

# WINTER CONSTELLATIONS

by  
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Ahsahta Press

Boise State University  
Boise, Idaho

Some of these poems have appeared in:

***Georgia Review, Graham House Review, Greensboro Review, Hiram Poetry Review, New Collage, Poem, Poetry Northwest, Pod Townsend Journal, Southern Review, and Young North American Poets (Spring Rain Press).***

Editor for Ahsahta Press: Dale K. Boyer

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Third Printing, April 1988

ISBN 0-016272-05-02

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:  
77-72388

For Edward J. Blessing and Richard P. Adams

*'Now my son is another poet, fathers,  
I can go on living. I was afraid once  
Four loving fathers meeting together  
Would be a cold day in hell.'*

James Wright



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# Introduction

Richard Blessing is a very gifted, deeply thoughtful, and increasingly skillful poet whose most apparent qualities are a firm control of diction, a rare ability to sing, a sense of humor which he sustains even in front of mirrors, and a persuasive amiability of tone and voice.

He is a man to listen to closely because he seems to me to be getting better in every way, every year, a rare characteristic in American poets of any age.

*David Wagoner*  
University of Washington  
May 12, 1977





# Wishing West

An ambiance of amber light on snow,  
goose-dappled dawn, pale stars above the sea—  
I wish a west and west begins to grow.

I weave of rain a name and naming go  
till crashing on the cloudspun cliffs I see  
ripe ambiance of amber light on snow.

I whisper seaward rivers' sunflecked flow,  
say yes to deer until deer come to be  
and wishing west find west begins to grow.

East of that west with wandering steps and slow  
I drop redwood dominions tree by tree  
deep valleys down from peaks of amber snow

and naming winds find hemlocks start to blow.  
I shout bright myriad birds then set them free  
and wishing west find west begins to grow.

I speak these geese and stars and find them so.  
Here in Ohio's twilight towns I see  
an ambiance of amber light on snow  
and wish a west and west begins to grow.

## Father's Song

Summers my long arm hummed your song:  
*Nobody loves you when you lose.*  
Good days I threw baseballs so fast  
they could pass through shut windows  
without disturbing glass.  
Nobody loved me when I won.  
You taught the only song I've known,  
and no one hated you.  
*They never saw me.* you said, when I asked.  
Old artificer, father, coach.  
you kept yourself the slickest trick of all.  
Did you lie upside down on a wooden rack,  
your skinny ankles taped,  
and imitate a bat?  
Did you blow pipe smoke out  
till you turned blue  
to float off as a cloud?  
Did everyone see through  
you then but me?  
Father, these days I lose and lose  
and you were right,  
no one loves me.  
Come back. Teach me that dipsy-doo,  
your phantom double-play.  
Make me invisible like you.

## Letter from Seattle

Mother, salmon are lost by the thousands.  
Sea birds turn like bells  
in a steeple of winter. The rain  
lies down with the snow, whispers  
*daughter, daughter, my only love.*  
Nothing endures. Not the naming of sorrows,  
the stars falling from the bough of dark.  
Blackberries tangle my yard like wire,  
like the story of our lives. Geese  
are fading in the sky. My astrologer  
says I will not last, that my son  
loves me, but is often afraid. I follow  
myself wherever I'm going. Will you believe me  
if I sign this

Always,

## Seventieth Summer

That summer, his seventieth, he walked  
the edge of town in a suit of rain.  
He thought of his brother who was dead  
and of his brother who was dead.  
It was something heavy he carried  
like a star near his heart.  
Like a star and like shrapnel  
in the shape of a star.  
It was hard to have been the last  
for so long. His death kept breathing  
in him like a fingerless baby.  
He wanted to open his mouth and shout,  
to let it out in the woods  
where animals went along with their dying.  
The happiness of others grew  
behind him like a wall. He wanted  
to lay himself down at the  
gates like a seige. He wanted the city  
never to surrender.

## To My Father

Father, it is your time for holding on,  
that strategy of die-hard leaves in cold,  
of pine-crossed stars that glint against the dawn.  
The hardest is to see your son grows old.

Last night my son's voice asked me, as I slept,  
"Daddy, when I grow up, will you grow down?"  
I answered with your voice. I woke and wept.  
I grow both ways at once, father and son.

We reap the seeds of fruit that we have sown;  
Father, all growing up is growing down.

# The Winter Maker

He is seventy now, and blind.  
He forgets he is the winter maker,  
thinks he is old man, like any other.

He looks out at the stubbled snowfields  
south of Buffalo and misses nothing much.  
When light refuses to enter his eyes,

he chews it like shoe leather, spits it out  
above the steeples and the ice-webbed trees.  
He tells the story of his life backwards,

day by cold day, ugly as factory tools.  
It is one of the ways he turns out winter.  
He feels the winter map of his blood,

the winter chill along impassable arteries.  
That is when sky opens its raw wound,  
and blizzards lean hard from the north.

Cars drift aimless in snow. Heaters stall,  
headlights fail. Then whichever way you walk  
takes you in deeper than the nearest farm.

# Boy Blessing

b. 9/11/68

d. 9/12/68

In the dark turning of the cycle  
the cells ran through their ancient act.  
Dividing, doubling, the quaint folk dance  
of worm, of fish, of snake, of rat—  
the slow progress of eons flying  
like August birds in amber light.

Today we fold and put away  
the practiced syllables of a name—  
we do not spend them on this stone,  
but we shall not take them out again.

## Your Poem

Love, between your reaching life and mine  
all space closes by halves forever.  
You are the tortoise no strong man will catch,  
the angel vanishing at the eye's quick edge.  
Today the stars cry out like blackening leaves;  
tomorrow are stillborn our miraculous children.  
I am afraid to taste the sound of your name,  
afraid of the light that rims your shadow.  
Love, there are those who arrive by saying good-bye.  
I will open the door if no one is home.  
If no one is home, I will walk in a little,  
leaving the dark in the way that I find it,  
leaving my kiss like a note on the table.  
Deeper and deeper I step into your absence  
like a silence on the roof in a season of rain.



# To the Lady in the Expensive Coat, Suede Boots

*Supermarket, 1974*

I eye you like champagne or caviar—  
things tasteful people like. What is it  
I want from you? Nothing like love.  
The sun this northwest winter hangs  
lacquered and white above the icy lakes.  
more warm than you. Yet down these packaged aisles  
I follow—what? I am like some constant priest  
keeping a ritual his father's father half believed.  
It is not so fine a thing as lust. Adorned  
and scented, you mock the fox, the seal,  
the thrashing thicket and all that slippery play.  
Something more sinister than play, is it the mask  
beneath all masks I want, the mother's face,  
the bearded woman sleeping in my sleep?

# To the Man in the Other Car, Who Wanted to Fight

12/24/73

*There are crazies out there,* says my wife,  
and it is true. What were you, brother?  
The mistaken prescription? The dark pill?  
The rusty blade in the Halloween apple?  
The bullet sleeping careless in the empty gun?  
Probably not so much. A flatter nose. At worst,  
an eye closed. Or were you a present to myself,  
a set of weights to make miracles ripple,  
a male extension that would never fail,  
the magic oyster to be opened, to be eaten,  
preserve my body and soul until your coming again?  
Brother, I have unmanned us both. I drive nowhere  
back down these empty streets, a crazy,  
out here, out there, looking for you.

## Winter Luck

Someone has built a lodge  
by the river. Smoke rises  
against the rain. Someone  
has nailed a raven wing  
by wing, to an aspen stump.  
It is a sign of nothing  
good: famine, more rain.  
the raven doesn't say.  
Someone has run the river  
into winter luck. Otter,  
muskrat, beaver, give birth  
to furry stones. Rain  
turns to smoke as it falls,  
lies down too black to rise.  
When salmon sail out, someone  
slams the future behind them.  
Fern is the tallest green  
for days.

At dusk the raven  
calls a council of shadows.  
He says nothing, like a sack  
of black feathers. Shadows  
know what to do. They  
deepen, surround the lodge.  
Someone dreams of a woman.  
Shadows eat her up.  
Someone dreams of a son,  
and shadows eat him up.  
When no one is left, his hair  
sits up in bed. Rain and night,  
those black, ravenous wings,  
hook bony claw and lip deep  
into lodge poles, break back  
the skins, teach anyone  
who's left to prey.

## Another Birthday Poem

It is an island, this September  
where alders let fall light down  
among blue fern. I have come round  
again. The day stops like footprints  
waiting to be filled. This wind  
is old roof and the house rises  
above me one more time. Today  
is the day of thresholds and latches.  
Today is the day that keeps blessing  
my name. Sky sharpens its colder edge  
and the lake hides a deeper lake  
elsewhere. Sun hangs fire in a stand  
of fir. Today I turn with the earth,  
the way it goes, as if it goes no way  
at all. My seasons fall away. Tomorrow  
is nothing but the earth's turn.

## The Rest of My Life

The river arrives  
like a procession  
of shadows. Snow  
builds a cottage  
of snow. Inside  
a woman stares  
in the long glass  
of winter. Dusk  
keeps taking her  
in like a sleeve.  
The rest of my life  
blows in her room  
like sheets of paper.  
Her shadow listens  
in glass, bends,  
begins to write.  
She writes the rest  
of my life, day  
after day. She writes  
tomorrow from memory.  
White wind hides pages  
one by one. My life  
is thin, is thinner.  
Still her shadow  
listens, bends, writes.  
What she forgets  
is what never happens.  
What she remembers  
arrives like a river  
of shadows.

## Lines for Her Leaving

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

# Last House

This is your last house. How sad you are.  
You have pressed out fresh darkness to hang in the closet,  
stored your good hours in an air-tight vault.

Which room will gouge the last glass of your eyes?  
Will you tumble like a pie tin to the kitchen linoleum?  
Be found in the nude above the bathroom pool?

Maybe the den will smother you with flushed paper roses  
or the stairs to your room will walk up your heart.  
The bed you have dreamed on has been measuring your shadow.

It is sad when children laugh under windows, when trees on the lawn  
bloom ruddy as lions.  
It is sad to have come to the last house and know it.

The carpet will deepen like a pond filled with lilies  
or your chair will drop you like a hangman's trap.  
What does it matter? You walk in and walk in and you never walk out.

# The wives have all gone away.

Rain is falling  
as we write this down.  
How green October is!  
How loudly snow rings  
in the passes above Port Angeles!  
The wives have all gone away.  
They have left a million dishes  
and ruby cigarette butts  
and many used Kleenex  
and a note saying  
they have left no note.  
They have taken the children  
and something else that feels  
like the air from our lungs.  
They have gone all away.  
Rain falls. We talk  
to beautiful women.  
They look like our wives  
and we tell them this,  
but when we have told them,  
it is no longer true.  
Too beautiful is less  
with the children gone,  
yes, and the something else,  
not air we think,  
but the cord of the spine  
or the muscles of the thigh.  
We write letters,  
hoping to win them back.  
We state the problem:  
*The wives have all gone away.*  
We offer amnesty:  
*Come back, come back.*  
*It will all be different now.*



We tie the letters  
to the legs of birds  
and they fly away  
and the mountains receive them.  
They do not return.  
The beautiful women  
look as if they know  
and laughter, children's laughter, corners in the wind.  
More rain. More messages.  
None of us knows how many  
we are. The list goes on  
for days and there is only  
one name, again and again,  
like the shades of October  
or the sound the snow makes,  
that huge bell-sound,  
name and name and name  
over green Port Angeles.  
*All love, we sign, All love.*

# What I Know by Heart

I know your address by heart.  
I write *Dear Occupant*:

You said one day you'd walk into a mirror  
until it pulled out like a train.  
From your window rain is a heavy shadow  
like smoke from an engine miles ahead.

Must I learn the strategy of this light?  
In bed I am out of place with myself,  
like a snake curving on a rich carpet.  
Even my voice brings death. And yours?

Yesterday a ghostly heron rose with a white cry  
from a warped madrona. The lake was wilderness.  
And I thought of you, writing this to me.  
I thought of you, reading this in a rainy light.

Suppose we knew each other by heart.  
Suppose each wrote the same words and read them:  
*Make your body like a rock.*  
*Ten thousand things will break themselves on your life.*  
*No shout will surprise you.*

How our bodies would harden then.  
You could sharpen my sword or bully a giant.  
Together we could mark a trail.  
We would be all the corners of the house.

*Address unknown* is what I know by heart.

*Dear Occupant*, I write. I am dying like a tree  
from the inside out. When the water birds have flown  
I am filled still with the white silence of their cries.

# Raven

The raven lands in a book  
of shadows. The ice tree,  
the flower tree, are one  
to him. He feeds on shadow  
and shadow grows back.  
The nest he builds is a nest  
of shadow. It is dark  
and he wants it darker.  
He turns his head inside  
himself and likes it there.  
It is a secret too dark  
for the bright snowy owl.  
Raven folds feathers outside  
in, night-lands in a tree  
of black ice and flowers.  
Someone is thumbing pages  
to find him. The glare  
is blinding on morning snow.

# Leaving

When you leave you carry yourself like a suitcase  
that matters. You listen to the locks changing  
behind you and say nothing has changed at all.

Isn't this your season, a winter so exact  
the wind warms up for days before it snows?  
Isn't this white sun the color scheme you choose,

the chill that wears you like a pony's winter coat?  
Think of the lives you're burning to survive.  
Think, when you cross that bridge, how gulls

are lining up to be gulls. *I must take my life  
more seriously* is what you write, but how  
can you know? The evergreens are black with cold.

Think how you tried to live without mistakes,  
but sky is a mistake, and water. You fit the house  
behind you when you left and not before.

Tomorrow's another matter, a wrong so constant  
you read it in the mirror right. Meanwhile, this snow  
you think is air packs you like luggage to be carried on.

## 35th Birthday

Presidential age. Your wife's still  
with you, more and less. Your son  
sings HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DADDY MONKEY,  
cracks himself up. And the day is good,  
gusts of sun and leaves, the air ringing  
like a telephone. The way to work  
is trying to be your friend. They've found  
the girls somebody stashed alive  
in the hills. *People are nice, really,*  
the radio says. The lake fills  
with light and your lungs are sails.  
Every day should be like this,  
*italicized*, nobody missing, love  
coming in cards, unsigned, the wind  
blowing smoky kisses. Don't cry.  
People are nice, alive, really, and well.  
Blow out the candles, get your wish.  
The cake you cut gets lighter every year.  
your wife gives you her cheek, your son  
his song and Happy Birthday's happy  
no matter whose. Nothing is changed.  
Your only lasting present is your past.

## Getting It Right

Rain again. You're home. This time you'll get  
it right. The mailbox where you mail your poems  
converts them into instant cash. No deposit.  
no return. Applause. Tomorrow when you make up  
friends, keep the prettiest one for your wife  
She'll live to give you presents, apple dumpling,  
popcorn surprise. Think safe. Make all friends  
girls. No road leads into town. Home's an island  
and only you can swim. Dogs are licensed friendly  
and police will break the thumbs of anyone you say.  
By law the neighbors envy you. They never think  
*Fat, lonely, bald.* Nice people on the phone  
take blame for every failure in your life.  
The news is always good. All precincts in,  
you win, landslides of love like Valentines.  
Write your acceptance speech in lies  
blue-black as rain. This time you'll get  
it right. What's right is what you want.

## Bicentennial Poem

Most accidents happened in the home. This was looked into.  
Accidents are seldom accidental. When our homes were gone,  
we had the streets, but there was crime in the streets.  
Already we had destroyed the woods to keep away the bears  
and wild men who were rumored to live there. Where could we go?  
Violence hung, heavy as rope, from elms in the park.  
Wings circled our shadows with a meat-eating sound.  
Our women began to claw themselves, their nails bleeding  
with a polished gleam. Men sang to drown out screams.  
Our children had been raised on this, like fine powder  
whitening the milk. Bones tore from sockets, turned on bones  
like clubs. Feet stood up for themselves on the toes of feet.  
At last we said: Violence must be met with violence.  
We learned the ropes. To save the circling birds,  
whose purpose remains obscure to us, we killed our cattle,  
hung them from the elms. We bound our women's hands,  
and still their nails gouged. We let the children starve,  
pursued the look of their eyes turning in and in  
until they reached some secret place we dared not follow.  
Shall we forbid songs? Surely the reward for silence is enough.  
These nights in a circle of light we cultivate lament.  
The dark turns inside out. The faces of friends twist in fire.  
Strangers are said to walk among us. Disguised as ourselves,  
they speak our language, but a bit too well. When they smile  
their teeth, their terrible teeth, are twined  
with bloody fingers and with hair.

# Passage

1

For miles the bones cry  
the dry skulls mouthing  
*stay* and *stay*  
making the saddest sound.  
Fingers rattle like sticks  
in the spokes  
of our careless wheels.

2

Crossing mountains at dusk  
we see  
the shapes of darker mountains.  
We lie down in ourselves  
and weep  
remembering houses  
and the shadows of houses.

3

Nightly the mountains sail out  
like owls.  
The stars are blue with snow.  
We sleep in a circle of firelight  
hearing  
beyond the shaggy pelt of dark  
the icy drum of the sea.

4

By day our fear spreads  
like a bruise.  
Over and over we count ourselves.  
We are always one too many  
or one too few.  
When we look back,  
the bones are sharpening the bones.



# The Mailbox

Across the lake  
from his mailbox  
a mountain hangs like a bell.

Nothing is in the box  
but notices  
saying that books are overdue.

He has waited so long  
for a phrase—  
not his own,

but almost his own,  
a broken silence  
with the ring of the mountain,

with something of the lake,  
that swimming light  
still moving among trees,

the sound, say, of a wind  
in earliest morning  
filling the box

with most articulate love,  
some shade of feeling  
passing into speech,

response and more than response,  
a surprise taken  
and taken by.

It is possible,  
or almost so.  
He will never be sure.

Nothing is in the box.  
There is only the earth  
and its wide weather.

the mountain swaying like a bell,  
the lake swimming  
through the summer trees.

## What She Thinks

She says she is thinking exactly nothing.  
Imagine that. At the end of Nebraska, say,  
a church. It is white and flat on the sky.  
You could walk to it for miles and not  
be close. Around it clouds and green corn  
kiss all day. The sun strikes noon  
each hour and the one tree's too far ahead,  
too far behind. These are arrangements,  
unarranged, meaning everything at once,  
arriving nowhere. This is what she thinks.  
When wind thickens, prairie bends,  
you trudge on, believing to the end  
the cut-out steeple's bell clangs invitation,  
not farewell. Nothing. She smiles. Exactly.  
Yet, behind her subtle veil may lie  
the corn-girl, that most earthiest bride,  
or only that woman she intends,  
immaculate and shorn, the promised nun.

# The Children

*in memory of Allison Krause.  
Jeffrey Miller. Sandra Scheuer  
and Bill Schroeder*

At Hiroshima.  
I have heard it said,  
when the black rain ceased  
an old man placed a sign  
among the brutal, sudden flowers.  
It read, "My children, where are you?"

*My children, where are you?*  
I think it is a garden where they are.  
Sundrops fangle with fire the patterned flowers,  
the smoke of summer grazes like blue deer  
and the air is alive with light and far-off bells.  
By night the tireless stars go round upstairs  
like a father putting a drowsy house to sleep.

*My children, where are you?*  
Sometimes they seem much thinner than the wind,  
a memory almost remembered by the very old,  
a house at evening, say, seen once from a train.  
Sometimes they touch me with their heavy eyes,  
but when I turn, there is only twilight there.  
Sometimes I hear the secret words of poems  
whispering in drawers even a father cannot find.

*My children, where are you?*  
I will be honest. I am at times afraid.  
At times the children seem nowhere at all;  
they were so little, and the world is wide.  
It is as if the poem goes round and round,  
the endless words circling to no good end  
like ponies on an empty carousel.  
It is as if a man has left a sign  
for children the wind has blown away.

# First Practices, Midget League

*for Bill Titmus*

Whistles can't keep the sweep in bounds.  
The boys bunch like dwarfed fruit, fall,  
flash like frightened fish, minnow  
and shadow, dimpling September's pool.  
What's being but a tiny violence?  
Noise trails the play like a gangling hound.  
*Find the center!* The coach tries hard.  
*Who's the three back? Where's the one hole?*  
The expensive mothers dream, waiting  
for heroes, not telling all they know.  
I know, I think, the three back is my son.  
(Distinctions blur in distance and dim light.)  
Small matter. Everyone's in motion. I adopt  
them all, decline all penalties, take every gain.  
Games should run longer. No one should lose.  
When someone breaks out, he should go all the way,  
blazing like the sky these northern nights,  
foxfire, flare, quick falling star, and gone.

# Etrafon

*for Jack Brown*

Your doctor gives pills to make life flat.  
That edge you've walked on widens to a field,  
no corners and nowhere out of bounds.  
It is what the sea would be if it were rock,  
if it held nothing in its heavy waves,  
if it moved by inches twice a day.  
It is like the sudden peace a soldier makes  
while his wound blossoms and the war goes on.  
When messages arrive, they can't sneak up.  
You see them coming miles away. The news  
is never new: people are dying and you  
don't care. Yesterday the sharp light  
broke your skin. Today you pull it close,  
your friend, a gray shawl that keeps you warm.  
That test pattern you watch is what you are.  
It never changes and you love that story  
from surprise beginning to surprising end.  
In-between's one note and you're the chorus,  
Hallelujah in too many parts, all flat.  
Hold on that note. Holding is keeping still.

## La Push: Caitlin's Story

The gulls cried *guilty* in the long rain.  
That boat you worked on schemed to let you down,  
and nothing in those Chinook you cleaned loved you.  
Indian girls who handled men like knives  
carved your name *whore* on driftwood gray as hate.  
The dogs never got used to you. All summer  
in your sleep your father's women crept in  
like tides. They looked like you. Whatever game  
that was, you still are it. Those tin shacks  
held out against the rain for years, enough  
to keep you in, to keep me out. I can't resist  
what blades have cut in you, can't tell the truth  
or even tell a lie I don't believe. I'd kill  
them for you if I could—gulls, fish and women,  
your old man too. I'd carve your name for good.  
How loveless stories are, and dark. Just now,  
just now, the sea goes pushing at our mouths.

## Loboland: Gardiner Washington

What is it about wolves? This one's  
almost white. One ear is gone.  
Half his upper lip. Head like a bear  
and two hands wide. The good eye glints  
through twisted wire, eight-fingered keeper,  
through us all. Bison are painted  
on the shadow wall. Wolves bring the dark  
in close. My son hides his face against  
my hip. I've seen these wolves  
from there. How far do fathers grow?  
The math's too hard. I've known  
old men who've splintered like hollow bones.  
I'm wolf myself some. lobo, dying out,  
too mad to count. Halfway to Dungeness  
the howl in me gnaws loose for good,  
pissing on fenceposts everywhere  
my turf, my turf, and gut you if you dare.



## St. Peter's Cemetery: Bainbridge Island

Because the chief was "friend to whites,"  
they named their city after him.  
From his high grave now, through alderwood  
and fir, across the Sound, tourists look back  
at the Sea-First Bank. This burial ground  
is small and will be smaller. Pigroot  
and berryvine, the buttercups, crowd in.  
Whole families are here. One child died  
on Christmas Eve. A brother ten days later.  
Most of the stones lie flat in earth,  
the oldest family, named UNKNOWN.  
I have been founding a city all my life.  
I build it everywhere without a name.  
Today I call the place after its many friends  
Unknown    Unknown    Unknown.

## Mercer Island

Indians thought the island sank each night.  
They are long dead, know better now.  
Nothing could bring this island down,  
not Herfy's, MacDonald's, Fish-n-Chips,  
not Jack-in-the-Box, not Pizza Pete,  
not all the towering doctors' homes,  
the Beautybark, the wood and glass.  
The census shows no Indians. The island  
lifts a bridge to headlights and to stars.  
And yet in dreams Wayne Hackett floats to me,  
drowned at age eight in Penobscot, Maine.  
He plants his weedy kiss across my mouth.  
Mornings the crabgrass crawls on real claws,  
my porch is green with mysterious slime.  
My dog's fur is falling out. Skin shows through,  
scaly and gray. His eyes bulge, jaws seem shorter.  
Somewhere my son has learned to swim.  
Why does my wife wear dresses to the floor?  
What is the song she sings at dusk?  
These nights I fasten doors and windows close,  
sleep on my back, mouth shut, ear-plugs in place.  
I never hear the Indians paddling long canoes,  
the water-sound of circles ring on ring above my roof.

# Winter Constellations

Now the wintriest constellations  
rattle their cold chains  
against my roof.

                                This evening  
I find all I have lost in the sky.

There is the basket I raised for my son  
and there is the net of stars raining down.

There the bright cloud of his mother's hair  
vanishes forever all night long.

North of Lake Washington my father climbs  
ghostly in the hunting fields. His eyes  
are hollows where nothing shines.

He says he has nothing to say to me.

Someone has carved a deer on the wall of moon.

This is the stippled history of desire.  
This is winter and evening, framed by trees.

Tonight the Cascades circle like a well  
where rings like water open out and out  
until they break on that black rock of space  
where the bound princess writhes in links of stars  
and lures the sea-beast up from the sea.



Richard Blessing is currently an Associate Professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle. He was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania on September 11, 1939 and was educated there, at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York (A.B.), where he also won football All-America honors as a quarterback, and at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana (M.A. and Ph.D.). His teaching experience includes work at Heidelberg College, Tiffin, Ohio, and at the University of New Orleans. In addition to poetry, he has published a number of articles and two books of criticism, **Wallace Stevens' "Whole Harmonium"** (Syracuse University Press, 1970) and **Theodore Roethke's Dynamic Vision** (Indiana University Press, 1974).



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