

2010

## Two Poems

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### Recommended Citation

Whalen, John (2010) "Two Poems," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 72 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss72/11>

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## “WHATEVER NEWLY COMPLICATES US

JOHN WHALEN

Portrait painter, fire fighter, reluctant witch.  
I claim no more than the briefest  
of occupations. No dairy farm  
and nothing you've ever learned by heart.  
Forest fire or not,  
wind pushes chaff through the house  
when no one's home to pay attention to me.  
When I run, when I dive into caves  
of tractor noise, when I kiss you,  
that's all I'm doing: as if arranging  
furrows in a field along these August hills.  
Falling into flames, smoke jumpers sing:  
fire on the mountain.  
Whatever's new. Whatever's burning.

## “MAN I MARRIED

JOHN WHALEN

When I was a girl, I followed Jesus  
up a beached whale. Pacific skies  
cut me into skinny strips, or worse to confess,  
cocaine thinned my visions into debt.  
At the Tip Top Cafe  
someone tied an apron to my waist.  
“Lucy. Little Lucy,” the mechanics cried  
and tipped me.  
They looked me up and down.  
College boys chased me  
into the cooler  
and tied me to a crate in all my clothes.  
One poked a stick down my shirt  
and touched my breasts.  
Another kissed my mouth,  
threw the others out.  
Red hair ablaze,  
he didn't like school.