POETRY NORTHWEST
VOLUME ELEVEN NUMBER FOUR
WINTER 1970—71

Cover: Tlingit shaman’s charm, Beaver and Dragonfly.

POETRY NORTHWEST WINTER 1970—71 VOLUME XI, NUMBER 4

Published quarterly by the University of Washington. Subscriptions and manuscripts should be sent to Poetry Northwest, Parrington Hall, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98105. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts; all submissions must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Subscription rate, $3.50 per year; single copies, $1.00.

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Distributed by B. DeBoer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N.J. 07110; and in the West by LS Distributors, 552 McAllister Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94102.

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It isn't easy filling your house.
And you can't hire strangers
to do it. There's the question
of space, how it closes in on itself
and how the light of your latitude
illuminates your worst hours.
It's a serious business, the way
dust gives form to
light
and
the way light falls with the shock
of weight. And in these bad
times,
the hours you sit alone, woman lost,
maybe for good, old magazines
papering your bed, you need
strong alliances with familiar mysteries:
tables, chairs, sofa, chest,
the private dark
of corners.
And space not filled
with wood
and fabric won't have direction.
The four walls become interchangeable
and your best trick will be
walking north and south at the same time.
You will entertain a few
but you won't be forgiven by most.
Whatever you do, don't buy new.
Secondhand stores have all you need.
Tables that have fed thousands
are priceless. Each scar in old wood
is the eye of a ghost. Voices
in the age-dark oak are not lost.
The smell of old beds will storm
your blood with images, and when you love
the thighs of decades spring in your wake.
Mind you, this isn't accomplished
overnight. Go slow. There is danger
in the blind rush to fill empty space
and you must endure the pain of waiting.
It's better to keep empty rooms
than furnish on the run.
Sleep and love on the floor,
eat on your feet, and entertain
in the attic where possible ghosts
will stir with pleasure, unlocking
secrets from the plaster
omens from the cupboards
prophecy from the sills.
They will make you welcome
and you will understand your part as host
until you join them.
As for the walls, fill them
only when your grief is photographic.
Avoid the cute trinkets of the dead.
And when the dead worm their way
inside, their grins will collapse
into pure technique, and they
will leave, shaking, bells of decay
rolling in their reports.

And now, you must know this:
The neighbors won't like you.
The jaws of machines will sooner or later
stutter in the street and warnings
will be stapled to your doors.

You will be declared invisible,
harmless, vague, arrested. Offers
from large companies to square things away,
for nothing, will be your only mail
for weeks. And when you don't reply
they will send angry threats
against your free time. You
will learn how to endure this,
how to dismantle doorbells,
telephones, and welcome mats.

And you will learn to spend
days without news, idle and grave
in a favorite rocker
among the shacks and mansions
and neighborhoods of time
supremely at home.

Vincent B. Sherry

THE SQUIRREL

1
In late afternoon
he comes back to watch me
through the high grass
I hear him, the first,
tentative sounds he makes
scuttling down the scrubby cold fields.
And I know he's back.

I stuff blankets in the chimney
hood the paintings,
knit a black seal on the door and
board the windows
but he wavers
in some forgotten crack of the shutter,
shaking his tail at me like a fistful of smoke
and quickly
he's gone into the clever stitchwork of his tracks.

2
I would turn from his sign, but
by now I know
it scatters behind him
everywhere. Down from the fields
and splitting over the furrow, the print drops
into the earth where the grain scars with his miserly pokings,
and up again, and off, here it is,
lacquered in the clay by the well where I can see
how his step falters as he must have drunk
the prints totter off amazed
for an instant I think this is
where he will throw his bones down, no
but here they are again, suddenly, behind me
where he must have bounded through the thistles
he's left a tuft of fur
stuck on one of their stiff spikes
like the head of an enemy I don't know if he's alive
or dead he and the tracks have separated
slowly the hills bear them both
up into darkness.

3
It is at night that I feel him
picking through me
he follows some lost map of the blood
to its buried source
he tumbles,
steadies himself, narrows his petty eyes and
leaps
at this crow that flops in the eaves of my chest,
drags it down with his mizzling teeth,
and I wait,
as the first paw works
into the nether spaces, I begin to breathe.

4
I have seen once,
crusted in the dry grass,
a squirrel skull rubbed thin and pale as a host;
on the floor of it, a small lantern
flickered in the fingers of dead nerves
knocking against the dust
until nothing answered.

THE CALM

I know
no-one's name
The fields slide through the window
like a broken arm
Inside there is talk of sleep
The ash tower rocks into place
The bed of ice shimmers
The pillow shrinks to a spike
A plume of darkness sprouts where I dozed
The light twists away like rosaries
Beyond a broken bridge the old train rattles
feeling the way as it falls

SURVIVORS

Outside I hear the knife
As it buries itself in the night
A button of blood inks the door
I answer
The beggar offers me the feathers from his sleeves
The chute opens I am knee deep in his darkness

NORTHWEST
He holds the stumps towards me
I hang my lantern
In the broken bowl of his ribs

I close the door
The hours go by on rollers
The windows wrinkle in the heat

I hear the laughter between the breaking of bottles
I begin to speak
I am the twitch in the dead limbs of God

**Gibbons Ruark**

**Two Poems**

**THE SPRING**

The car works the road into a lather
Of dust that falls through the glittering lens
Of sky till the world is washed by another
Weather. Trees that shivered their black bones open
Into flapping leaf-tents, the thick shade spreads
And fills the cross-work shadows of branches.
Sunken water rises and inflates the heads
Of mushrooms as the earth's stiff sponge cases
Under my feet and the warm grass prickles.
I come to the flowers that tell me to turn
Down the breezy tunnel of trees until
The teeth of the fence turn white and turn
Me again and I am through the loosening
Gate and kneeling at the spring. I feel them
Watch me from the porch where they are talking.
Rocking. The sweet mist rises from the rim
Of the bricked-in hollow. I take the stone
Steps one at a time, clinging to the mossy
Side till every flicker of sun is gone
And I cup my hands to swallow the chilly
Spout springing from the bottom. I can hear

Dry birds’ voices babble down from the grass
And I dip my face again in the water.
They are calling. Before they call the last
Time I press my ear to the cooling
Wall and listen. I go up into the sun.
One is in the white swing, two are rocking.
I climb the steps to where they rock me one
By one in the bony hollows of their laps
And brush my cheek with their papery lips.

**LOCKING UP**

A shutter ticks or a finger snaps in my sleep
Or the silenced alarm clock clicks
As the long hand passes the hidden hour,
And over again he is locking me into his house,
Starting out of doors and bolting door after door
As he moves to the center of a nest of boxes.
First the lawn chairs drift off the lawn
To hunch in the damp garage under dust covers.
Beside them, the long black car is turning cold.
Now the door overhead starts to roll on its bearings,
Slithering over headlights
To ring into position on the concrete floor.
Now the gauzy wing of screen flaps shut,
The bolt of the inner door he slips into place
Is an oiled shell hissing into a rifle's chamber.
Now he is rattling the bones of windows, making sure,
Switching off the last light
With the pleasure of a safecracker listening for tumblers,
Laboring steadily up the stairs
To where a small eye burns against bad dreaming.
He is closing his own room now behind him,
Peeling his clothes off piece after piece,
Crawling into bed and drawing up the covers
Like a skin he can believe in.
Outside, he dreams, darkness is a slick black tarp
The gods pull over the earth and fasten down.
DON GREENWOOD'S PICTURE
IN AN INSURANCE MAGAZINE

Greenwood's picture,
taking me into my dream
of childhood where
teachers wore blue hair
and the earth
was in the principal's room. He

would not recall
their solemn
noses and windowsticks
ready against
unpleasant odors. But there
was Greenwood always

elaborately solemn
who was also good
with mothers (he could play
it serious or
chubby depending on the
occasion). Don Greenwood's

picture in an insurance magazine!
skilled winner
of badges, old captain
of the safety patrol
in a country outside the pink continents
of my dream

of geography! In a
full-page mosaic
of zealous frowns and sinewy grins and
repetitious ears
Greenwood

P O E T R Y
rising with hands and claws
that curl out, searching for
the throat of the air

and that is roughly where you are
Coyanosa
slumbering unshaved,
a drop from that cloud
from some fierce bird,
a drop of lead paint, star-shaped, dried
and curling, tongues
splintered on the desert's edge

we go through at seventy miles per hour
but not fast enough
not to see
streets without trees
broken tanks, dead horses,
the early goat sun shining through
ribs of houses on blocks,
the shades pulled crooked in windows,
as if hastily, against the morning
after a doomsday party

not to see
people dragging themselves
from holes and barrels,
who stand by the road
and their sneers
follow us like screams,

women rolling in the dust

legs spread
gritting their teeth;
in the peeling Skeleton Cafe
men still drinking
as their flesh slides off

this is the day you select your queen,
with guns and knives dance around her
suck her blood,

smear each other with oil
and set the town on fire,
only to rise again the next morning
the same, gutted, smoking

even hours later
the grease eats at our fingers
and lids;
we are still driving through
your blowing candy wrappers, Kleenex.
by now they have fallen
ashes into their bones;
behind us the plume glows;
babies turn lizards
in their cribs;

around them coyotes
go crazy

scratching at the moon.

**Albert Goldbarth**

**ONE OF WOOSER'S STORIES**

"Dancing naked is a way in which many societies conceive the ultimate outrage."

Awoo! they wanted me in wristknots, missy,
twinetied in some cellar—here, come closer
and I'll tell you—because they woke at night
with a stab of fluting like a scythe sliced
shkk! through their grainsack thinking; and awoo!
the flutes were never found scattered in the fields
by some witless fugitive: the hounds found not one scent
unless it was of cinnamon ... A shepherd
swearing wings and human genitals appeared in silhouette
on moon's face was the clown next day at market,
missy—hush, now, I'll just hold you—pebbled
by the children: until months after, ewes
in border meadows gave stupendous birth
to soft and nuzzling progeny with pinions
budding downsoft from the shoulders: offspring which were burnt... Oh, the burghers feared me! when the mayor's daughter screamed awake all Townhall Hill, and Mayor's Lady found a lost and special something was no longer plugged between her daughter's legs: replaced with only possibilities, perhaps a fading whiff of peppermint: and yet that girl would hum and say no more, a smile in her pouting and her wonderful moon irises: and after that was stumbled on at midnight in a haystack playing acorn-catch and reading poems and roadmaps! Awoo, I swear they wanted me so bad: and got me, too, I say, though accident and clumsy: drunken bailiff finds me sleeping on a newmoon eve on a silent incline near the woods: no twigs acrackle, and no crickets out to chirp, no pattering of leaf gusts: one moment between musics that they accidentally bumble in: and so of course are on me like the dogs on a bone... And jab me into their Citizen Square where the jeering jowlfaces from town swarm about me like manure-flies when the dogs had done and left a bone for offal... What a party time they're having! which is their mistake, and not a flick too soon, I promise that... They hold their chains and briar-ropes like rosaries, like shovels, something made to fit the palm... And hold gold fiddles for their wicked celebration which, as pastries pass from hand to hand, the shopmen strike in tune and then! as sour as their sawing is, still the cows stamp foot to foot in time, in stables round for acres, cardinals blaze out like bonfires in oak boughs and burst beatific bird choruses... My feet tap! oh, the town officials gather in around me like a ring turned gangrenous on your finger, pretty missy: block me to the left, the right, they block in front, behind and never see the chords and cantos in the air

flying with me, suddenly above their stubbly heads, swooping over silotops and singing to their waving rows of fierce uplifted fists "Tra-la! For I was conceived by dancing naked, and shoestrings can't lynch this outlaw!" and here, your mouth I know could amply refresh a mouth as tired with talking as mine—ah yes, I flew in rhapsody awoo! above their solitudes...

Peter H. Sears

HOW DO YOU REALLY DO

I know them again the way they shake my hand that shakes slightly expecting her drooped stem to sleep in my hand but his grip barks from the hip as he gives me my name like congratulations rolls it out as if it costs money but free to me only me and their faces are keeping my hand tempted tempted to tell on myself tell them everything the door so thick so heavy this door I've shut then felt walking behind me walking just like me and the dream following when I stare away and feel the huge fish I stand on, it sleeps with both eyes open.
THE FASCINATION OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Because I have spent my life
Struggling with insurmountable difficulties—
Women's sexual hang-ups, straggling girdles,
My own rattling knock-knees—
Will I be able?

Because I have met riddles threatening to ruin me—
How to pour out ketchup or how to spell it,
The getting rid of prune pits and gum gracefully—
Will I succeed?

And because I have seen nightmares
Flying at me in daydreams—
Yeats riding sidesaddle,
Beating a dead and falling horse—
Shall I now say t. s. and eat another peach?

Richard Dankleff

ON RE-READING SWIFT

A woman I once knew
and loved, and fled somehow,
made three marks and wrote "true"
by these lines I find now.

What Swift and she believed:
"Happiness is the state
of being well deceived."
She did not separate

my words from what she was,
for women she said live
by fictions. And because
their loves are fugitive.

Vassilis Zambaras

POETRY LESSON

And yet, we know something of bitterness—
This draining out of love in syllables
Teaches us, among other things, silence
And how to talk our way around it.
IN THE STABLE

He liked his young nags’ attitude. Their smell, like nutmeg plus dry oat straw, brought to his mind that land where horses ruled so reasonably. Lem Gulliver had been deported. Here his two colts’ intellectual limitations sometimes clouded fine points, but they did grasp facts tolerably well. And matter of fact had always been his preference.

He said:
we sailed five weeks, storms sank us. I swam ashore where six-inch dwarfs did all men do. Those petty dungmills strutted about playing war. Stank of old fish.
In the square by the emperor’s palace the wretched poor sunned sores, watched their soiled world. How even deformed excrements can be smug, God knows. Filth.
Those beggars’ mugs lump into one slut’s face big as a giant’s hairy bum.

He said: someplace . . .
Fact slip.

Those giant maids of honor stank worse than the dwarfs. Their tricks you’d hardly believe—one set me astride her slippery nipple, a frolicsome wench . . . till her face turned slutish, she broke wind, hopped in the stream, hugged me—I leaped ashore, grabbed up my clothes, while she still there in the water thrust her muzzle skyward. Howling. Unless . . .

He said: someplace . . .
pomp and manure. Dumped off by pirates, I found the horses’ island, where reason keeps pride saddled, where mind so orders mind that humble virtue prevails.

And this went on in the stable

from day to day (in the house he sniffed snuff, touched no one, ate by himself) till the morning, like Augustine suddenly struck by a much-read page, he came in his corral where the colts had lain just as the sun lighted there in the straw:
golden biscuits baked for the King of the Yahoos: conflagrant a pile of beautiful steaming horseturds.

Mrs. Gulliver found him and dragged him in.
She told the neighbors he had a touch of sun.

Robin Johnson

THE DARK BELLS

"... death holds no hilarity"
and silence of houses wounds the listener:

Doorbells freeze in tight sockets; Phones choke on their own cords, Recoil yards of jangled listening, today Passive as candlewick.

No bell signals the thermal fevers. Always, do women cry out? Such void rejects the throat’s cry Stabbing the air, then diffusing.

Emissaries of secrecy, These mute instruments seal mouth, Seal ears, in utter discretion. They inter the striking hours

While dusk muffles even the undertones Narrowing the sounding-board walls, Foreshadowing—inch by inch— That tight room.
ANGRY IN SPRING

She bore the weight of her body,
endured air's tonnage,
the labored heft of her blood,
all but the egged, surviving self
sagged dormant. The ancient
willow greened in spite of her,
dead grain thrust,

apple trees grotesque with age
broke fragile impossibilities from the bark.

Countrywoman wise to the almanac,
the shadblow sign of first fish running,
the watch in the sugarbush, herself
cycle by cycle dragged alive again,
she fought the fulling—
apples cumbering the branch, wheat
heavy in the field, and in herself
fought summer glowing headlong
only for fall.

FETISHES OF THE PATROL LEADER

at fifteen my service was only hints
tightlipped joblots at a buck a pair
the sea inside my shoes whispered fungo softballs
the better customers put their morals in a box

a cockfight on the telephone all day
hog creek swollen with pink stonerollers
and saturday nights the free movie exploded in the
town's groin, the place was crawling with snatch

amphibious dishwashers and first trombones
tithed to a powder blue suede imagination

while the edemic scoutmaster and scoutmaster's wife
frankly sipped their Strohs 'til Lawry's closed up

with a onegun salute and the beatitudes
it was hard to put sleep in the same bed
Lassus died in, even harder to remember Him before
the twelfth law interrupted an oceanic dream

and once upon a nocturne she had volleyed
I came to attention inside my sister's piano
the patrol leader raising the soft khaki flag there
unnoticed beside the footpedals and Chopin himself

playing salvoes hard against a sheet
of etudes, progressively heavier, darker
as if two lawn mowers had met on high f sharp
at last the needle on my ear aboutfaced and died

only the shock value of rawhide saved
me, ringing up a bunch of folding kitsch
after hours, baring my hands where no one could see
deep into the clattering octaves of God's morning

White Pigeon, who died running, brave in snow,
I want to make a quietus with your wrist's knife
the river under your rock is chucked queer with guppies
and no man of us remembers your scout motto's sound

THE WYVERN

The tracks leapt clear
Of the breakwaters off White Bay
Where I uncovered the arm slippery
As jellyfish muscled
Over the black rocks by the tide,
The blooming cannons of the surf. I rowed
My eyes north a league to a cave
In the teeth of the skiffing wind
And held course, the hawser to the bow crawling
Toward the red belly of my Yahweh
Towing the sun through trucks
Of shad, sardine shingles, sprays
Of papery shrimp.

I imagined the moon an ancient cairn
Exposed in the dark by the sea's slow
Claw. The clouds drooled
Fever till my naked head smoked.
Asleep in the hollow of my blood. I
Heard nothing, swallowed hard.
Bits of bloaters
And half-eaten wedges of horse
Floated dimly on the cave walls.

In a hundred mornings of fog and blades of gull
I fished between a dragonfly's wings
Beside a good fire of lonely wooden men.
One told a story
With his cathedral silence.
Now I remember only the calipers of his jaw
Closed over the drowning deer, the great
Shoulders stirring the air.
The arm still rolls in the nest
Of the shore, the fingers wrapped in gold thread
Feeling for the eel of my memory.

David Lunde

SPACE

1
How to speak of the free insects
I have chloroformed in my heart?

I have launched my fear, my
instrument: my detectors spin
in the bitter wind from the stars;

they record like spiders
the taut jerk of panic
that says something's trapped.

2
We are not bees: we have no choice.
We draw lines on the interior canvas;

We ascribe significance: this
is a flower: here the bright
petals, there the stamen, the pistils:

it is love: it is you
in a sudden change of mood examining
the wind for the lightness of birds.

3
I know the atmosphere of Mars, have
some notion of temperatures on Venus;

I detect, I record, I interpret,
but I don't understand
these footprints on a dead world.

Heart, black vacuum, killing-jar,
what are these struggles
in my organs and instruments?
Douglas Flaherty

BACK TRAILING

I once carved this tree
It takes me back
thirty years beyond what
it was I started
he told the boy son

I know this birch
where I carved initials
the old man said again
back tracked a way
set off round the sprawl
of elms and rangy maples

We serve by going back
he said the first time
and turned his wish bone
legs like a divining rod
back to that same birch

I swear to the mad gods
this is the spot I marked
Red faced out of breath
he sliced with pen knife
the deadly white skin
unsheathed the milky flesh

Letters in reverse clung
and would not run
He rolled the message
told the boy to follow
back trailing out
of deep woods toward home

Harold Witt

NANCY VAN DEUSEN

They gave her everything—
horse, clothes, private school,
ballet until she quit,
then lessons on the flute
(she said it marred her lip,
and locked the music up).

She sulked through half the Louvre
and couldn't be enticed
up the Acropolis—
the only thing she liked
on that expensive trip
was shuffleboard on ship.

She yawned whole operas through,
wouldn't pour the tea
as grateful daughters do—
though married the nice young man
they chose to run the store,
a joyless squarejawed bore

(she loved his red MG)—
in labor with the twins
screamed as if only she
had ever felt such pains—
watching her parents die
didn't move an eye—
inherited it all—
the house on Lemon Heights,
the tennis courts, the pool,
the store, the stocks, the rights
to lands of ore and oil—
and drank away the nights.
Gary Gildner

Two Poems

"THE CLASSIFIEDS ARE QUICK"

In hot, cold, or indifferent seasons
he is always wanted
by someone, somewhere . . .

Aggressive? Ambitious? Burning
to make it Big!
Yes. Oh yes!

Well then,
"Recognition Becomes You!"
—and his head swims
in possibilities his eyes
can't follow fast enough—

For he, too, can operate a clamshell crane.
Drive a Thunderbird from coast to coast.
Guard, from midnight until morning breaks
innocent around their limbs,
the student nurses in their Lutheran parking lot.
Or learn, in forty weeks, karate.

Yes! He can stay in touch with fun!
Can kiss the lonely, bored, discouraged, common
life good-bye and mix
three nights a week with others over 30, under 55.
Can send his résumé to Mr. Short, Box 48,
who has the product,
prospects, high commissions,
unabused expense accounts, Blue Cross!
—in fine, everything but Tigers
he can train to get a signature
and close a deal.

Yes. But he must not sit back, bite his nails
and wish, "If only I had Spanish and phys. ed.
I could teach in Pleasant Valley—"

MARK ONLY ONE SPACE

Mark only one space.
Mark "hot water" even if you have it only part time.
Are you white, black, Japanese, or Other?
If you are "Other" print race.
If you are Indian print tribe.
Erase mistakes completely.

Have you ever been knocked out?
How long were you unconscious?
Have you ever "hit for the circuit"?
Did you touch all the bases?
Did you steal home?
Does anyone outside the immediate family use your bathroom?

If you went down for the count, did your mouth volunteer
tiny bubbles?
Did anyone giggle?
Did a lady in a sporelike lavender hat
kick a midget popcorn man full speed on the knee
because she couldn't see around him?

Have you ever wanted to drown your sorrows?
Are you sick and tired of being out of shape?
Are you sick and tired of dropping your guard?
If elected, will you promise not to come back?
Warren Woessner

Two Poems

OCTOBER

Suddenly
drive-ins close,
stand like glass flowers
whose petals have driven away.

Boats are pulled up
and turned over
all along the Fox.

The pumpkins have begun their migration.

Following
outside the car window
at dusk
the reflection of your hands
picking over the fields,
trying to save enough
for winter.

NO COVER FOR STAG GIRLS

At the corner of Avon
and Kay-Mart, they wait
with the patience of the ugly,
clustered around the bus stop sign
as if it were warm.

Like birds that have forgotten
how to migrate, they face the winter
down. Endless telephone lines refuse
to release one invitation.
“What d’you guys wanta do?”
Surrounded by barbed wire,
the last herd of buffalo dance,
drink beer,
kil time until closing.

John Allman

THE LOVERS

I find myself in a sentimental
narrative: an old mother weeps.

Next to her, wearing black lace,
the girl from the check-out counter
in Grand Union smiles knowingly.

I hold my hand out for the change.
She blows me a kiss. I blow one back.

Obscenities explode behind the curtain
that separates this room from the alley.

A garbage can lid wobbles noisily
like a coin coming to rest after a toss.

“Where is she?” I ask the old mother,
who lifts her baby-pink face to wink,
and laugh. I rip away her hat and veil.

Others appear in their place. I peel
translucent layers of an image
that is constant. A face in a pool.

The check-out girl strips to her white apron,
rings up a sale, gives me a hundred green stamps.

“Please, I don’t save stamps. Here.” She
blows me a kiss. The wind thumps the big
glass panes that look out on the sea: it’s
a hurricane coming off the Atlantic.

“Hurry. Hurry. Where is she? Where?”

The old mother is walking on the water,
drifting out to sea, muttering to herself.

I bang on the glass. “Stop! Stop! Save
me!” The girl takes readings, closes the register.

The old mother, trailing a flannel gown,
vanishes into the whirlwind on the water.

I’m locked in the store. The girl is outside,
between me and the sea, blowing a kiss.
Patricia Goedicke

ALL MORNING I HAVE SEEN THE WHITENING

Just before dawn, in darkness
Everything I'd murdered in myself
Rose from the pillows and danced
On the shoulders of my old hurts
Where I had never permitted them before.
Words put on clothes, they shone like jewels,
Bright daggers busy as a circus,
Lions alive and roaring.
The ringmaster with yellow teeth flashing

But all morning I have seen the whitening.

While I, an amazed audience
Applauded, made plans
To speak of them today
One by one they waved goodbye and went. Now
No snow is visible, nothing
Falling, or piercing the air
But something is whispering out there
Something insidious,
Gradual, like the graying of my hair.

Carolyn Stoloff

MAD IN A GLASS BOOTH

mad in a glass booth
losing blood
your changes swallowed
by the clanging box
heart-beast ear
fold your webs—too weak
no tool to break banks

looking through trees into holes
into the Eden-wound I see
rats slip through festering cities
hear promises fiddle air
like crickets on summer nights

looking through holes between masts
bent by wind through what is clean
touchable I hear motors erase evergreens
scoop gravel from streams
drill my ears

looking through holes as a child
world upside down moon underfoot
wounds filling eyes with fall
leaf into blood ink the calendar
one day burying another

looking through holes that focus today
in a box into litter-flat news
looking into now's nothing an empty gun

NORTHWEST
a trumpet of lilies
promising regeneration

looking into the lemon lily afternoon
beeing its sweet
carrying it to cities to strew
so gardens will grow again
in spaces between politicians

I see trunks of speechless men
climb into holes into bone houses
babies rest on women's hips
sons stand on their fathers' shoulders
building temples praised by women

the man-forest as holy and travel slow
to pick flowers with those who know
what to call them cement out of sight
I see Earth this thunder rock
sail somehow into light

Mark Halliday

HUMAN LIFE PARTLY EXPLAINED

From where I stand
a good deal of evidence is visible.
I see a bakery.
People eat bread
partly because they like the taste,
partly because it gives them power
enough to travel.

I see piles of tires.
People ride on wheels
to get to where they can see
what other people are doing
or failing to do.

I see mailboxes, telephone lines, antennae.
People want to hear from people.

I see gravestones.
People die when they have eaten too much,
or not enough,
and traveled too far, or not far enough,
and heard enough, or not enough, or almost nothing.

Paul Hunter

TO TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF IT

Who cares if it's good writing habits
that gets this said, gets it said?

Why don't you like the Northwest,
like yourself, live a little,
like the country, try yourself
for treasons against the race?

Start again: why don't you just
like yourself. Feel the rain
of her hands on you, look up
that simple, keeping in mind
you thought you were going to look up,
she was going to drop on you but
gently at first, and that
I told you both all of that.

I've been here before, it's redundant
to screw in history, love,
like a lightbulb. You'll be sorry
you see, you can slip, smash

the onion, weep, understandably
short out the light you just thought up.
Helen Sorrells

SELF PORTRAIT

I have hung my nerve ends
With electronic roses that click
On, off, on, off, lovely lovely
And twang like tooth aches.

Wound tight and tighter
In my self-heated afternoon
I sit among my roses and hear
Quartets of my own voice

Speaking out of time
And out of turn, scolding the tall
Children who come in out of the rain
To kiss my cheek and bring me

Component parts—switches, and wire
That binds the stems of the roses
Past endurance, but they endure—on,
Off, on, off, on, on, on.

Peter Cooley

THE MAN WHO CLOSES HIMSELF
(after Guillevic's "L'homme qui se ferme")

You don't find him in crowds,
the man who closes himself.
He doesn't need hiding
where it's so dark
with the fires, the keys
and the spiral where each step
will never rise.

He has learned to go
through doors nailed shut,
the man who closes himself,
and felt his body sprayed
into the grains of the wood.
He has carried his doors
until he will drop.

He has hands,
his feet,
he has a head,
it isn't easy
and then the torque of the wind
is never the same
at any minute.

He knows corridors,
the man who closes himself,
and mirrors, the floors
where his face will go on walking
after he's gone.
Mirrors that are reflections
of all his keys.

He wakes
to find himself
in the mouth of the sun
falling
without his moving
into that sun.

He finds himself
in the bark of a tree
where he can hide
with the hollow inside.
All night he will walk
in that tree's circle, unable
to rise through the tree
in the way of the moon.
He has seen his other
watching in doorways,
approaching in smoke,
a light growing closer
under his skin.
For the man who closes himself
the other is skin.

* * *

For the man who closes himself
what is the sun?
what are the trees?
what are the zones of the wind?
what would it be
to sow himself
starting from the center?
He knows this much
it's his own way.

* * *

For his wife
there is nothing left
except in silence
beyond the words.
In bed she moves
under his hands like water,
water that will not rise
to drown him
but in minutes.

* * *

He would like to get away
from all this, to go
to the edge of the field
where he could lie
with the fireflies
of snow that would come down
to light his eyes.
These eyes that want to go out
beyond the edge of the field.

* * *

He would like to walk
in the poem, to talk
in it, to hear the light
lifting his body off
as he spoke his way, the earth,
the water, fire
rising out of his breath.
But the words turn him here.

* * *

There is the spiral,
there are the mirrors,
there is still the wind.
He crosses these, always alone,
the man who closes himself,
wanting to be
with none of these, to be
wherever they take him
to make his way.
The reason he's going
is still
to be made up.

Jack Crawford, Jr.

NUDE IN THE RAIN

I subscribe to the Lang-James theory.
You don't run because you're afraid. You're
Afraid because you run. It's what you
Think it is that makes it. Well,
I could be wrong! I may have
Misinterpreted! Sorry, if so!
Rest easy, phantoms of Elysium!
The world is what you think it is! Ho ho!
That's a fine bromide! It's not what Hegel
Says it is, or Kant, or Nietzsche.
So it's raining and you say, God
Another one of these! On the other hand, one might
Strip off his clothes and walk in it!
Silly, eh? But there you go. I see you
All naked in it. It’s pouring off you.
It hits your head and swashes off your shoulders.
Streams over your breasts. Your long hair
Is coils of water. Limp. Your
Arms glow. Your kneecaps shine. Your
Nipples suck it. Your lips bubble.
It goes in and out your navel. It
Swashes at your hips. It glistens
On your buttocks. It slides off your
Shins and calves. Your toes twinkle
And twitch in it. Lightning flashes off you. Thunder
Rooftops are refreshed. Grasses utter
Green sounds. The nostrils gurgle.
Lightning smashes into trees
Looking for lightning-rods. Big limbs curve over
From the weight of water. Faces
Are at every window. Their mouths
Are open. You have made an impression!
But horses do it. Cows do it.
Birds do it. Fishes do it. They don’t go in
Out of the rain. They’re naked in it.
Well, all right. So it’s what people say!
We all understand.
Maybe you can’t go out like I said but
Didn’t recommend necessarily. Maybe it
Can’t be done. How’d you like to be sitting
Naked in the clink?—all wet—after
Police came for you?—
Or men in white uniforms?
So it’s raining and, making a grimace,
And dropping a small profanity,
One may say:
God, another one of these!

David Hilton

THE MAN UPSTAIRS

Against a yellow accordion
he loses the War always. His gray voice
sings each night the kamikaze
pasting his buddy to the bulkhead.

1944. He hides the year inside
his trousers like a treasure still
alarming him. It sirens him down
the stairway that stops at my door.

He says he knows the arms of the police
are really rubber hoses
and if you give a woman an inch
she’ll cut it off. And since

the silent mailman commits
only the big-time thefts (the letter
from his mother announcing her rebirth)
he knows I’ve stolen his dish towels

on order six years from Procter & Gamble
in Kansas City. He holds nothing personal
against Kansas City—all his friends
have vanished everywhere,

the caves go under everywhere.
And all of them were cowards anyway,
flattening themselves into extra coats
of mole-colored paint stuck

to the turrets of their battle stations
as the fat zeros fell drunkenly
upon the decks. At age 18
to survive as a coat of mole-colored paint,
after the attack to be chipped off
slowly, daily by the rubber hoses of
cops, bartenders, mailmen, landlords,
is only what a coward deserves though it is hard.

For such philosophy the Government
thinks he is 100 percent and
rewards him accordingly. So he
has time for his music

that rises each night like the whine
of an ancient propeller,
keeps rising
until he throws his body against the floor.

Kurt Beattie

FOR THE GOOD FISHERMAN

Now they are casting their lines,
and the late day's light on their hats and arms
is yellow as sunfish.

With legs white as the birch at the shore,
see how they dangle their feet from the raft,
al least rotated bare to the waist,
and languidly lie on the water,
on the warm boards.

The sails lull them, the trees toss by the shore
behind them, and the dock is for shooting stars,
divers falling from heaven.

Alone, my mother is treading water by the shore
where her toes touch the cold gravel
and her hair washes around her like weeds.

Ambling through crests of lengthening shadows
my father
is building a fire of green wood and briar
and weeds.
The smoke drifts over the shore
to the lake.

Out somewhere behind the island
my sisters are struggling with the oars and calling,
panicked from the rowers they did not want.

Today, dear, I have only one fish, a small trout
that I have left in the water
tied to a root.

Easily I watch him; he drifts easily,
gliding through the roots
and fading in the shade of the overhanging bank
of ferns and moss.

I lean to the oak, in the cool shade
I lean me, drowsy with your love, where willows
bend to the water
and the leaves rustle and wind
is silly and wavers
like the silvered tail of the fish.

But he is tied to my leader.
He is tied.
And so,

(that we may swim where the cold blood warms, where love
can always find water, and the sun be born,
where I could not for my life say anymore
than this, this came clear in the lake, my love,
for there, a bright day burning, burning in my eyes
with the lives of my life, showed me our death)

I cut him loose.
Greg Kuzma

THE HAPPY ENDING

When he held his hand up
as if in surrender
a rabbit slipped out of his sleeve
and flew like a flag.
Was it some kind of signal
for money to slosh at our feet?
The night turned to chorus around us.
Who was this we held the gun on?

Later we told him
all the things he knew about us.
He saw us hating our mothers
but loving them secretly.
He saw how we hated each other
and so stole the love from
our lives.

We gave him the gun
and he shot us to death.
We fell in a blue heap at his feet.
We washed at his feet like an ocean.
We sang like the sun.
Our blood stood up in a lump
and blew warnings of joy.

He turned the gun on himself.
We carried him home.
We caressed him.
He was someone to love.

Laurence Lieberman

A CANTICLE TO PEASHOOTERS

While munching chutney-dabbled duck on the pillowed veranda
And sipping hot rum tea—tinct with a mild veronal,
Curly dickering over trifles with my puttering handmaid,
I hymn a canticle to peashooters, a burbled hymnal.

To you whopping civil doughboys lumbering by,
Straw-gun mounted puckered cheek and snicker eye,
From the chancel, hallelujahs
Greet your glorious what's-it-to-yas
As you commence your hullabaloos and broadcast affrays;
I ranting, emulate your illustrious ways.

I marvel that your ill-timed pot shots reach their mark,
That rich meanings may be borne by short-range ammunition,
At the vast exchange of petty loves and hates you embark,
With what outlandish ease you master communication.

RUNNING WATER

The faucets of America
were left on overnight. None
are running out of water. The hoses
are running the houses. American horses
drink at the corner-gutters.

The holiday weekend
begins. Stockbrokers
cash in on the president's
vacation. Whoever forgot
to shut off the unlit pilot
left on the power. The morning's
electric. On another block
near somebody else's backyard,
a live wire is humming.

Hush.

I'm told there is water in blisters,
and in the last stages of abdominal
cancer, the torso converts
to a human geyser. In the wards
visiting well-wishers
gag at the water coolers. Well
water is fresh in America,
still. The hoses were running all night.

John Woods

Three Poems

A BONE FLICKER

Some bones announce we are cruising at 580 mph.
Some bones look in to see if some bones left the key.
Bones are getting married tonight.
Others find a wet spring bad for the patio business.
Bones all over the Kona Coast.
Bones lecturing to bones on bones.
Around bones, a haze, an isinglass,
a kind of flicker,
talking in a wet, smacking way
about scratching, mostly,
an itch, an itchy bone,
wanting out.

WHICH END OF THE STICK?

Is it a fire in the head,
on top of an ice column,
or a black box, riding a rich,
plundering animal? What chooses,
and what gets on with it?

Those who thump their books,
blueprint eyed, are they never
drunk and disorderly at think tank
office parties, are they never
vague, ruminating mouths,
venturing a testament of belches?

And you who magistrate a few inches of skin,
crawling in and out of each other
on bended knee, what nose will you follow
when the old brain rinds,
and the scent trails blow away?

Lost in a dark country, a dark planet,
in a tug-of-war on each end of the stick:
the dirty end, and the business end.

Remember those whose eyes light up
just short of madness, the True Way
burning like a wire in their brains.

Their faces blazon on store fronts.
Their voices roar from sound trucks.
Great crowds, their countries on their backs,
have fled down Lombardy grace of roads
until the wire burned out at Berchtesgaden.

Then came the millions of Ikes,
with no lights on anywhere
in those dark, rented heads:
a single orgasm of national purpose.

In the street you thought you knew,
out stretches the ebony nightstick
to put the law on you.
THE CLOSING OF THE VICTORY BAR AND GRILL

For Richard Hugo

Did we go down in flames after all,
the fuses set short over Ploesti?
Are the mothers grandmothers,
knitting gold stars to wear in their eyes?

I feel a stiffness when I climb down
into my life.
I toss back the last one several times.
Something fabulous is coming up.

When one is a veteran of World War Two
he is likely to have several eyes,
each replaying outrages and illusions:
the square needle in the left ball,
the short-arm in helmet liners and raincoats,
and in the guardroom,
a crystal ball of VD kits
for the last virgin to bear arms.
He will sit in a Biloxi bar,
looking dangerous, clutching his VD kit,
trying to pierce a waitress
with his eyes.

Later, he will offer
the condom, huge with breath,
to the vagaries of the air,
where the swollen dream,
entering the movie house fan,
dies of applause.

You are thinking this is a long poem.
It was a long war,
and the Victory Bar and Grill
is here to testify that a drinking veteran
dreams a long gullet. He listens close,
hearing what’s coming and going,
exploding behind his eyes.

the whip of blood.
If you sing through this gullet,
it takes awhile to come out fabulous.

The sun strikes amber through your beer,
and in its spotlight
you see a product of know-how:
a miniaturized Belsen, with little people
marching, the tower lights
twisted in the wire.
A plume of smoke from your cigarette.
So beautifully preserved,
you don’t know whether to laugh or cry.
The skin lampshades, the holy cross
dropping its corners, gold teeth
rattling in the collection plate . . .
We were lost in that war
and live on the other side of life
with the others that blew up,
where the joyless are gently restrained,
where the powerless grow steadily beautiful,
where we tell poems
about the underside of grass.

Now the Victory Bar and Grill is closing.
The short snorter, the picture of the squadron,
flow to the archives
on the combers of this poem.
And we are veterans among you
as the neon darkens,
as the uniforms march under strange banners.

One last beer to that old bitch, World War Two,
and her slant-eyed daughter.
About Our Contributors

Rick DeMarinis teaches at San Diego State.

Vincent B. Smreczynski, a graduate of Notre Dame, is studying in Boston on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

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John Woods's new and selected poems will be published by Indiana University Press later this year.

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