

# Poetry

NORTHWEST

AUTUMN 1970 / VOLUME XI / NUMBER 3 / ONE DOLLAR



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# POETRY NORTHWEST

VOLUME ELEVEN

NUMBER THREE

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AUTUMN 1970

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POETRY NORTHWEST

AUTUMN 1970

*Kenneth O. Hanson*      Six Poems

FIRST OF ALL

First of all it is necessary  
to find yourself a country  
—which is not easy.  
It takes much looking  
after which you must be lucky.  
There must be rocks and water  
and a sky that is willing  
to take itself for granted  
without being overbearing.  
There should be fresh fish  
in the harbor, fresh bread  
in the local stores.  
The people should know  
how to suffer without  
being unhappy, and how to be happy  
without feeling guilty. The men  
should be named Dimitrios  
Costa, John or Evangelos  
and all the women should be  
named Elena or Anthoula.  
The newspapers should always  
lie, which gives you something  
to think about. There should be  
great gods in the background

and on all the mountaintops.  
There should be lesser gods  
in the fields, and nymphs  
about all the cool fountains.  
The past should be always  
somewhere in the distance,  
not taken too seriously  
but there always giving perspective.  
The present should consist of the seven  
days of the week forever.  
The music should be broken-hearted  
without being self-indulgent.  
It should be difficult to sing.  
Even the birds in the trees should  
work for a dangerous living.  
When it rains there should be  
no doubt about it. The people  
should be hard to govern  
and not know how to queue up.  
They should come from the villages  
and go out to sea, and go back  
to the villages. There should be  
no word in their language  
for self-pity. They should be  
farmers and sailors, with only  
a few poets. The olive trees  
and the orange trees and the cypress  
will change your life, the rocks  
and the lies and the gods  
and the strict music. If you go there  
you should be prepared to leave  
at a moment's notice, knowing  
after all you have been somewhere.

## NEXT

One night in a bad mood  
alone in a foreign city  
*merákia* or worse  
a black mood, I went  
by cab to find a friend  
six times he was not home  
the neighbors had me in for drinks  
assuring me he will be here  
the taxi driver thinking  
drunk crazy American  
not *merákia* or worse  
and the last time I found him  
home, in bed with his wife  
who spoke no English but  
made me a cup of strong Greek coffee  
while I wept by the bed  
*merákia* or worse and  
he assured me his house was my house  
and in the world I had one friend  
went home by cab to bounce  
off the walls and finally  
to fall in my bed alone  
dreaming of conveyor belts and pulleys  
and all those moving parts  
in which I only  
gum up the works  
and woke to a Greek morning  
rigid and at attention  
neither saved nor damned  
neither dead nor alive  
wondering what next

## THE SIXTH FLEET IS IN

The sunlight glitters on the bay.  
The American sailors walk in schools  
like fish, with cameras  
and transistor radios.  
Their God is watching them.  
He knows all and it saddens him.  
They sparkle in their  
innocence and whites  
but they are anxious to sin  
and waiting to be taken in.  
And Greeks oblige  
and this is nothing new.  
Their God is older and he smiles.  
In hundreds of tavernas  
*paramythy* flows, in praise  
of ingenuity. In suburbs some  
19-year-old Helen is always doing it.  
The sunlight glitters on the bay  
and in their blood  
the Greeks know life is good  
today is today, and everywhere  
the hilarious face of God.

## THE GIFT

Some gifts have no history  
are late or early  
too soon discovered and  
too soon forgot.  
This eagle's foot  
the claws extended to a six-inch span  
the toes and ankle covered  
everywhere with beads of saffron  
mimicking the skin  
and the thigh  
where the feathers would begin  
topped with a pincushion  
tells some Northwest

Indian's devotion.  
Boxed or shelved  
it shared the Pike Place Market  
with old shoes and mushrooms  
fish and first editions  
and the sounds and smells  
of lives lived  
always close to the bone.  
Quinault or Quileute  
no doubt it bought  
some Indian a beer  
at the Britannia Tavern.  
But medicine is medicine  
and having lost three  
confrontations with myself today  
I praise the eye that picked  
this token from a varied store  
to honor no particular occasion.  
Unique, original  
it holds its own—  
good medicine within it.

## LETTER FROM A DISTANCE

Just at the opening  
of a long vacation your  
inscrutable letter came  
bearing a stamp  
of Delphi, stones  
in green, and from a cleft  
above the theater  
the fumes that gave  
the oracle the view  
of what the future held  
and paid the rent.

I break the seal  
unfold the page  
although I can't

make out your meaning  
and my oracle, the friend  
who reads the signs  
has gone to San Fran-  
cisco for the week.  
I know this time of year  
the sun is shining  
on the corridors of Rhodes  
and on the beach  
where Venus rose.  
Is this the news?

Or will the syllables  
the genitive, the dative  
in a careful script  
disclose the usual  
number of disasters  
only money cures?  
Last time you wrote you said  
"I like you very much.  
My heart is like a rag,  
I do not understand."  
And I was moved until  
my oracle revealed  
it's just a Greek expression.

Still, stubbornly I choose  
to think it was the truth  
although I know the Greeks  
made patsies of the Persians  
for their doctrine of shoot  
straight and tell the truth.  
Meanwhile the past  
remains between the lines.  
The future is obscure.  
There's no one here  
to read the signs. *Yásoo*  
Evangelos. I'm in good health  
I hope you are the same.

## END OF THE MONTH REPORT

I have washed the windows  
I have signed the checks  
I have arranged the books  
according to the six principles  
in my head  
I have found my poems  
in a new anthology  
cheek by jowl  
with Robert Lowell  
I have taken this into account  
I have bought the beer for today  
I have re-read the material  
on the Industrial Revolution for Monday  
I have read the student papers  
I am pledged to read  
I have put my life in order  
Why then do the bits and pieces  
of another landscape  
fragments of a great despair  
gather in a sidestreet  
with obscene gestures  
chanting fuck your order  
long live doubt  
long live the *paramythy* of the heart  
the storm and stress  
of the bounced check  
the pure disinclination  
of the who knows what  
the shipwreck always  
of the uncertainty at the door  
long live the domestic  
tranquility of chaos  
the rocks and water  
of negative capability  
the raw discrimination  
of the checks and balances  
O burn the papers, put the books

again in the damp basement  
Christopher Smart molding  
alongside the Cat Man of Katmandu  
cheek by jowl with Lady Winchelsea  
O to be merely clever  
like the students of Salonika  
who believe in nothing but themselves  
or their uncles, which in this case  
is something to believe in  
O to have antecedents  
without thinking them up  
to have only  
lies to contend with  
the indiscriminate sun  
in a plastic bag and the yellow wine  
more clear than a washed window  
week in and week out.

*Jack Tootell*

Three Poems

YOU WILL RIDE EARTH

You will ride earth as you did before,  
you unincreased in stature, the land  
as mountainous, as enormous as before,  
the ink-blue sea as empty of sails, of smoke.  
Winter will not wait for you, nor spring hurry  
then, although you may have cunningly threaded  
the needle's eye with a ponderous cable;  
although you may have turned a snowflake inside out  
with a red-hot poker for scalpel.

. . . Even though you turned time backward,  
decomposing, for instance, beef stew into its elements,  
various unripe vegetables and a sullen steer.  
Earth is the same blunt pedestal, even though  
your efforts should be successful in teaching Faith  
to land-grant college student bodies.

Yet something of day will be changed, and of night,  
of work, of love, of begetting;  
water and fire will obey you, and wild animals.  
Rivers will flow to your feet, asking your blessing,  
the buried diamond speak, saying, "Here I am,"  
the intense stars carry messages for you,  
and carrots and chard flourish in your garden.

It is true that explanation, which is difficult  
already, may be further diminished  
to jungle drums, smoke signals, sign language.  
Such disability is secondary. Do not grieve.  
Nothing is new, absolutely nothing is new  
but the tension to be faithful to the mystery  
and, performing the experiment, to become the experiment;  
then you will ride earth as you did before,  
still apparently little in its vastness.

ELEGY FOR DIMINISHED THINGS

At this late hour a brief elegiac word  
and threnody, a single tear on the cheek  
and a crude chord on my homemade harp  
for disappeared and vanished things  
and for all dwindled and diminished things:

For the Chaldean lion, splendid-carved in Ur,  
and the five-legged bull vast as a house  
who, shrunken, made a British unicorn;  
and for the Irish fairies, in their prime  
eight, nine feet tall and thundering in the air.

And farther gone in time, the mammoth with  
the wildly sprouted ivory spears,  
direwolf, cave bear, cat with sabre fangs,  
the giant elk, the European moose, the auroch,  
the giant beaver of the interglacial rains.

Here on the mid-American subcontinent  
where Manitou sat grand within the wreaths  
of his Indian summer peace-pipe, the scarlet oak  
and maple embers drifting down the universal haze  
—no more. No more the Manitou  
at the prairie's edge in Illinois, seeing  
the wide Lakes outstretched northward, or Missouri  
and Ohio gathering for the distant Gulf.

Lightened, dispersed like atmospheres,  
the Iroquois, the Cherokee, the Crow,  
Nez Perce, Pawnee, Navajo, Puyallup,  
themselves forgotten, the Manitou forgotten,  
his sombre tribes marooned on desert buttes,  
thin Indians in alien blue jeans.

#### DISMAY OF THE GUARD

Perfectly lined in steel, the cellblock  
with the light bulbs deadly straight  
closes its perspective lines far off.  
All is asleep, but the dreams  
of the men quarrel in the air  
smelling of disinfectant and men.  
The guard yawns at his station.

She enters, lissome, in a gown  
of spring green, and touches the locks.  
The metal gives to her fingertips.  
Swiftly, lightly, noiselessly  
floating she moves, touches, touches.  
The men's dreams seize and arouse them,  
they climb or tumble out of sleep,  
rise heavily to their feet, and before them  
the bars give way like illusions.

She passes, the surpassing virgin,  
a green flame flickering.

Questions break out, exclamations.  
The dreams shatter like glass.  
The guard yells into his telephone  
but the line is dead. All the men  
dumfounded, praying curses, crowd outward.  
All the doors are wide and the walls down.  
No alarm rings. All the men  
stream out over the countryside  
shivering in the night, to cry aloud,  
"Where is she? Where has she gone?"

*A. Poulin, Jr.*

Two Poems

#### IN THE BEGINNING

As if called by a voice  
inhabiting the sun  
crouching on a hilltop  
and brooding on the suburbs,  
they come from behind  
the grey, loose bark  
of trees, beneath a stone;  
they rise from the bone  
and flesh of cattle  
steaming in the fields  
and alleys; they come  
from the folds and seams  
of our damp clothes, and  
from the roots of our hair.  
They come from nowhere.

This morning the space  
outside our window  
filled with a universe  
of seeds. Tonight whole  
swarms of newborn insects

gather into galaxies  
trembling blue and green,  
inheriting the air.

And worms are stirring  
beneath our soles,  
rising to be crowned  
princes of the earth.

#### FISH

The morning liquefies.  
I take one step, spring up,  
and I am swimming  
above branches of coral.  
I breathe water. Delicate  
fish dart through my eyes.  
Gold and black, they are  
angels. Inside my skull,  
nesting in my lungs,  
they sing shrill, barbarous  
arias, chorals of kyries  
at some inhuman pitch.  
They are shattering my bones.

But nothing, nothing weighs  
me down, not even the drought  
of darkness sweeping across  
the states toward Asia.  
Men flicker like matches.  
Whole cities are burning.  
The Mississippi's brown  
with blood. Still I am rising  
higher and higher. Angels  
are winging me toward  
planets pulsing like pearls,  
toward space infested with sharks.

*Thomas James*

Two Poems

#### FOXGLOVES IN THE DAWN

Foxgloves are stiff with the hoarfrost.  
Each morning I watch tiny paws  
Wag in sheer coats of rust,

Welcome, outlasting a few untidy days.  
I watch them through my windowslats,  
I watch them crystallize,

Thickening to the color of quartz  
In the steel ambush of mornings,  
In the sharp citron lights.

Now they are little tongues  
Rattling the oak-ribbed arbor, numb,  
Outspoken as starlings.

One dry leaf deserts the pear limb.  
Fox tongues are browning. I confront a sky  
Uninteresting as worn denim.

On the last morning, I will rise early.  
I will find the horse, fleshless in the dull  
White hoarfrost, scraped stone-gray.

I will not mind the absence of a saddle,  
The fox tongues unhinging themselves. I will mount,  
Not looking back at all,

And lose myself, climbing the weedy hill,  
Steering the furious dark head, bent  
Into the milkweed's shell.

## WHAT I KNOW

1

The morning glories decide to open—  
Infection is running up my body  
Like tiny flowers, each on its separate string.

2

Left out in a cold light,  
These flowers are blue and watery,  
The color of an eye all over.

3

They unwrap their delicate skin  
Against the flaky paint of this old wall.  
Here is an ancient itch.

4

The skin of a hand has such thin veins!  
Under the torn mouths of the arbor  
My heart stands up in its own wreckage.

*Mel Takahara*

## NOVEMBER'S LESSON

1

"It's a way to go," I say. "Shift fast and trip  
a notch." Up. Down. Subtle, subtle;  
settle to a fine focus: bastard amber.  
Now, stay. "I dare you to love," I say  
and make you. Sit. Careful. Petulant. Petulant  
membranes slip into focus and out and into  
your turning. Sit careful. Believe, I come caring. Intent  
on focus, I slip, catching on grooves. Intent  
on shifting, I sit, loving the hue your face  
assumes. This clarity quivers me cold. November

says: This warmth is amber, bastard and brittle.  
Quiver into focus, Love. These edges slip.

2

Dark's the flood that draws  
headward flown from deep  
as drawn breath

my brawny  
pump's primed so sleeping  
cannot drown the paced  
tides and waking

weeps.  
The dawn's full: your face  
grown deeper

richer  
warmer than this light I taste  
rising.

Now. Now, the latches  
to the doors

all are sprung.  
Through leaves, through branches  
high, higher

dispersing  
the common, a desperate run  
of sparrows stalks this morning  
burnt light

and suns  
snap in light-frames winged  
burst to burst

through honey  
colored air

settling  
a moment caught tight  
now slivering the air

lifting  
loose

they soar from sight  
roaring  
their loss roaring.

How crossing fields of fine pahoehoe lava,  
 blue-green flakes like scaling paint,  
 spread: lichen to feast on dark basalt  
 in sunlight. Patches of rock sucked brown  
 and brittle, crunch: the sound of snow giving.  
 Here are faults. Open. Drawn black crevices  
 inhaling for ages the silt of ash and pumice.  
 The way is a leap from edge to slipped edge.  
 "Leap," says salt in the wind from sea, "from flow  
 to flow."

Nothing's lost here.

Forms, memorized by lava, tell clearly  
 of November when light slivered earth and whole  
 days were fractured, spilling marrow in their rage.  
 A slope of agony, hardened to grooved surfaces,  
 can be walked. The stone furnaces  
 contain amber light.

Now, my way's the stone's  
 way to the shore,  
 face to the crusting salt,  
 to an edge where ocean slips,  
 shows a plainer  
 life, packed on bright shalestone.  
 Quivering.

*John Judson*

24 DECEMBER

from DIARY OF A LONE COLD

For those with empirical  
 experience of altitude, twice  
 the distance between

the bottom and the middle  
 is up. It is  
 the morning before

Christmas. Tonight we  
 will work late,  
 singing softly to

ourselves, having a drink  
 or two, thinking back  
 to the thirties and

before, to virgin birth,  
 while outside the window,  
 snow and the landscape's

clarity will keep us  
 this American distance  
 from each other, as

alien as the Burlington's  
 1:15 freight, me-  
 andering down the valley

of the Father of the Waters,  
 hauling our northern  
 currents south,

so that in imagination,  
 at least, we can  
 meet the sea,

dropping our mortgages, our  
 time, our flesh  
 to face its blue

mystery, as hungry fishermen  
 would unfold their nets,  
 hoping to gather

in one bright and tightened  
 string, a standard  
 measure of ourselves.

*Paul Anderson*

WISCONSIN WENT DEEPER THAN CHINA

"Man is a weed in those regions."  
—De Quincey, *Confessions*

Fishing till midnight below  
the dam in back of the Cosmo Theater,  
we impaled nightcrawlers on Eagle Claw hooks,  
heaved them on hand lines into the dark water,  
waited for the abrasive ticking  
felt in the fingers, message of mouths at work  
from deep in the weedy water

Levis slick with catfish slime,  
we walked home on the deserted tracks with ties  
beneath our sneakers squishing the river out  
or balanced along one moon-bright rail  
parallel with our fish-heavy  
happiness, lugging a soaked gunnysack of catfish . . .  
most of them would live till skinning time  
when we peeled their black skins  
back to the finality of our own flesh . . .

then spilled our excess, easy as rain  
into dreams of water wider than the mind  
breeding weed beds infested with whiskered fish  
yellow Buddha-bellies swelling, swarming overhead . . .

now, again, inscrutable as cats or khans  
drilled in wisdom deeper than death  
they mass themselves in the mourning  
hours, swarming past my streaming hair . . .  
like hordes in movies and history books  
coming, coming eyes flashing like sabres aimed  
in a war that is a dream  
that is a war that leaks  
and drips and lasts . . .

does such a memory, fastened  
to the mouths of dreams, come ticking  
at midnight because my brother lies  
among the rice field leeches at Dak To . . .  
will his Buddha-fish bloat . . .  
or brains blossom like bombs  
widening, coming coming still  
gaping into the silence of an old age

*David Galler*

THE MOUNTAINEERS

*For Tony and Rhona*

In warm weather, they can be seen  
descending with makeshift carts  
to sell the valley people stone  
to repair their houses,  
pave streets,  
or erect dividing walls  
in delicate, good taste;  
wood for the coming winter's fires;  
homely fruits,  
which in their preserved state  
are held as luxuries.  
Now, what the valley dwellers see  
is that these men are coarse:  
many the maiden aunt  
who in her youth  
was rumored to have paled,  
panels her lintel  
with wood from the timber line;  
many the mountaineer  
who, having sold his goods,  
gruffly accepted from his host a drink,

got drunk and stayed,  
and, toasts later, announced  
his wish to buy in town,  
but, mortgage signed,  
vanished, never to pay.  
And, to the valley dwellers' dismay,  
their own sons  
have traditionally been prone  
to rise of a summer's night,  
secretly part the grain,  
fare up the rocky slopes.  
In dead of winter,  
laid by a mountain arm  
before their fathers' fires,  
hearing a sermon  
on how valleys extend beyond each peak,  
these sons have revived  
between faintings to groan:  
*The heights, the heights!*  
Many a time,  
a man has stood alone  
with his son's rescuer  
to see him shrug.  
Well may he frown:  
year after year,  
in wizened age  
a mountaineer may die;  
the valley people will bear his body to rest  
near those of their own,  
outside the town,  
burial past what he could pay;  
and, of his kin,  
never has one been known  
to object  
in any way.

*Arthur Oberg*

SUNDAYS

We visited the dead. Sunday meant  
Pruning hedge, stooping to plant  
And rip out what had failed in an

Eastern winter. As a child, I knew  
Death signaled a new grave, a plot  
We would drive for miles to keep,

Another stone hauled from the mason's  
Yard, its cost divided among the  
Remaining children. Within two

Years, my four grandparents died,  
Lowered to ground used to shovel  
And pick, the breakage of love.

In my dreams, I was keeper of  
The flowers, promised a favorite  
Aunt flowers, city blocks of them,

When she died. She was young, and  
She laughed. After one Valentine  
Dance, she exhausted her life in

A garage, removing shoes and glasses,  
A martyr for part of our Sunday  
Love. As Sunday child, I guessed

Her wishes for what they were,  
All your faces and laughter.  
I give you back to earth again.

There is no ear here for what you ask,  
Things obscene, austere, impossible  
As air. And I had thought to be your keeper.

*Thomas Brush*

WALKING WITH WHALES

It's been so long since day has passed  
The dark spilling slowly to the ground  
And sticking, the light clean as bone  
Turning black and sky and breaking off  
At the ends of my eyes that I dream  
Of walking with whales. To balance

On skin as wide and heavy as night  
Is to taste the wind and sea itself  
Holding a dorsal fin twenty feet high  
The slant of sight wrapped around it  
Like love, the blow opening out streams  
As old as blood and to wish to be sewn  
To her side like Ahab and dance  
Dance with the sea.

*Felix Pollak*

READING POETRY TO FRIENDS

To get unravelled in private  
is bad enough, but to re-enact  
the unravelling in semi-public  
(which even professional strippers find  
more public than a public stage) is plain  
indecent. Yet what is poetry but this un-  
ravelling into arty patterns? Here I am,  
exhibitionist of integrity, honest fraud,  
peeling off to an orchestra of peephole  
silence (embarrassed too?) and proudly  
ashamed acknowledge the applause as I step,  
compulsive dress rehearsal of death,  
out of my coffin, to take a bow.

*Sandra M. Gilbert*

from THINGPOEMS

TYPEWRITER

Your fingers oppress me  
like ten insoluble problems.  
I count and click but I will never  
figure you out.

SALAMI

I am not as big  
as I smell.

WINDOW

How much longer shall I intervene  
between you and darkness?  
I am holding the sky up  
with these panes!

CIRCLE

Extension  
is always a  
digression.

FACE

I precede you like a curse.  
No matter what you do  
I will get worse.

*Joyce Carol Oates*

IRIS INTO EYE

the spheres are whirling without sound inside  
spheres  
deft as ivory  
tails of vertebrae interlock  
hard as ivory and ice  
it is a miniature sun frozen hollow

tails like the finest bodies  
of fossils  
are locked together  
beneath the grainy surface of skin  
as the surfaces circle their surfaces

a ball of air circling itself  
slicing the air slowly in its circling

daylight emerges as a small hole  
an eye that achieves an iris  
the collapsible space begins to breathe  
the vertebrae lengthen into life

this sunless ether is silent  
in every dimension  
the sphere turns  
I make my way up through layers of old bone  
the ivory fossils of old blood  
clenched fists of babies softened and unborn

coils are revolving  
the hot fluorescent center of the globe vibrates  
the speechless muscle of the brain spins slowly  
slicing the air  
continents shaping like raised welts  
on the skin

the space between the ribs glows iridescent  
warm as the most intimate mucus  
of the soul

the eye widens  
the iris becomes an eye  
intestines shape themselves fine as silk  
I make my way up through marrow  
through my own heavy blood  
my eyes eager as thumbs  
entering my own history like a tear  
balanced on the outermost edge  
of the eyelid

*Jarold Ramsey*

A CEREMONY OF FALLING

Out here taking the edge I let  
Old Faithful the wind play its one trick  
With my hat, catching it thrown into space  
Floating stalling hurling it high  
Back over and safe to flat ground.  
Three buzzards swing in for a look.  
Well buzzards, well hat, faith and good flying!  
But I have come to the cliffs  
For a lesson in falling.

Closer, closer, Old Surefoot,  
The world is nearly behind. A killer  
Could nudge me now right over.  
My tiny shadow below waves back like a lover  
Vague on a bed of unthinkable scree.  
Out of its depth as always my heart  
Says *Fall down fall down and worship*  
But my hands God bless them my ignorant hands

Scrape on a teetering boulder and wrench it free.  
Two hundred pounds of basalt like an idol,  
This one human shove in a million years and it goes—

The long drop unseen  
The mind letting go in delight  
In its own heaven of falling  
Through the wind not yet now crash  
On a ledge rock speech vaulting out huge  
And entire fire and brimstone spinning  
Faster and faster a world set free  
My world going down!

All around on the thunderous rimrock now  
Wild men are rolling big stones to the edge  
In the wind we are brothers  
We chant the fall of each stone over  
*Hoya Hoya*  
If someone real ran out below wide eyes  
White hands help up  
We would not stop.

*William Zander*

#### A FAREWELL TO SURREALISM

*There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure. . . . This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown.*  
—Freud

1  
I have come to the place of knots,  
like a donkey. Knots that coil and stretch,  
dip into heat and hold, like lungs,  
enormous roots, whistling lianas,  
wires and veins, all the ineffable  
rags of the poor. Knots like eyeballs,  
sistrums, tits and umbrellas. Slowly,  
the lines stretch out like waves on a far

horizon. Sand. Blood. Rocks  
of course stand around like a pen.  
They laugh at my underpants.

2

I go through the window,  
gently, nothing is shattered,  
fall against the porch post,  
something is buzzing, furniture  
is black, I'm twisting  
my face to wake up, trip over  
the coffee table and float  
facedown to the floor.

3

Dreams are weird. God, who gives them,  
gentle as sharks, fierce as bluegills,  
says: I am. I lie around  
with my antenna up, watching  
the flickering screen. What does it mean?  
I read the footnotes. Freud and Jung  
give each other the finger. Bly  
sits in his wig and hose, like Johnson.  
I sniff my weirdness like a dog.

"TRANSLUCENT ANGEL—FIRE INSIDE!"

I tell my friends. "A GHOST LIKE THE MILKY WAY AROUND MY  
HEAD AND NOISE LIKE BOMBERS!"

They love me.

Smile and bring me wine. I pass out  
on their couch. My head is a stone.  
Bladder fills by itself. Heart grows mossy.  
Mouth is sealed with mortar.

Still,  
at some ungodly hour,  
two little girls  
jump on me;  
I rise  
through the weeds  
and hug them.

## MERRILL LYNCH, PIERCE, FENNER, &amp; HOFFMAN

Boys it's good to see you  
 glad to have you back  
 didn't know you left or  
 that I was ever here  
 haven't changed your clothes  
 have you found the place  
 alright we'd better adjourn  
 or we'll never get started  
 how long has it been since  
 we burned our bank books  
 and got our new telephone  
 should be here any minute  
 Please put your feet up  
 make yourselves anywhere don't  
 spend everything on food  
 is this a meeting or is some  
 one knitting gentlemen should  
 n't have to diet or take  
 their coats off too soon it'  
 s good to see you going hope  
 you never get there hurry  
 back but Please don't waste  
 my dime I'll be smoking every  
 cigar I get when I'm skating  
 up & down this classy table

## THE LAST WORLD'S FAIR

Sometimes  
 i feel like a poet  
 in a world of Platos  
 or a radio in the tenth century  
 What it must be like  
 to be a small town suicide

spinning on a turntable  
 that is not attached to a speaker  
 Wrung through a typewriter  
 that has no ribbon  
 being ground into a helpless food

How it feels to rain  
 into hidden reservoirs  
 bloating the city & its sky  
 with badly needed shoes  
 To storm the nearest desert  
 keeping my books in the fridge  
 the rest of my life

I taste the weather for seed  
 breathing louder  
 than the warm tractors  
 which follow my bed  
 Whirling in the manner  
 that holds me up thinking not  
 that i'm blind but that i  
 haven't gotten used to the dark yet

*Stanley Plumly*

## Two Poems

## THE FEEL OF A FACE

We have looked at each other like passengers—  
 always in the hallways in back of the eyes

where the drift begins  
 (the small rooms dreaming

of taking up space).  
 We have watched each

other trying to think through  
 the mirror of a moving window

as the train  
finally tunes like a wire in the country.

We have looked until the eyes  
hurt with faces

and the body sat as still  
as an Indian at prayer.

We have watched  
the flesh dough up with lies.

Nothing is happening  
that we've not studied here.

We could be falling through water,  
for instance, looking at each other.

#### ANGST

It comes down from the top of the head  
like an air too great for gravity.  
And it seems to fall everywhere,  
an infinite debris,  
through your whole body.

Sometimes it accumulates so heavily  
your feet feel like bodies  
all by themselves.  
Or at the fingertips  
where it knots, then finally drops off,

and you can't remember  
having ever touched anything.  
For whole weeks you carry  
it around, a perpetuity  
of falling and settling, a dust.

You describe it as a kind of mist,  
as if you held a body of water  
inside you, and above that,  
the cumulus of a brain.  
Then one day it rises,

like a vapor beginning to realize  
the limits of form. Until your eyes,  
like clichés of what eyes do,  
cloud up,  
breathe back at the source.

*Morton D. Paley*

Two Poems

#### ECOLOGY POEM

Lampreys moving into Lake Erie  
have eaten everything, even the chemicals.

The redwoods were rounded up and put  
on reservations. A few maimed veterans

stand on their lunar battlefields and doze  
wistfully through parasitical long moss.

Where gun-gray runways spike our marshes, shoals  
of starlings fluster the great nacelles;

cormorants flap in the neap off Santa Barbara,  
and grinning whales, *les fruits de mer*, are dumped

from wide-load trucks. In the slippage of our heartstreams  
an ashy sediment grows. The hunter reaches the brained baby seal.

## HEROES

We have seen them entering the sun  
and others entering black suns inside them,  
heroes emerging from all that turbulence with  
a metaphor or a monster's severed head.

The muscular boy tosses his shield at the sun,  
for heroes are lucky—Death's playful favorites;  
the woeful-jowled monster worrying Andromeda knows  
he hasn't a chance against Perseus.

Others, descending, thridding the passages of  
the mansioned heart, discover that labyrinth grows  
explicit as a golden bull whose power  
sprouts from your fingertips, a maizy palm.

*James Crenner*

Three Poems

## MORNING PRAYER TO YEATS

Most of the night  
I read *A Vision*.

And it came clear!

I drifted upwards  
in my body, and  
bumped along  
the ceiling of my skull,  
knowing now  
that there were worse things  
than being a man.

Now here I lay, mid-morning,  
heavy in my sad  
bed, hungover from so much  
delight, and still a man—  
what could be worse?

Screw matters  
of life and death, Yeats.  
Let us be  
turned loose  
among preschool children,  
where we can make  
pictures of no  
consequence,  
and converse quietly  
in a low gibberish.

## APPLICATION BLANK

*Experience:*  
Once I saw my own  
hand pointing  
something out. Once  
I quit looking  
for everything I had  
once looked for.

*Awards:*  
Honorary climax  
after climax after climax.  
Curator of the part  
of my life that is over  
and done with.

*Vocational Plans:*  
I hope to grow  
very old in your  
service—unless Jesus  
turns up again,  
or my wife finds  
work, or I get  
my megatheric  
unspeakable Rosebud.

## TO SUICIDE

You are beautiful now,  
sleeping by first light.  
But—forgive me—after  
all I put you through  
in the dark, I simply  
cannot stay to face you,  
your pleas, recriminations.

*Michael S. Harper*

## ON THE INSIDE: VISION AS WONDER

The inner life is rich with blue  
rocks chiselled in running water,  
the minerals & salts intact;  
we putty out the slick indentures  
with homemade paste & an oil can;  
the poems shine through with each  
buffing as black men "x" in their  
missing names, or a buffalo herd  
stampedes over a butte without sound.

We get all this down in ink:  
what to do about blacks  
costs billions of dollars;  
we educate & reeducate ourselves,  
in weaponry & ballistics  
as the polls come in.

In the space for our marks  
the pen picks up the count  
in decimals on the wires.  
We get all this down in ink:

*William Keep*

## SICK OF THE STOMACH FLU, I EAT UP THE NEWS

*August 15, 1967: Grizzlies kill two girls in Glacier Park.  
"Not where he eats, but where 'a is eaten."—Hamlet*

At breakfast, queasy, scanning the morning news  
Cold as lumped sausage fat, myself stalked  
By the march of events, I remember once when I whistled  
Up toward stunt-pine meadows like a motherless fawn  
To lure a buck to my gun, how a grizzly came:  
Lumbering, the great, light-pointed, mountainous  
Slope of his shoulder, the little pig eyes  
Neither curious, biblical nor uncertain,  
Solid as nickels in the comfortable, U.S. Grade-A fat  
Of the pig-face—*Ursus horribilis*,  
Chief customer of permanently panic-struck  
Chain stores featuring fresh venison, berries, roots  
(Fifty-seven varieties), moles, voles, shrews,  
Mice, sick rabbits, salmon, fathers, sons,  
—Daughters wrapped still in wet spring fur. Humped.  
Who never meant no harm, though we believe, with General Foods,  
All life to be alive equally until slaughtered,  
Until our lungs flap, our thighs go hollow in flight  
Among fog, branches, stones, bombcraters, lying mouths  
While trying to take hold of what  
Persistently takes hold of us  
Our too-thin wrists are broken by running water.  
We are, the paper says, without benefit of Mark Trail,  
Most dangerous mammal on the North American continent  
Constricted now to the cries those girls cried smally  
Toward faces, fires, the all-living affluence,  
Richly starred, of that lovely autumnal Montana night  
When they were kissed, hugged, moaned and died.  
Smokey guns-and-butter smacks his lips  
Because even in death his hair's electrical:  
Tipped, a fat land's where he feeds until he falls.

T. Alan Broughton

NIGHTCRAWLERS

Baited by the night,  
the black ground's meat,  
they rise at dark  
across the close-cropped lawn  
to stretch the long  
wet muscle of their flesh.  
The darker the sky  
the more incautious  
is their reach  
but never do they release  
that one fixed end  
or know untethered stretching  
tip to tip.  
If their eyeless search  
is true, they catch  
the reaching taper  
of a neighbor worm  
and let their wet  
circumferences combine.  
Startled by moonlight  
and parted clouds,  
the least earth quivers  
and they retreat,  
contracting to their single state.  
Random couplings done  
they coil to wait  
the sun's descent,  
leaving the surface ground  
to tortuous passage of snails,  
the seagull's laughter,  
carrion and shrill.

Ken Smith

CRYING WOMAN

She is making her sounds, the ones for everyone else.  
She goes *cri-cri* like a walking bird and then  
sounds of a big bird alert on the rocks.  
Crying woman makes the sound of a baby about to be fed.  
This one is the sound of someone alone a long time,  
the sound of someone cast out at sea, the sounds  
of wreckers guiding a boat to their reef,  
of the ship's crew who are drowning  
and the indignations of those who tell this years after.  
This one is from the mountains, she makes big sounds  
full of cloud and rain, she begins her infinity.  
This one cries Mother, thinking of her people.  
When she thinks of the south she sings  
like someone asleep in the sun all day.  
This one the otter. This one the gazelle  
running for love of running. And this one  
who is quiet a long time is a gull  
pitching out from the cliff between land and sea  
till she becomes the air she swings on. This one  
begins shouting straight off and never stops,  
a devourer that wants everything at once.  
This one is creeping through grasses to ambush,  
and at last she's a spilled song  
finishing somewhere into the roofbeams.  
Silence is hers, she makes that  
when she thinks of another, when through her sleep  
her children are running too near the water.  
The cry of an animal kicked awake to its guard,  
noises of something lost in the thicket, she croons  
the names of old lovers dead in the wars.  
Some sounds come from nowhere, she wants  
a man who lives on the moon's back, she wants  
to die if she does for eternity what she does now.  
The first awake in the camp, she's about

seeking warmth, she goes out of her self's house.  
She's the first creature to crawl out of the sea.  
She makes all sounds, I don't know if she's one or many.  
If ever she puts them together at once I shall drown  
and drift with her in the sea off Northumberland,  
crying *forever* forever, awake to the last star

G. N. Gabbard

Two Poems

APRIL 1521 AS APRIL 1968

So there stands Martin Luther  
at Worms, in a plain black friar's  
robe, with the little clear immovable eyes,  
and big bones sticking out  
under all the skin of his face like  
that great bump of a crown  
bulging through the tonsure—  
not much like the Imperialists  
or the ascetic Monsignors  
or all those meerschaum-faced  
steelplated Spanish soldiers—  
he stands: because he can no other,

when a bang like the wrath of God  
's thunderbolt out of a sky  
quite clear blue, bright whitelight  
(this is assuming a  
more advanced weapons technology  
than could have been the case),  
knocks him down all red  
on black. The Spanish soldiers  
and Germans run, collide  
with the shafts of each other's  
ceremonial halberds,  
and curse their feet, slipping in blood.

Who was it? Oh some anonymous  
jangler with a harquebus  
(for the Pope had already long since put his curse  
on crossbows). He got clean  
away, down the Rhine via barge one  
dark night and over the sea  
down to Spain, where he spent  
the rest of his natural days  
running a Jesuit front,  
a smugglers' bar in Cadiz,  
drawing an annual rent  
from a well-concealed European source.

It was an expensive funeral  
(he wasn't excommunicated  
at that time). Bishops came with solemn faces,  
and crowned heads too with solemn  
faces. Giovanni de' Medici came  
to make a personal appearance.  
And after the requiem,  
he speaks about what a shock  
and loss this is to Christendom—  
though the man was less than perfect  
(the bishops yawn and hum),  
or he would have been more than mortal.

Then the peasants all come rushing  
in flocks to the burial, herded  
into some order by morioned Spanish lancers  
who hold swords flat and beat  
at bare heads. But when, still orderly,  
they mass-march up the street  
to the cathedral, where  
they present their demands  
turned by the recent murder  
into uncertain questions,  
bland faces under miters  
answer: "Reformation? What Reformation?"

## REASON FOR A PALINODE

He took the Sirens for muses, slipping past  
That fabulous rib-encircled isle of theirs  
With deafened oars, himself tied to the mast,  
All wax carefully reamed from his open ears.  
After which, he was never entirely sane,  
But his most manic gibber ran in rime.

Sailing around the isle a second time  
In hopes of renovating his inspiration,  
He found that singing altogether tame.  
He fidgeted in his ropes, said: "I've heard  
All this before," yawned, and looked bored.

*Greg Kuzma*

## GOOD NEWS

1  
Good news. You've arrived  
with your eyes like just snuffed candles.  
Had you come sooner  
I might have been  
up to my elbows in radishes.  
Here. Eat one. Feel its woolly cool.

2  
Good news. I've slept.  
I slept in timber tall  
as our lust.  
I slept with gorgeous beaches  
and then I came back.  
Brush this sand map  
from my shoulder.

3

Good news. Sorrow has  
had a blowout. It  
will never reach you,  
the night so black and wet.  
Hug this new harmless curve  
till darkness opens on the oyster  
of daylight.

4

Good news. The bicycle that  
was stolen that bore your  
initials is back with  
the presents of your ninth  
tenth and eleventh birthdays.  
Do not fear.  
The days of your life  
stretch behind you  
complete again—  
like a long open road.

5

Good news. The letter  
this morning contained no  
untrained misery.  
The closing was courteous  
as a kite.  
There was no libel in  
the adjectives.  
And it was from you  
whom I miss.

6

Good news. We worship  
together at last at the spigot.  
This water was once part of  
Africa. Or sweat off a llama's

bedroom fur.  
We drink and are warm  
and jungly.

7

Good news. The weather  
this morning, blank and  
indifferent, is pictured  
at last on my Kodak.  
I leave it parked  
on a park bench  
for someone to steal.

8

Good news. Good news.  
You were really terrific.  
Your bread was terrific.  
The joke you told,  
the pots and pans collapsing  
afterwards,  
spelling out such Good News  
on the floor.

*Jack Matthews*

Two Poems

#### THE BICYCLE

So young this infant someone's daughter  
toddles into the shining spokes  
like sunrays sucking bright rainwater  
and with a detonating clatter  
pulls the bicycle down upon her  
dismaying herself with sudden screams  
and then the thing is suddenly lover  
and penetrates her uncertain dreams  
in which each thing becomes another  
and subsiding in the insistent hoax

she awakes to think she is a mother  
which dream has vanished and now  
it seems

that she is past and turning under  
the revolving wheel of earth and soaks  
her wrists and hair in the falling water  
of an infinite rain our God the Father  
who turns the clock around again  
and all her life dries still like rhyme

#### BULLETIN

The news is out:  
A passionate neglect  
has cast this violent day.  
The engine of the cities  
roars and misses.  
Warm air in the late spring  
abrades the skin  
with hot whisper of frostbite.  
Hypnotized fish  
surviving in the garbage water  
tap their ceiling of gas  
with tentative kisses,  
and blow diminishing rings.  
No apotheosis here.  
Only this subtle Armageddon  
of orange days and bottle-green nights.  
Bronze armies are waiting,  
haloed and wrathful by the dead trees.  
Only the tick of cinder  
on the skin,  
and only the electric hum  
in the empty streets.

## LETTER TO THE POOR

Dear poor people, the soft light of peace is gone  
and we won't see it for a long time.  
The arms of the seasons are empty.  
Too much dies out of sight  
this year's rice  
its seed curled up inside  
like the tongue of an epileptic—  
the tongue! a drop of his flesh  
poor people poor people  
the body grips it for dear life  
the tongue of hunger inside you.

Poor people, listen to me  
we ask your forgiveness  
so much has begun to smell good!  
Everything will turn out okay  
the green things will grow out of the earth  
we will tack smiles across every hole.  
Any humanist will tell you  
that history has to change  
poor people poor people  
hold out for a little while  
goodness is ready to spring out of the earth.

It gushes out on a fine morning.  
The workers, smudged with dirt  
drop their shovels and cheer.  
Your wife hugs you beneath the derrick.  
Goodness covers you with a sigh  
its hands plunge into your shirt  
pop! your feet feel the fresh crack of shoes  
your fingers slip into rings  
your arms into coats, legs into pants.  
Pop! you have everything.  
Poor people, you made it.  
Your number came up  
poor people poor people.

## BEING IN LOVE

Being in love, the earth rising as if in your stomach,  
rising against the sky, rising out of its own shadow,  
out of its skin, like a hill, like a wave,  
swelling, getting larger,  
rising as if to conduct music,  
if we reached out we could touch it, grab some of it,  
how could it mind, it has so much, grows so much.  
The newly mowed field which can see again takes a breath,  
fish in the stream look up,  
angels in the form of raindrops land on our faces,  
they slide down holding their skirts up,  
your kiss slides down into my mouth.

I wanted to know what love is like.  
I was standing behind my back.  
I was leaning over my skin.  
How the earth rises! and  
the hair of love falls from the trees, from a window, from  
my hands,  
it makes the side of a hill soft  
and the hill is in love,  
it lands on the fences, trucks, on the heads of bald men,  
in China it lands on the trees falling out of the earth,  
in England it lands on the Queen's shoulders,  
in Italy it lands in the fountains.  
The hair of love lands in our bed,  
it breathes and sighs,  
each hair pulls off and breathes with its own mouth,  
each one kisses our skin and sinks deep in our flesh,

and we rise out of bed, float in the air, we enter things,  
windows, nests, the caves in a stone, the shelves of space  
between the sun and the sky, between the water and the shore.  
Nothing has edges! Our skin grows together  
and makes a dress, the dress dissolves;  
our pores drop off,  
we jump out through each pore!

### About Our Contributors

KENNETH O. HANSON's first book of poems, *The Distance Anywhere*, published by the University of Washington Press, won the Lamont Prize in 1967.

JACK TOOTELL was born and raised in China and teaches in Orange, California.

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