

Poetry

NORTHWEST



WINTER 1971-72 / VOLUME XII / NUMBER 4 / ONE DOLLAR

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POETRY NORTHWEST WINTER 1971-72 VOLUME XII, NUMBER 4

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POETRY NORTHWEST

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POETRY NORTHWEST

WINTER 1971-72

Eugene Ruggles

Six Poems

BEGINNING AGAIN AS MORNING

Your bones left out all night
gathering secrets from the grass
have become more simple now,
and the daylight enters them
with the wind as midwife,
carving a date
in the marble of your cheek—
I think they have said
quit walking around with a grave
on your shoulder. It's not worth
the weight of a log.
Kneel down with the insects
where the sea has been folding
a scarf for you,
open her leaves of water.

AN OFFERING

This morning the fields are a stone of sunlight
cut with October frost and pheasants that glide looking
for fallen corn. The shocks of corn stay in the fields to dry.
Once a boy ran through them shaking off tacklers, shouting names.
They're not needed this year as feed. Perhaps they will be plowed
back next spring. Now they turn more golden as the leaves become
red. Everything else is frozen to death. A man has pulled them
together with his arms and tied them in these fields as the weather
was turning above their dance; inside they have been filling
with thick layers of moonlight, like women. The thin hands
of winter can descend and gather their gifts.

TRAVELING INTO THE SNOWSTORM

1

Driving west through Montana at dusk
the headlights discover the flakes
swarming inside their beams,
like pure alcohol
the storm comes into my arms.
The empty space beside me
unfolding and spreading across my lap.

2

Last night the plains of North Dakota
drained away in every direction,
like the chest of God.
I keep noticing my right arm
moving off to the side,
as though it were some animal feeding
I have to keep reaching for.

3

The snow has banked sleep
alongside my temples, for a few seconds
death has promised me his eyes.
All day I've been tasting my life,
like those young Apache boys made to run
for miles over a blazing desert,
holding a mouthful of water.

4

Near dawn the Rocky Mountains rise up
like a continent throwing off darkness.
It's been a long trip from your fist, father,
just to unload this cargo of song . . .
light nods on my shoulder.
And the dumb one inside of me
sinks even deeper beneath this offering

of weather, this anchor
being lowered inside my forehead.

GIVING THANKS FOR THESE AUTUMN SOUNDS IN THE WOODS ALONG THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

At dusk we are listening
only to a strip of cloth
pulling kerosene out of its bowl
to light

there's the slice in my thumb
closing over,
the dirt sinking under the skin
like it was before

thinking it's more than ever
worth it,
the cord of firewood stacked in the shade
turning beneath the canvas

far off it seems
the same fly is choking
to death at the end of my elbow,
for the earth is always unarming itself

resting my head
on its side against the oak table,
the deaf leaf of an ear
settles this slowly to the perfect ground

to decay and remembering

how earlier the two-year-old doe
is breaking from the wet brush
after hearing my voice in the path,
only when the words enter

her ears will they ever be slightly
filled with grace.

—thanksgiving eve, 1970
Bodega Bay, California

A POEM OF WEEDS

The sleeping bag has come to rest
here against this hill
after a night of drifting
the lower waters

it has lodged
between two logs of douglas fir
I crawl naked from the old lining
what is left behind
is already decaying in its skin

the small creatures who died last night
are beginning to stir
in the pure rooms of peat moss

this is the silence
when they exchange the grace in their bodies

a wall of rain
is lifting a sheet of beauty in the east
it should be here within the hour
I think I'm ready now

stretching as far as I can
as though to hear through my forehead
like a snake come down to drink
my mouth pressed against the weeds

nearly touching the wonder of a hole
that has opened before me in the night

a thing seeking its source
with only the weeds holding back
this side of the hill
from the river—

DEATH

Night falls over the cliffs
of your voice like water
we drift out through the bodies of each other,
scraping against a great weight
there in the depths,
just beneath the pale boat
of your face.

Gwen Head

Four Poems

WINTER CLOSING

It was you who made the rain and the fair weather.
A body that the largesse of fever leaves
is itself, only itself, so small a room
to live in, the grave seems great.

The fountain is empty
where last summer, whirling in plumes of water the children
splashed and settled like little birds, a sundial
this mean reminiscence of light has frozen
perennial at blank now. Leaves erased
from smudged sky bare scrawled reiterations
of limbs like a childish punishment: *we are maples,*
maples, maples, and trefoil and cinquefoil
lie in drifted labyrinths the downright keyhole shape
of feet obliterates but cannot solve.

At the stagnant verge of the lawn, the conservatory
glistens with its equivocal rainbows of orchids
like a bubble trapped in an oil slick. Incendiary
the false heat sears the throat like chalk-dust or quicklime.
Astringent and overweening, chrysanthemums
in the cold rooms flaunt rank on rank their omens of fortune
and longevity, fading lunar into that dusk
where cramped hours end, like white lights boring
into the deep shaft of night as the gate clangs shut behind.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF BAUDELAIRE

"Comme au long d'un cadavre un cadavre étendu."

I'm cut off and can't reach. It is no wonder
your body, my love, when you leave me for sleep, takes on
the sudden detente of the dancer, spent and sagging
in the wings, or the stag dead in mid-stride.
It is this strain of stretching and falling short
that draws and maims in the bridal bed. Undone
and entranced, Saint Julian tumbled from his horse
to the forest floor, there to twitch and moan
through the night like an old dog, dreaming again
the hunt and death.

We have between us
played many vernal tunes on coiled metal,
a din of winch and windlass in our ears,
"engines" the pornographer tells us "of terror
and delight" whose clatter warns of the old plague.
We know less than we did. Only that in love's black noon
all faces grow blanched and leonine. We trust
outcast, that there must come of delirium
some wraith to warm us, some god from that machine.

OLD WOMAN GARDENING

They were leeches on her, drew her blood like tides,
that hardy lady, camped upon her field chair
surveying the heavy charge of yellow roses,
bold coxcomb and the janizzary lilies;
loathing all blue and cloistered beautiful hours,
hot for the fierce flower, the short and lovely prime
of the morning glory, its trumpets flaring in valor,
or the musketry of salvia, rattling brigades
whose bright exemplars loomed impaled like standards.

There she had sowed them, dragon's teeth, bones of her mother
bedded down soft to rend her with their carnage;
Canute, it seemed, of the sun, defying its round;
heliotrope, with cypress at her shoulder.

SINFONIA DOMESTICA

The chair began pink peonies and scrolls.
As fidgets found their rightful targets, it
broke out in motley ripple widening circles.
The pink, the muslin, then the stuffing too
peeled back, popped out; plain dirty white poked through.
Empty, a great, gross Raggedy Ann slumped there
headless, in linty sores and dire undress;
sad sat-out doppelganger limply needing
a human arse to clothe its nakedness.

My mother soaked her feet; the epsom salts
turned toenails succulent and cyclamen.
Reflective, apt, one topiary hand
clipped, pruned out callus spring impolitic.
The other hand swept up the dear debris.
She did not speak; my father read the paper.
Across the room, the turned back beds were neat
white, separate. And yet beneath the sheet
old cotton mattress pads lay flocculent
and ringed with linked love-circles like a tree.

Henry Taylor

HARVEST

Every year in late July I come back to where I was raised,
to mosey and browse through old farm buildings,
over fields that seem never to change,

Rummaging through a life I can no longer lead
and still cannot leave behind, looking for relics
which might spring back to that life at my touch.

Today, among thistles and ragweed, I stumble over
a discarded combine—the old kind we pulled
with a tractor to cut and thresh barley and wheat.

Now it lies listing into the side of this hill
like a stone or an uprooted stump, harboring snakes
and wasps, rusting slowly down into the briars.

Still, I climb to the seat, wondering whether it will
hold me, fumbling for pedals and levers
I used to know by heart. Above my head,

The grain-pipe forks down to the bag-clamps,
and a wad of tie-strings, gone weedy and rotten,
still hangs by my right hand. As I touch these things,

This machine I once knew by many unprintable names
moves out through barley in late July, and the stalks
fall to the knife as the paddle-reel sweeps them in.

On wide canvas belts, cut grain rides into the dark
insides of the combine, where frantic shakers and screens
break the grain loose from the stalks and the chaff;

Almost invisible, small spines from the grain-heads
pour out through holes in the metal, billowing
into a cloud that rolls with us over the hills,

Engulfing me, the machine, the tractor and driver,
as we work in a spiral to the center of the field,
rolling back through the years in a dust cloud.

The spines stick to my skin, work into my pores,
my bloodstream, and finally blaze into my head
like a miniature cactus of hatred for all grain,

For flour and cereal and bread, for mildewed surplus
swelling in midwestern silos. Never again,
I thought once, as I rode out the cloud until sundown,

Never again. I climb down and walk out through the thistles,
still breathing fifteen-year-old barley. The years
in the cloud drift back over me. Metal rusts into the hill.

Barley dust pricks at my brain. I have come home.

Raeburn Miller

Two Poems

ON A FRIEND'S DECISION

Lame men may climb mountains, though the knee
Chides in its socket and the back is tugged to the left
At every step. Though the warped body
Chokes out much talk on the way, lame men may climb mountains.

Women with bad teeth may bear children,
Though the stab clangs sharper when the gritting time comes. Though
Their smile stains the cult of Mother when
They croon and coo, women with bad teeth may bear children.

Man has made tools. See the clever crutch
And the artful denture, and know how the mountain goats
Vault from the steep, how the beavers crunch
Hard bitter wood into comfort and a tender home.

Man has made tools. But if the limb spurns
Aid, if the cracked tooth is set on wearing its own pain
Like a wreath, then the wiser mind turns
From the besieged peak and the splintered crib, conserves breath.

And when age comes, the wound will throb less,
Renunciation will taste less gall on the withered
Tongue. And when death comes, this scar may bless
Your dying even, like the compromise of a saint.

SOLITAIRE

I used to feel guilty
because I liked you
so much better

than bridge or gin rummy
or chess even.
You seemed such a waste.

But now, though omission
makes up half our sins,
I take you easy,

knowing this harm
is violence only
to the imagination,

a unifying loss.
I lay out the tableau,
its pattern of chances

the probable winner.
You keep me true,
as responsible as if

my hand were a god's
arranging for his godhead
this black on red on black.

David Steingass

CROSSROADS

Three tourist cabins fall to dry rot
behind a panhandle cafe. A screen door
plops on its face, like a bass
falls back in a pool of sunset; as though a man
stuns his boot on the doorsill, trying to catch his
heart before it bursts.

A tabby tiptoes through fresh snow. I watch
a shotgun riddle her into a furry sieve of blood.
Poppies bloom from her ears.
Pronghorn antelope plunge into the cafe walls
clear to their Adam's apples.

They see the failure of their horns' wishbone tines
to reach an even branch, their glass
paperweights of eyes amazed
as though they turn astonished cretins.

The cross hairs gauntlet of highways
pierces four horizons.
The wind imagines tree leaves,
spending the day soothing their edges.
Small dust tornados march in random columns.
Farm ponds look like consommé, their water red
far down, like paper slashes.

Debora Greger

IN THE COUNTRY

What is the difference between a knife and the moon?
The knife is older.
What is round as the wind?
The rocks it carries.
What is on the other side of the moon?
Things we have forgotten.
What do the trees whisper at night?
"Nothing, nothing." We do not understand them.
What comes after falling asleep?
Dreams of falling awake.
When will the falling stop?
When there is no more air.
When will the birds come back?
When we forget them.
What hides behind the wind?
The one afraid to fly.
Who saves tears?
The one who keeps his eyes closed.
What is left to eat?
The rocks. The moon. Cut them with the knife.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A POLICE
REPORT AND A POEM

1. Police

They are tall as timbers, broad
as houses in the setting sun,
sea fog, or the cooling offshore
breeze. The continent, ancestral amphibian,
slopes out of the sea
for the first bitter breath of gas.

Sea weed, wrack, sand
& the permanent line change of wave

Their forests are endless, dry
needles point their way to streams.

2. The Machinery of Captivity

Leaden they march, leaning
inward, seeking smaller circles,
the rise and fall of sirens;
the structures of their myth
become dogmatic, dark blue.

Swamp gas, epicenters, the turgid
circles of the rockbending ripples

Their gloves are white
in the noonday sun.

3. Secondary Indications

Colors: green and brown, green and brown
the growth rate of certain crystals
bands of feathered flesh, a quality
of light

blindness as a metaphor

armatures, diodes, resistors
and capacitors, the rheostat
formation of variables

GOD = 3RD LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS

His arms are spirals (he is weaving)
in a kind of supernatural
stillness—lifted high through
several shades of meaning.

What he does is a kind of counting.
His eyes are cryogenic,
his ears are paraboloid, sensing
the pulse of inner arithmetic.

He is vibrating minutely
in and out of time. His language
is unknown to us, its multiphasic range
too broad, its phrasing untimely.

To him, abstractions are
negentropic (he is weaving);
he is weaving, layer after
layer, the principles of the binary star,

the majestic excitement of the supernova,
the hermaphroditic earthworm,
subtle shades of infrared, heat death
of the universe, variations

on chemical cruelty. His parameters
are infinite, parallel, his force
is in tongue and finger, his feet
are planted firmly in the perverse.

THE LESSON

for my mother

All for the sake of art
 you left me there.
 Those unscuffed shoes,
 the unaccustomed tie
 and forelock damply kept back
 from the forehead,
 were preparation for the sacrifice.
 Her cave was walled
 in pictures of her demons
 (Bach in his wig, Beethoven grim with anger),
 perfumed by brew that bubbled in her teacup;
 and black boxed like a fallen harp
 her instrument of torture
 grinned its mottled teeth
 where for a trebled hour
 I flinched my fingertips
 among dark tongues
 that thrust to trip me up.
 Behind me that evil stepmother hovered
 while whole notes split to halves, to quarters,
 to hemi-demi-semi-quavers of panic.
 And yet I learned that witches' magic,
 mastered my fear
 and soon became apprenticed
 to worlds beyond your gentle knowledge.
 Mother, who once abandoned me,
 the price we've paid for such desertion
 are all these songs
 I conjure up from practice,
 the wild notes flung that set to words
 the space between us.

CUTTING LOOSE

This night as you slept
 I cut the mooring of our house.
 I saw the rope drag limply,
 the neighbor's house fade
 like a falling moth,
 and sidewalk, last tether
 to our street, slipping sideways
 to sink without a sound.

I lay in bed beside your sleeping form
 half waking to the crescent moon
 that dangled in the window panes,
 the lapping up along the walls,
 and thump of unmanned tiller.

Tomorrow when you wake, my love,
 our breakfast will be shared
 with flutters and cries of purple birds
 and lacings of nameless leaves.
 No children will shriek their way to school,
 no paper will be humdrum on our doorstep
 and if we turn the radio on
 the voice will drop its liquid vowels on stone.

Backwards, where we were,
 they'll pause to stare
 at one frayed end of rope
 and deep hole of departure.
 The district attorney will take his notes
 and then they'll back and fill,
 trying to smooth such dangerous desertion.

At night the neighbors touch their ropes
 and in the basement, hone their rusted knives.

THE SHOT

for David Perkins

"Why look'st thou so?"—"With my crossbow
I shot the Albatross."

If he could have taken ship again,
Watched the cobalt veins of the white clouds,
The sliding wrinkle of the planet's skin
Come ever on, swung at the mainmast's tip
Like a bell on the ringing waves, and watched
The seabirds spiral down as in a well,

If he could have, he would not, of course—
All that glanced over in a line or two:
Weeks of good weather worth no comment,
Unless that on the edge of days shaped
Perfectly as a bubble a slight mist
Teased the corner of one eye. Looking back

It was the good days he resented most:
The sun rising on the left like a carpenter's plumb,
Sinking on the right as the captain walked the deck
Puffing at every third step on his pipe.

Then the storm came: How well he remembered
His nerves crawling with lightning along the ropes,
No time to think, the deck usually a wall,
The air foul in the hold where he huddled
Tingling with rope-burns, almost glad,
Against backs shivering and wet as his own.

Now the cold, and the floating ice
Misshapen as his thoughts. Majestic, strange,
The enormous bird, still as iced sails
Big with moon or, landing and cavernously
Shrugging off the world, its eye upon him.

Daily it made a dizzy play catching
Food in the air or coming among the silly crew
With hubbub of wings. It drew the moment out,
Gliding in narrow circles about the ship.
He never could recall just when he shot.

THE JOURNEY

for Erwin P. Rudolph, Sr. and Jr.

That journey took us along rivers draining in black swamps
up cliffs of rotting purple stone
through cities where each whisper startled its ghost

to castles where white weeds
scraped and hissed in the dungeons
and dust writhed at the top of the stairs

across oceans whose monotonous wrinkles
drove the crew mad, whose horrors
spawned under a bladdery sun.

When the weather turned we were sorry
begrudging our skins their returning color.
Our minds at first refused the simple air

the green hill's poisonous innocence
and cliffs white as flowers the waves bore to them.
Restlessly we paced the lean-cheeked ship.

One morning we woke later than usual
none having kept watch. The air was rich
with those things we'd denied our hearts

compressed by disaster. Trees broke
the horizon quiet and sharp. There was a shining
among the trunks. Some heard singing. Then . . .

words! words! a chaffing of landward gulls.

Robert Peterson

A STORY

The note asking for locks & tokens was signed "a fair maiden."
You addressed me as Archie Moore, said I reminded you
of Memorial Day rodeos.

I followed you home chewing my Calling Card
Shot it as Spitball through your quick window
propped open with 2 packets of French beans.

First saw you
trying to jimmy an empty news-rack
with an eyebrow pencil.

You seemed to belong to a season
of the last snows. I thought of spring water in tin cups,
Hannibal, & the sophisticated sounds of linotype machines.

We agreed to meet the first day of sun & wind.
You dyed all your skirts to match my cowboy hat
stained with the sweat of rope-tricks & whale-watching;

Cleaned your canary, who renewed his membership.
Relived your arboreal life, rushed to the roof
crying "Eisenstein!"

Meanwhile the war went on though some of the wounded
recovered. But the day finally came. We met as planned
beneath my great painting "Philadelphia."

What was there to do? Built a boat, which we sold.
Then a bed. But preferred to sleep on our leaflets.
Became overnight revolutionaries & organized debates.

Where did we want to go? But that was impossible.
The pyramids had not yet been built.
Nor had passports been invented.

In spite of our urges, conversation languished.
Even wearing your Sleeping Princess curtains were you bored.
So we renounced Garments. A bird flew listlessly through them.

Meanwhile some thieves were apprehended, rapists sent to therapy,
Senators decayed, & a famous battleship sank in shallow water.
One child was executed for the crime of paraplepsy.

Time went on. Philadelphia was founded, Rome burned, Archie
Moore
went to Australia, Rome was rebuilt, Captain Bligh became
Charles Laughton.

We discovered an Alp. You wove a rug of the shape & color
of your shadow in love cast by hobo candles
against the glacier

While I exercised
with window-sash weights stolen
from medieval outhouses.

The dawns passed through us like dull swords.
We spoke of camel-riding & constitutional law & wept
into the benthonic eye of a dying sea turtle.

An Umpire arrived with a decipherable message from Houdini.
The ice melted as we polished our chains.
A Pterodactyl nested in the invisible web that bound us.

But a day came when I found you in bed
seeming to belong to a season of the last snows.
This was an alibi I could not accept.

Now I am back in the hatband.
And you have your cathedral, & wild horses forever.
This is your map of the treasure.

Bruce Berlind

PASTORAL

*"A 46-year old Ash Mill sheep farmer
has shot himself. . . . The North Devon
coroner, Mr. Brian Hall-Tomkin, recorded
that Mr. Stone took his own life while
the balance of his mind was disturbed."
—news item*

There is something on the landscape neither lamb nor calf.
When I look it is there, when I turn away
it is there still.
It is a configuration on my mind, the landscape
is my mind's rolling map.

I stalk it I trample it, my mind.
But I am not alone, it is grazed on
by others.
The tireless imperturbable jaws
graze with a sound of gears stripping.

A cow has given birth, but look!
Her muzzle smears with foam,
she convulses,
the limp umbilicus trails obscenely where she falls.
Magnesium! Magnesium!

A week-old lamb lies dead,
crows have made off with its eyes.
But lo! how it lives, its skin
is wrapped on another lamb
which suckles the dead one's mother.

A cheat! A cheat!
The balance of the landscape is disturbed.
There are atrocities beyond imagining.
It rumbles and tilts, it writhes.
Beware! Beware of the landscape!

Robert Herz

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF DON JUAN

They came to me when I lived in the capital.
Limping in and out of my house
like pigeons, half-asleep,
they said they were searching
for bright objects, pieces
of chipped blue glass, clean bones
and the like to hold up against the city.

I let them have whatever they wanted,
these friends. And soon they came
to resemble each other, one man
following himself again and again into my house.
I had no privacy, I gave up shame, I watched
the white ribs of hatred and envy grow
until they stood open in their eyes.
And finally one morning I could not
find myself anywhere in the house.

Now I hold a black wind in my hands,
I let the ground tend to its own wounds.
Past and future mean nothing to me.
I have my own occupations for which
nothing else will serve me.
I do not eat or drink or propagate,
I sleep only at distances,

I wait for the night to settle down in the front yards
and nestle in the pantry alongside the beige crockery.
Inside their long Victorian nightgowns
the women begin to touch themselves and drift
toward mirrors and windows
with a shrug which says, I,
I myself alone, and which means: Anybody.
And then I come.

Felix Pollak

GINKGO

Tall and slender, it shaded the temple gardens of Yü,
and Siddhartha Gautama saw its sparse irregular branches
weird in the moonlight.
It knew Homer and Ptolemy, Michelangelo and Shakespeare,
and Goethe wrote one of his minor poems about it,
comparing its clefted leaf with the duality (ach!) of
his soul. (My grandmother pressed a ginkgo leaf
between the appropriate pages of his *Gesammelte Werke*.)

Silver apricot, the maidenhair tree, a "living fossil,"
ginkgo, gingko, ginkgo, jinkgo, jingko, jingko,
the sole arboreal survivor from geologic time, surviving
wherever, deciduous and gymnospermous, meaning, it annually
sheds these small, tight-grained, semi-fused or semi-parted
open-fan yellow leaves, and that its seeds are naked,
it comes in male and female. But only the male is desirable
for planting: the female, while producing a fruit whose kernel
"is highly esteemed by Asiatics as a food," produces also
the surrounding pulp that is, sorry to say,
"very foul-odored."

Look closely at this leaf: Lao-tzu's eyes
must have rested upon its identical twin, Alexander's troops
(joking ribald at the sexual smells of their far-away women)
must have smelled that fruity stench and eaten those oval pits.

Ginkgo biloba: found "missing link between flowering plants
and ferns": survival is the ultimate virtue.

Dennis Trudell

FOR THE PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC

It is 11:20 A.M. They have returned
from coffee and exaggerations and are retyping
their previous afternoon. They have stopped the assassination
of referees now, the place kick still hits
the crossbar on Sunday's television and they are selling
shirts and ties. Are assigning detention,
are hoisting the automatic rifle, having flicked
the cigarette at the Kentucky frost; they shuffle
out of diners with a final obscenity
that fails to lighten the fact of seven hours
to Huntington. They replace the phone
and face the substance crossing the rug
from the loose diaper.

The most hapless
of bus-catchers has arrived by now, is bent
over the blueprint plaza; the carnivore of thighs
has retreated to its cave, they are ready to dictate
as though their secretaries are hydrants. They
have reopened bank windows and box offices; the telegrams
from Spokane are getting through. Library books
are being processed—whunk! whunk!: the due bills
are exchanged for faulty toasters. They are not
trading recipes or discovering erogenous zones,
most of them; they are shaving metal or mixing
heroin with sugar. Only a few are swimming.
All of them keep sucking their lone mountain
of breath.

Sandra Stone

EVERY DAY BUT YESTERDAY:
CATALOGUE AND COURSE DESCRIPTION*

*Note: Each student must provide his own hole and a pocket to put it in

On the fourth day of April the lesson is Elemental Attrition
beginning with the buffeting of raindrops;
the dry pale silence of smiles that seeing,
hold themselves in check; hands that wait;
allemandes that alternate with liquorice
consternations; spun sugar courtesies;
tinker toy constructions

Required: no equivalents

Then if ever, early June wavers in the grasses
the clouds are not calamitous, stars dangle on the wheat
Lilac and Wisteria, Honeysuckle dreams

There will be no regression

Summer is the fallow time
sun drifts and daisies and
river trailing vines; apple cores

There will be no comprehension

For the fifth day of Fall, credit is offered in Preliminary Mazes
the elements of mystery are examined in three dimensions;
the relevancy of hedging; walls, both anterior and ulterior;
all tunnels, all burrows; the strategy of connections
No prerequisite; compulsory

In Winter, all day December, the class is Fundamental Atrophy
a germinal course on the measurement of windfall;
study, evaluation and application of control techniques;
some charting of the dynamics of the bruises
of snowflakes

Progress reports at intervals
by certified technician
Upper level credit to those
with sufficient evidence

Next term:

"Can These Raging Bones Survive?"

Joan Hobbs

Two Poems

...TELEGRAM FROM UNMOTHER...

help stop radical chick not dead stop these words on wall stop
today rain turned to hailstones size of eggs stop am alone with
no umbrella stop step over fragmented shells embryos on pavement
dazed stop easter again so why this plague stop chicks rabbits
multiplying stop eggs rolling crazy over earth stop clouds clearing
show hole poked in sky stop who's in charge here stop we'll be
sucked out stop painted stars stripes theosophic polkadots stop
dye your hair blue stop paste newsprint on bellies stop send help
c.o.d. stop cassandra

THE LAP

His type of lap at first appears inviting. Offered a choice
between this lap, for instance, and a large maroon and blue
bolstered watercouch complete with fish-scales and that certain
sense of slime, or this lap, for example, and a great furred
feel-in experience—not a seat, but the sitting experience itself,
captured alive just for you—; given such alternatives ladies
invariably select the lap, which is, in fact, warm, masculine,
and comfortably non-flammable.

But while in winter his habits are inoffensive and even subtly
pleasing (with the beard tickling the nape of one's neck and so
forth), in summer it seems to offend ladies peculiarly that on
their white tummies and breasts, birdseed trickles from his
fingertips.

UNMINED

So much untold,
So much known and unsaid,
Has gone beneath the ground
With the dead,
That veins like gold
Must run unanalyzed
Among the stones and sand,
The reaching root be surprised
By something freed from the hand.

WINTERKILL

The winterkill
Can hurt the heart too deeply for the spring
To heal or cheer.
There is no solace in the greening hill
Where thin blades of the dogtooth violets stab
Through the white rib cage of the deer.

WATERS OF THE STONE

Full-banked the river sings.
Above it rimrock hollows hold the rain;
The water colored by the lichen stain
Is drunk by furtive things.

These know the heights alone;
Although the shining river glides below,
They look with wondering eyes upon its flow
And drink the bitter waters of the stone.

THE REDUCTION OF WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT

You were the cheapest,
less per word
than bird or clown,
though still cut down
straight to the anapests

by the brittle old lady
at the top of the stairs
to the mezzanine,
whose vicious scissors
have their own ways

of coping with inflation.
She knows what that does
to pipes, pantries,
panties, porticoes,
and poets of sensational

skill but little sales.
Worn down and thin,
you cost but ninety-nine,
a severe bargain,
but more than SNAILS:

A PICTORIAL LIFE HISTORY,
which says, I suppose,
a good poet endures as well
as those who ooze
through life's glossy story.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY

riding with dead men in convertibles
the top down in the mean heat
getting sick in the back seat
not stopping dead men driving
north
south south north
straight ahead

lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees

straight ahead
capitals of the world
capitals of artichoke
capitals of lettuce
capitals of walnut
capitals of peach
not stopping in morgan hill
not stopping in hollister tracy
gilroy king city soledad
not stopping in salinas
for cherry pie
and black coffee strong enough
to stand up straight
north
south south north

and the soldiers
the mud tightening around their boots
holding them to the ground
holding them fast
in the white sun

six feet apart
the soldiers stand
on this side of the road
on that side of the road
on this side of the road
on that side of the road

armies of my eye
armies of my teeth
straight shooters
driving straight
no tolls no turns
we salute and salute
and salute and salute

lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees
lemon trees lemon trees lemon trees

SOMETHING ABOUT TEA AGAIN

We wait for morning
The mad child who lives
in her hair
digs at her temples
with a salty little spoon
It was washed up by the storm

The child shakes her doll
The plastic eyes roll wildly
in the ragmop head

The smiling idiot stands outside
the Syrian cheese store
watching the plastic pennants
invent the wind

We make love
We make tea

The smiling idiot stands
in the doorway with open arms
If she jumps she falls through

I love her
(says he loves her)
We drink tea
(something about tea again)
We wait for morning
(and so forth and so forth)

William McLaughlin Three Poems

COMMITMENT

The Sibyl of Shaker Heights makes out
Like a cannibal. Loving the scent of
My skin, she laces me with her saliva
And nearly draws one tortured soul out
Through the pores. Our arrangement—
Her great wealth for my body—includes
Her right to consume me, ultimately.
When I slipped and lost the left ear,
She ate it wrapped in lettuce leaves;
And her prophecy that I'd sever a leg
Ended in my presenting it to her
Roasted for Christmas, a seasoned gift!
Now I've succumbed to her predictions,

And though the Rolls awaits my use
She warns me daily against leaving bed.
O she has me there, she has me, counting
My teeth with her tongue, assuring herself
I haven't cheated with the dentist.
Who'd have thought finally and in the end
She'd have me entire; but the fact that
Some sibyls live for a thousand years
No one told me, no one ever told me.

RENEWAL

Someone said "Let's,"
so the razing began.
Greek egg and dart
from under cornices

struck my chest; Roman
acanthus, pulverized,
clogged the nostrils.
My Old Victorian Home

swayed in gothic shock
accusingly, its eyes
bitter with dark fire.
Don't blame me I said

I only live here y'know.
Yet by the time mind had
unloaded its gewgaws,
I saw my own curves

mocked in glass and
chrome panels rising
so functionally vertical,
plumb as a madhouse.

IF WE CAN JUST GET THE STANDARD OF LIVING UP
MANLINESS WILL GO OUT OF STYLE

Avoid being cast on a desert island with me.

I will not share its provender,
nor halve a washed-up fish
down the backbone—
if I have the power to overcome you.

Better, join me in the world of abundance,
and though you would extirpate my eyes
I'll raise no fist (I think)
but weep
with the power to overcome you.

In the land of the half-assed they fight
(have turned the cheeks too often)
have lost through full manliness
protecting
what's theirs as power to overcome.

Let us send females to the bargaining table;
they will make it into a festival
of wanton open loving
free for all:
plenty has the power to overcome us.

I know a man who thought deeply about heroics,
until he decided his inner monologue
was a stream of grossness
so unnecessary
he overcame himself.

Philip Booth

Two Poems

A DREAM OF RUSSIA

On the Trans-Siberian
Railroad, far
east of the Urals, years
before the last war,
the east-bound train
cranked to a stop
in the absolute
middle of nowhere.

We all got out.

It was high summer,
it must have been June,
in that labored cut
through the low
hills somewhere
west of Omsk; the fields
were full of buttercups.

A conductor, tipping
his cap, came up to tell us
the last car had a hotbox;
the axle of the last truck was,
in fact, burnt out. It would take
an hour to fix,
perhaps two hours.

The men smoked.
They stood at ease on
the roadbed; the women
climbed up the bank
into pastures.

Somebody in authority
must have telegraphed
ahead, perhaps
to Omsk, or back
to someone he knew
in Moscow.

The men walked back,
alongside the track
as they smoked, to inspect
the burnt-out truck.
It had melted all right, the cap-
end of the axle, melted
beyond repair.

We waited under that empty
Russian sky for more
than an hour, while
the hotbox-end of the axle
cooled from redhot
to lukewarm. Men spat on it,
or patted it, to tell;
they made bets. But nobody
seemed to doubt that help
would eventually come.

It came all right! Oh it
came: a blur
becoming four men, rolling
in front of them—up
the long track behind us—
a widening great steel axle,
a new axle and two new wheels, welded
as one.

While we cheered them on,
and the train whistle blew
from the engine-end, the women
returned to the top of the cut,
standing with hiked-up skirts against

the near horizon,
humming some Russian song.

Then the conductor
directed the men,
perhaps a hundred men,
to lift
the last car.

They heaved and did it,
swearing great oaths,
as though they were moving
heaven and earth.

He held them there, they
held the car,
for the crucial minute,
conducting in that same dialect
he must have sent
by telegraph. And while
they held, men moved out
the old axle; and those four men from
somewhere back toward the Urals
rolled in the new one. Then
the conductor gave
his signal; they let down easy, and
there she was!

All this was years
before the last war, somewhere
east of the Urals.
I tell you that train-whistle blew while
the men climbed back aboard,
and we got ready to start toward
the east again
on the Trans-Siberian
Railroad: toward
Omsk and Lake Chany and,
in another week,
Vladivostok.

It had taken exactly two hours.

Oh, when that whistle blew,
the women came down from
the railroad bank
and the long pastures
behind them; they pelted
the axle-pushers with skirts'-full
of buttercups, with what looked like
daisies, and with summer-
hundreds of
native Russian flowers.

WEAR

I hate how things wear out.

Not elbows, collars, cuffs;
they fit me, lightly frayed.

Not belts or paint or rust,
not routine maintenance.

On my own hook I cope
with surfaces: with all

that rubs away, flakes off, or fades
on schedule. What eats at me

is what wears from the in-
side out: bearings, couplings,

universal joints, old
differentials, rings,

and points: frictions hidden
in such dark they build

to heat before they come
to light. What gets to me

is how valves wear, the slow
leak in old circuitry,

the hairline fracture under
stress. With all my heart

I hate pumps losing prime,
immeasurable over-

loads, ungauged fatigue
in linkages. I hate

myself for wasting time
on hate: the cost of speed

came with the guarantee;
the rest was never under

warranty. Five years
ago I turned-in every

year; this year I rebuild
rebuilt parts. What hurts

is how blind tired I get.

About Our Contributors

EUGENE RUGGLES, who lives in San Francisco, won our Helen Bullis Prize in 1969.

GWEN HEAD of Seattle was co-winner of our Helen Bullis Prize in 1968.

HENRY TAYLOR, now teaching at American University in Washington, D.C., has published two books of poems: *The Horse Show at Midnight* (1966) and *Breakings* (1971).

RAEBURN MILLER teaches at Louisiana State University in New Orleans.

DAVID STEINGASS, who lives in Sorrento, Maine, has just finished an appointment at the MacDowell Colony.

DEBORA GREGER lives in Richland, Washington.

ROB SWIGART is a graduate student at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

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ROBERT SIEGEL lives in Hanover, New Hampshire.

ROBERT PETERSON is currently living in Taos, New Mexico.

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ROBERT HERZ is a graduate of the Writing Program at Hobart College.

FELIX POLLAK teaches at the University of Wisconsin.

DENNIS TRUDELL is currently visiting poet at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland.

SANDRA STONE lives in Portland, Oregon.

JOAN HOBBS is a graduate student in French literature at Oberlin College. This is her first publication.

CLARICE SHORT teaches at the University of Utah whose Press will publish her first book of poems soon.

DAVID JEDDIE SMITH has just left active duty with the U.S. Air Force. His second book of poems will be published by Basilisk Press this year.

ROBERT HERSHON's latest book of poems, *Grocery Lists*, will be published soon by The Crossing Press.

WILLIAM McLAUGHLIN lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

PHILIP BOOTH, who teaches at Syracuse University, won our Theodore Roethke Prize in 1970.

News for Contributors

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