave my trunks,
the seat of all my sorrows.
I leave my jock
with a single spidery hair
curled graceful as an autograph.
This is called a fake,
and this, a drive, my last,
straight up a wall that's higher
than any whistle's pitch.
Nothing is free unless we choose it.
Through scattered clouds of jeers
I throw myself whole now. I choose
the white net of this page,
these words.

DOCTOR

She writes prescriptions for the dead.
Rx: you must bring the future back,
involving, definite. Unexpectedness
is good. Prospects. Do well, be well,
it does not matter which. Trust fire.
There's a gap in the field above the heart,
she says, once in eight years,
but only for an instant, and you must be quick.
Night will be colder there, but your own.
Reaching yourself she diagnoses "arrival."
Eat or be eaten, as needed. For pain.

T. Alan Broughton

HOW TO SEE MY DEATH

You barely stir as I rise
in early morning when light
lies only at the foot of the bed.
By the time I have dressed
you have turned once
and lifted far enough to the surface
to see me waver in the doorway
then I am gone.

The first birds skitter from the feeder,
the neighbor's cat who has stretched
from sleep to waking lust
slinks in the wet grass.
I begin my run
flicking pebbles letting
the stride fall short
as muscles wake and green begins
to flow around me—bush and tree

and lilacs clutched in their cones.
Breath mounts in me, my heart
old thing of checks and flaws
tries to find the measure
of this new tide

and you have reached your bare leg
into my place, letting that vacant touch
wake you to the limbs
of trees, a crazy robin scolding
at the roof and plummeting moon.
Rolling the covers back
like a loose-lipped wave
you lift your knees,
breasts and small veins purple as the sea,
then put yourself in clothes.

Now I am turned toward home
feet kicked out and legs
taking lengths of a road I knew
until the last turn where old apples
twist and writhe to find a bloom
and she stands in an upsprung wind
sea-foam scudding from her hems
eyes of the cave where moon
sleeps into day

and my heart
with home in my eyes
breaks in a surge
dives in the drown of its blood

and I seem to fall
my hands out to clutch
once more at this world
where cats sing the stalking bird
and you in your yellow harbor
mend the nets.

They will carry
the dead me back to you
lax hand and sweat turned cold.

But this old face lies
in its dull repose.

Look. I still run
where field holds its ragged edge to sky
her hair flung darkly
and she has me by the hand,
new roads rising
to our touch and go.

Sherry Rind

WOMEN WITH FOX SOULS

I

You would have said yesterday my life
was given to me already formed
and I had only to step into it
as a woman steps into a garden,
while you stood like a fox outside the gate.

II

Remember, even in a lighted room
my eyes, too, glow with the sign of animals
starving in a dark place.

Once a tame animal kills, the blood
will make her go on killing.
Today we drink tepid wine,

scrape our sharpening teeth on the glass.
Our eyes and brows begin to slant back
but our hands remain womanly, the fingers straight.

III

Women with fox souls choose a clear night
and a pale moon to leave their women's bodies in bed
and run, heads low, ears flat, across fields, woods,

city streets. They sit in the garden, their gold eyes
giving back the house lights. No one dares look at them.

It is their nature to mark out a territory
and snarl when they meet at invisible borders.
They cause wells to dry or mill wheels to turn;
some steal children, put out the hearth fires;
others cause men to die suddenly in sleep.

In the morning they rise as women,
replenish the fire, heat the water,
quietly perform all the rituals of home.
If their men suspect,
they do not speak of it.

IV

You would have said yesterday my fox-soul
was sated but what was it you saw at midnight
keening with hunger outside a darkened house?
Daily our faces narrow, our hair turns redder;
the fox bares her teeth in our hearts.

Nancy Steele

BLOOD VISION

1

I wake to winter,
Goose flesh,
A bird at the wrist;
My hands will not stop flapping.

2

I climbed each tree in the orchard
Once my hand slid into the crotch
Of a maple wet with possum blood
Live moss, soft against my skin
The pulse stuttering in my fingers.

3

These wounds I survive:
A heart that rocks on its stoop,
Born old; dragging its lives
Below porches, under leafpiles
To any dense part of the woods.

4

In sleep my fingers
Dredge the thin bark of sheets
As if to retrieve
Something slowly dying
To grip and haul it up into light
And skin it
Alive.

Joyce Carol Oates

ICE AGE

The Spirit moves where it will:
the air is scimitars, the air is shrieks.

All night the flesh of trees cracks
and in the morning the eye can gauge no distance,
the ear is deafened in white.

A world of glass!—many-winged glare of ice.
If the pulse beats it must learn caution
for here the slightest touch kills.

Razor-cruel is the light from the east.
We walk in blinded circles, helpless.
Trees—grass—stones—river—our steaming breaths:
the ice-drowse is upon us, the hypnosis
of ancient sleep.

In the Ice Age beauty fits tight as a mask of skin.
One cannot breathe, one stiffens to perfection.

Anne Pitkin

DECEMBER

The sparrows flying off the page
appear in the background, because
the tree was erased, and the casual design
of thin clouds couldn't be exactly reproduced.
Now we agree, reluctantly, the sparrows
are better. We learn these failures early

struggling with the music, until
we have it mastered, and we find we've lost
that first keen tenderness that drove us on.
Still, the same tones from the belltower vibrate
through all changes in the weather, traveling
at perfect intervals, although they toll

grief or joy, depending on the hour we hear them.
This last day of the month is cold and clear,
an open book's unbroken spine. The trees
along the boulevard repeat themselves and tangle
delicate as nerves in a forgiving sky.
The bare frame of a new house turns ruddy

in the sun's evening slant. Inside
she meets her lover for the last time
takes his arm and walks him slowly through
the rooms she and her husband have long planned.
A galaxy of dust defines each beam
of bronze light falling, as she passes,

on her radiant hair. Outdoors, on one patch
of sky, a small constellation of birds like smoke
loses shape. Last night's fresh snow quiets the street,
except for the staccato barking of a dog,
the distant shouts, like sparks from a struck match
of children rushing through the perfect air.

Joan Stone

WHAT DAUGHTERS COME TO KNOW

I can still see the pages
growing out of designs she contrived
for ages in her head,
along with long lists that grew
naming things she planned to take away;
lists that read like a homesteader's
dream: oatmeal, salt, flour,
a blanket, and her name always
in a black hand at the top of every page.

Now she sends me letters out of the quiet
where bears lumber in the night across
the half-finished porch,
where eagles circle in to fish
the river outside the window.

She has invited me down for apples;
I come in the early damp
on deer-trails, through the orchard
moving belly-deep in grass,
moving always toward her house.

The sun is just up;
already she has bread rising
and thick soup on the stove;
she offers me tea against the cold,
opens the stove-lid to the fire,
feeds in yellow sticks of alder.

The loosened light catches her face;
her hands shine; her dogs cluster around her;
light moves out to even the corners.
I tip my chair back
against the outside wall;
pulled back toward the darkening cold.

FALLING FROM SKYSCRAPERS

1

The first time is the hardest.
All that small movement below
and no one looking up.
X en route to the dentist,
Y to a lover Z
(yours), taxis obsessed
with their own metrics.
Don't look back
for the wringing of hands.
Expect no brass bands
at the bottom, no plaques.
Slip into air,
it has never fit better.
Dream the old dream of flight,
steer, ride your weight
down like a gull
fishing the torrent.
You will always remember
this moment.

2

Falling from skyscrapers
the second, third, so on
is like being a file clerk.
You dress for work
(sporty), put your papers
in order, act responsible.
Dream the same old dream,
of flight to the tropics
where, for you: rain.
Cast your weight down,
a stone ill-shaped
for skipping or walls.
You will try to forget these

moments, but all you know
now is falling
when what you want is to stand
on the ground
looking up, to behave
like a tree or a tourist,
like love.

Michael Magee

THE RAINBOW

It is what bridges us, light bending
as though to break,
we wonder
at its dazzling arc
how it shimmers by sunlight
curving the limits
of our space.
Its secret is more than alchemy:
no touch of gold
could show how this sky transfixes us.
Not even if our blood had become water
or the sea had turned our salt to tears
could we be more taken
than by this shining world.
But to see through our lives
is a trick we would sit still for.
There it doubles,
now it becomes three.
For here is light made
of air, sun, rain
leading us through
and one by one
or in pairs we follow it
if only to be won over
at last by our blind belief
so that with luck we might be shown the way
to our disappearing end.

Lawrence Kearney

THERE ARE 23 STEELMILLS IN BUFFALO, N.Y.

1. On summer nights
the stars won't rain,
the red dust will not rise, will not
become a man again:
we hear the steel-dust
on the other side of the bedroom wall,
gnawing the clapboard
while we sleep.

Chewed down to its knees
South Buffalo collapses,
and we ooze through the siding
into the dark, metallic air,

wanting only to lift
with the smoke coiling above the roofs,
and caress one another, at last,
without shame.

But we are
ashamed, even in dreams.
Each of us drifts off alone.

2. Before dawn
we float back to our beds.
The houses clumsily reassemble.
The backyards unclench
and let the moonlight seep through.
The steelmills
call out our names, softly;
they know who we are.

By 6 we're up and at breakfast,
reading the paper—
whispering as we read
in a wry, submissive voice:
the voice to be used at work,

to apologize, to confess,
to exact penance
from every word it knows . . .

Yes.

I will.

Whatever you say.

—the words coming on
in piston strokes
as we slog to the corner
to catch the bus for work,
the words our mouths fill to
over and over without love
for ourselves or this place
we have made with our own hands.

Jarold Ramsey

BYNUMVILLE

I.

Here it is, then, the family ghost town
my father never saw,
in the lush low hills of northern Missouri.
This is Chariton County,
north of Moberly and Marceline,
where my homesick Grandma
ran back in dreams for fifty years.
Standing here knee-deep in unfamiliar weeds,
I know it like my name—
a dip and a twist in the road,
four tiny false-front stores (my Grandpa
Billy clerked in one), abandoned,
glaring two on a side like clans.
Beyond them, to the west, it looks like pig-lot
and cornfield all the way to Oregon.

In 1900, not having heard the Frontier close,
they turned their backs on soil so rich it hums
and went away to take up free land in a desert.
Why? Why? at first the only seeds they brought
to sprout were "Ramsey beans."
Was it a new word or name they heard beneath the wind
one fall, a song irresistibly out of the West?
Or did their fields roil like waves
beneath the plows toward sunset?
In the year the centuries twined
Grandpa drained this town of family,
mocked his friends, and left.

II.

Not my home town, nor even my father's.
Yet the featherbeds here were heavy with us
ever after, and the farm women, dressing chickens,
named us in their rosaries of unlaidd eggs.
Could I live here?
Would I thrive and flourish?
On my leg a sheep-tick finds me native
in the very blood. In fever
I enter one of the gaping stores like an owner
and set up shop. General Merchandise
of my twentieth century mind goes on the shelves
dry goods for sale
the way it all turned out past Bynumville,
history beaten on a plowshare with a sword.

III.

As the shadows on the roadside lengthen
I hear them coming from the fields,
the yeomen Yokums, Billeterers, Wilsons,
their voices calm as cistern-water—
oh my shirt-tail grandsires all, you who stayed behind,
from the depths of your unknowing tell me
standing here for my father
what have you meant for us, for me, to do?

James B. Hall

Two Poems

OHIO FARMERS, AT RESURRECTION

Lord, we are your honest farmers
And here, all in good order, our Books:

Note the long, bad years of your own tornadoes
Yet we rebuilt all granary roofs in due season;

Observe other Expense against Accounts Receivable,
Their outrageous charge for hauling, paid in kind.

We mention also about twenty shoats shamefully taken
by cholera—no doubt all according to your Plan?

Still, we are your farmers regardless of season
And therefore we, ourselves, claim certain improvements:

Here ten thousand Leghorns, hatched in these batteries,
All laying, all sterile, even their lust bundled for export;

Furthermore, Sir, we sold-short all our Winter wheat
Thus turned right judgment into long-term capital gain.

Truly, Lord, we are your absolutely honest farmers
Yet be forewarned of all their stock-yard rumors:

The subtle husbandry of a double-set of ledgers,
Or alfalfa mowed, sold, then charged off to drought;

These malignant tales are hatched in the weevil
Throats of merchants, all Brothers of the Golden Thumb.

Against calumny, Sir, we place this paid-for church,
Your pews at hymn—and all built with ample parking.

Reason enough, before you complete this Day's Glorious
Work, to state just one well-considered proposition:

Forever we shall accept the depreciation of barns,
Upkeep on all line-fences, the sicklebacked weasel

Among pullets, and the distemper of your certain droughts;
Yes, these and many other calamities merely for your dispensation

To avoid waste, to mow this season's clover so near fruition—
And also to hold—O only for our children—title to these lands

Until once more, in your own time, unannounced even as now,
You do assume most certainly forever the direct management

Even of these recalcitrant woods, these cut-over lands
Which as we watch that Day you will transmute to gold.

Then even from a squall line across the Winter sky
Which is your hand opening we shall see larks rise singing:
Consider this thing well, Lord, for we are your honest farmers.

THE BACKHOE

Being possessed of neither flesh nor feathers
Nor any other life beyond
Diesel fuel ignited only for an instant,
I stand all through the night

Astride this ditch of my own digging.
Now all shorebirds sleep
And the river fog rolls like an old dog
In off-street kennel parking lots;

Alone all night the night-mortician waits,
Drinks coffee beside his corpse;
In the nightstick silence of all your streets
A cat moves grey like stolen goods.

Being not wholly of earth or pipes or water
I see the implication of all debris
Especially when the imperious cannonade of rain
Sends even the State Inspectors

Running to their white construction shacks
Where deals are made and money
Is the green tongue hammering inside their hard hats.
Then comes this shutdown sunshine

Holiday and back along these open, morbid trenches
I see the accommodation of all silt
And know dirt dug out is only dirt put back come Monday
It's only right, and Plan enough for me.

Quinton Duval

INDIANS

We came upon these strange men, children
really, their faces the scarlet red of a bird
feather or bad wound. Just at the sweeping bend
in the river they stood, and possibly thought
what a dream we were. I remember
at the same instant I could see huge fish
sleeping near the raft.

Jaime said "we soldiers . . . make people free."
It sounded so stupid, the words, the language,
even just the sound. We all felt stupid because
any of us could have said it.

They stared at the matches we used to light
cigarettes and jumped up and down like rabbits
when we offered them the small smoking sticks.
We saw that they thought we were on fire inside,
and perhaps we were special, in our dark
green clothes and our rifles pointing to heaven.
These people we could not save.
They didn't know what metal was, much less Marx.

We pushed off into the current, each man silent
and watched them grow smaller and mix with the trees.
That night around the campfire, I felt the stones
in my heart shift, and allow all my sorrow
to flood into me.

Kurt Heinzelman

THE GENERAL PRACTITIONER IS ALONE IN HIS STUDY

He had a desk
 he kept between us.
 Antique—that is,
knobbed legs with real wormholes
 and well-bellied
 like a good man singing.
That is, I'd
 call it antique if
 that word could stay (as he might
put it) clear of patinas,
 the deep-down surface
 sheen of age. "Shit"—
(we'd been talking for a while)—
 "when the phone isn't
 ringing, these books bear me down.
Now what have they
 got for me
 to help to make whole?
Who needs me most?
 More than whom?
 Will I make
anybody better?—
 That's my lie—
 to fix the truth
in time,
 to soothe a fine, soft woman
 or her children."
(He thumbed the desk-top,
 stroked it
 back at himself.)
"First, I think of words
 as dressings, cast
 to flower like a scar.
At times the simplest
 application hurts.

Sometimes nothing helps.

I think of Yeats
 who thought he knew
 what Homer knew—
The Book, he called it,
 of his People—
 half-forgetting
in his vision that the
 books rebound, bind
 anew the artless
suture which you unstitch
 as you go.
 But the book itself is use.
That Eliot, you know, bought
 a special Dante, kept it like
 a hip-flask in his jacket, until
he learned Italian, anyway.
 He always wished it were in Latin.
 Listen, if this was
Stevens' office, you'd be
 out by now, with
 handfuls of actuarials.
I'm thinking here about the one
 about the surgeon
 who put it to his interns
on their maiden voyage
 to the OR
 if they really
liked setting knives
 to living flesh.
 There you have it." (He let
the desk-top go.)
 "Now, take my cat,
 nursing its Persian gut,
eyes glazed
 by a third lid.
 In the morning sunlight
she folds
 all her eyes
 and licks herself."

Greg Kuzma

HAVING READ THE BOOK

In the book
Al Longine is the hero.
In the movie
a gorilla.

In the book there is a dreary
presentiment,
disaster with a capital D
lounges in furs.
In the movie a band plays polkas.

In the book
the hero meets a hobo
in the dark,
together they build a fire,
and over dinner
the hobo relates marvelous
adventures.
In the movie the hero
and the hobo are the same person.

In the book a particular person
makes an impression.
Carried around in a watch
his portrait.
Carried around in an "aching heart,"
dreams of a bygone age.
In the movie the story is about
THE COMING OF THE AUTOMOBILE.

In the book this sentence:
"All the long day the leaves had been
surrendering ever so gently
to what that night had brought on
secretly." In the movie this line,
"Fiddlesticks."

The book has a girl, not altogether pretty,
who is seen, at times, from a distance,
hanging wash or smiling between
the edge of the window
and where the window shade comes down to meet it
but does not quite touch.
In the movie her name is Honey and she
is saucy and has a good build.

In the book Claude Aiken is killed.
In the movie he goes away.

In the book when the war is over
the town's streets look emptier
and one or two dogs do all the celebrating.
In the movie everybody's uniform is pressed
and everybody pounds on the bar.

In the book Charlie Hawkins
has one incredibly moving scene.
On the banks of the river that has
always flowed there and which
is seen at times to be the one true
subject of the story, and where
Hawkins fishes every morning, rain
or shine, he tells Bert Thompson
his own young dreams. In the movie
Hawkins is a shopkeeper with six "Howdys."

The book is 618 pages, the movie
seventy-three minutes.

In the book a strange disease
takes Sister Lizzie.
In the movie a howitzer destroys
a minister.

In the book there are at least
a dozen different separate days.
The movie is one long morning
with a lunch break.

In the book Al Longine quote
has trouble with his father end quote,
quote felt a meanness there he never
could explain. In the movie
the father beats pigs.

The cover of the book is green,
with gold letters, and on the
dust jacket there is a picture
of a river, some animals up to their
knees in it, and a boy fishing.
The first scene of the movie
shows a big-breasted girl
drinking a Coca Cola.

Carl Mayfield

THE POLITICS OF KISSING IN PUBLIC

Where is the prize?
I've looked on the sports page,
read the beauty hints with diligence,
talked with stray dogs and plums,
meditated for weeks on end,
and never have I seen the trophy
for which everyone is working.

The action is endless:
the illustrious senator
was caught this morning
with a blue baboon
who had to be pried loose;
the movie actress
has been on the same corner
for ten years and only once
has she come up for air,
for fresh lipstick.

Where do the careers go
when they leave the lips?
Am I the only one
who doesn't pucker
when the lights go on?

I shall have to consider
this wet craft, study the profiles
as they appear next to fire trucks.
I want to be ready
when my chance arrives,
my acceptance speech
on the tip of my tongue.

James Grabill

WHAT I MEAN TO SAY IS

Late in the afternoon
A break in the rain,
The slanting sunlight falls against
The yellow building and falls into
The large chestnut leaves. As a few
People walk beside the passing cars
We are sitting in a Mexican restaurant
Eating supper, the large chestnut leaves
Opening. Later in the summer, walking
Back up from the river, walking up steps
Of old stones and sand inbetween, hot
In the sun that soothes the water, hot,
Driving in the dusty light, the dust
Rising in columns, the sunlight through
The trees cutting shapes out of dark sky.
I am standing near the door of the building,
The dark brown wood has been painted red
And an old car seat is out in front,
Where the men sit sometimes. Early

In the day the trucks come, and there's
The sound of meat unloaded, men talking
Too loud. Then on the way back from work
There are neon signs from the bankrupt cafes,
Large bar mirrors, manikins with blonde hair
From 1964 they put old furs and nightgowns
Over them, they sell jukeboxes with amber lights
That spill down onto the records when they turn
And they have a stuffed chicken hawk for \$50.
It's July and the scent of the concrete
In hot sun soothes everything, calms
It all down. Walking past the apartments
The sound of fans and silverware being
Shuffled in the kitchen, old men with coats
And girls with short shorts stepping onto the bus
Quickly, tossing cigarettes back onto the bare
Sidewalk, with sky clear, and all the rain
Somewhere in the ground where the roots breathe
Soil that would suffocate the rest of us
Who live here on the surface.

Jill Krilov

THE TREE

Some still have seen it, times between their sleep
And rising, when some restless prescience
Woke them before the dark breath came. The arms
Of knowledge lifted vast indifference
Unreachable above. So I have seen
It, waking in the night, an ancient guise
Formed to our sight, the fruit older than stone,
Made before wind or season broke our skies.

You and I walked there once—the grass rolled back
Until our gaits matched breath to breath, until
We trod the air. I recognized it then,

Once by the darkness of the air, the chill
Green breath that blocked the sun, once by your speech
Less words to me than rites, and how your eyes
Slid helpless up to unreceiving bark:
The Tree of Knowledge, whereof we must die.

I write this for another walker now
But in your name. I write it that the tree
May teach us our own shapes, how we are not
Like leaf or branch, no sun-spawned alchemy
But the cast-off seed of heaven. Still its light
Gleams in our hair, we still are favored sons
Disowned, who walked once in such giant woods,
Sunlit and green, where this tree was but one.

Samuel Green

ON BEING QUESTIONED ABOUT A BANK ROBBERY BENEATH MY OFFICE

"Are you sure you didn't see anything?"
—FBI Agent

I know what he wants to be told: that I've kept
a careful watch on the street all day,
like a correspondence detective; can tell him
about the short black man neatly dressed
in a gray suit; can describe, perhaps,
how he balanced on the curb across the street,
gathering courage, a hooked trout leaping
in his chest. I'd have guessed, by the way
his hand fluttered around his pocket,
that he had a gun; would have a list
of license numbers to choose from,
makes and models, jotted down exact times.

And yet I've nothing to say. Seen nothing
but cold rain whacking against the window like pellets,

drubbing cars. And jobless union men loitering
about the doors of the Labor Temple
across the way; crouching in stairwells
like stuffed toys. Nothing he wants to hear.
Still, I feel a need to show my well-honed eye:
Did you notice how fine the harbor seemed
this morning, I ask, how smooth it was,
and dark, like an oilstone?

Mark Halperin

VISITING YOU

The erratic breeze and blue
moment of sun are gone when I hear you
mumble like steeled John Clare on the third day
to Northborough: *honest courage and myself
in my army, I led the way
and my troops soon followed*
hungry, half lame, toward the sure disappointment
that awaited—or else
not caring, which is to say, content,
a man mad to be on that road to his lost home.

I see your lounging heart,
the guests arrive. I hear the talk start hard,
a child with coiling pink embroidery
at her throat and arms cry because she's cold.
People, the last of them me,
have waited to meet her too often.
Whatever meek protest I make, I'll follow as she,
who's just plain tired
of the open mouths of visitors,
follows the floor and lighted hall to bed.

As for Clare's bizarre invention,
it bridged the way toward hope but was too thin
to bear him any happiness, his choice

be sane or eat. History was cruel,
the actual man could choose
less. Infrequently
returning, the visits each predictable
each time, he stares, shudders
for what's to come. And when I visit
you, who's to say which of us is bereft?

The bald hill I climbed
with friends from which I saw the river wind
through a half-circle of trees—we got chased
away by yellowjackets, the shrieking girl
stirring a ground nest
that swarmed and stung us all
and we hadn't enough time left for our hands to come down.
Now you are all gone.
Say the pain of the present won
or the bees. Mad John Clare would understand.

Eve Triem

REDDTAILED HAWK

The several visits to the Turkey Timber farm
he learned new skills: could plow a straight row
with mules, then the tractor. Milked 15 Guernseys,
one, Daisy, would not let anyone else milk her
till she felt he was gone. Continued to play
with the friend's nephews, pick strawberries
for a favorite dessert; he was getting taller,
itching from a loneliness he had no name for.

Stole her out of a tall-pine nest
(leaving two noisy beaks) to be his kin.
Reckless of parent wings returning to mash
young bones to the furrow. The redtail taloned
his shoulder, morning-evening chores, the clean manure
smell, the chickens clucking, a shared world. Peering

into his eyes to know his mind. Yellow satin breast,
autumnleaf on back, a stare like the aggies he rolled.

Back to town and school. His little sister hunted
and tossed grasshoppers to the quick pounce, the big house
was free to growing wings; evenings they played—bird
and boy—reliving hawk-stoop and rise with the catch.

When an oakleaf's the size of a gopher's ear
it's cornplanting time, mating-nesting time,
the redbrick house is a cage. He took her to the woods.
She flew to the tops, looked around, came back to his shoulder.
Her grieving whistle must have broken windowglass
miles away. In the freedom of trees she will forget
her first lover—gulping tears, hobbled to earth.

Mark Jarman

THREE GODS SHARE THEIR PASTIMES

Neptune

"You want to see death up close? See a mouth
so empty the sea has to fill it?
Through the telescope, drowning
is like the dying of a cell—
that magnified, that curious and small.
Where you stand you can pick the horizon apart,
bring a freighter to your eye, with its crawling deck,
and when the reef crumples the hull
and the deck spills,—here you are to see it."

His house was a box of glass,
cool as lichen,
stilted above the Pacific. He said, "Remember,
when you look through the telescope,
if you see death and forget what you see,
think of your eyes under coins,
think of death's metal lenses."

Mercury

"When I stretch out on the grass,
no one can call me. The light fades,
increasing in some other sky,
and my body lessens,
is less to imagine.
When the stars appear, I remember
I could span the distance
to each, propelling myself
with one thought, if I wanted to think it."

His caduceus lay by his side
like a double helix unraveled.
He said, "The stars are relaxing. Join me.
Near death the minutes pass
just as they pass after life.
How much time do you think we could kill,
lying here, counting them?"

Vulcan

"I was given a woman.
I said I could hammer my own
from sheet metal, but
I was given this woman.
She leaves, every day,
for the world of her own powers.
I can see her there, making
the blood come to men's faces,
the taste of smoke in her mouth."

He was pouring molten lead into water,
watching the metal clench.
He said, "All day, in my mind,
I follow her. When she comes home
my hands are clean, glistening with lotion.
She expects me to take her.
I do not. I sit and watch her."

SLAPSTICK LOVE

(L'Amour Fou)

" 'Tis very like a sneeze, but oh!
The difference to me"

Sharpnosed love, smirking love, fool
love, bowlegged, hunchbacking love,
pragmatic joke, too-cruel
irascible, rickety love,

ah love, let us be foolish.
Strip off all clothing, the tragic masks,
showing our comic flesh.
When the pants are down, one risks

everything. Warty, his crimson oversize
head trembles, bag-bauble swells.
But her bearded lady face
grins up. Let bedsprings jingle bells,

silverware fall from sleeve. Now for the un-
expected welcome grossness, big foot
in the right place, right thing in
the wrong, quick switch, sleight-of-limb. Now let

there be rejoicing in the sheets,
marrow jig and lingo tango.
Scratch every itch
openly, hair-strum, soprano banjo

riffs, pantomime skin-flute.
Shamelessly crucified upside
down, now! kiss the bottom of our heart.
Quick creaks the rockinghorse in bed,

bladder bangs, rebounds,
flam! paradiddle! rattamacue!

Lips' smacking sounds
all the muscles laugh in u-

nison, mad loins's uprush
slaps on heaven's face
the hoary whitewash-laden brush,
and descends to hell again with juddering grace.

SPECIAL ENVOI TO A FAIRY TALE

Prince, rise and face the court.

. . . trial
by a jury of your fears . . . pronounced *Guilty*.
. . . found that you malingered in the usual
chimney corners till well past puberty . . .
. . . a new man, after your two half-brothers
(heirs to the throne before you) . . . seven years
detained on a far-off imbecilic quest . . .
. . . that you heaped coals of rescue on their heads.
. . . further, that you exterminated . . . magical
"public nuisances" . . . (not classified before as . . .)
. . . ambiguous as life and twice as . . . but, their
activities seeming too colorful . . . control . . .
. . . bluetipped gryphon . . . last living specimen of . . .
the greater western witch . . . dwarf flower-dwarf . . .
. . . claws, teeth . . . for trophy . . . the rest to rot.
. . . disclaimed, nonetheless, . . . special strength or virtue
other than cunning, simplemindedness, or . . .
. . . approval of the peasantry . . . lower middle class . . .
. . . mainstays . . . in case of revolutionary . . .
. . . that you abducted certain princesses
from the Orc's castle, and not against their will
(three counts) . . . educated and married one of the said . . .
and only one . . . leaving to your brothers . . .
. . . dismiss the two counts of hemifratricide
. . . reasonable doubt . . . grounds of self-defense . . .
. . . no part of the function of this court
. . . pass judgment on . . . tactlessness of the
"shit-eating" (so described by witnesses)

grin . . . exhibited . . . during . . . this "justifiable" . . .
. . . refused no aid, from whatever source, low,
. . . improbable . . . that you committed altruism
. . . case of the little golden fish . . . broken,
the twig bled . . . every hope of . . . rich dividends.
. . . that in each and every . . . did so reap.

We find these

not to be extenuating circumstances.

. . . You stand condemned.
. . . utterly unfit . . . associate . . . real and
actual human beings . . .

. . . sentence of
this court . . . taken hence . . . a place of enchantment . . .
. . . happily ever . . . term of your natural . . .
And may . . . have mercy on . . . if any.

Sonia G. Gernes

THE CHICK'S REPLY TO THE OBSCENE CALLER

What you do not know, my friend,
is that I grew chirping to my present form
on a poultry farm. A fledgling myself,
I could clip wings, pluck banty breasts,
preside at mysteries of the chopping block.
I knew what chickens would be nesting.

There were also ducks and geese.
My mother taught me different tones of quack,
made sauce for the gander, dressed
out the drake. She knew
which rooster's comb to trim, who laid
the rubber eggs, what hen
would cackle loudest. Ah friend,
how she could have taught you
the possibilities
of being fowl.

David Posner

AFTER MOUNT ATHOS

I

The monk kneels, tucking in his words:
promises folded, love upon love, down the damp cell.
A woman with a boy's laugh calls him
from a dead village fifty years away.
He lies against night, his arms
Pinioned by moonlight
casting his shadow into sleep.
Rock flowers on his heart.

II

A man sees God in his time:
the first frost on the mountain straw,
a gutted window in a burnt field.
His cracked mouth eats the years
with black nails chewed to the quick.
As a scarecrow bunched where the wind's thick
rattles when thunder breaks,
he hears a Mind like the sudden silence of crows.

James Galvin

Two Poems

THE HERMITAGE

*No, I will not go in. Because if I go in
there is no one.*

—Antonio Porchia

As usual we enter through the eye.
Inside, evidence of a hasty departure:
First, the lantern full of snow.
Look into it closely.
It is crossed with animal tracks.
Who could read by this light?

Then the hourglass, recently turned.
In the top half, sand, rocks, yucca,
A whole desert emptying. Below,
Sand falls into high mountains,
On patches of snow
Which we mistake for clouds.

And here, in his haste,
He has left his memory, the glass drum,
Whose sound has traveled so far,
Yet is clear like the sound
Of geese flying overhead,
Year after year inside it.

And this cracked tumbler
Full of colored seeds, quite curious.
They produce a bitter taste and visions
Of living trees, buried underground,
Their trunks filled with earth,
Branches hung with black fruit and leaves.

And in this spoon, a drop of water
From inside the ear.
Even now it flows in the direction
Of the tongue. It is the liquid
Through which we sink, all of us,
In our various sizes.

THE SNOWDRIFT AS A WAVE

for my mother

Consider this hour, this death.
It leans toward me. We touch.
It has a fragrance like burning lace.

Pitch-wood in the furnace:
The damned making love,
The drowned in their ships, tapping with wrenches.

The winter I was eight,
Snow drifted up twenty feet around our house.
We left the truck and snowshoed home.
Father brought his mother, bundled on my sled.

Had you stopped to rest,
To lean your arm against a tree?
Were you always so unhappy?

A sail billowing under the coals.
A seed waking in its pod.

I tunneled into that drift, made rooms,
Listened to the blizzard
As it made more waves like mine.
I had seen the sea once.
It opened its waves like drawers,
Repeating the name of something misplaced.
It searched the same drawers again and again.
It sounded like that snowstorm
Giving itself away.

Consider the hour, the death,
A fugitive sea.

James J. McAuley

Two Poems

AN IRISH BULL

(An incongruous mixture of metaphors, often humorous, sometimes elusive or surreal, usually rendered in a political context; a low species of oratory, developed during the notorious filibusters of Parnell's party at Westminster in the 1880's.)

—for James Whitehead, aet. XL

Political passion is the poorest coin
We trade with. Slumped in our chairs at the screen like resigned
Brokers or navigators, we're the last,

We pretend, with the power to lend any value to words
So debased in the common exchange we feel them break
From their moorings in meaning when we bring them to meet

In metaphor, as if we could still make ends meet
Or tame any beast by such means. Words are coins
Thrown on a table to settle a debt, a sign
That nothing's settled.

In the news at last

Franco is dead. The smart man gives us the word:
"He was good for Spain." Then a commercial break.

Old Farrell, my countryman, twenty at the outbreak
Of that war when we both were born, went south to meet
A fascist slug that sent him home lame. No coin,
Spanish or Irish, could straighten his step, resigned
As he was in his hatred, his only hope to outlast
The fanatical, bickering, stomachy men whose word

Is good for Business, always a good word
With upstarts and fascists.

We've worked hard to break

Their code, to invest in a language that's meet;
But meanwhile the enemy we know has coined
A new name for himself, and left no sign
That's the least inimical, no word that lasts.

Rage in Beirut, Belfast, L.A. The last
News item, Dow-Jones bullish; then a word
From our sponsor. The doldrums, without a break
In sight. In the boredom of bad news we meet
Our worst enemy.

Better to toss a coin,
Tails for the fascists, sure to come up, and resign

Ourselves like Farrell to a bitterness designed
For our own good to bankrupt the spirit. The last
Word for them from the newsman leaves no word

Unturned: *conservative*. Euphemisms break
Into spume to show us where the breakers meet
The rocks we've sailed too close to.

But if the coin

Turns up the imperious head of coins, could we assign
Politics a lasting language, find the exact words?
Or when the beast breaks loose, turn back to meet it?

THE CONFESSION

To the grey rock below the silent park, in grey light,
The tide in its patient blind labor at last has yielded
The girl's white form. Her rigid nakedness

No longer could drive her lover to this murder,
Nor excite the youth who, finding her stretched there, is stiff
And cold with an unearthly fear, having discovered,

Once and for all, woman's mystery. With his coat
He has covered the trite flesh—a Shrovetide effigy
Cast into the sea at midnight, when sinners turn

Penitent. In the condominium nearby,
Shadows are wavering behind the venetian blinds;
Roused early from their beds by the forlorn

Siren, a few emerge on their verandahs
In bathrobes, hugging themselves, watching through opera-glasses
While the coroner kneels to touch her temple, shaking

His head, and the sky stealthily brightens. The detective
Is staring at the sea, having pulled the boy's coat away,
And they can see the black pubis on the wretched white

Branching form. Shivering, they vanish inside.
Her lover regards his hands as if another's
Clenched and unclenched before him, remembering

The low sound in her throat when her body opened
For love. He will never make the detective understand
How, cherishing her every breath, he surrendered
All that torment and desire to the quiet waves.

Thomas Brush

Three Poems

INSOMNIA

You live through another midnight
While the moon's dark
Surface slides like fog past the cold
Window. You wait like a child
For sleep, but only find your mouth
Filling with blue feathers, the air
Wet and tangled around you, the ceiling
Dark as breath. You think of snow
On the lawns of memory, the old mother of nightmares
Coming up the white path, dragging your name
Through the ruins of winter. You remember her
Bloodless face and a sky
Filled with chalk. By now sleep is nothing short
Of miraculous.

OPENING NIGHT

Through all the worst weather
In years, through hail in the lobbies, and rain
In the halls, April in the fog, and snow
In their empty pockets, they have been waiting
For a night like this.
And they will open it like a door and leave,
The cold streets and buildings
Falling behind them. They will walk with dignity,
With stars on their arms, turning heads
To the show that must go on, leading ladies

Of the evening, waving bottles at the crying ushers,
Until there's standing room
Only. They will roll like money
Down the aisles, kick off their shoes and light up
Cigar butts, take the caps off
The wine, and toast each other
For staying alive. And when the house lights
Dim, and they bow
From the waste of their lives,
The applause will be deafening.

LOVE POEM FOR NOTHING

Since this is no one's birthday
That I know there are no party
Favors hanging from the walls, no applause
For not dying, for having lived
This long, and there is nothing in the air
Except the warmth we exhale
Around us. And since the ground is dry
And there are no clouds
Filling with water or ice that we can see
Hovering darkly above us, let's say this is a celebration
For The-Dance-Of-March and for you
The-First-And-Last-Wife-Of-The-Endless-
Season. Let's say the flowers
In the center of the garden are bursting
For the song rising from the bright shaft
Of your throat. And let's just say your arms
And hands, and mouth that is smiling
Here beside me accept
This poem, without rhyme
Or reason, as you accept the morning
Gathering something beautiful, something
Undefinable, something made of nothing
But the blue rooms of the sky.

About Our Contributors

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- LAWRENCE KEARNEY was a fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Mass., last year. He is living in Amherst.
- JAROLD RAMSEY, on leave from the University of Rochester, received an Ingram Merrill grant last year and an NEA Creative Writing Fellowship this year. The Univ. of Washington Press will publish his *Coyote Was Going There* this spring.
- JAMES B. HALL, well-known novelist and short story writer, is teaching at the University of California at Santa Cruz.
- QUINTON DUVAL lives in Sacramento and has published widely.
- KURT HEINZELMAN, Williamstown, Mass., is co-editor of *The Poetry Miscellany*.
- GREG KUZMA edits *Pebble* and The Best Cellar Press; teaches at U. of Nebraska.
- CARL MAYFIELD publishes a poetry sheet called *The Margarine Maypole Orango-tang Express* in Albuquerque.
- JAMES GRABILL, Portland, Ore., is author of *One River* (Momentum Press).
- JILL KRILOV is a freshman at Bryn Mawr.
- SAMUEL GREEN, graduate student at Western Wash. State College, edits *Jawbone*.
- MARK HALPERIN is the 1976 winner of the International Poetry Forum's poetry prize. He teaches at Central Washington State College.
- EVE TRIEM, Seattle, published her latest book of poems in 1976 (Querencia Press).
- MARK JARMAN was last heard of in Iowa City.
- G. N. GABBARD lives in New Boston, Texas.
- SONIA GERNES teaches English at the University of Notre Dame.
- DAVID POSNER, one of four national winners in the Associated Writing Programs Series for Contemporary Poetry, 1976, teaches at Florida Tech in Orlando.
- JAMES GALVIN is on the staff of *The Iowa Review*.
- JAMES J. MCAULEY teaches at Eastern Wash. State College. His latest book, *After the Blizzard*, was published by the University of Missouri Press.
- THOMAS BRUSH is a high school English teacher living in Issaquah, Wash.

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