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The cover drawing, "The Fall of Icarus," is by *Michel de St Ouen,* who was born in Zaire in 1930 and educated in France. He is a self-taught artist. He has had nineteen one-man shows and has participated in numerous group shows. His work has been exhibited in the United States, France, Holland, Belgium and England, where he now lives.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS APPEAR BESIDE THEIR WORK

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Editorial Note

FIFTY YEARS OF SURREALISM

1924-1974

PRISM international is not and never has been a surrealist periodical. Nevertheless, unlike the majority of literary magazines in Canada, it has always been willing to open its pages to surrealist writing and surrealist art that reached what the editors considered a high degree of excellence — notably extracts from the long poem "Half-Way from Here to There (a surrealist accusation)" by the Czech poet Arnost Budik, and reproductions of work by the leading surrealist artists Conroy Maddox, Joe Rose, Rikki and, in this issue, Michel de St. Ouen. We therefore believe it appropriate to remark upon the fact that 1974 is surrealism's fiftieth anniversary, if we take as its birth date the year 1924, which saw the publication of the First Surrealist Manifesto and André Breton's first dictionary definition of surrealism.

What is the position of surrealism today? Repeatedly declared dead by critics and public alike, it is, in fact, very much alive, both as a movement whose degree of organization varies from country to country, and also as a pervasive influence traces of which are visible in every aspect of literary and artistic life. Poetry, the novel, the theatre, films are indelibly marked by the liberation brought about by surrealism and its influence has even penetrated such unlikely areas as commercial art and shop window display. An appreciation of the shock value of the unexpected image, the juxtaposition of apparently unrelated objects, is part of the equipment of every designer of advertisements and displays. However far removed from the aims of surrealism the activities of these people may be, their appropriation of surrealist techniques shows how closely related these techniques are to the deepest human needs and impulses.

However, surrealism was never intended to be a purely literary and artistic movement. Its objectives are best summed up in this sentence from the Second Manifesto of 1930: "Let us remember that the idea of surrealism aims simply at the total recuperation of our psychic force by means of what is nothing else but the vertiginous descent within ourselves — a perpetual walk in the forbidden zone." Surrealism proposed, and still proposes, to transform the

individual man and through the individual society. The hope of a total transformation of society has clearly not yet succeeded, nevertheless the general trend towards freedom in all walks of life is not without its debt to surrealism, as the French students in revolt against the state and authority well knew when they wrote on the walls of the Sorbonne: "Power to the imagination."

Like any movement or idea that has lasted fifty years, surrealism has undergone certain changes. At the outset, Breton pinned his primary hopes for an exploration of the depths of the human mind and the liberation of its riches, for what he called the "mechanism of intellectual subversion," upon automatic writing and, later, automatic painting and drawing, parallel to "free association" in the technique of psychoanalysis. With the passage of time, however, the limitations of purely verbal automatism as a method of liberation became evident; the dream, after all, while it defies the laws of logic, has its own inner coherence; however unpredictable they may be, complete images follow one another in a developing sequence — and dreams are the most completely unfettered expression of the mind. The application of surrealism to painting, in particular, showed that complete automatism was scarcely attainable.

Thus by the end of his life Breton no longer believed that automatism was the only weapon in the surrealist's armoury. The search for the "marvellous," the liberation of the imagination, the enrichment of the world by what the banished areas of the human mind contain, can take place through means that are not entirely automatic. Some degree of conscious participation, though not of control, is entirely permissible. Ultimately this, together with a belief in the possibility of a constructive purpose, is what came to distinguish surrealism from its forerunner, Dada.

Since the imagination, and man's desire to transcend what passes for "reality," are eternal aspects of the human condition, surrealism — which represents the most complete and intense expression of both — will never fade into oblivion.

M.B.

The following stories are part of a collection entitled *Nanda's Nurds*. It is JOHN LOWRY's ambition to bring this out in paper with pictures.

from NANDA'S NURDS

JOHN LOWRY

1

ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON, I happened to see two police cars parked in front of my neighbour's home. I put down the paper and leaning on the back of my chair, spent some time looking at the scene, waiting for some resolution. Quite a while passed. The longer the wait, the worst it must be I reasoned. He might have had a heart attack; why, he could have killed his wife, or beaten her to a bloody pulp. I was just about to give up when four policemen came out — empty handed. They were smiling and chatting. They got in their cars and drove off.

I went out and canvassed the neighbours who had waited like myself. What the hell happened, I asked. No one knew. George Atkins shrugged; maybe it had something to do with P.A.L. A man who I did not know said someone had had a seizure but was o.k. The little knot dissolved. I looked at the house: white, red roofed, it looked just like mine. A bicycle stood on the porch, and I could see a lamp burning in the den.

I went back to my home and, after pacing the floor a while, said the hell anyway, got into my car and headed downtown. I drove by the Police Station once or twice, seeing nothing unusual, and finally parked a block away. I had it out with myself, yes, no and maybe, and decided I couldn't do it. I couldn't go into the Police Station and ask for information about my neighbour, Wallace Mahoney.

Instead, I drove home, garaged the car, went into the house and turned on the football game. I poured a drink and settled into my easy chair. Then, as though on some kind of command, I stood up, shouted what the hell anyway, and bolting out of the house, made a bee line for Mahoney's. Along the way, I picked up one of the big, white-washed rocks at the foot of his driveway, and dancing shamelessly on his immaculate lawn, screamed for him to come out and face it like a man.

"Come out, you two-faced, lying, yellow, son of a bitch!"

And with that: pow, the rock through his living room window.

Well, Mahoney, poor devil, came out all right. He was skinny and slope shouldered at best, and this afternoon, he looked plumb scared. I never knew he wore suspenders, and they were hanging down the sides of his pants.

"Johnny. . . . " He stopped to wag his finger. "Johnny, what in God's name. . . . "

Swinging with all I had, from the shoulder, I powered my fist into his face. He went down hard, his suspenders swinging.

I guess his wife or someone called the police. It seemed as though they had been waiting around the corner. Only two this time. They didn't ask me why, or anything. Just said, in the car. I got in.

* * *

A number of years ago, during the Kennedy-Nixon campaign, I was walking down Fifth Avenue. A short girl with a pale complexion asked me if I would help elect John F. Kennedy. I told her I didn't care, really. She explained that there was a great deal to care about; not to participate in the electorial process was self-defeating. I would willingly co-operate in my own alienation.

She was an earnest, sweet girl. We had a drink. She talked a lot about anomie and alienation. She told me to read Fromm, Kahler and Sartre. She spoke about taking risks, chances. Choosing.

"How about us?" I said, taking her hand.

"Can I trust you?" she replied.

I didn't know what she meant. She explained. She felt I had a great deal of promise, but I lacked commitment. I should be deepening my awareness through participation in a worthy cause.

"Do you always talk like this?" I asked.

"Please be serious."

"I am serious."

"I'm going to trust you," she said.

Would I come to a Kennedy rally in the Garden that evening? She would speak to people, find meaningful work for me. I agreed.

"Now?" I said.

She smiled. She didn't smile easily.

We spent the afternoon in the Biltmore hotel. I drank a lot of gin and, when we weren't making love, listened to the girl. She knew I was sincere, a good person. I was fine and needed someone to believe in. I got a bit drunk. I promised to see her again at the Kennedy rally and meet the people who would put me to work.

I took a nap and awoke late. I decided not to go to the Garden rally, but something about the girl, about the afternoon, impelled me. It was crowded and I got confused. It took me a long time to find the right section, and, by then, the rally was in progress. Kennedy was speaking about moving America forward, something like that, and he looked fine in the spotlight. I found the girl seated in a box. She was listening intently and taking notes. I smiled and touched her arm. She started.

"Hi."

She stared blankly.

"Hey, remember me? I'm from the Biltmore."

"Oh," she said, resuming her contemplation of Kennedy. "What do you want?"

"I'm going to work in the campaign, right?"

"There isn't any. Go away," she said.

Kennedy finished speaking and the girl jumped to her feet, applauding wildly.

* * *

When Henry got his new 30.06 we all got into an argument. It started with deer hunting and ended up about people. Some of us said that no one would kill a person: you had to be nuts. Henry and some other guys laughed. Henry said for a hundred dollars, he would shoot anyone with the exception of his mother. We took him on. I put up fifty, a guy named Louis another fifty. We gave him fifty down, the rest he had to get when he shot someone. He said he would do it from his roof by the end of the week. We could all watch from the window in my place.

There was some excitement. If he didn't shoot anyone, we got the rifle. Every night, we watched Henry from my place. We could see him on the roof, pacing, and sitting down with the rifle across his knees. Sometimes, he aimed at pigeons and, twice, we saw him following some jerk coming down the block. We thought he meant it: he squatted down, so all you could see was the top of his head and the rifle sticking out from behind the chimney. He followed people right to the corner, but nothing happened.

The week went by. It was a Friday night. We were all watching him. He had only a couple of hours left. All of a sudden, he stands up. He's barefoot. We see him put the rifle in his mouth. There was nothing we could do. He won the bet.

WALTER BENESCH is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alaska. He has studied both in the U.S. and in Europe and holds a Ph.D. from the Leopold Franzens University in Austria. He has contributed to a number of little magazines and a collection of his stories will be published next year by Hellric Publications.

HELEN MORLEY'S FINGER

WALTER BENESCH

THE OWNER OF THE delicatessen down the street is fascinated by the middle finger on Helen Morley's right hand. Saturdays when she does her shopping he nibbles her in the mirrors of mirrors up and down the aisles where she squeezes along from the bread to the bananas, thumps canned goods and watermelons (in season). No matter how firmly the rest of the hand commits itself to a tomato's ripeness, a grape's state of juice, the finger stands rigid, ready like some wild animal sentinel to spring . . . as if possessed of the same rabbit fear that peers from her wet, gray eyes above the little peroxided moustache. Her narrow face is streamlined in a bun at the back of her head to offer less wind resistance in flight.

He never stops her, partly from pity, partly from respect for her deceased father — a wealthy attorney. A strong, fierce man who had served as an officer in France in World War I and always wore at least one of his medals attached to his lapel. " . . . a real tiger he was . . . yes sir! I remember once I'd took some kolbassa up to the apartment . . . she was at work and the old guy let me in hisself. My god, what a place! Heads on the walls and all that African stuff, but real ones . . . and he'd shot 'em all hisself over there. Well, he seen how interested I was and he told me about each one of 'em and how he'd almost been eat a hundred times by elephants and lions and giraffes. But the damndest thing, right there on the mantle, was this glass of stuff . . . looked like water . . . and a hand in it! Of course I knew he'd lost one . . . someplace in the first war he said, he'd been trapped in a tank or something like that. He wasn't keen to talk about it and I didn't want to pry . . . but there it was, the old guy still had it staren at 'im . . . damndest thing I ever seen . . . "

Her mother had passed on while Helen was quite small and she had been raised by the cook. Her father was too seldom home to

assume much of this sort of task. When she was 16, he fired the cook and Helen took her place.

That she might not waste her time when he wasn't there to be cared for, he sent her to a secretarial school. " . . . either a woman marries to raise a family and keep house, or she learns to feed herself. You've got a house and your own family to take care of so there's no need for marriage — but when I'm gone you'll have to take care of yourself . . . that way you've got the best of both cakes of cheese and with no man around your neck who's a bum. . . . "

Halfway through the secretarial course she was in a car accident. He was driving and drunk — a pity as he said because otherwise she might have sued. Helen broke her right arm in two places and lost her middle finger. At school she had to shift her finger pattern on the typewriter, but graduated at the top of her class. The same automobile accident injured the reflex in her left foot so that as she walks its gentle flapping raises small puffs of dust in the summer, of snow in the winter.

She got a job in the secretarial pool of one of his client's firms. After typing all day, she dusted the stuffed heads, vacuumed the rugs and prepared dinner. Before he became bedridden he took her cheque at the end of the month and gave her an allowance. Later, when constant care was necessary the cheque went to the string of male nurses who wrestled the old "tiger."

* * *

Any secretary new to the pool is confounded by the phenomenon of will and skill that the fastest and most accurate of the typists is missing the entire middle finger of her right hand! And every newcomer is quickly forced to select a side in the controversy that lives in the coffee room on Helen Morley's gloves.

To conceal her deformity, Helen wears gloves at all seasons to and from the pool — the sleeve of the missing digit is stuffed with wool fuzz and when she relaxes her right hand, the sleeve points like an asparagus stalk at the passing day.

One school of thought, with Ruth Thompson in charge, insists the stuffed glove is an intolerable absurdity. "She's certainly no beauty, no one's arguing that, but why should she go out of her way to make herself ridiculous?" " . . . and she's always catching it on things and in doors . . . " " . . . it just makes it worse, I've seen the way people stare at her on the street and in the stores. . . . "

The other and larger school by one, is led by Ruth's rival for

section supervisor, Alice Crowder. Not so outspoken as Ruth, Alice brings a more subtle psychological insight to her point of view. "But that's it, the poor dear needs anything she can get to bolster her soggy ego." "If it helps let her do it." ". . . that's no worse than bleaching her moustache . . . "

Occasionally, through promotion or pregnancy, the balance shifts from one side to the other, but the change is never so solid that one of the leaders might feel secure enough to speak to Helen Morley directly about the glove. That other people notice her is certainly true. Most of them assume, like the owner of the delicatessen, that she has a "severed tendon" and are not faced with the enlightened choice of the members of the pool.

Helen Morley's interest in the pool, for as long as those who work there can remember, has never gone beyond typing at great speed what she is fed to reproduce. She drinks no coffee with the girls. Lunches alone. Rumour intimates that she is "Mormon", though one of the girls claims to have "seen her drinking coffee in Woolworth's one Saturday . . . she thinks she's fooling us . . . "

She doesn't drink coffee nor does she think herself better than the others. A childhood of stuffed animals' glass glances and the old man's pickled rages early atrophied all self assurance — and coffee and alcohol upset her stomach. Helen likes the delicatessen's "mild green tea . . . with the tang of distant adventure sealed in every bag at the factory!"

The death of her father has altered the substructure of Helen's world little. His "goddammit woman, where's the you know what!?" no longer disturbs her sleep, but the glazed animal stares that spied on her while he was alive now post their observations to him beyond the grave where someday he will confront her with all she has done or neglected to do in his absence. The raised trunk of the elephant still threatens obscenely to seize her when she dusts it. But she is more afraid not to dust. The tiger's promised roar reminds her of her father's flawless teeth arched in a grimace when something displeased him.

In the evening the tall, thick shaded floor lamps light smokey fires in the yellows and oranges of their eyes. On the high, dim ceiling antelope prongs fence vast parallelograms around the elephant's tusked erection. Deer, intent on the marlin above the buffet point their ears for the lion sounds of dripping saliva. When she turns the lamps off, the room is thick with their waiting. Even though she

sleeps with the door to her bedroom locked, she hears them whispering beyond the wall.

The apartment exudes the dark, masculine scent of the hunt. It is as strong in the kitchen where half full bottles of expensive gins, whiskies, brandies still throng the cupboards, as in the bathroom where three straight razors, two shaving mugs, and a year's supply of shaving soap live in the medicine chest. Only in her room is there a break in the pattern. The rug a little brighter. The high ceiling kept at a distance by a spiraling lace canopy over the bed. The smells from the bottles on the dressing table thin the dense musk that comes in the open door.

After his death she thought of subletting part of the enormous apartment, but was afraid of the heads . . . besides . . . he would not approve. A guilty glance at the glass containing the hand on the mantle scattered such thoughts.

She had deliberated before the burial whether the hand should be enclosed in the coffin? "We can attach it in the sleeve and with a little colouring it would appear it had never been severed. . . . " the mortician had assured her when she asked his advice. For sentimental reasons she hadn't included it. After all it was a part of her father, and that as a young man before the world had superimposed its cares upon him. There was a picture next to the hand of the virile young officer in his high collared uniform, his hair slicked back, the two hands folded in his lap. She liked to think that the hand in the glass . . . by some miracle had never aged the way its companion had. The other was eroded with swollen veins flowing about arthritic mounds. Its muscles helpless to lift it from the sheets. (Almost the same miracle might have happened to her finger . . . if it had been salvagable and salvaged . . . ?) Besides . . . those terrible heads couldn't really hurt her with the young officer's hand there . . . ?

The picture frame she covered with black ribbon, but the hand . . . black seemed inappropriate . . . Six months after the funeral, in desperate loneliness she placed a little bud vase near the glass and kept a fresh red rose in it. Gradually the animals shed their terrors as if the rose met their approval. They stopped whispering. Their eyes glazed. They slept.

Once when she returned later than usual from the office — several of the girls had been ill — as she stopped before the door to search for her key, the finger caught in the straps of her purse and she dropped everything in trying to disengage it. Coins rolled in all

directions. She bent to retrieve them and heard the crash of breaking glass from the apartment. When she opened the door the air smelled of alcohol.

The marble hearth was covered with glass splinters, both the bottle and the vase had fallen and broken. The hand and the rose lay together on the pile rug a few inches further away. "My God, My God!" — her eyes raced about the room seeking an explanation, paused briefly at the elephant's head as though suspecting his trunk, but that was too far . . . he couldn't have . . . ?

She picked up the hand and laid it gently on her handkerchief on the table. This was the first time she had ever seen it out of the fluid or touched it. It was firm and slightly warm as though the fireplace had been burning?

She emptied what rubbing alcohol she could find into a fruit jar and then, without cleaning up the mess, rushed to the all night drugs on 2nd Avenue for another quart.

How could it have happened? An earth tremor? A passing subway train that she had missed in the excitement of finding her keys . . . ?

The next day she bought a new bud vase and two rose buds.

* * *

Three days before Christmas a light, dry snow was falling. It had begun about noon and some of the girls had used the "blizzard" as an excuse to leave early. At 4:30 Mrs. Calvin from Accounting brought in a stack of "admonition" letters on various overdue accounts. Because the accounts were all of them sizable and Mrs. Calvin wanted to be firm without antagonizing, each letter softened the sharp black of its numerals with the pastel of its individual tone. Each would have to be typed separately. Mrs. Calvin retreated to Accounting. A couple more girls vanished on the way to the supply room. At five Helen and two others remained to finish the stack.

It was seven before she left. An inch and a half of powder swirled underfoot — too dry to pack except where an underground source of warmth took the subzero chill off the ground and melted an ice flow across the walks. There was no wind and the broken reflex in her foot cast a snow shadow several times larger than the shoe.

"I've got to get some mittens" she thought — then she could leave the gloves with their dilemma at home. She knew of the controversy, but avoided it like she avoided the animal eyes and his half full bottles of whiskey in the cupboards . . . though sometimes

she thought of opening them and drowning all those heads in their contents! But . . . then where would it stop? Wouldn't she drown too? Why didn't she want to drown?! No! . . . to think that way! She tried to visualize him, sitting silent, solid at the table — unable to do this, at least recall the photo on the mantle. The young man's hand next to it. These visions almost always steadied her.

When she opened the door on the dark apartment, she heard a strange sound like a great cat lightly padding across the blackness. She quickly turned on the light in the entry way and tried to peer into the living room. The room exposed in the door's trapezoid was vague and noncommittal. She switched on the floor lamp. The room was as she had left it, yet changed . . . She did not look at the heads. Glanced at the photo to steady her nerves. Saw that the lid was off the fruit jar and drops of alcohol were scattered near the glass? The hand didn't appear to have been disturbed . . . had someone been in the room . . . opened the glass . . . ?!

As she co-ordinated her various sense impressions with possible explanations, a terrible feeling of another presence in the room pressed against the back of her neck. Should she scream . . . run out into the hall!? She edged back to the door, opened it, and backed into the rows of locked apartments. They assured her enough that she could examine the lock on the door. There was no evidence that it had been forced. No scratches on the key plate or wood frame.

Down the hall a door opened and a couple came out. Stared at her, then walked toward the elevator. The man pressed the button. "The Wilsons" . . . she recognized them and quickly limped back into her own entry way. She knew they were watching her. She closed the door.

Most of the people on the landing she knew from the elevator, but like her father she avoided any closer acquaintance. A cold formality separated all the entries from one another. The inhabitants had their interests and friends abroad.

The sight of the Wilsons had sobered her enough that she could return to the living room. The apartment door had not been pried, there was no disturbance except on the mantle? She turned on the lights in the other rooms. No one. The $20 bill in the corner of her mirror was still there. She put the lid on the jar and wiped up the alcohol stains where the liquid had now dried.

In the kitchen she warmed a TV dinner. She didn't want to sit in the living room with the heads . . . it was almost as if they had been awakened again. After supper she went to her room to read in bed.

She wouldn't look at the ceiling even in her room and was glad that the canopy was there between the white sheets and the vault.

For several days after Christmas she couldn't approach the outer door without her fear returning. She was anxious in all the rooms of the apartment except her own. Began to take her supper there to eat on the dressing table. She moved the photo from the mantle to the table in the living room that like a talisman it might restore the apartment to normal.

Beyond her closed door at night she occasionally heard the animals whispering again. Sometimes she awoke in the dark with a start — had she sensed some peculiar sound in her sleep? . . . listened intently till the clock fractured the darkness with its alarming scream . . .

Finally, she moved the photo and the fruit jar into her room onto the dressing table. For several nights slept soundly.

The temperatures outside dropped steadily. The only pauses in the cold came in late January in short bursts of moist air and heavy snow. Many of the girls were absent with the flu. Her health held. Nothing more serious than an occasional headache. Toward the end of February she developed a harsh cough and a mild fever. By this time the situation in the pool was critical. Almost half the girls were gone. She did not feel she could stay away from work even a single day.

In the middle of one particularly taxing afternoon, plagued by a splitting headache and light nausea, she left her typewriter to join the others for coffee — certain that she would not make it through the afternoon without some sort of drastic assistance . . . perhaps coffee . . .

The fact that most of the absent girls were from the other side gave Ruth courage and she began a conversation which moved from surprise that Helen did drink coffee after all, to a comment about how pale she was, to pleasant agreement with the fact that she was now wearing mittens, to the question whether or not she knew how ridiculous the stuffed glove made her look? It didn't fool anybody.

Helen mumbled something and took the paper cup to her desk — a serious breach of one of the pool's rules. No one protested.

At home she didn't bother to heat a TV dinner but went straight to her room, took two aspirin and went to bed.

About midnight she was suddenly awakened. Something had happened in the room! As she lay still, holding her heart back, trying to recall what she might have heard on the periphery of sleep . . . she noticed a dripping sound coming from the dressing table.

She switched on the light above her head and got up. The jar lay on its side, the lid off, alcohol dribbled onto the dressing bench. The hand lay on the floor.

There wasn't anyone else in the room, the door was locked still . . . she even checked out the closet and glanced under the bed. She stooped to pick up the hand. The fall had spread the fingers and in order to return it to the glass she had to force them back in place. As she pressed them together she found them as warm and plastic as her own . . . a shudder flowed up her arm. She began to cry in convulsing gasps. She half fell, half sat on the edge of the bed, unconscious that she still clutched the hand until several minutes later a firm pressure on her own fingers startled her!

The well preserved reflexes in the hand, reacting to the nervousness of her grip, had closed the fingers about her own. The clasp of the fingers was at once sobering and comforting, almost tender, in a way the old man had certainly never been. For a moment she was overwhelmed by her own loneliness. Still holding the hand firmly gripped around her own she walked over to the photograph. The young man there in his uniform was straight and sober, but the eyes were kindly . . . the old man's eyes had been bloodshot and inflamed from alcohol and too many trips to the sun.

She returned the hand to the glass, the reflexes continuing to resist her attempts to disengage the fingers. After she had cleaned what she could of the alcohol from the rug she lay awake for a long time trying to find herself in all that crowded in on her splitting head. The animals fortunately were not whispering. The apartment was quiet.

As she finally slept the young soldier with the high collar and kindly eyes gently opened her door and led her by the hand through the wall and out into a grassy valley where animals of indistinct sorts and sizes roamed along the ridges. The two of them sat down on a small sandy knoll. He was pointing at something in the distance . . . she couldn't quite understand what he was saying — the voice she knew was that of a fractious old man . . .and this was another's. As she strained to see what he intended, she noticed that on the rim before them the animals had stopped moving aimlessly and had begun descending the slopes — sideways . . . as though to conceal their intent. Even at that distance even before she could clearly distinguish their forms, she could see the hard yellow-orange eyes. He seemed oblivious to their movements. When she tried to speak, she couldn't . . .

She attempted to rise, but her legs were lost in the sand . . . he was still pointing in the distance. The pressure of his hand on hers began to increase, timed it seemed to the approach of the animals . . . then he did see them . . . ? The greater the hurt the closer they came . . . so close she could now hear them breathing, their paws sliding through the grass . . . and still he sat there . . . !

The cold shock of her sweating awakened her. The cover had slipped from the bed. The first signs of the sun fired the canopy's lace. As she turned to retrieve the blanket she rolled onto something hard in bed. Raising herself on her elbow she found the hand . . . its fingers twisted into her gown. She recoiled so violently that it rolled onto the floor with a gentle thump. She must have fetched it in her sleep . . . the overturned jar lay on the rug near the bench . . .

For the third time she picked it up. It was warm from her body heat and soft to the touch, the fingers as pliable as with some living thing.

She straightened the jar and started to place the hand into it. Suddenly the gentle pressure of the dream was back. She attempted to disengage the fingers with her left hand, but the pressure increased at once and began to hurt! The warmed reflexes held her fast. It was impossible to turn it loose, the pressure relaxed when she relaxed . . . but was there immediately if she tried to put the hand into the bottle . . .

She could see the animals along the walls. Fell over the bench and against the dressing table, knocking the jar to the floor. A cream container rolled off on top of it and shattered it. In the fall the hand relaxed its grip but she didn't notice. She squatted on the floor on her knees for several minutes before she realized the hand was lying quietly on the dressing table. How had it come there . . . ?

The grandfather clock in the living room began striking . . . 9:00 . . . years of habit took motor control over her groping mind and carried her into the bathroom, dressed her and walked her out the door. Even the idea of lateness, the first time in ten years, did not reach a conscious plane until she was already on the bus and surrounded by women with small children instead of gray office workers.

Mrs. Calvin stopped by her desk to collect some forms that afternoon that she had left there earlier in the day . . . they were still untyped . . . "Are you ill" . . . concerned and not unkindly. Mrs. Calvin respected her, "one of the girls one can always count on . . . of course she has her peculiarities . . . I've never seen anyone quite so . . . so

. . . withdrawn . . . yes . . . withdrawn . . . sort of dried up, you know, like a prune . . . "

"Go home, dear, and go to bed. It must be the flu. I'll get one of the other girls to take care of these . . . "

She was not only having hallucinations, was late for work . . . and now . . . what had happened? Where had she been all day!? She couldn't neglect her work . . . there wasn't anything else! By four it was obvious she couldn't sit at her desk any longer. The typographical errors completely corroded the pages.

What awaited her at home? She couldn't clearly recall the events of the previous night. She didn't want to. At the drugs she purchased another quart of alcohol and bought an attractive coloured candy jar with sealing lid. At the apartment paused before the door and listened. There were only the normal hall noises.

In the apartment the evening's half light coated everything with a thick dusk. Taking her hat off she went into the kitchen, the brightest room when the light was on, and made a pot of strong tea. After she had had two cups she took her coat off and laid it over a chair . . . went into the living room.

The sun had set and the room was quickly darkening. She did not turn on the lights. Washed her face in the bath before going into her room. Here in the bedroom, because it had a south window, there was more light and she could make out the form of the tumbled bed through the thin lace curtain. She hesitated for several minutes in the doorway, staring at the receding light on the window drape. She did not look in the direction of the dressing table . . .

When it became too dark to see, she switched on the ceiling light. Blinked in its brightness . . . quickly and brusquely walked to the dressing table. The hand lay exactly as she had left it. Cold and stiff now. She picked it up with her handkerchief and hastened to the kitchen . . . the increasing warmth came through the cloth and the stiff fingers began to relax.

She set it on the sink drain to unpack the candy glass. Fetched from the cupboard what was left of the rubbing alcohol. Out of the corner of her eye she thought she saw a finger move . . .

She grabbed the half empty bottle from among the whiskeys that flanked it and returned to the sink. The lid slipped out of her nervous fingers and clattered into the basin. The sound of metal on metal startled her and she spilled some of the contents onto her hand. It was cold. A thin, antiseptic smell wrinkled her nose.

She glanced at the lid resting on the drain, bent slightly to retrieve

it. Her finger and thumb, however, instead of seizing the lid closed on the knob of the drain. She lifted the cover out and looked at its holes as though trying to remember what the strainer was for?

From the strainer to the candy glass . . . her eyes skimmed over the white form on the counter . . . had it moved? She dropped the strainer onto the drain board and seized the hand. Before her nerves had time to register its texture, she stuffed it stump first into the basin's cavity. Turned on the disposal and the hot water . . . shoving the fingers down with the dish brush. There was a dull edge to the sound for a moment as the grinders caught the bones, then the water drained the sounds off . . . she poured the rubbing alcohol into the sink, emptied the new bottle after it. Went to the cupboard and seized the first two bottles . . . dumped one of them in, started to empty the second but changed her mind and placed the neck to her lips, coughed, spit, and pulled another mouthful in and down.

The kitchen smelled of good bourbon. Steam covered the window above the sink. She threw the empty bottle into the basin where it broke, sending splinters into and around the grinding hole. A speck of blood appeared on her forehead. She took her coat from the chair, the gloves from its pocket and pushed them into the disposal. From the utility drawer removed a screwdriver and ran into the living room, perched on one chair then another began prying the eyes out of the heads. Whenever she had a handful she dropped them down the hole which belched a sandy response. After she had the elephant's eyes she fetched a hammer and shattered his tusks. The head hung askew, the trunk was twisted . . .

. . . as she pushed the fragments of tusk into the steaming neck, she remembered the photo in the bedroom! When she tilted the frame to remove the picture, she suddenly noticed the plate behind the glass was blank . . .

EMPEDOKLES

SIX FRAGMENTS

Translated from the Greek by Robert Bringhurst

FRAGMENT 57

Maxillae went into motion without mandibles,
arms walked naked, unhinged from their shoulders,
eyeballs wandered without brows . . .

FRAGMENT 61

A lot of them sprouted sternums and eyes on both sides.
Ungulates with human faces, also the opposite,
oxheaded bipeds appeared. Other mixtures: creatures
part man and part woman, with umbrous broadleaf limbs.

FRAGMENT 62

This is how the fire, as it separated, germinated
the night-flowering seedlings of human beings. Listen.
The lesson is relevant and full of information. Listen.
Crooked forms imprinted out of earth existed first.
They were partly water and partly opaque shape. Fire
desired to arrive at its own image, therefore fire
forced them into flower. They had at that time no limbs,
nor the hand and the lonely voice which join in a man.

FRAGMENT 105

. . . tumbling in the surf and undertow
of blood, where the thing called thought is. Thought
is, in fact, the blood around the human heart.

FRAGMENT 115

There is an instrument of mandamus, an edict issued
long ago by the gods. It does not expire. It is sealed
edge to edge with promises. It says that whenever
one of the demons who are doomed to immortality hexes
his hands, commits a murder or perjury, he is to be
banished for three hundred centuries. He is to be born
into mortal bodies, exiled from happiness, inhabiting
one incarnation of pain after another. The high air's charge
chases him into the sea and the sea deposits him
in the dirt. He is seized by the sunlight, and the sun
drives him back into the undertow of air. Each one takes him
from the other but none of them offers him shelter.
I am one of these, a vagrant, a refugee from gods.
Me. I believe in a drunken brawl.

FRAGMENT 127

They come among the animals as mountain cats,
and among the broadleaf trees in the forms of laurels.

EMPEDOKLES (c. 490 - c. 430 B.C.), Greek poet and physician, was born and lived at Akragas (now Agrigento) on the south coast of Sicily. Of his two long poems, *Peri Physeos* and *Katharmoi*, fragments remain. Of his other work nothing survives. Recent scholarship suggests that he may have died in the Peloponnese, instead of diving into the mouth of Mount Etna, as tradition claims. (cf. The immortal lines quoted by Bertrand Russell: Great Empedocles, that ardent soul,/Leapt into Aetna and was roasted whole.)

ROBERT BRINGHURST is the author of two books of poems, — *The Shipwright's Log* and *Cadastre*, both published by Kanchenjunga Press. He now lives in Vancouver.

THREE POEMS BY JOE HUTCHISON

WELL

going on as I
do just
gabbing across the pillows

comes
the sudden faint
pressure of

lips

my
brain (that
bucket of darkness)
drops

& you pull it
up

full
of fire
& silence

SKY FOUNTAIN

The river dives
down from a slit
in the sky

white froth a shout
on the rocks

but here the stream slows

slivers of light flicker
in the small coves
along the bank in the clear
eyes of water

FOR PABLO NERUDA

d. September 1973

You held forth the pure rose

wrapping the cut
stem in the weather
of your blood
a storm
darkening
the numberless
white petals
till
heavy with color
they fell

and fall
continually

death-ripe syllables
volcanic rains
that sing
as they kiss
the black wet earth

JOE HUTCHISON's poems have appeared in *Abraxas, New: American and Canadian Poetry, Lamp In The Spine, Concerning Poetry* and *Edge*. He lives in Vancouver and has recently obtained an M.F.A. degree in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia.

LUNA MOTH

All dark's evening
where love hides
in an iron age,
I've waited for you,
green daughter
of walnut and moon.
Like a fire
tending your silver flight,
my heart
opens
all its windows
and describes
a shield of light,
an endless orbit
of silk
through
the Yellow Pines.

Butterfly of beryl and darkness,
blind lunar mask, flared moth
swept from an emerald sky,
kissing
your vesper dust
of lilac and lavender
I uncover
an azure tint of water,
the azalea
pulsing
in coppered loam
of the outer night.

I love only you;
the green rhythm
of your powdered wings
lulling me like
jade-water under
laurel,
the scented filament
of our embrace
threading
a final moon
to the earth.

FIRE

Without flint,
without sun,
fire found the worm's highway,
grooved out the blood-channel,
bellowed the heartsmith,
scorched the flesh
into light. Light out of light,
fire in fire, dusked were the eyes of men
full of fire, the salamander
emblazoned his ashes
under rock.

Now fire
from the fallen fireman's glove,
fire in the palm of his hand;
fire in the wood,
in the seed, the ash. Fire
around the curtain's tail. Fire
where the hellbender
circles the river's mouth. Fire
hissing from its book.
Fire in the reed,
fire in the thief's throat,
in the giant's eye,
on the bird's beak; fire
when firestone flows,
fire behind the firewall,
fire where the dwarfed amphibian burns,
fire where his flaming tongue
eats through the blood's blue asbestos.

KERRY SHAWN KEYS is the author of one book, *Swallow Tails Gather These Stones* (Kanchenjunga Press) and has had poems in various U.S. magazines. He has an M.A. in writing from Indiana University and now teaches at a college near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

TWO POEMS BY THOMAS HOWE

THE SNOW FIELD

I am in a snow field with sparrows in my eyes,
We climb with unnecessary effort.
No one will explain a salmon.

The snow has been scorched white
And down the valley flies the eagle;
He waits for the mole to penetrate the light.

All the snow will melt, become water
And drive down the valley; I will try to drown.
Sparrows peck eyes, I'm told they taste like shrimp.

I will waste no effort in the gathering snow,
And after the flake has completed a final turn,
I will await the eagle.

THE HOUR

The winters are colder now
Beneath wet shoes the frozen ground jumps at me
And the snow translates the language of the city.

When you are angry and sick in your house
With all the things I did not do to you
All my complaints will petrify with the soil.

Tonight I will be standing in the Plaza and
I know that one after one the pieces of ice that
Spell my name will break and flash.

These things have happened to us before.
They say there is an hour in winter
That freezes out the inside of your heart.

THOMAS HOWE has had one volume of poetry published entitled *There Is The Sunshine*. One short story has previously appeared in *The Canadian Fiction Magazine*. He studied Creative Writing at U.B.C. He is currently making a documentary film on Al Purdy at Loyola College.

SCHLOSS HEIDELBERG

Coming from a land
of wood,
I can't conceive
the age that raised
this hilltop citadel.
Overgrown, bombed
in successive wars,
its foundations are carved
out of the mountain.
In my country the stones
speak for themselves
and the ancestral lodges
have sunk into the ground
without trace.

There is no echo
to follow back,
only a worn cobble
from the main court
to carry away in my pack.
As we cross the drawbridge
a shadow of wind
crests up the valley,
bleeding through walls
where flowers are easing
open the chinks.

YOUR ISLAND

(for Noona)

Inside
winter nights,
skin becomes
a manuscript,
set into silver
daguerrotype,
then crumpled
and touched
to flame. In
the pale spaces
around words,
tears polish
a cheekbone,
the winter sea
honing its
thin beach.

DAVID CONN grew up in rural Quebec, and has now settled in Vancouver. He holds a B.A. in Sociology from the University of British Columbia.

A. SOUTHGATE is a graduate of the Creative Writing Department of the University of British Columbia and is at present living and writing on Babine Lake in B.C. This is his first publication.

IT WAS A BAD WINTER

A. SOUTHGATE

IT WAS A BAD WINTER. There had been no thaws. Snow accumulated on the ice. When the ice cracked from expansion, water came through and formed slush beneath the snow. The slush, protected, didn't freeze. The lake was uniformly white — impossible to tell where the slush lay just below the surface and where it was deep.

Helmut and Janie came back to the landing at the end of February. Early in the day they set out to snowshoe across. No one had been more than a few hundred feet from the shore.

It was heavy going. Wet snow piled on their large bear paws. The muscles along the inside of their legs ached, then burned, then screamed. They stopped to remove the snow from their snowshoes.

The lake was a hundred and twenty miles long. Their place was half way along the length of it and on the side where there were no roads. It was like living on an island. The only way there was over water — fifteen miles.

Open water holes quietly bubbled as air, trapped under the ice, worked its way to freedom. Helmut and Janie ploughed a heavy furrow around them . . . without stopping . . . propelled by fear. Away from the holes they stopped often to clear their snowshoes. At dusk they were still on the lake with a long way to go. It began to be difficult to see the open water holes. The dark outline of the hill that was the background to their cabin kept them moving.

About an hour after dusk Janie fell and had difficulty getting up. They had been forcing themselves since early in the day. She fell again and Helmut had to help her up. When it became necessary for Helmut to help her walk he realized it would be easier to carry her — otherwise it simply meant that they both fell. They left her snowshoes behind.

Helmut had packed moose quarters many miles, but never in deep slush. With Janie on his back he could walk ten steps before he had to stop. Janie figured he moved two feet forward with each step. By the landmarks she could tell they still had a mile to go. Five thousand two hundred and eighty feet. If he made ten steps between stops he would have to do it twenty-six . . . no . . . two hundred sixty-four . . . Jesus. She counted out loud for him. Instead of going ten steps in each lot he went twelve but Janie counted it as ten. That way they would get there ahead of the calculated number of lots. He also made an effort to go more than two feet with each step. She refrained, however, from calculating how much earlier they would arrive.

The effort of the steps articulated itself into the counting. It began to seem as though the counting were the difficult part. The numbers had to work hard to drag the steps behind them. If Janie could count faster Helmut would surely be able to step faster. But Janie kept a steady pace.

It became hard to get going again after each stop. Helmut's muscles simply wouldn't work until the message coursed through his body with overriding authority. Janie suggested he try twenty (twenty-two) steps at a time. He did it.

It was all a matter of counting. If Janie lost track Helmut would be finished. She couldn't allow her mind to wander — even if she had to make Helmut stop in the middle of a lot to recalculate and organize. Once, when Helmut had completed a lot of twenty, he looked and saw open water a few feet away. As Helmut made his way back and around it, Janie clung to the count and struggled to compute the number of steps that would have to be added because of the detour.

Even when they passed the point that was the beginning of their harbour — only a hundred and fifty feet to go — Janie continued counting, calculating, straining to keep track. It was a long mile.

* * *

It took an hour or so to get the cabin warmed. Their ancient wood cookstove was slow to build to a good steady heat and it was cold in the cabin. Once they had recovered a little, with the stove blazing and the lamps lit, they had a closer look around.

The year before, when they had arrived back from their sojourn in the city, a packrat had been in the cabin and more or less demolished it — chewed a little bit of everything and dragged the

remains to a huge pile in the middle of the floor. This time there were some mouse droppings but no serious damage.

In the morning they could barely get out of bed. It was the sort of pain that made them weak with laughing when they tried to move.

In the afternoon Helmut dug a path to the outhouse. Janie took stock of the preserves. Except for some fish that had come unsealed and some pickled onions that had gone mushy their large stock of food was intact.

When Helmut came in Janie showed him the bucket where they put all the kitchen wastes to be composted. It was nearly full of beans from a large bag of kidney beans they had left in the porch. Kidney beans were just the thing packrats love to get into. There was no sign of packrat.

But how did the beans get into the bucket? There was room under the door for a mouse but only just, and it seemed impossible for a mouse to carry anything up the sides of the bucket — sheer metal. And where were they now?

Helmut dug trails to the shop, basement, woodshed, septic tank. He dug out the snowmobile and started it. He would have to make two trips across the lake to pick up supplies to last them until conditions were better for crossing or until the ice broke up and they could use their boat.

He left early in the morning and followed the convoluted swath they had made coming over. The slush had frozen where it was exposed and, although it was bumpy, he had no trouble staying on the surface. The snowmobile was safer than snowshoeing but he didn't waste any time getting by the open water holes. He stopped once to pick up Janie's snowshoes.

On the other side he loaded the toboggan lightly with supplies from the van. He didn't want to overload the toboggan for fear it would break through the crust on the trail. The lake invited and he crossed.

When they had unloaded, Janie took Helmut into the cabin again and showed him the bags of sugar they had left behind the armchair in the corner. The mice had been there, eaten some sugar, left some dung and some beans. They decided it must have been mice that had taken it there. But mysteries remained.

The mice had obviously moved in when Helmut and Janie moved out in the fall. But what could have enticed them to move out again? — out of a comparatively warm nest? . . . away from an

abundant and varied supply of food? The dung looked fresh and there was lots of it. Why hadn't they heard or seen them? Did the mice sense humans coming and move out just before they arrived? Or were they abandoning ship for other reasons? Was the roof going to fall in from the weight of the snow? . . . a tree going to fall on the house? . . . the foundations give out? How did they get the beans into the compost bucket? Helmut and Janie descended into comic paranoia, laughed at each other, and rebagged the sugar.

The following day Helmut took the snowmobile across the lake again. It had snowed and the trail was hard to find. In some places the slush had seeped into the trail beneath the new snow.

On the other side he took the van out to the town and bought fresh vegetables and meat. By the time he got back the weather was beginning to warm up. He loaded the toboggan quickly and headed across the lake.

By now the slush had moved in where he had passed in the morning. It was too warm for it to freeze. The slush thrown back by the two churning tracks of the snowmobile built up on the toboggan and weighted it down. In the valleys between the drifts the toboggan dug in and caused the tracks to spin. Helmut leaned as far forward as he could to take the weight off the back. He rocked from side to side to get the tracks clear and give them new footing. He made it home but the trail was covered in slush behind him. Unless there was a severe frost he would not be able to cross again.

Janie had the mysteries solved. Cleaning the pantry she had pulled out the five gallon crock from under the bottom shelf. Like the compost bucket it had kidney beans in it. Under the beans she had found a nest made of a skein of wool she had not realized was missing. She pulled it carefully apart. In the nest were eight mouse tails, neatly severed and rejected. The mice had eaten each other.

* * *

It rained. The snow packed and melted. It rained again. In a few days all the snow on the lake had turned to slush and it was impossible to move on the ice. Helmut and Janie were isolated.

Several days passed with no change in the condition of the lake. There were still many things in the van that they wanted. They waited for freezing weather and another trip.

Water ran off through cracks in the ice. Overnight the ice lifted, pushing up the remaining slush so that the lake appeared white and solid. They recognized the initial stage of the long breakup process

that would eventually release them. In the meantime the lake, despite appearances, was still covered with enough slush to make it impossible to cross. And the breakup wasn't until May. In March it seemed unlikely that they would have no more freezing weather. Nevertheless, it was conceivable that it might not freeze enough or that it would be too late, with the ice already too far gone on the shoreline, to make the lake traversable. It was possible that they would be isolated for a long time.

* * *

Janie kept busy.

Above the stove on the sleeping balcony she had two staggered lots of Moong beans sprouting in cut-off plastic milk containers. They had to be rinsed with water once or twice daily. Each lot took five days to sprout completely and then she started a new lot.

On the windowsill by the sink she had a ginger-beer plant in a tall open jar. She fed it every day with a spoonful of ginger and a spoonful of sugar. The plant moved constantly up and down the jar in its own liquid, leaving a trail of yeasty bubbles behind it. Every seven days Janie strained off the liquid, put in a gallon of water with the juice from a couple of lemons and bottled it off to age for three weeks. The plant went back on the windowsill to repeat its cycle.

In the same manner she kept a sourdough starter for bread. She made bread every four days or so, taking her yeast from the starter and carefully replacing it with the same quantity of flour and water.

Every five days she made yogurt in a crock over the stove, saving a little of the culture from each batch to start a new one. When the culture became weak she started a new process with a few spoonsful from a carton of commercial yogurt they had brought with them.

In the fall she had picked a basket full of rose-hips. Now she thawed, crushed and strained them and started a two gallon crock of wine. She put it under the kitchen counter and checked it every day to see that it was working properly.

Further along under the same counter was a crock neatly full of thiny sliced cabbage covered with a cloth, a wooden plate and a stone to weigh it down. Every day Janie skimmed off the mouldy liquid and changed the cloth. In four weeks it would be sauerkraut and she would can it, label it neatly and store it on shelves in the porch along with all the food she had canned during the summer.

Extending inward and along the full length of the other window in the cabin there was a planter that she had seeded with radishes

and leaf lettuce a couple of days after their arrival. They were planted in humus from the compost and they did well. She hoped to be using the radishes in three weeks and starting on the lettuce in five weeks.

Pinned to the wall in the kitchen part of the cabin was a list which she had contrived in a way that helped her to keep track of the many feedings, waterings, and tendings that were necessary daily, twice daily, weekly and so on.

She made another careful inventory of their food and worked out a menu that would give them a healthy diet for over two months. Although they were short on meat and vegetables they had all the ingredients necessary to sophisticated preparation. Janie had several excellent cook books. She spent long hours following complicated recipes exactly and produced gourmet meals from the simple food they had.

In her spare time she worked on a five foot by six foot afghan that she had started the year before and which was half finished.

She kept herself busy.

* * *

Helmut filled the water tank every few days. He smashed the ice off the edge of the pier and carried the water with buckets. It took him about a quarter of an hour to fill the tank. He covered the hole with plywood so it wouldn't freeze solid if they had cold weather.

In the fall he had split and stacked enough firewood to last them easily through the winter. He brought the odd armful into the house, but Janie liked to pick her own wood so she could control the fire for whatever it was she was doing at the time.

On nights when it threatened to be extra cold, which weren't often, Helmut brought the frost susceptible vegetables into the cabin. In the morning he took them back into the porch, which received some heat from the stove during the day.

Although the snow on the lake was gone there was still two foot of heavy soft snow on land. He started to snowshoe into the woods. Thinking of shooting a rabbit or grouse with the .22. His shoes weren't made for wet snow and his muscles still remembered the first crossing. He came back after a few yards. They didn't need rabbits.

There were things he wanted to build and improvements he could make in the cabin. But he had left all his tools in the van. He didn't

fret too much over not being able to get at it. He was ready to relax for a while until he could make another trip across the lake.

He didn't think the ice would remain dangerous. He kept watch over it from the window of the cabin. At least once a day he went to the lakeshore to inspect the ice closely. There was very little change. Each day it thawed a little. At night it froze the same amount. For a while he was sure there was progress. It seemed as though the ice was definitely going. It was getting further from the shore every day. Then he realized the water level was rising. The run-off from the rain was coming into the lake. The ice wasn't moving away from the shore. The shore was moving toward Helmut.

When he wasn't watching the lake he spent his time lying on the couch in the cabin. He watched Janie as she worked. He dozed. He thought about the mice.

There was very little to think about the mice. Still, they came into his mind often. He wondered mildly what could have happened to the last one. Many things. Predator probably. One day he stuck his nose out of the cabin and shwoosh. An owl.

Helmut saw the parallel with their own situation. Plenty of food, warm nest, long isolated winter. Perhaps he would end up eating Janie. Or she him. He watched her kneading the bread. He tried to visualize her arm cut into pot size pieces. Soup bones. He thought back to times that he had cut himself. He couldn't remember the colour of the meat.

* * *

After three weeks of neutral weather it was apparent they would be stuck for a long time yet. Twice the temperature went far below freezing and Helmut thought he would be able to make the trip in the morning. But the crust wasn't quite strong enough and by one o'clock it was gone completely.

Janie cleaned the cabin. She washed the floor, walls, shelves, windows, ceiling, and finally the stove. When she finished the cabin she started on the clothes, washing them all with a hand plunger in a five gallon pail. She cut a huge stack of kindling. Her afghan grew.

Helmut forgot about the ice. The breakup would come in mid-May and they would use the boat to go across the lake. There was no use thinking about it until then. He stopped going to the window to look at the lake. He spent more time on the couch. Janie was always busy around the cabin and Helmut watched her, slept, went to the toilet, slept, watched.

At times he thought of all Janie's activity as being for his sake. He felt gratitude and pride. What a fine cook and comfort-maker she was! He ate huge quantities. They had run out of meat but Janie continued to turn out fine meals. She fed him well and he grew fat.

At other times he resented her persistent fecundity and wanted to smash all her jars and boxes and crocks full of things fermenting and multiplying. They threatened to fill the cabin with their growth and push him out. But he didn't smash. He ate more bread and sauerkraut and yogurt and beansprouts and filled the cabin with his growth.

Sometimes she was repulsive to him. In the warm cabin she wore a short-sleeved shirt and the hair stuck out on each side of the muscles of her arms. When she smiled or spoke her upper lip moved far up to reveal another thin lip — like a foreskin pulled back to reveal the head of a penis.

These things also attracted him. When he found her desirable he revelled in the coarse skin on her feet, the misshapen fat on the backs of her thighs, the poreless scar on her belly.

The idea that he might eat her didn't leave. One day as he lay on the couch watching her stir a vegetable soup the compulsion swelled in him until it was nearly overpowering and then subsided and was replaced by terror. Sweat poured out of him and he left the cabin to sit on the toilet.

Thereafter he stayed in bed. From the sleeping-balcony he couldn't see her. He didn't get dressed or wash. He came down only to eat and defecate and, every few days, to brush his teeth. When Janie came to bed at night he was afraid of her.

One late morning when Helmut came back into the porch, after running out to the toilet with only his boots on, he noticed several layers of paper spread out on the floor around the door to the cabin. He stepped into the doorway and a super clean .22 short neatly entered the middle of his forehead, passed through his brain and lodged itself far away in the back of his head.

* * *

Janie quickly removed the boots, cut a hole in each leg just behind the ankle and inserted a heavy cut-off broom handle through the holes. Notches in each end of the handle held the legs apart. With the aid of a rope around the broom handle and a pulley attached to a rafter in the porch she hoisted the body up until the hands were just touching the now bloody paper on the floor. She placed a pail

under the body and cut off the head. There was nearly a gallon of blood.

After replacing the bucket with a large washtub she washed the carcass with scalding water and scraped off the fine hair. She emptied and washed the tub and put it back under the body. Working quickly but carefully she made an incision below the penis and, putting her hand completely into the incision to hold the intestines clear, cut the abdominal wall to the breastbone with the heel of the knife. With a few deft strokes she cut around the anus and penis. She pulled them through to the abdominal cavity and tied them off with a cord. After cutting a few muscles and pulling the windpipe through she was able to scoop everything into the tub. Lungs, heart, liver, kidneys, stomach, bladder, intestines. The sexual organs, large intestine, and bladder she discarded in the compost bucket. Lungs, heart, liver and kidneys she put in a bucket of water to soak out the blood. The small intestine she cut into workable lengths, turned inside out and scrapped. She emptied the stomach and set it to soak in a separate bucket. Then she went back to the carcass and split it down the middle using a heavy knife for the breastbone and precise strokes of the hatchet from tailbone to neck. She left it to cool and age for a few days.

The lungs she cooked with kidney beans and then canned. The stomach had to be simmered 48 hours and then she pickled it. The small intestine she used as casings for blood sausage and meat sausage from the trimmings. Some of the meat she put in crocks and covered with brine to cure. The rest she deboned and canned. The head she cleaned and boiled for headcheese.

In ten days all was preserved and on the shelf neatly labelled. She breathed a deep sigh and went back to her afghan.

PAT LOWTHER is a Vancouver poet and is at present working on a multi-media script to be shown at the Vancouver H. R. MacMillan Planetarium in 1974.

THE FACE

PAT LOWTHER

1. THE FACE

ALWAYS WHEN I wake my first consciousness is of your face, inside me, as it were under my own, as if my features overlay yours. In those first moments the face is stylized, the hair and beard curled like those of statues. Only gradually, as I move, you move too, the face becomes individual.

I do not recall having dreamt of you. I cast back into sleep: a heavy vacancy, neither of us was there.

All faces change minute to minute. Aspects of your face accompany me, changing without waiting for my intention. I do not invent you. The photograph you sent me has an aspect which has occupied me less than others. I must bring it into balance with your other faces.

The face in the photograph is impressive, formidable in fact. The man with that face, I say to myself, can *cope*. That man will always have everything under control. I am perhaps intimidated.

Most often I remember your face close up, foolish-loving, looking much younger. Or with eyes closed kissing, the even tension of shut eyelids, a sheen like wing cases, a detail giving disproportionate pleasure.

But at my first waking I think we are both eyeless, with the brutal dignity of ancient masks. I imagine myself thin and gold, my hands locked at my sides, tongue locked to the roof of my mouth, each hair root locked in its pore. I imagine myself a sarcophagus carried to burial, an image of you static as a photograph locked under my face.

2. THE CLOTHING

You are so much more clothed than I am. Underwear top and bottom, everything tucked in. I could never touch your body by

accident. I could never in a casual embrace slide my hand onto skin and body hair. You have to undress first.

And you carry your life like clothing too. It's very becoming, it suits you. Your relationships with the people around you look good, their textures are interesting. You are conscious of origins.

Maybe you have it all worked out: just enough pain and struggle to allow you to keep the nerve ends vibrating. Enough disorder to have let you fall in love with me.

I have a longing now to stare at your real face, to question, demand to know you. But you were the one who stared that way into my face. All the time we were together your eyes never left me, I couldn't eat or sleep. And when you asked me to tell you about my life, so that you could picture what I'd be doing at different hours of the day, I wouldn't answer you.

Listen: every morning I take a razor to the fabric of my life, I cut out a woman shape, I step into it, I go out, I perform, it works. But every morning it has to be done again.

Sometimes I can't get the blade sharp enough, the shape flat enough. I can't manage a protoplasm silhouette one molecule thick.

My shape takes exaggerated depth like those optical-illusion letters they use to advertise religious movies, where the edges go back and back into the page and come together at a point representing infinity. My continuum drags behind me, a rubble of dark and rough and glitter stretching back probably to the point of birth.

Then my whole life seems like the act of birth, as violent and difficult and inescapable. My clothing is bloody membrane and sea water, dragging at my body.

I can't even imagine what you feel like in your turtleneck sweater, checkered pants, tidy underwear.

3. THE MACHINERY

The machinery is, in abstract, like a space wheel in orbit. Stately precise turning into and out of sunlight. If we were separate from it, it would seem lovely. We would breathe in delight seeing it in a movie.

The machine is, of course, a centrifuge. We're locked on its ouside walls by the magnetic soles of our feet, the veins branching downward. I think of a glass anatomical model of a man, with an erection.

As if the earth had gone transparent and its gross axis become

visible, turning us. Like a drill-core spectrum, a blackened rainbow, the red orange yellow at the centre, further toward the ends roughness, jumble, glisten of coal and oil pools, moving capillaries of water. The ends themselves hard glossy white, ice that never melts. The effortless spin of the thing generating so much brute power.

Sometimes I think I can see you across the curvature of the walls. We might reach out, try to touch.

But the machine holds us motionless. Our muscles flatten, our veins and arteries spread out like maps. We are splayed, pinned down on separate beds, in separate cities.

I'm turning downward into sleep. I will not dream of you. Slowly, slowly, it's turning you toward your morning. You are beginning to remember me.

MACKENZIE

Me rising, hear
a feast of gulls
cackling over carrion
at the water's edge, see
a silent crane
orphan at the peak of sky
heading north, need
to rise as high
to recognize my own
direction, my own
appointment
among these forests
these rivers endless
these lakes and rocks
among men whom I do not know
their ways marvellous
and savage as May weather
in this country

Sleep peels from my body
        like skin
How do I become operational
in this air, grey
silvering at edges:

my feet are covered in boots;
by their very nature
these bones preclude flight?

With compass
        and canoe
I must content myself
My mind and instruments
may still contrive
        new boundaries

And with gulls
I shall be conversing
awhile yet

INTIMACY

Fearful names naming
fearfully, Terror, Erebus
the thin threads
of the lives of men
and cold waters incognizable
ferry us to ourselves

The crews would have me
turn my ships about
but already I am
countyman
of the constant
grind and squeal of ice
huge and ageless pressure
moving against my skin

from the centre south
from the inside out
I have found
figured in ice that corridor
into the farther sea
nameless and
named after me

11 JUNE 1847

The cold sea is woven
with sullen lights
auroras, suns. Too
the breath is woven
three sisters say it

But I learn
it is my invention
this arctic tapestry
The warp is the wave
the weft my nervous breathing

alone here now
at the margins

BRIAN HENDERSON's work has previously appeared in *The Wascana Review*, *The Canadian Forum*, *Quarry* and other periodicals.

THREE POEMS BY JIRI GOLD

from the volume *Minotaurus*, Prague 1967.

Translated from the Czech by Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz

MORNING SONG

Play for me fakir
I will writhe
like the most intelligent
snake
and I will look wise
like a cobra
And I will exude horror
to all sides like
a snake
while you
will be the recipient
of admiration
encircle me with the tones
of your flute
and conceal my nakedness
enrich me with the sweetness
of your breath
and still my hunger
Sprinkle me with the shower of your talent
and I will move with the awareness
of usefulness
Nothing is sadder
than a wineskin
drained of wine
waiting in the darkness by the wall
for you
rat-catcher

THROWING PEAS AT A WALL

He spent a long time choosing the wall
Having found the appropriate one
he began to throw peas

He kept throwing for a long time
occasionally abused by passers-by
who called him a lunatic
or a rabble-rouser
and notified the police

But
the peas
did not stay on the wall
as was to be proven

the wall
fell

The air began to move
so as to fill the space
which it had occupied

At the same time
It was possible to notice something
which much later on
was given the name
stars

LOCKED-UP CHILDREN

Today
I will be the window and you
the bars
I will be the door
and you the key
You will be the board and I
the backside I will be
the whip and you
the back you will be
the face and I
the fist I will be
the spoon and you cold
soup I

will be the prisoner and
you free —

The children laughed
No one knew how to play such a game
And even he who shouted it
spoke out of his sleep

JIRI GOLD is a young Czech poet whose book of verse *Minotaurus* appeared in 1967. Since the political events of August 1968 he has not appeared in print.

OLDRICH MIKULASEK is a Czech poet, born 1910. Throughout his work he tries to give form to the unexpressible, to draw from his own subconscious the patterns of man's joy and pain. The most important feature of his work is the complex mixture of analytical intellect and passionate emotion.

MARKETA GOETZ STANKIEWICZ teaches German and Comparative Literature at the University of British Columbia. She translated Ernst Barlach's play *The Poor Relation* for our Spring 1968 issue and Five Prose Pieces by Jiri Jirasek for our Summer 1970 issue. She has published articles on East European theatre and has translated other Czech poets.

CONVERSATIONS OF MADMEN

OLDRICH MIKULASEK

from the volume *That Royal* (Prague, 1966)

Translated from Czech by Marketa Goetz Stankiewicz

First Conversation of the Madmen

FIRST MADMAN:

You are writing sad poems, Mister,
it's springtime . . .

SECOND MADMAN:

The blacker the trunk, the greener the foliage,
your pharisaical park,
whitewash and make-up!

FIRST MADMAN:

Sniff! Stuff yourself with lilac!
It won't happen.
You'll begin to stink yourself. It's springtime.
I have seen dead ones. I see you.
The nose is the first to shrivel.

SECOND MADMAN:

Madman! They are different madmen
those dead ones.
Even when it is a skull the head is bridled
Even when the head is a skull it is bridled
and the sword that cuts most rapidly
urges it sometimes into a gallop.
They did not smell because they died. They perished because they
smelled in themselves
the smell of the whole world. Of everyone. Everything. All.
With their heads tossed back like lovers. Ah Springtime,
only the bees will fly to your lilac —
and it, oh laughter
(the lilac)
with its cups drained to the dregs,

and it, o laughter,
its head droops.

The lilac is sad.

FIRST MADMAN:

The moon is waxing, she is almost shameless.
That's like wanting to hold more and more
in your hands —
what can you depend on in the darkness?
It is springtime.
The louder the leaves' whisper
the deeper the trunk's silence.
And it grows out of darkness.
Blood darkens the cold,
the shivering cold
of men's trousers.

SECOND MADMAN:

The moon is waxing, she is almost shameless.
But always at least one
death is missing.
Knees breaking
into emptiness, into fullness
breaking knees.
Head tilted backward, lilac and park
and wailings and groans,
which the branch knows.
The branch on which men are hanged.
The branch beneath which rebels
the mad jubilation of your life
in the thinnest flute
up to your mouth, up to your throat,
which with your last breath
will be cut.

Second conversation of the madmen

FIRST MADMAN:

Because a man actually walks
on a very thin line.

And one step is enough, one wrong step.
And it's enough to have a drop too much —
And something drinks you up.

SECOND MADMAN:

Oh, happy whale,
who is all wood-grain,
too often tempted, often under the thumb,
and of perfumed amber
under the skin, secretly, alone,
I know what lamentations are
when the hunchback is crushed,
great big lamentations.
Your body will not beg
and glides to the bottom.
(If the ocean has a bottom.)

FIRST MADMAN:

Because a man, at best
he flows.
And then he swims in it
like the greasy eye of pain.
O, I am so overgreased
and not heavy enough, I will make
only a meagre soup,
just good enough to spill down your shirt.

SECOND MADMAN:

And then the word — end.

FIRST MADMAN:

How endless, sir!

SECOND MADMAN:

And then those little things,
scalpels, scissors, knives,
when they open the body
and even when it is freezing you steam.

FIRST MADMAN:

Because man, at best
he steams.

SECOND MADMAN:

Oh, happy whale,
your tuft turned me on,
your fountain, your splatter,
with which you let the sea fly up
for a little shellfish, for some plancton,
for some food.

FIRST MADMAN:

Because man, at best
he flares up.

SECOND MADMAN:

And falls back like ashes.

FIRST MADMAN:

And falls back like ashes.

Third Conversation of the Madmen

HE:

And you like him?
As the hedgehog the snake
or the hiker the trail?

SHE:

As water by the spoonful.

HE:

As water by the spoonful?
Isn't that too little
in these days of floods
when a mere bee drowns
quickly in a whole calyx
its legs shaggy with pollen,
the camel in the desert
may be sustained by the leather wineskin,
the cow by her bulging udder,
the ant by the aphis,
the poet by a hundred and two verses,

(and that until the last one conceals within itself sometimes
a tiny drop of unscrupulousness),
and the lunatic only by his own hand
on a stranger's throat?
And I alone also by the sight of you,
so emaciated, that people are bound to perceive
whole processions of massacres,
so that they cry out,
someone here is still breathing
and holds on to his own body.

SHE:

As water by the spoonful,
which no longer harkens back
to broth or soup
and oceans of any kind —
and if that gentleman had run after her
on thin legs,
that don't even get wet in the well,
a water strider,
perhaps it would be a clear comment
on her obvious purity.

HE:

But that would be bad.
But that would be like love
and love by the spoonful
goes to mouth from mouth, from mouth to mouth.
You would almost be enough for each other.

SHE:

Nothing less, sir.

HE:

Of course there are different ones:
a little tiger-striped (shake the prison bars),
a little leopard-spotted (spots our advantage),
a little electric (but only polyester),
a little scented (oh my truffles),
a little to be touched (in solitude it gets lost),
a little mad (holding on with the very nails),

a little quiet (while sowing, but with needles),
a little faithful (knives always in bed),
a little themselves (strangers preferred),
a little beautiful (crying only for their own eyes),
a little too much (even their hips they envy us),
a little wild (death is very close),
a little cruel (and why has it to be you),
a little eternal (what's happening to me),
in the nettles a little
I smell roses, sage,
a little I am mad,
give me some mint. —
But on a spoon?

SHE:

Like water on the spoon
I love him.
Slowly I taste him,
there is long thirsting in the tunnel
and in the end I gulp
the whole landscape
that swallows me
together with my blindness.
If I drank from the well
I would buy myself a jug.
I drowned,
Oh, I drowned
in a little tear.
I am a little mad,
give me some mint.

Fourth Conversation of the Madmen

FIRST MADMAN:

I hear steps in the hall.
Someone is coming to me
shuffling.
On the threshold he wipes for a long time
his bare feet.

SECOND MADMAN:

Perhaps he is only ashamed
to knock.

FIRST MADMAN:

It is as if tired hoarfrost
were settling.
The hand grasps the door handle
but has no strength.
How I would like to wake up.
But I want to go to sleep.
I am wrestling with the angel of sleep,
until feathers are flying all around,
but then they settle on me.
How heavy they are.
And I so much want to go to sleep.

SECOND MADMAN:

That is from weakness.
Another piece of clay?
It will slide better then.

FIRST MADMAN:

And that obvious mist
Do you feel it rising from the gardens?

SECOND MADMAN:

Everybody wants to warm himself.
Even that cool little trout
in the frying pan sighs with pleasure,
may the devil take me!

FIRST MADMAN:

It rises from the feet.
It forces you to get
on your very feet.
Lying down we somehow push ourselves
over a corpse.
Hemp! Hemp!
Why — hemp?

SECOND MADMAN:

(One must scratch through the ice
before reaching the heart)

FIRST MADMAN:

And then again the fire
roars into my face.
Somebody is shovelling earth with a spade
and it's *me* who is covered with sweat.
Or is it dog's steam
that rises from my lungs?

SECOND MADMAN:

There you are with her now.

FIRST MADMAN:

With her? With whom?
It seems to me rather
that for all those blossoms
I no longer see the stem.

SECOND MADMAN:

Oh, that's only the blood
on the tips of his knives.
Think of meadow-saffron!

FIRST MADMAN:

They stretch too much.
Dead glaziers
breathe into them.

SECOND MADMAN:

But not without end.

FIRST MADMAN:

And they remind me of a box.

SECOND MADMAN:

In that box there is nothing.

FIRST MADMAN:

And that nothing, can you eat it?

SECOND MADMAN:

FIRST MADMAN:

It just occurs to me, do you hear me?
(I hear you only from far away),
that not a single bird has
violet feathers.

Fifth Conversation of the Madmen

They say that when in great anguish swans rise as high as possible,
their wings pressed to their bodies, and, folding them inside out
as if imploring (in vain), they fall headlong to earth,
to their deaths.

They say.

Dying swans, they say, also sing.

They say.

But what if they fly constantly to their bottomless fall
that has no end? It is said that they
scream as if they were asking.

They say.

FIRST MADMAN:

I don't want anything,
but ask,
where do swans fly to?
My shoe pinches here.

SECOND MADMAN:

And you with your shoe!
They stretch their necks,
their swans' necks,
and scream,
scream and ask,
where swans fly to.

FIRST MADMAN:

Swans fly,
they are black or white,
but later black,
fear of fear.
Where swans fly to,
the black swans are asking,
or the white ones spotted with fear
to ask where they fly to
with orange-coloured beaks,
with the last hope,
those that ask,
where swans are flying to,
black in the black night,
and whether they don't get lost,
and where the white ones go,
desperate small sails of thought,
almost the last ones —
is it possible just to swim like that?

SECOND MADMAN:

Where swans fly to,
God knows.
But does God know where swans fly to?
Swans fly and scream,
that they don't know where they fly to,
and they fly Godknowswhere.
Do you feel like eating something?
If I remember rightly,
there was some talk of stretched necks.
And they are in front of the wings.

FIRST MADMAN:

The wings don't move.
The sea and the air move.
The sea does not know. It is.
As terror believing in a throat
(at least that of a bottle from a shipwreck)
and the throat again in a muffled moan.
The air does not know. It is, because it moves
before it dies for a little while at least

my dear,
with shivering insides.

SECOND MADMAN:

Swans are and do not know,
that they fly,
beneath them the sea of their torture,
that they do not know where they fly to,
under their wings the air of nothingness.
It too will get angry some day — and I,
am I thin air for everybody?
Actually it should be glad.

FIRST MADMAN:

Where are you getting lost to me
so completely, that I lost you,
an icecream-cone in a hungry mouth,
black in my night,
that you are lost to yourself too,
white in your day of snowstorms,
when pain is the only presence
on a cruel plain:
"Tear, wolves!
I am still warm inside,
there in the mucous membranes of the soul."
I hear your scream.
It is frightened, everyone is afraid
of his own tooth,
even the butterfly of the sparrow, the old lion of the hyena,
God is afraid of God,
who asks,
where swans fly to,
and the swan of the devil,
who out of fear does not ask
(he is proud),
where swans fly to,
because perhaps white swans fall
into black hell,
because perhaps black swans fly
into the white sky
in praise of eternal air-conditioning,

they fly, but they scream
they scream, but they ask,
where the troubled swans fly to,
that sad, sad bird?
I have been drinking my cup for a long time.
As long as the length of your hip,
which kindly offers itself.
Why do I drink and why so slowly
because dying from mere thirst,
I conquer desert after desert,
so that I would be thirsty again
to hold my cup for a long time,
as long as the length of your hip,
which provocatively offers itself —
and why?
Only so that I would take a long time dying,
because I live so short — like breath?
Where do swans fly to?

SECOND MADMAN:

Where do swans fly to,
When dawn in the bottle from the shipwreck shows
that it contains no message about
where swans fly to.

FIRST MADMAN:

And every morning night makes your accounts.
Downy dear duck, I ask you,
if you like me a little.
I like you more than the main railway station.
There isn't much there.
Buffers and tracks.
And steam. And bitterness in the mouth
after stale beer.
And the swans — that descended in flight (shot in the side)
Thick are the feathers of our lives.

SECOND MADMAN:

Dig through them. Lice.
They don't move. And they fly.
And they eat swans.

SEVEN POEMS BY HAGIWARA SAKUTARO

Translated from the Japanese by Terry Nabata

GREEN FLUTE

Dusk in the middle of this plain
elephants with long ears slowly plodding

yellow moon shaken by the wind
grassy leaves like a hat fluttering here and there
is it sad, my love?

here is a small flute
the colour of the sound is clear green

please play the mouthpiece gently
blow it as a sky become transparent
call up your mirage
from the longing of the distant sea
it will seem as if a single phantom
were slowly drawing near

being like a headless cat
hovering in the grass-shadows of the graveyard
I prefer dying in this sorrowful twilight scene, my love.

FACE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE EARTH

In the depths of the earth
a sorrowful sick man's face.

in the darkness in the depths of the earth
softly softly the stalks of grass unfold
a rat's nest unfolds
tangled in the rat's nest
countless hairs begin to tremble
at the time of the winter solstice
from the sad sick earth
roots of slender bamboo sprouting
sprouting
look well and see deep sorrow there
vaguely we can see
truly truly an obscure depth

in the darkness in the depths of the earth
a sorrowful sick man's face appears.

TURTLE

There are trees
there is a swamp
there are blue skies
in a man's hand a weight is felt
quietly a pure gold turtle is sleeping
this shining
pain of sad nature must be endured
it gropes and sinks into man's spirit

this turtle
sinks into the deep blue sky.

BAMBOO

A straight thing grows out of the earth
A sharp blue thing grows out of the earth

penetrating frozen winter
this green leaf sparkles in the morning sky
weeping
weeping tears
and already now the penitence
melts from my shoulder

tangled bamboo roots spread out
a sharp blue thing growing out of the earth.

DEATH

From the depths of the gazing earth
a strange hand appears
a foot appears
a neck pushes out.
My friends
what in the world
what kind of a goose is this?
From the depths of the gazing earth
with a foolish look
a hand appears
a foot appears
a neck pushes out.

EGG

In this high treetop there is
a small egg, shining
look up — a small bird's nest shines
now is the time for the criminal's prayer.

WINTER

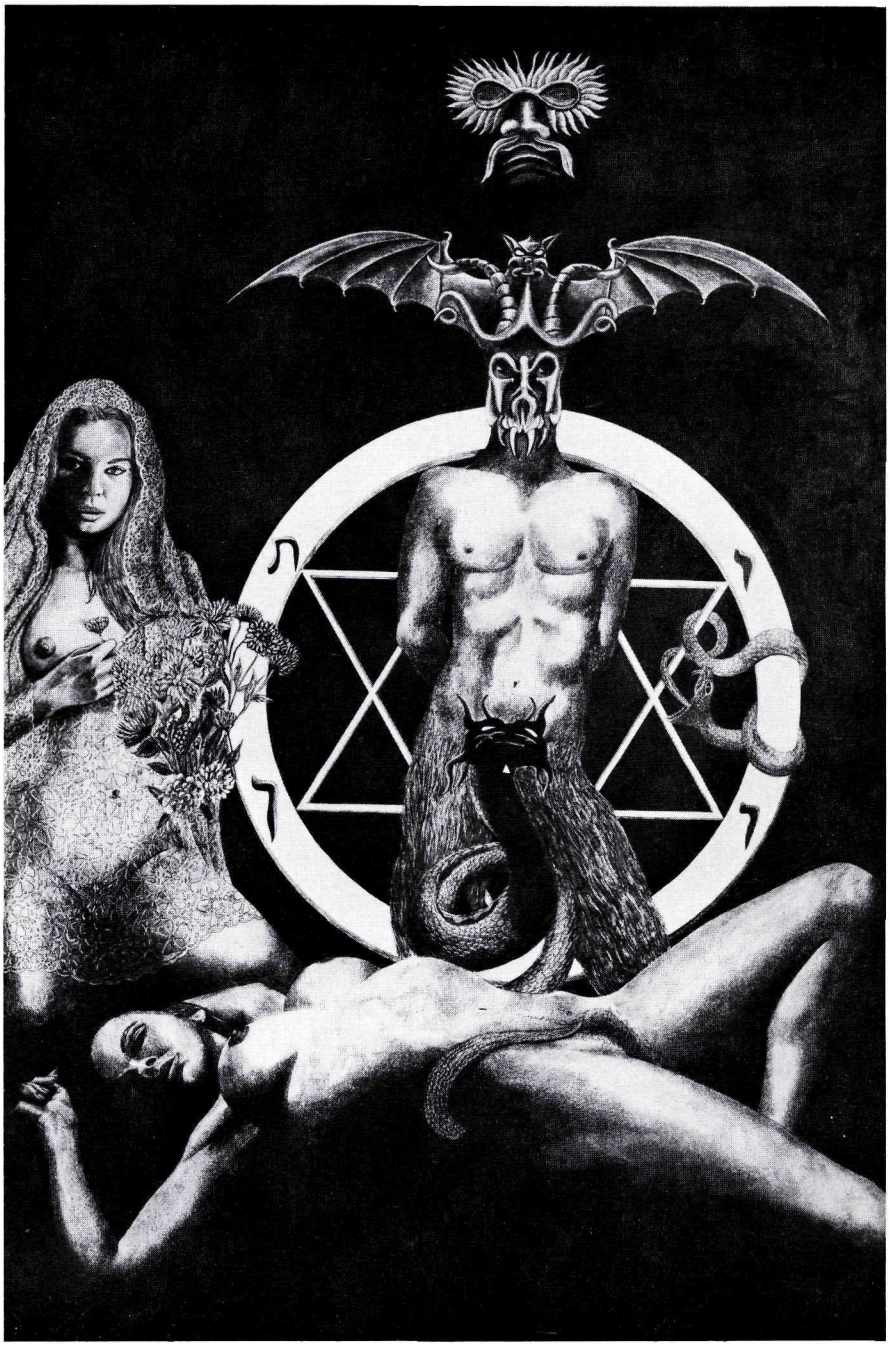
Marks of original sin appear
in the sky.
They appear on the fallen snow
appear shining in the treetops
because they can overcome
the depths of winter
the marks of the crime committed
are manifest.

Look!
in the dark sleeping
earth something alive
begins to build the house of penitence.

HAGIWARA SAKUTARO was a Japanese poet who wrote early in this century. He was noted for his innovations in language and structure in Japanese, as well as for his bleak tone.

TERRY NABATA is a student in the Department of Creative Writing, University of British Columbia, as well as a student of the Japanese language. This is his first publication.

VENUS RISING
Indian Ink and Brush



THE DEVIL'S BRIDE
Indian Ink and Brush

THE CENTAURIAN GATE
Indian Ink and Brush

PORTRAIT OF JEANNE (ARTIST'S WIFE)
Indian Ink and Brush

HOME IS THE WARRIOR
Indian Ink and Brush

THE RETURN OF THE HERO
Indian Ink and Brush

CLEOPATRA
Indian Ink and Brush

SELF-PORTRAIT
Indian Ink and Brush

JERRY BUMPUS's novel *Anaconda* (*December* Magazine, Box 274, Western Springs, Ill.) is being made into a movie. He has had stories in *Esquire*, *Tri-Quarterly*, and elsewhere. He teaches writing at San Diego State.

MR. SPOON'S VISIT

JERRY BUMPUS

SUCH A BRILLIANT MORNING! Mrs. Dutt had Newfield carry the glass table and three chairs into the garden, and when Mrs. Kilfoil came, the ladies strolled arm in arm along the paths, pausing at each new "yellow pearl," Mrs. Dutt's miniature roses. Then the ladies followed the path into the little maze of japonicas, profuse with red blossoms, where they were lost for a delightful moment.

"I so wish I could have been here when your nephew arrived," Mrs. Kilfoil said. "I can hardly wait to meet him."

"He actually arrived twice," Mrs. Dutt said.

"Gracious! How does one manage that?"

"He came in the afternoon, but then he left again."

"You don't mean it!"

"He left his luggage and didn't come home until all hours."

"All hours! Did he explain himself?" Mrs. Kilfoil said.

"Not at all. But he *is* just a boy. I was surprised at what a boy he really is. So . . . incomplete. But he is quite charming in his way. He's very quiet and . . . " Mrs. Dutt's thin lips lifted at the corners in a rather sly smile, "I have the feeling he would like to be unusual."

"How interesting!" Mrs. Kilfoil said.

They turned up the path and returned to the table. Newfield appeared and served coffee.

"Yes, my nephew is charming in his way. And he certainly delights in spending Sister's money!" Mrs. Dutt's laughter tinkled in the still air of the garden. "There has been a parade of deliverymen this morning. Apparently last night he went shopping. They've brought a phonograph, and a peculiar chaise longue, and dozens of pillows, and an extraordinary carpet . . . "

"Where is he putting it all?" Mrs. Kilfoil said. "He is in that lovely large room upstairs, isn't he?"

"He refused to step a foot inside it. So I showed him around and he chose to plant himself in the garden."

Mrs. Kilfoil sat straight. "You mean he's . . . there?" She turned to the little guest house, not forty feet down a path.

Mrs. Dutt nodded.

The doorbell chimed in the distance, and Mrs. Dutt's eyes sparkled. "More of the merry merchants."

"I believe you're enjoying this immensely," Mrs. Kilfoil laughed.

"Perhaps," Mrs. Dutt said, smiling slyly.

But the person whom Newfield showed to the garden was not a deliveryman. He was a well-dressed gentleman, tall and dignified, with silver at his temples and the extravagantly suave, rather strained visage of a sensitive, decently intelligent soul. "Mrs. Dutt?" he said.

"I am she."

"R. C. Spoon." He bowed. "I have come to see your nephew." He approached the table, totally at ease and conveying the impression that he somehow wasn't aware that he had numbed the ladies.

Mrs. Dutt regained speech. "Is it about? . . . " She lifted her hands and twirled two vague circles. "I suppose he's buying more things. Very well." She turned toward the guest house. "He's . . . "

"Ladies." He spoke softly and looked quite directly first at Mrs. Dutt, then Mrs. Kilfoil. "You have here a lovely spot." He glanced about the garden, his gaze pausing on the guest house for just a moment. "Idyllic," he said. "A place of dreams."

"Please, Mr. Spoon," Mrs. Dutt said.

"Thank you. For just a moment," and he sat down. He tilted his head, took a deep breath, and sighed. "Time," he said with his eyes closed. Then he opened them and looked rather sternly at the ladies. In a clear tenor, Mr. Spoon sang:

> The whippets of joy bound down golden ways,
> While harvester Time collects hours and days.

The ladies murmured.

"Thank you," he said, and his brow tightened with two smooth grooves, giving his face an elegant pensiveness. "We hurry along and it is only in rare moments such as this," his hand moved over the garden, "that we realize time has . . . taken us. And that it has taken us with cruel indifference."

"So true!" Mrs. Kilfoil said low.

"I've often thought, that before it's too late I would face up to time and . . . " again the hand moved through the air as if blessing the garden, "stop. For we can, you know. We can stop, really. And

then . . . " He reached across, picked up Mrs. Dutt's cup, and took a sip. "Truly taste life."

"Oh! Please!" Mrs. Dutt sputtered. "Won't you please? . . . "

"Mrs. Dutt," his tone was hushed, urgent, "we so ruthlessly dedicate ourselves to limits, we can't taste life." He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He whispered, "We can't breathe."

They sat in silence, the ladies large-eyed, their lips parted, watching Mr. Spoon stare afar. He stood and handed Mrs. Dutt a card. He bowed, turned, and walked down the path. He knocked at the narrow door of the guest house and the ladies heard a word from inside. Mr. Spoon answered, the door opened, and he went in.

"What does it say?" Mrs. Kilfoil whispered.

" 'R. Cumington Spoon, Classic Autos.' "

"Do you suppose your nephew is buying a classic auto?"

From the guest house came a burst of harsh laughter. Then a peculiar, metallic grating. The ladies turned toward the little house. "What *was* that?" Mrs. Dutt whispered. Before Mrs. Kilfoil could answer, there was a loud bump inside, and rubbery thrumming sounds rather like bouncing.

"Gracious!" Mrs. Kilfoil said.

The garden was silent a full, tense minute. Then there was a prolonged dragging, scraping — and a truly tremendous crash with the shattering of glass.

"What is happening?" Mrs. Dutt exclaimed.

"Things are breaking," Mrs. Kilfoil said.

"This is awful!" Mrs. Dutt stoood, hesitated, glancing at Mrs. Kilfoil. But Mrs. Kilfoil didn't rise from her chair.

Mrs. Dutt marched down the path. As she reached the guest house she heard a furious scuffling and knocking about, with grunting and gasping. Something banged against the wall, rattling the door. Mrs. Dutt rapped on the door and there was abrupt silence inside.

"Yes?" said an odd, tight voice which didn't sound like either Mrs. Dutt's nephew or Mr. Spoon.

"Is everything all right in there?" Mrs. Dutt said.

"Yes, thank you."

She waited a moment, but there was no more forthcoming. "Well, I must say . . . "

The phonograph came on with loud, jumpy music that pushed Mrs. Dutt from the door. She hurried up the path. Mrs. Kilfoil, chalk-white, was standing by her chair. "I really must be going."

"No," Mrs. Dutt said loudly, over the music. "You can't leave now."

The music covered some noise, but the ladies heard more knocking about, and the ultimate — a shuddering crash that fairly shook the guest house and jolted the phonograph needle off the record with a squawk.

The silence was unbearable. But gradually the garden uttered its mild whisper of leaves, and there was the preoccupied twit of birds. The ladies sat at the table staring rigidly ahead.

The guest house door opened and Mr. Spoon stepped out. Head down, he walked up the path and for a moment it seemed he would pass right by. But he stopped and, turning, revealed his face: it was quite pink, like a child's after a good scrubbing. "Would you ladies accept my invitation to join the Club of Secret Treasures?" he said softly, almost as though offering his condolences. "It really is a nice club; Mrs. Spoon and I are members. The Club is very select and one hundred percent sincere." He stood straight and sang in his radiant tenor:

> The mourning dove her love laments,
> Yearning for sweet recompense.

"Buffs, hobble-dodgers, and maybe a flam or two, we enthusiastically welcome new members." He bowed, then still bent rushed forward and reached out as if to seize Mrs. Dutt's nose.

From her hair he plucked what at first seemed a red ball. But when he rolled it across the glass table, it untumbled into a bright red rat with a quivery nose and keen little eyes. The ladies gasped. Mr. Spoon reached into Mrs. Kilfoil's hair and out popped a sky blue frog. On the table the rat and the frog looked at the ladies. Mr. Spoon aimed his arm, long and straight, at the rat and frog, and a green snake shot forth. The rat and frog leaped from the table, and the snake slithered off after them and disappeared into the garden.

Mrs. Dutt blinked. "My word!"

"Unexactly earthshaking," Mr. Spoon said, "but fun, you see, and definitely dignified." He licked his lips and straightened his tie. "So give it a think, dear Mrs. Dutt, and call when you decide to join." He bowed. "Good-day." And he was gone.

Mrs. Dutt and Mrs. Kilfoil sat holding their breath. Then a bird swooped from the sky and darted through the garden.

They stood at once and hurried off when they saw the narrow door of the guest house opening.

HAROLD OBER is a graduate student in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia.

STRANGE FRUIT

HAROLD OBER

CHIQUITA BANANA haunts my dreams. In the latest installment she and her husband, Raoul, are having a bitter domestic quarrel. Raoul wants to join the rebellion against United Fruit; Chiquita naturally forbids it. "There are forces in this world more powerful than you or I," she remonstrates. "To resist these forces for the sake of mere heroism is the act of a coward!" "Are you calling me yellow?" shouts Raoul with a mighty oath. "*Tu eres una banana* (You are a banana)," replies Chiquita quietly. "*Yo soy una fruta!*" cries Raoul, leaping to his feet ("I am a fruit!").

I am sitting here typing this for the ears of the young lady in the room next door. She is every bit as beautiful as Nancy Poole was. She says she is a former Miss Toledo. That seems questionable. Anyway, when I told her I was a writer she was obviously thrilled to death, began asking me all kinds of embarrassing questions about what I've written, who I write for, how I write (standing up, like Ernest Hemingway? lying down, like Marcel Prowst?). Rather than tell her about this king-size block I've had for the past three months, and how I spend my time reading magazines from the laundromat, cover to cover, and that whatever fleeting inspirations do happen by I immediately smother under a barrage of Peek Frean Digestives or Stoned Wheat Thins or Mister Salty Pretzels, I gave her a lot of cheap, evasive, answers, and that night I moved my desk closer to our mutual wall and began to type. I typed what I had bought at the supermarket that day, I typed the lyrics to a half a dozen songs, including forty-four verses of "A Hundred Bottles of Beer on the Wall," I typed a list of the states and their nicknames and capitals,

and as much of the Pledge of Allegiance as I could remember. In succeeding nights I grew more ambitious: a dossier of friends and enemies and what made them so. A physical description of Herbert Feldsher of Feldsher's Pharmacy. A fable about a pig and a pelican. A dialogue between two necromancers. And so on. Now I can't stop. Every night I filibuster away, making fierce, agonizing, islands of noise on the machine, surrounded by seas of hesitation filled with the silent search for truth — even though I know she's in there fucking Ray Trutch from down the hall: she wouldn't dream of taking me away from my work. So I can't very well stop even if I wanted to, which I don't. I'm the lover manqué, after all, which is at least as good as lover, I'd say. Certainly it's better than no lover at all.

I am at once reminded of the lesson of Maryanne and the Nun, which has probably been repeated in one form or another in everyone's experience. Even in its singularity it seems to reverberate familiarly.

I was at Writer's Camp in the green hills of Vermont for two weeks, and it didn't take long for us to notice a rather curious, and not unattractive, couple within our midst: a beautiful doelike girl of eighteen named Maryanne (I never knew her last name) and her constant companion, a young nun in white who was quite pretty herself — despite a diminishing pair of seamstress's glasses — and whom I knew only as "Sister."

These two naturally became the subject of intense speculation during the course of the two weeks, for they were as inseparable as body and bodyguard. Not that Sister wasn't a very interesting individual in her own right — indeed, she was by far the more vocal of the two, always quick to give her opinion in a literary debate, a hard laugher at any joke, quite popular on her own, in fact — while Maryanne stood decoratively at hand.

What strange hold, I wondered, did Sister have on luscious Maryanne? Protective jealousy? Were they lovers? Was Maryanne happy? In vain I watched for some pleading, maiden-in-distress, glance. All I knew was that Sister taught creative writing at a seminary in upstate New York, and Maryanne was apparently her star pupil. But if she were deliberately being kept beyond reach, then why did she make herself so available in those short skirts, tight jeans, blouses tied teasingly above the waist? Before long I began to notice a discreetly suggestive smile playing on her lips. But for Sister . . . but for Sister!

So it went, day after maddening day, until the last night. I had already drunk a fair amount of booze and was on my way over to the barn for some creative sitting in one of the big cushioned wicker chairs there, when who should I meet coming from the other direction but delicious Maryanne herself, and unattached. I smiled quizzically. "Do you know where the party is tonight?" she asked, eyes darting this way and that. "No," I confessed. "Didn't even know there was one." Without another word she walked off into the night and I, rather bemused, continued on into the barn.

I found myself a big chair in a corner and had only just settled into it when I realized through my boozy fog that there was Sister sitting a few feet away talking anxiously to a boy and a girl. "What did she say?" she urged. "Well," the guy said, "she started talking about how she's always been jealous of her older sister who was a cheerleader, too, and how she's always been competing with her in everything, and then she said that last year her father tried to rape her. . . . I didn't know whether to believe her, really. She was acting pretty strangely."

"How do you mean strangely?" prodded Sister.

"Talking fast, laughing a lot, making weird faces."

"Did she seem to you to be under the influence of any drugs? LSD? Pot?"

The girl shook her head. "I thought maybe, at first, but it seemed so obviously a put-on that I changed my mind."

"A put-on?" said Sister sharply.

"Yeah, like I think she was trying to make us *think* she was stoned. But I could tell it was an act."

Sister was silent. "But she told you she was going to the party?" she finally asked.

"Yes."

"Well, thank you very much." And off Sister went, to "the party," presumably, in search of her charge. I moseyed over to the girl and boy and told them I couldn't help overhearing. The guy shrugged, told me Maryanne had wandered up and asked first about this party, then wanted to know where she could get some dope, then out of the blue began to talk about her sister, her father, etc. He was of the opinion that maybe she *could* have been spaced out on something, but the girl was still skeptical.

I felt like a big city journalist interviewing two eyewitnesses, and gave my head a sad little "it's all too much" shake. I decided that bed was probably a good idea at that point and I headed back in the

direction of my room. I didn't like the secrets this night was harboring. It seemed to me that every Maryanne I had ever known had been mysteriously, conspicuously, remote — including the one in the song, "down by the seaside, sifting sand."

Anyway, I walked into my dormitory, and immediately upon entering I discovered none other than, you guessed it, Maryanne and Sister sitting in the lobby engaged in low, murmuring conversation. They fell thickly silent as I made my way up the stairs, and I felt certain that one of the vital universal secrets would be found out if one could only eavesdrop on them. So I closed the hall door to the Men's Wing, and then slowly, inch by inch, I tiptoed back to the top of the stairs and crouched there. Below me I heard Sister giggling and whispering: " . . . and then he told me you were jealous of your sister who was also a cheerleader, and that your father tried to rape you . . . " And Maryanne let out a delighted, tinkling, peal of laughter. "And so then I asked him . . . "

I didn't wait around to hear any more. Turning on tiptoe, I fled to my bed and my nightmares.

The most satisfying vomit I ever had was also in the long run the most expensive. It took place as I was walking out of the Odyssey Bar in Ann Arbor, Michigan, one summer night, with R. F. Kahn and Art Marroquin. I had long since passed the critical point after which you become a mere sluice-gate for whatever beer is set on the table in front of you, and in the act of getting up and making my way out the door into the wide-open night, I set in motion a simple and obvious catalysis which bade me excuse myself and vomit cleanly and genteelly into the gutter. It came out like a bean bag: no muss, no fuss. I even had an audience. A police cruiser had drawn up at approximately the same time, and the two policemen stood watching respectfully and solicitously while I finished what I had to do. Then they ushered me into their car and took me to jail. The charge was "drunk and disorderly conduct." Drunk — maybe, but disorderly? Not at all, I felt like protesting, but I was feeling too orderly to protest. If jail was the logical consequence of my action, then I would embrace it was Socratic equanimity. At the jail they took away my glasses, my watch, my belt, my wallet, and they rolled my fingers on an inkpad and stamped them hard on a big piece of paper with appropriate spaces for all ten fingers. I co-operated like a schoolboy on a tour of the police department. Then they led me through a series of iron expansion doors that opened with an electric

buzz and closed with a metallic clang. At last I was put inside my cell. It was like a large gray metal boxcar with other hoboes asleep or muttering in the corners. I found a vacant metal berth for myself, and lay down, still beery and magnanimous, and fell asleep.

I woke up in the gray-on-gray of early morning, sober, shabby, and scared. The fact was I was in jail, and I needed badly to take a shit, but some guy was using the roll of toilet paper for a pillow. I tried to savor the experience, the hard knocks, but I was feeling too lousy. The Negroes who had been muttering all night were gone. It was no boxcar I was locked in, but a locker room, and the only soft surface I could see was the toilet tissue under my cellmate's head. What was I doing in jail, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I had lived between the ages of one and two? Compare home movies of me romping in the Arboretum.

I had to go worse than ever when the police, different ones from last night, came to take me to court, and these were not friendly, they were no longer tolerating a benign drunk. No, I couldn't have my glasses back until I was released. In silence we rode to the courthouse. Outside, the free of Ann Arbor were waking up, making breakfast, going to work. I was escorted into the building from a rear door and they locked and double-locked me into a room the size of a small elevator. Squinting out through the tiny window out the wide window across the hall, I could see figures in the window of a distant restaurant — free! free as birds! Then they unlocked me. I was brought to trial. R.F. and Art were there — character witnesses if I needed them. The public defender advised me to plead guilty; since it was my first offense the probation officer might plead on my behalf. I pleaded, and was found, guilty: the evidence was overwhelming. I couldn't even see my accusers! The probation officer was too busy to see me. Would I pay a fine of thirty-four dollars, or would I spend another night in jail? My friends paid for me. I got my glasses back, along with my wallet, belt, and watch, but not my figerprints. That's all.

Want to hear about my first authentic religious experience? I was in England, studying there, Junior year abroad, etc. We had a five-day vacation in late October corresponding to Thanksgiving. Fineman went to Cardiff. Romano went to Paris. I went to the Isle of Wight, where I was going to stay and write poetry for five days. Fancied myself a poet back then. I ended up taking a room in an inn called The Horse and Groom in the seaside town of Cowes. I

was lonely. There's nothing going on in Cowes during the off-season. I would walk the narrow streets, eat seafood in some restaurant, go down to the promenade and watch seagulls. Sometimes I would try and write a poem. Once I copped a found poem off a sign for Pascal Atkaey and Sons, Ltd., Yacht Fitters Marine Engineers. The sky was always overcast. After five the streets were totally deserted. I would go back to my room and try to write a poem. Finally, with nothing else to do, I would go to bed at nine-thirty and wake up at nine the next day — to another wan, unpromising, sky — so as not to miss breakfast.

The day before I left, which was also the day before my birthday, I was feeling pretty bleak from the accumulated effect of four days of bleak, sunless, weather, plus lack of companionship, plus lack of inspiration. When I emerged from the Horse and Groom in the afternoon, however, I saw that the clouds had cracks in them, there was blue! Maybe it would clear up! Armed with new hope, I decided to take a long walk along the promenade as far as it went, which was to the next township of Gresham, and maybe find a likely rock to sit on by the sea and perhaps compose a poem or two. So I walked toward Gresham, and by the time I got there, as a reward, the sun itself was setting. I sat down on a rock and tried to write a poem about the setting sun. First I compared it to a bronze Belgian coin. I changed Belgian to Congolese. I crossed the line out altogether. Then I compared the color to the orange-yellow Crayola in the sixteen-crayon box. I didn't like that either. Meanwhile the sun continued to set. I suddenly realized that poems were utterly futile, second-hand, translations. That even my perception of that "sun" was once-removed. I began to get an intimation of that *thing* we identify as "sun." If we had no name for it, if we were all utterly ignorant and illiterate, it would still be there, rising and arcing and setting, that thing. I could feel a keen infant joy blooming in me. There was that thing, in its thingness pure, almost abstract, and perfect. And that thingness was everywhere, in everything, all around me, perfect. The sunness of the sun. The sandness of the sand. I picked up a handful and rubbed its gritty texture between my palms. Yes, that was what that was! I felt as if I were discovering everything around me for the first time. The sky: skyness. The sea: seaness. My joy was overwhelming. I could touch anything and feel its essence. The roadness of the road as I walked. I even savored the words. Road. Tree. I ran my hand over familiar surfaces — bark, stone, water, wind — and felt more of them than I ever had.

The smell in the air at that moment was the perfect essence of the sum of all its ingredients, and each of those ingredients, whatever they were, was perfect, too.

It grew dark. Obediently, I walked to the bus stop, waited there for the bus to take me back to Cowes. (Everything!) An old lady came laboring up the hill and as she approached I smiled at her benevolently. Without introduction or preamble she said: "I was feeling quite low this morning and so I went to the vicar and he read to me from Scriptures and I felt *so* much better, it's been a lovely day, hasn't it?" and then without a goodbye she walked on.

Next day, one score old, I left Cowes, bringing back with me to Waterloo Station about two thirds of the original intensity of my discovery of the thingness of things. After another two weeks maybe one third remained. Today, a trace is still detectable.

The deepest I've ever been in love was with a girl in a dream. I dreamed I was riding my bike through a muddy crossroads and along came a girl on another bike, and I "bumped into her." But the "bump" took the form of a complicated, almost co-incidental, hug — and that hug was more tender and more precious than anything I have ever felt. I seized the rear wheel of her bike and stopped her. We looked at one another — over our shoulders — in astonishment. We were incredulously in love. I had to hug her again, though it couldn't quite compare with that first "bump." It turned out we lived far apart, perhaps at different ends of the earth. We had to plan a bike route where we could deliberately intersect. The dream ended with us kneeling in the mud in front of a road map, plotting out various routes with our fingers. I woke up in love. I loved her! Would I ever find her, I stayed in love for almost a week. I took it with me wherever I went. For the first day or two it was self-sustaining, a physical condition. After that I needed only to remember the "bump" to feel the flood. Then it became less easy to re-create in my mind. Each succeeding memory drained it a little more. Finally I am left with this dried fruit, which will keep.

It's April ninth. Time marches on. No sound next door from Miss Toledo or Ray Trutch except for somebody's cobbledy snoring. I stopped typing at around 4:30 a.m. and went outside for a walk. Robins were already broadcasting at that hour. And the sky, to my surprise, was already "streaked with dawn." I walked over to the park. No cars. Saw three shadow-dogs crossing the street into an

alley. I entered the park and walked cold over to the jungle gym and stiffly, still night-jittery, I climbed up and sat on the top cusp of bars. I sat and shivered for a while, and then I stopped shivering and just sat, vigilant. There were light, TV-blue, streaks to the northeast and to the southeast, but not due east. I felt like a hawk perched on a high limb; I was one. I turned my head to the left and to the right. I ruffled my coat like feathers. I gazed steadily out at the lights of the city. The streaks in the sky grew lighter — the sky was all of a blue cast now. I could make out the silhouette of the mountains. The water held a more lucid blue than the sky. Lights on the piers, red and yellow, twinkled. All around me the robins were monotonously fluting and barking their rhythmic chirps, and the streaks were turning apple green. I thought about the sun advancing like a papal procession across North America. At last, us. I closed my eyes and tasted and felt something massive and polypoid, some old, familiar, thickness in me and around me. When I tried to analyze it, it retreated. Meanwhile, the robins were chiming something they know better than I do, in their unsubtle animal clocks: just survival, by one more day.

CLEAR WATER

MARK FRUTKIN

clear water in the depths of the eye
where the fish swims without mind
as light as silence

the lidless sea awaits
without a glimmer of waiting
the arrival of my absence

here where all songs join
here where the waves of wood
transcend growth
and leaves are neither
a greeting nor farewell

this star has received no light
from distant neighbors
no silver utterance
gleams in its throat
it has no mind to speak
and hears the others
as its own silence
a sea calm beyond images.

MARK FRUTKIN was born in 1948 and now lives on a farm in Western Quebec among the Gatineau Hills. This is his first appearance in print.

TWO POEMS BY CRAIG POWELL

ATTEMPTED MURDER

The scar above my spleen where his
knife shoved in chafes hasn't
begun to whiten yet the Indian
hates me he slews mad as a
foetus past me in the male ward mouth
sloppy with pills and electroshock
waiting his time
                as the stone
dromedaries wait kneeling in the
tomb garden among iron
bells embossed with calligraphies such
quiet between the rubbed muzzles
is beautiful all movement
a contemplation of their pose
I loiter still between
the stone and the wind not expecting
the dromedaries to unclasp
their knees and rise the knife
to be gentle when it comes
again
                I flailed
like a cockroach when he struck a
dead man almost my shoes
slam heavier onto the stones now the
dromedaries in their glistening haunches
cradle the ludicrous
itch those deep bells they
listen to that tell no sound
endure endure

THE SILENCE IN WHICH MY FRIENDS DIE

I have one face in snowlight a
moustached man beside
me smacks his gloves together
shifts his weight on the ice women mutter
and gather like nuns the immense
metallic frosts of the Kingdom
stream over us my body
rises breaking all that it loved

Winter knifes
the iris like the broach of Jocasta
I am almost old and the art
is difficult fresh pine
needles are burning under the snow
What is it turns my life
into a grave for my friends?
my bones upright? the blood
quaking in its caves? the inhabited
light explodes on the distant houses . .
another World identical to this

CRAIG POWELL graduated in Medicine from the University of Sydney, Australia, and is a Member of the Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. He came to Canada in 1972 and is now the Clinical Director of one of the three regional admission units at Brandon Mental Health Centre. His poems have appeared in the *Canadian Forum* and *Tuatara*.

THREE POEMS BY ROSALIND MacPHEE

RESPITE ALONE

His barn busy sucking in cows

a veterinarian
paces the heartbeat
of the fevered Mennonite horse:

loosening its teeth on the wind,
sensing on its lips

the kiss
of another regime.

SHAD HOLLOW

Pilgrims come here each year.

Lovesick, we
dared our breasts
to ride the wild winter wind

wanted to look up
and see
the lidless eye of the bell

always in position,
its muscle
ready for the call
of the salamander's claw.

CRUCIAL EDGE

At the filling station

a horse bends to his knees; he is
being serviced
by two girls with straw hats.

He asks for direction.

They mumble something about
his underside; whitewashed by angels,
they say.

With reverence, they draw a chalk line
around the perimeter
of an adjoining construction site,
advising him of appropriate landmarks.

Recognizing their kindness,
he follows this line against death.

At the end
of his contentment, he looks at himself
suspended from scaffolding,
theorizing:
I have been whitewashed by angels.

ROSALIND MACPHEE is a part-time student at the University of British Columbia. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines in Canada and abroad. She now lives in Lions Bay, B.C.

TWO POEMS BY DENNIS NOSON

LEGERDEMAIN

Along the way home
through dim and narrow straits
lie islands of dwarf pines
mad caps
with branches all grasping
east
    where the sun would be.
Branches wave ragged
    in the westwind
sweeps of spume
    lace the dead-wood shore
wind mystifies the air.

Long streaks of salt-stained mist
slip into a small white light:
    it winks
and the wind dies
    it winks
and the waves damp down
    it winks
and the branches reach round
toward the sun
which does not set.

PRESERVE AND PROTECT

Hooking my left-hand finger
into the belt loop over my right hip

and likewise for the right finger
and left hip loop

I found that speech came hard
and wasn't really worth the effort
anyway
the pressure from the crooks of the elbow
pushed in the diaphragm
slowed respiration
heart beat down
and instinct relaxed

in this way my M-16 was effectively
jammed.

DENNIS NOSON was born in Seattle and raised in Los Angeles, San Diego, Honolulu and Seattle. He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After two years in the U.S. Army he is now a graduate student in physics and oceanography at the University of British Columbia.

CHARLES BROWNSON is a displaced Westerner, now a librarian at SUNY, Oswego. Another story of his appeared in the South Dakota Review, and he is currently at work on a fictional exploration of the conditions of autobiography.

PLANETS

CHARLES BROWNSON

SOMEONE HAD WRITTEN fuck you on the back of the seat ahead. When the streetcar slid out of its tunnel the words stared at him like painted eyes. He looked away, scrunched down in the seat to peer through the lower part of the window, watching the street signs which flicked by now and then almost overhead. Like avocado trees — four leaves on a long stick.

She was living out in the Sunset again, but not so far out this time, 34th Avenue. The houses all looked alike — white stucco and Spanish tiles, with that flight of steps running sideways up the front. With green lawns painted on the cement between the red driveways. She would be around back, three rooms of plumbed white plaster behind the garage and the family overhead, a kid practicing the piano all morning. He would stay only a couple of days, maybe.

The lips of the automatic door flapped open in front of him and he tumbled out into the street. He wished he could have stayed away.

She was in Ingleside before this, which he liked better. Going out at night to Ocean Avenue the car slid stiffly out of its long tunnel. He sat inside in the sour green light looking down into another world of dimly visible buildings and tiny, solitary aliens whirring along faint blue streets. That afternoon he had met her downtown and after a few minutes of desultory talk she scribbled her address on a Kleenex for him. He was going out now to Ingleside for coffee or maybe a bottle of wine, and they would sit until nearly morning without talking at all. Before going to work she would wake him to

ask if he would go out later for bread or a pound of hamburger or something, and say that she had left some money by the telephone. It wasn't necessary any longer to invite him to stay. He felt small and well-regulated. He felt ashamed to stay, and sanctimonious to pretend shame after so long.

And before this it was Noe Valley, where he had the choice of a streetcar or a bus. It was her first unfurnished room. She had gotten a job and with her pay she had bought a pink Formica table, two wobbly chairs, and a double bed. He tried to be useful, to make the chairs more solid with some bent coat hangers. The wire laddered her unfamiliar stockings, but she said nothing and sat on the floor instead.

He resented her endless affection but weakness drew him to her like gravity. From guilt he eventually slipped away each time; from fear he tried to avoid her; he dreaded meeting her again, though he knew he would, and that he would follow her again to wherever she was living then. They were different worlds stuck together by gravity, kept apart by the swiftness of their orbits.

Before this he found her in one of the first permanent places she had, one room over a Chinese grocery, where he came one night for a bag of rice. She was buying a can of baked beans. After a few minutes he went up with her to smoke.

It was a single room the size of a closet with a bed in the wall which, when it was pulled down, left no room for anything else. They sat on rush mats, a low table between them on which a misshapen homemade candle burned, drinking tea from two small bowls, sharing a pipe, and saying nothing. In the telephone alcove a bundle of dry sticks stood in a plastic tumbler, but perhaps even that had been left behind by the last tenant. In the course of many dislocations she had never found the trick of extending herself in objects. Reduced to ectoplasm, she was as insubstantial as he. An atmosphere to shroud him. Doppelgangers.

She yawned and stood up to let the bed down. He pushed the table out of the way and stood flat against the wall. She squeezed into the telephone alcove on the other side and let the bed fall between them. Then she sat down on it and began to undress.

In his memory were thousands of other nights in unfamiliar places, which he had dreaded since childhood. There was an aunt, a plain, shy woman who lived by herself in a tiny house where he and his mother spent weekends in the summer, visiting, behind the deserted school in a dry and brilliant, dusty little town. One summer

she was operated on for breast cancer and they stayed a month. After that she padded her brassiere with Kleenex and in August, during hay fever, she kept her supplies of tissue there, shrinking toward evening. Lying on the couch in the parlor, unable to sleep, the dusty plush fabric coating his sticky skin, he had tried to imagine her appearance. Were her breasts gone entirely? Was her torso smooth and clean now, a neat, slightly tapering cylinder like a rubber truncheon? In his mind he took away her navel, too, and imagined that perhaps along the sides of her body, beginning under the arms and running down as far as the hips, he might find a tell-tale flashing left. On other nights he imagined two nasty raw spots, round sores the size of salad plates. Certainly they had covered up these holes with something. Maybe they had even painted the nipples back on somehow. And if that had been done couldn't they have blown her up again some way?

He stared as she sat on the bed and began to strip. Her body was familiar. She was not old, not decayed — her legs were strong, her hips solid, the pubic hair still dense and black, vulva gorged. But dread came over him and as she pulled off her shirt he fled.

He always fled in the end, slipping out sometimes in the night, or failing to return from an errand, or leaving the door stand open behind him, clattering down the stairs, bursting into the street.

They lived before this in a flat in the Western Addition where the walls were covered with newspapers to keep out the drafts. Time was made visible on these walls — a grand quadrille, an elaborate Allemande from the door to the window danced to the illusory music of a string quartet, four musicians who sat over a wall sconce with their instruments on their laps, rigidly, day after day, performing still the concert reviewed in the papers six months before. In a moment of enthusiasm he imagined that he might project another universe here and he began to visit the paper theatres and cabarets, the restaurants and strip shows, the symphony, the opera, taking always an inexpensixe box on the second night, wanting to go unnoticed. Actors trod the boards for him alone, traveling shows stayed on months after the troupe had entrained to install itself elsewhere.

Here was a performance from the entertainment section: a long-legged chanteuse and a troupe of comedians with her. With the troupe a rundown old man, a portly old goat who nightly flapped his elbows, croaking, in imitation of a young cock. Thus humiliated by the whorish singer with whom he had so long been infatuated

and for whom he had thus debased himself, he went berserk one evening in the middle of his croaking, crowing performance and pushed backstage in a mad attempt to murder the woman and free himself.

In the afternoons of that winter he took long drives across the city. Women in muffs and heavy coats, their somber clothes sweeping the walks, young men in black school uniforms, sailors, Chinese in black silk and soft hats, made their ways through the street around him. Before the University he alighted, an elegantly attired old man, from his carriage. An acquaintance who happened to be passing along the walk raised his hat in greeting. He nodded in reply, dismissed his carriage with a rap on the side, and caned his way slowly up the marble steps of the School of Philosophy.

In the spring the streets, which had turned to a sticky gumbo during the rains, began to dry out beneath the wheels of his carriage and the hooves of the horses which drew him ceaselessly, eternally in his diurnal circuit of the city. In the spring the dandelion wine fogged up in his cellar and the fried potatoes that his housekeeper served him for breakfast had sprouted away their best flavor. With the spring his health degenerated. His fate, now darkly seen, waited. He began to brood.

The first compartment they had together was the basement of a rickety wooden building in the Sunset, a few blocks from the ocean. It reminded him of a converted root cellar. The drainage was bad there and the room was constantly wet. Water dripped from the ceiling, it ran out of the walls, it collected on the floor in puddles. Because the building had been erected on wet sand it now leaned downhill and nothing inside was straight. Things fell out of the cupboard in the night. Water wouldn't stay in the ice cube tray. There were no windows, and the entrance was down a sort of well fitted with a nearly vertical flight of wooden steps, half of which were broken. During the winter the sludge and garbage collected in the well so that they could hardly get the door open and when it rained the mucky water ran over the sill.

She disliked to spend much time in this dismal cellar and therefore he was often alone. She had classes at the University when she cared to go, which was not often. Evenings she spent with other friends or in the theatre around the corner — there was always some interminable series of Russian or Japanese classics showing, or a Bergman retrospective — or next door to the theatre was a coffee shop where she could spend an hour over a book and a cup of cold

tea. There were usually one or two others there, sitting quietly on stools in their tattered ulsters and long gray scarves, so that she never had to be entirely alone. When she stayed home she read books, her feet drawn up beneath her, wrapped in a blanket against the wet air. She read pulp thrillers, books with faintly colored covers that she bought in art shops, stories with whores in them, thieves, and priests gone bad. As she read she tore the pages out one by one and threw them away, so that when she was finished she had nothing but the empty covers.

On Sunday morning they would get up early and go through the park and down to the beach to sit on the wall below the esplanade until noon watching the ocean. A few ships passed and if the fog lifted, as it sometimes did in winter about ten o'clock, they might pick out tankers and freighters far beyond the buoy lights, black specks which seldom moved as they sat hour after hour, wrapped in scarves and greatcoats, on the esplanade. A few times they wandered all morning in the park and never got to the ocean. And if, in the hours before the fog lifted and the traffic picked up, it rained, the city would be almost silent.

It seemed useless to speak on these mornings but often he did speak, words like exhaust smudge appearing out of the air, clinging to every exposed surface. He tried to explain himself. She told him to be quiet.

When they first met, in the theatre coffee shop around the corner from her compartment in the cellar, she asked him his sign.

Leo, he said. The Sun.

He always spoke of the Sun with awe, conscious of its monumental power, of the doomed weld of life and death that was its nature. Before the Sun it was acquiesce or be broken.

But there is pleasure in submission, too, she said.

He looked at her face under the fluorescent lights of the cafe. It was still well-tanned, he saw, and her skin had the characteristic open-grained texture of sunbaked clay.

Eventually, she said, the Earth will fall into the Sun, when it slows down enough.

We'll all be dead of the cold before then, he replied.

Imperturbable noises filled his dreams after that. Constant, monotonous noises — the painful sound of the summer wind of his childhood, of a blizzard at night, of bare feet on a straight gravel road.

In the park there was the endless sound of water — of rain drip-

ping from the leaves of trees, of dirty streams trickling across their concrete beds, of viscous bubbles rising in the ponds, of the condensation of fog, of the mucky earth. There were the voices of birds — the ever-present scavenger gulls, the muttering of flocks of ducks beneath the overhanging willows, the wings of pigeons. Wind. An old gentleman walking his dachshund, one hand on the brim of his hat. A horse being ridden at full gallop around the polo grounds. The hiss of a rare automobile on wet pavement. Footsteps — on concrete, on sand, on wet leaves.

THREE POEMS BY JOE ROSENBLATT

THE TOXICOLOGIST

He has scrutinized the egg
& has placed it back into its refrigerated sarcophagus.
The guru has heard the motet under the plaster:
a bird in full bloom!
The egg is contaminated, poison . . .

In the health food store
he sniffs the carrots.
The horizon is lined with stilettos,
unsprayed, earthy
ikons.
They will grow into a carrot manse, together.

DREAM FOOD

Remember me when I'm invisible
leafy & green inside a dream
where birds are snug in a nest
like a child's boots in a shoebox

I'll be a blue sky for uxorious spiders
weaving their highways in the light
to establish their thoughts in my space
of greening skin, & first-born of nuance

Daffodils will laugh in the heart
of the dream, all ashimmer with pollen
from my unspoiled acreage of images
where birds hang out their signs: egg wanted.

IT WAS NEVER LIKE THIS BEFORE

I don't want to get up in the morning
the dreams are becoming more intense
the vivid reds are boiling in my brain
erupting through a purple sky.

Leaves bury my fantasies:
I'm in a russet pond full of virgins
their skin is the white of lilies
they want to make love under water

The women have glowing turquoise eyes
small half lemon breasts
& inoffensive thighs, smooth
like the arcs of doves in the blank

I wear a smile like an old suit —
the dreams are becoming more intimate
I'm afraid of the orange sunset
it will impregnate the ladies

The virgins of the deep extend their arms
their raspberry nipples flash in the sunflower light
but morning hauls me up
up toward the earth, & another day.

JOE ROSENBLATT is the author of five books of poetry. His work has also appeared in a number of anthologies and periodicals. He has taught at York University and the University of British Columbia.

FOUR POEMS BY IRENE FRIEDMAN

ONE BROWN DAY

It is the kind of day that used to be green but is now brown.
The trees have eyes where their leaves used to be. The grass
is breathing hoarsely. There is no one in the square except
for two dogs and an old man feeding pigeons from a plastic bag.
The rain has left eyes in the puddles too. The old man feeds
the pigeons. He feeds them a wrinkled crust of bread which he
breaks and scatters around him. The pigeons shrug and come
closer. They come closer. They surround the old man and peck
at the bread with their twisted beaks. The old man keeps the
bag inside his coat, as if to shelter it from the rain. Every
now and then he stops with his hand inside the bag and looks
around him with fish eyes. He doesn't see me. I see only his
round fish eyes. They swim in little jerks every time his fist
comes out of his coat. His coat is moldy. It's been somewhere
too long. I can even smell its spider smell. I can smell his
dusty breath. There is no one in the square except for the
old man and myself and two dogs avoiding each other's tails.
There is no one around the square either. No one on the
downtown streets around us. There's a red barbecue sign over the
treetops. It has a red rooster which winks. It is impossible
to see the top of the skyscrapers. The streetlamps are on although
it's noon. There are several statues of green heroes whose faces
I don't recognize. They have no names. The old man removes his
hat and throws it to the pigeons. The dogs race toward the hat.
The pigeons disappear among the eyes in the trees. The old man
turns and looks at me. Our eyes meet. I too have fish eyes.
He has no hair. It is my lover. The one who used to grow in
my garden.

ATTICS

one of these days my mother
will wake up with a new
pair of eyes and
she'll discover
the bargains her great
great grandmother found
a moment
before she finally
closed her eyes

LOVE

Love
is a key you find
long before
you've got a door

UNTITLED

don't ask me what it means:
the hairs bend their heads
on my arm (corn,
after all, does it)
there's been lots of sun lately
lots of sun

IRENE FRIEDMAN was born in the Russian Urals in 1944 and lived in several countries before coming to Canada at 15. She has recently completed her graduate studies at McGill and is now a student in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia. Her work (poetry, fiction, and criticism) has appeared in various literary publications and over the C.B.C.

DONNA E. SMYTH is teaching English at Acadia University, Nova Scotia and has published stories in *The Writer* magazine (England), *The Canadian Fiction Magazine*, and *The Antigonish Review*.

LAMB

DONNA E. SMYTH

HE HOLDS HER UP a mirror but she shakes her head. Her refusal irritates him. He swings round in the swivel chair to look out the window where the brown grass of spring shows how long it has been without rain. Each day the clouds mass on the flat horizon, each day it does not rain. Unless it rains there will be no green for Easter, the lambs will be born into a brown and dusty world. That will not affect the price of meat but, nevertheless, he is depressed.

She twists a kleenex into knotted shapes and seems unable to control the trembling hands. It is difficult to breathe. Each time she comes she means to ask him to open the window but each time she forgets until it is too late and he is displeased with her again. He never says he is angry but first his lips grow thin and he taps his fingers together, then he swings round to the window. She re-crosses her legs and clears her throat.

— I saw a crow today. Black as sin against the blue sky.

— Yes, they have returned early this year.

— Isn't it funny how you say things like that and never stop to think what you're saying. Why is sin black? Why isn't it red, for instance.

— Black is the absence of light.

He is dressed in black but also white and he kneels before the altar. The words he is saying make no sense to her but she comes each morning to listen and to look at the pictures of the saints on the walls where the plaster is peeling and cracked, cracked too some of the pictures and faded. The faces of the saints are stiff, they are wooden faces, and their eyes stare at her. There is a musty smell, a damp one. Spiders run under the wooden seats. There is never anyone else but him and her and he does not know she is there, at any rate he gives no sign of knowing, and this is enough to reassure her.

She likes to sit on one of the wooden seats, just inside the door, and watch him and listen to him. It is like listening to the sea inside a sea shell which you hold to your ear.

— Perhaps I should stop coming here. We never seem to get anywhere.

— That is your evaluation of the situation, not mine.

— I don't like to waste your time, I know you're very busy.

— What is it? Are you afraid?

They are together, seated side by side, in a small airplane. Across the aisle are two other seats but they are empty. The pilot has his back towards them. He looks out the window and sees nothing but snow and a white, rolling plain that extends as far as the horizon. They are flying between the grey cloud cover and the white land. He has the impression of extreme cold and notes that he and she are dressed in parkas and boots. Both wear fur mittens. He looks at her as if to say something but does not, instead he takes off a mitten and leans forward to tap the pilot on the shoulder. When the pilot swings round, he gasps and recoils. There is no face. No, there is a face but it is hidden, the features obliterated beneath a stocking mask.

— You know everything there is to know. I'm afraid of boring you.

— You are afraid of telling me something.

— What? What? I have told you everything, my whole life history. More than I have ever told anyone else. It is a boring life, an ordinary life full of ordinary things. When I got up this morning I looked at our weeping birch, we have one in the front yard, and now it looks dead and dusty as if it were winter, as if it were not spring. It made me feel like weeping myself. But that is such an ordinary thing to you, weeping. You must have seen hundreds of people sitting here, in this chair, weeping.

He swings the chair so he is looking at her again, and that is better, at least she can see his face. But not his eyes. They are hidden by goggles, ski-goggles tinted yellow.

— Why do you hate yourself?

— It's you who hate me.

— Or you who hate me.

— No, I . . . I don't hate you. I have dreams about you.

— What am I doing in those dreams? I said — what am I doing?

— You have a giant penis in the middle of your forehead and you stick it into me.

They are walking down the road together, side by side, and the white dust rises and settles and rises, a whitish dust that clings to the

shoes and the pants and the legs. On either side there are fields of wheat, yellow miles of it brighter than the sun which is at a mid-day position in the sky. She is tired and feels the sweat running under her arms and pricking between her legs but she does not dare suggest that they stop. Something in his manner makes her certain that he would not stop. Behind them the road is a white line between the fields and ahead of them is the same line. It is difficult to tell if they are progressing or merely walking in a circle. The dust settles back and covers their tracks, they could have been here before, there is no way of telling. Then the building appears. Inconspicuous, at first it is merely a brown structure on the horizon. As they approach it assumes a recognizable shape, that of a house, a two-storey house. No, there is only one storey and a false front put up so that it looks like two. There is a porch which sags and the boards are faded, they are weather-beaten to a fine sheen of grey. On the front of the building is some lettering, an A and something else, neither of them can make it out because the paint has flaked and cracked and peeled. The porch and the darker interior promises relief from the sun but they both stop when they hear a growl from inside.

It looks like a bear poking his snout out, a black bear, but then they see it is a dog, an old dog who walks with difficulty, dragging one leg. They laugh and he says, Here, boy! and the dog allows itself to be patted. They follow him into the interior where it is slightly cooler, where the dust has seeped through cracks and lies thick on the floor, on the shelves, on the counter. There are two windows, both broken, but across one some boards have been nailed.

He walks behind the counter, stoops to examine, lifts up a metal object and places it on the counter. Dust covers brass but it is plainly still what it was and the two pans, one on either side of the centre support, sway slightly, having nothing, on one side or the other, to weight them, to tilt the balance.

— You have no right to judge me.

— Everything must be weighed and considered. It is part of what is happening.

— Sometimes I think I see you as you really are but then I forget what your face looks like. Perhaps it is the goggles. If I were to meet you on the street, at a party, if you were to come to my home for dinner, I would not recognize you. But you, you would know me anywhere. You have passed me under your microscopic gaze several times this year. By now my structure must be perfectly plain to you yet you continue to poke and pry.

— If it does not rain, the crops will not grow. It will be like the Depression again. I suppose you remember how it was?
— I was a girl with my hair full of grasshoppers and dust.
— Of course it could also snow. That is very likely. Rain or snow, there is little difference. Once I was in England during the spring time, in some county or other. We were walking past a field and saw a lamb who had just been born. The blood was still on him and the ewe was licking, licking with her tongue to clean him. In the grass beside her was the bloody mesh which held him once but now lay, shiny and slick like jelly, useless.

It is cool and dark and quiet. The candles, two of them at each corner, flicker but the form between them is still. She clasps her hands on her lap and looks at his face which is still like stone, still except for the shadows of the candles which play over her face and his. His hands are crossed on his breast. There is also stone, cold and uneven, beneath her feet. Some of these stones have writing on them but it is difficult to read because the only light comes from the candles. His hair is white, her hair is long and golden and hangs heavily on her white neck. She says words which are not familiar to her but must be said, words older than stone.
— Why do you seek to destroy me?
— I merely wish to know you. That is why you are here, so I may know you.
— If you were to take your goggles off, your eyes would turn me to stone. Turn back to the window. I don't want you looking at me.
— I listened to the weather report today and they said, maybe rain, maybe snow. But look at it. Nothing happens, only the interminable wind blows the dust into your teeth, into your eyes.
— Into your hair. Once, when I was a girl, it was so bad we had to abandon the car because we couldn't see to drive, there was so much dust it was like a blizzard.
— Do you wish to continue?
— You must tell me what to do.
— Buy the children Easter eggs and hide them on the hillside. They will roll them down like stones, like snowballs.

He sees her sitting on the grass. There is grass sprouting from her fingertips, it waves like green flames and her thighs are silver as the bark of birches, are silver as the tender young shoots reflected in the water. The water gushes from between her legs and he drinks it eagerly, he splashes his face with it. Her belly gleams and is slippery, silver and slippery as the salmon leaping. He tries to hold her

between his hands but she arches and leaps and is gone. He sits down in the dust to weep.

— If the lambs are born in the snow, they will not know about the sun and the blue and the green. The world will be white as they are white and cold and shivering. The crows sit and wait for the lambs to die. You know what the crows will do.

— Perhaps we should become vegetarians.

— When you are born your head is covered with blood. That is why they wash you.

— Or lick, lick with their tongues.

She sees that he is coming out of her hole, a tiny man in a business suit, perfectly featured, perfectly formed. He has been inside her all this time. She holds him in the palm of her hand, undecided. Perhaps she will keep him in her purse and take him out from time to time to look at. Perhaps she will plant him in her garden to see if he will grow. Perhaps she will eat him.

He swivels in the swivel chair and feels his penis growing, growing. Soon it is so large that it rests on top of the desk. He is alarmed by the weight and size of it, it threatens to render him helpless and, moreover, seems to be taking on an identity of its own, apart from him. There are branches sprouting from it and green leaves unfolding, sweet and sticky. Soon the tree fills all the room and still more branches spread, breaking through the window, putting pressure on the walls and roof.

Amid the falling plaster, he perceives that they are lying beneath the tree, he and she, the one inside the other and it is difficult to tell who is inside and who outside. He closes his eyes.

— I don't think I will come anymore.

— You've got what you wanted, have you?

— Without the goggles, your eyes are mirrors. I see us reflected there. You are a crow, black as sin, sitting in the tree; I am a lamb.

— Some kind of sacrifice is to be expected.

Washing off the dust, the rain falls gently on all the leaves, it is rain, not snow, the meteorologists were right. He swivels in the chair to watch the brown grass darken.

— The farmers will be glad to see this. I hope you won't get wet as you go.

— I can take a taxi.

— Well, then, next week as usual?

— Do you think it should go on?

— There is no way to stop it.

MEREDYTH SAVAGE is a Vancouver writer and translator who lived for many years in Mexico. She received her M.A. from the Department of Creative Writing at U.B.C. Her translations of poetry, fiction and essays from the Spanish have appeared in a number of literary journals, including *Prism*, *Mundus Artium* and *The Yearbook of Literary Criticism*, and her translation of a Spanish play, *The Perfect Gentleman* by Max Aub, was produced by the C.B.C. She has also published translations of Canadian poetry in Spain.

After Douglas Day: *Lowry* and Tony Kilgallin

A REVIEW BY MEREDYTH SAVAGE

DOUGLAS DAY's recent biography, *Malcolm Lowry* (483 pages, put out by Oxford University Press) is the most comprehensive work to date on the "demonically" gifted Canadian author and his work. Day's biography is a penetrating one, engagingly and thoughtfully executed, as unflinchingly honest and unbiased towards Lowry as it is generously humane. Lowry, with his robust and untidy devils, his alcoholism and his exasperatingly appealing infantile dependencies is an all-too-easy mark for dragon-slayers who could be guaranteed a facile trophy by the simple execution of a contemptuous burlesque of his especially vulnerable underbelly in order to hue down his genius. With keen, compassionate eyes, Day neither persecutes nor romanticizes the man but rather offers an illuminating portrait of Lowry and his work that seeks to comprehend him in all the breadth of his complexities, from his often dazzling visionary gifts to his crippling limitations, and succeeds in integrating these divergent elements into a coherent and perceptive whole.

Close on the heels of Day's widely acclaimed biography, Vancouver author Tony Kilgallin has come out with a book on Lowry which must bear examination in the light of its predecessor. Not half the size (211 small pages), Kilgallin's book, *Lowry*, is published by Press Porcepic in Erin, Ontario and sells for $8.95.

The two books on Lowry are not at all parallel. It is only the common subject matter and the fact of their nearly simultaneous appearance in print that invites any association between the two. Both in emphasis and in attitudes, the perspective of these authors is poles apart. Douglas Day may be said to approach Lowry and his

work from a primarily psychological perspective, gestalt in outlook, and Tony Kilgallin from a more symbolistic and analytical literary viewpoint. Though both books deal with Lowry the man and his writing, they are highly dissilimar in aim, scope and stylistic content. Douglas Day's book is indeed a biography and deals with Lowry in the larger context, attempting to convey the essence of the whole man as well as the development and body of his writing.

Kilgallin, on the other hand, does not shoot nearly so high nor attempt to cover such extensive territory. Kilgallin's title, *Lowry*, leads one to expect a biography. But *Lowry* is not a book *about* Lowry; not really. As to what Kilgallin's book actually is is a bit more difficult to say. The book suffers from a lack of clear identity: its character is ambiguous and its specific intent remains somewhat obscure to the reader. The general artistic presentation of the book and elaborate mythological illustrations (unfortunately rather artificially imposed and not always directly relevant to the text in any intrinsic way) certainly suggest an appeal to the aesthetic layman and seem to imply a general, rather comprehensive overview of the man and his work.

What the book provides instead is a skilful but fragmented diagnosis of an assortment of compressed, un-integrated and unevenly fleshed elements of considerable interest to Lowry enthusiasts. The style and content of the book are essentially academic and scholarly in nature, and, much in the manner of a literary treatise, seem directed primarily to colleagues and dedicated students of Lowry's work. If this was indeed Kilgallin's aim, why then the elaborate presentation, seductive ornamentation and resulting price of $8.95 for 211 pages? Due to the nature of Kilgallin's approach, it would seem to have been far better for him to have clearly confined his scope to areas of his most obvious expertise, namely, the specific and in-depth literary analysis of particular aspects of, say, *Under the Volcano*, in a well-defined perspective, without the dressings of a more comprehensive overview (though in the case of *Under the Volcano*, it is the latter which is far more needed).

Kilgallin's book is divided into three autonomous chapters, or essays, one dealing basically with Lowry's first novel, *Ultramarine*, one dealing with *Under the Volcano*, and, preceding these, a chapter giving a highly compressed bit of biographical data amplified by a collection of quotations taken from comments of a number of Lowry's contemporaries who knew him in various capacities. Curiously, it is this lively collection of anecdotes in the first chapter

which provides the most attractive and readable material in the book, and it is certainly to Tony Kilgallin's credit that he has used these direct personal perspectives on Lowry as extensively as he has and that he has retained them in their original language. These direct quotes give more access to the colors of the man and afford more immediate perceptions into his personality than purely biographical narrative ever could. Many of these recollections are as engaging as they are insightful into Lowry's psychology:

A friend of Lowry's, Peter Churchill, with whom Lowry and his wife, Margerie, stayed briefly outside New York before leaving for Italy, revealed an incident, quoted by Kilgallin, wherein Lowry had been following with great interest radio reports on the progress of an approaching hurricane named "Edna" ("Malcolm and hurricanes had a peculiar affinity"). Early the following morning, near the time for their departure for the Italian-bound freighter, a high wind was gusting. In Churchill's words:

> Joan and I were still in bed when Margerie burst in upon us and announced with a suitably dramatic gesture that Malcolm had vanished. She had searched the house. He was gone . . . I put on some clothes and went to look for Malcolm. In passing I saw that a full bottle of gin had disappeared also. The trees outside were swaying in the wind. I noticed that one of the low sweeping branches of a Pawlownia tree seemed to be swaying rather more than was accounted for by the wind. Through the mass of enormous leaves I could see Malcolm in pyjamas clinging to it desperately. When he saw me he shouted, "Hang on! Here comes Edna. Don't let go!" I subdued Edna slightly by leaning heavily against the swaying branch and in a matter-of-fact tone asked Malcolm if he could lend me a razor blade as all mine seemed to be blunt. Edna forgotten, he followed me into the house and duly found me a razor blade. (*L* 76-7)

This incident was also quoted in Day's biography; the following reminiscence, however, appears only in Kilgallin's book:

Dorothy and Harvey Burt, close friends and neighbours of the Lowries on the beach at Dollarton, B.C., recall the Lowries' homecoming to their beach shack in March or early April of 1953 after their annual winter retreat to Vancouver. Their shack was generally vandalized during these absences, and on their return this time they found their outhouse pushed over on its side:

> it was no surprise when we reached the trail leading down the bank to the beach to see the massive, heavy-planked two-holer sagged on its side amongst the salmon-berry bushes, its great catch-pit gaping obscenely up at the trees. We took the suitcases down to the house, fortified our-

selves with gin, and clambered up the stairs to start work. As we approached the pit, Malcolm noisily cleared his throat, advanced to the edge of the hole, looked down, put his left hand to his heart and extended the right, and in the most perfectly resonant parody of melodrama declared, "O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth . . ." (*Julius Caesar, Selected Letters of Malcolm Lowry* 388) at which point we both exploded in guffaws. The forest echoed with our hoots and sobs . . . We staggered, bent over with hands on knees, grabbed trees, stumps, branches for support. (*L* 63-4)

Further fortifying themselves with still more gin, they set up a block and tackle and pried up the outhouse with a cedar pole. ("Malc told us later the place was dear to him: he had built it himself, and had read the whole of *Remembrance of Things Past* on its throne.") At one point the house tottered, sagged and threatened to fall on Lowry, who lunged forward to try and force it up again:

For a moment it had looked as though the house would topple over onto Malc, and both of us were alarmed and exhausted. He looked at me, grinned, and said, "Harvey, can you imagine what it would look like in the books to have the most famous Canadian author killed by a falling shithouse!" (*L* 65)

Vancouver, unfortunately, took a rather dim view of Lowry and his much loved shack in Dollarton, which provided Lowry with possibly the only real periods of happiness of his life and a tiny, vital fortress of sanity in which to work. Though Lowry and his wife had rebuilt the shack with their own hands from literal ashes after it had burned to the ground in a fire, enough citizens in Vancouver were sufficiently morally outraged upon discovering that a man who had "struck it rich" should be living so cheaply in their midst that an article appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* on August 1, 1947 headed: "Wealthy Squatters Find Rent-Free Beach Haven". In "righteous" indignation the article began: "A successful novelist who could write a cheque for thousands is 'king' of the beach squatters of Royal Row at Dollarton, 10 miles east of Vancouver." (*ML* 389 It is perhaps understandable, given the provincial attitudes prevalent in Vancouver at that period and Lowry's most expressive nonconformity, that Lowry regarded Vancouver as "the most hopeless of all cities of the lost", and in his short story, "The Bravest Boat," turned it into the sinister and philistine city of Enochvilleport.)

The outhouse incident and other often poignant recollections, including glimpses of Lowry's struggle with his own private goblins (which he both conjured up and sought to assuage in the bottle), amplify the picture.

Vancouver writer and CBC producer Norman Newton, who knew Lowry, had this to say about him:

> He seemed to me to be a self-destructive visionary, who used liquor the way some Romantic poets used drugs, as a kind of anesthetic for the mundane self. When one was with him, one seemed to drink in the same way. Deep in his personality there was some kind of spiritual horror: he was very interested in magic, and I suspect had to some extent become a victim of malign spiritual forces. Certainly he thought this was the case . . . His speech when he was drunk often had a kind of 'prophetic' quality about it; and at these times his eyes would sparkle with an almost demonic glitter . . . He seemed almost an angelic creature captured and tormented in Hell . . . (*L* 59-60)

The interesting and revealing personal observations by Malcolm Lowry's contemporaries do indeed shed light on the world of Lowry's personality. However, welcome though these authentic glimpses of the man are, the biographical portion of Kilgallin's book must, regrettably perhaps, be viewed in the larger light of Day's biography, by which it appears as a kind of abbreviated journalism attractively spiced with colorful, vivid interviews to compensate for flesh lacking in the narrative. In due fairness to Kilgallin, it must be said that he does not pretend to the breadth and depth of Day's biography in his account; however, one would have hoped to find some at least hypothetical distillation of insights drawn from the facts of Lowry's life and the observations of his contemporaries, some in-depth probes into the man and his perceptions.

The stylistic change between the first chapter of Kilgallin's book and the other two is marked and abrupt. The second and third chapters, dealing basically with *Ultramarine* and *Under the Volcano* respectively, are rather heavily academic and require a serious devotion to the subject matter on the part of the reader. Kilgallin has quite apparently researched his material extensively, although there are instances when one would like to see more direct references to source material for certain unsubstantiated assertions which the reader may question.

An example of this is to be found in Kilgallin's chapter on *Ultramarine*, where he states that the novel's heroine, Janet, was "modelled upon the silent movie star Janet Gaynor, since Lowry had no girlfriend at the time of the novel's composition" (*L* 99), whereas Douglas Day, speaking of Lowry at the same period, states that "Perhaps he was, like Dana Hilliot of *Ultramarine*, keeping himself pure for a girl back in England. (Conrad Aiken has said that the original for *Ultramarine*'s Janet was a girl in Liverpool

named Tessa, but there are no more clues to help us, here.)" (*ML* 93-4) We would hopefully assume that Kilgallin did have a source for his remark but might wish he had let us in on it.

The two chapters dealing with Lowry's work, which constitute the bulk of Kilgallin's book, are frequently somewhat thick in style and language. Kilgallin's manner of presenting his material is not always inviting in itself, as opposed to Day's book, which fully and immediately engages. Kilgallin's rhetoric, at its worst, is all too often overweighted, and instances of turgid and pedantic writing are to be found.

> The contrasts between Dana's thoughts and the stichomythic dialogue of the crew throughout the book are emphatically ironic in illustrating interior and exterior modes of consciousness. The abrasion of these modes creates not only double perspective but the important interfacing conflict of values that wages within Dana. (*L* 103)

Too frequently one can hear the thud and clank of the heavy wheels of analysis in laborious motion.

Called by Douglas Day "the greatest religious novel of this century" and by Kilgallin "the global masterpiece recognized to date in sixteen languages as one of the few touchstone novels of our century" (pretty strong stuff), *Under the Volcano* is indeed a magnificent, tragic, compassionate and beautiful work, as John Woodburn rightly called it in his review in the *Saturday Review of Literature* after the novel's publication in 1947. In looking at Lowry's masterpiece, Kilgallin pursues, almost exclusively, symbolic patterning, literary allusion and structural technique, looking so minimally at the novel *itself* as to leave it almost non-existent. He quite apparently takes for granted an ample familiarity with the novel on the part of the reader. Basically absent from Kilgallin's book is any real consideration of the essential nature and textural feel of *Under the Volcano*, its language and mood, the emotional ebb and flow of its characters, its thrust and vision or the dynamics of its tensions. This exclusivity of perspective in Kilgallin's study necessarily narrows the field of vision considerably, denying us what we might have hoped for and expected in such a book: at least a glimpse of an attempted holistic view of Lowry's major work. What we have here, however, is a dissection with no real evidence of a fleshed body lying on the examining table. Rather there is only a prolific array of isolated organs lying about, connected by an intricate wiring of veins and arteries but with no trace of the body.

In his study Kilgallin over-indulges himself in a sea of literary

allusions to external material — citations from works of other authors, potentially analogous literary situations, Freudian commentary, books on magic, the occult and esoteric religions — some of these allusions pertinent and illuminating but others — too many others — considerably strained and intrusive. Lacking restraint as to the judicious employment of literary allusions, Kilgallin is often excessive to the point of ostentation.

On pages 173-4 Kilgallin refers to an incident in *Under the Volcano* involving the novel's protagonist, Geoffrey (the Consul) as follows:

> A Cabbalistic interpretation reinforces Geoffrey's observation: "I have another enemy round the back you can't see. A sunflower. I know it watches me and I know it hates me" (UTV 148). Swedenborg believed that if God appeared in the heavens it was because He was the Divine Love by which all spiritual things existed, in the same way that all natural objects thrive by the sun. Talking to Hugh later about this same sunflower, Geoffrey states that "it stared. Fiercely. All day. Like God!" (UTV 183). As Adam and Christ, Blackstone and Livingstone, Geoffrey echoes the belief of the hero in Claude Houghton's novel *Julian Grant Loses His Way*... Agreeing with Houghton that "a man can't imagine his own heaven till he's found his own hell" Lowry had Geoffrey look into the abyss of his life for his salvation. (*L* 174)

These references might be quite justifiable in this context had Kilgallin taken the trouble to reveal the reasons for their relevance to the reader, which he fails to do. This sort of thing occurs all too frequently.

Kilgallin is preoccupied with the detection and definition of Lowry's symbolic usage, of the techniques by which the work was structured and the sources of its materials, whereas Lowry's prime concern in *Under the Volcano* was a thematic one and one which wrestled with the question of personal meaning in the largest context — at the risk of sounding grandiose: that of man vis-a-vis himself and his relationship to the universe, in the abstract, and to his fellows, in particular. Kilgallin does not touch on the passion for meaning which informs the novel, and in a book that pretends to be more than a technical analysis, this omission is to be regretted.

Kilgallin's tracking down of all appearances in the novel of the significant number 7 in any shape or form is characteristic of the manner of his intensive symbolic pursuits. To cite a few examples:

> The novel started and will end at seven with the actions of the horse associated with death, the Book of *Revelation* and the four horsemen of the Apocalypse... the number seven drew to it the Seven Taber-

nacles in Hell . . . the seven daughters of Atlas called the Pleiades to whom Yvonne will speed after death; the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, among which is the Pharos of Alexandria duplicated for Geoffrey as the Farolito, and the seven stages of man which Geoffrey relives before seven o'clock. (*L* 184) . . . Vigil's triangular tennis racket, Laruelle's quadrangular — totalling seven . . . (*L* 145)

A major portion of Kilgallin's study of the novel is given over to the unleashing of the hounds on such symbolic and mythological figures occurring in *Under the Volcano* as the number 7, the scorpion, the wheel (of fortune), the tree (of life), the horns (of the cuckold), the goat, the split-rock, the number 666, the swan, the dog, the horse, the eagle, the hare and so on, discussing the manner of their employment and function in the novel, with attending literary allustions.

Symbolic witch-hunting *is* a natural temptation with this novel, it must be admitted; Lowry begs for it — demands it, even, of the serious critic who seeks to comprehend the work maximally. However, a symbolic pattern is not a novel but merely one of its many features, and to dump the bulk of the weight of appraisal disproportionately on to one attribute — even in the case of *Under the Volcano* — is to thrust the perception of the whole substantially awry.

Lowry himself, unlike many of his critics, acknowledged that the symbolizing and mythologizing in *Under the Volcano* is not the prime foundation and concern of the novel. Day quotes excerpts from Lowry's thirty-one page exegesis included in a letter to his publisher Jonathan Cape:

all this (the mythological content of the novel) is not important at all to the understanding of the book . . . The novel can be read simply as a story which you can skip if you want. It can be read as a story you will get more out of if you don't skip. (See *Selected Letters*, pp. 57-88)

Day comments:

The inclusion of various kinds of arcana is, not, then, for the purpose of ornamental or pretentious complication, but to add resonance . . . to simplify, to make the work accessible to any kind of reader. (*ML* 319)

Highly pertinent to an appraisal of Kilgallin's approach are Day's remarks on pages 321 and 322:

Lowry may . . . have thought of the process by which he wrote and rewrote *Under the Volcano* as one of simplification; but the fact remains that his novel has seemed to almost every reader an enormously

complex, even obscurantist, piece of fiction. It is not surprising then, that, instead of essays which explore the novel as *Gestalt*, critics have so far concentrated almost without exception on one or two of the many strands which woven together produce the whole work . . . At this moment, there is . . . only one published work of criticism which is immediately and unqualifiedly valuable to any reader of the whole novel: Dale Edmonds's *Under the Volcano*: A Reading of the Immediate Level, which assumes what no one else seems really to have assumed: that the novel "exists powerfully as a story about people," whatever else it may be: and that it is on this immediate level of "people, places, events and circumstances within a fictional world that most resembles our own" that *Under the Volcano* communicates most affectively. To read Edmonds's essay is to learn that Lowry's novel does indeed respond to a sane, non-Procrustean, non-thesis-pushing analysis. Someday . . . we will perhaps see our paths cleared for more fruitful and illuminating studies, and fewer instances of earnest drudgery. (*ML* 322)

Fortunately, Kilgallin is not without moments of humor in the business of symbol-hunting, and in a brief but delightful moment (shaft of sunlight in the symbolic swamp) he pokes fun at this pursuit with a neat bit of word-play: Dealing with the symbolic associations of the Mexican town Cuernavaca ("Cow's Horn") in *Under the Volcano*, Kilgallin says: "Geoffrey is quite aware that 'Venus is a horned star' (UTV 220). Accordingly, he calls the town 'Cuckoldshaven' (UTV 64), the name of London in the Elizabethan play *Eastward Ho!* In true fashion he is the *cuckold shaven* (UTV 177-8) by his cuckolding half-brother Hugh" (*L* 159), (who literally shaves Geoffrey's face, as the latter is incapacitated by alcohol).

One of the most interesting features in Kilgallin's study of aspects of *Under the Volcano* is his disclosure of Lowry's use of cinematic technique in the structuring of his novel, as revealed by Lowry in his exegesis. Calling *Under the Volcano* "one of this century's most cinematographic novels" (though certainly not in so self-consciously obvious form as Robbe Grillet's *Jalousie*), he describes the opening of the novel and its filmlike handling thusly:

from the satellite camera angle of the novel's first paragraph to the telescopic close-up shot in the fifth the reader-viewer will have closed in, frame by frame, from the global panorama to the focal centre of Laruelle. Employing rapid cuts from perspective to perspective (panoramic to close-up) Lowry has employed five examples of montage:

a) juxtaposition of the separate settings in the opening paragraph:

b) presentation of the characteristic features of Quauhnahuac by showing selected portions of it;

c) combinations (churches, cantinas, pools) connected not only spatially and temporarily but also symbolically;

d) fluctuation between the positive spaces of (c) where there are defined objects, and the negative spaces of the third paragraph where absent ghosts are invisibly perceptible. (compare the body in *Blow-up*);

e) rhythm of shot-sequence from wide and long angle to narrow and short (*L* 131-2)

The discussion of Lowry's employment of film techniques and the tracing of influences of the German Expressionist filmmakers on Lowry and in *Under the Volcano* is both illuminating and provocative. It is a pity that Kilgallin's exploration here is so highly abbreviated, as this is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of his study of *Under the Volcano.*

Throughout the book Kilgallin compresses far too much pithy information into far too little space, often crowding a mass of profundities and fascinating perceptions into apparent near insignificance. It is really almost incomprehensible that so much material is so unduly condensed in this book. One is curious as to why Kilgallin has done this. That he has actually succeeded in presenting such an amazing quantity of pertinent information within the constraints of so slim a book is quite remarkable.

Whatever its limitations, one cannot help but come away from Kilgallin's book with a sense of grudging respect for the author's substantial accomplishments and diligent, back-breaking research. The undertaking of the compilation of a broad range of studies on particular aspects of *Under the Volcano*, excerpts from works of a wide variety of other authors which bear relevance to Lowry's book, applications of Lowry's exegesis to elements of the novel and the pertinent relating of all these to components of *Under the Volcano* is an exceptionally demanding one. Kilgallin brings a high degree of skill and knowledge of his craft to the examination of a profusion of elements in Lowry's work, and, in the main, his analysis is intelligent and informative despite its somewhat wearisome handling. The context is wrong, the excesses are evident and the compression is regrettable, but judiciously edited and broken down into different contours and developed in breadth along the lines he has set down, the material provided by Kilgallin in this book could present a valuable key to a great many aspects of the work of this extraordinary and often bewitchingly enigmatic author.

BOOKS AND PERIODICALS RECEIVED

PERIODICALS

Arts in Society, Fall 1973, Volume 10, Number 2, Film: New Challenge and New Possibility, published The University of Wisconsin-Extension, subscriptions $7.50 per year, $2.50 per copy, 320 pp.

Books Abroad, Autumn 1973, An International Literary Quarterly sponsored by The University of Oklahoma, 216 pp., subscriptions $8.00 per year, $2.50 per copy.

Canadian Literature, No. 58, Autumn 1973, A Quarterly of Criticism and Review, published University of British Columbia, 116 pp., subscriptions $5.50 per year, $2.00 per copy.

Chelsea 32, 1973, poetry/prose/art, 170 pp., subscriptions $3.50 for two consecutive issues, $2.25 per copy.

Chicago Review, 1973, Volume 25, Numbers 1 & 2, Quarterly of art-work, book reviews, drama essays, poetry, prose fiction, published University of Chicago, Illinois; subscriptions $5.00 per year, $1.50 per copy, 210 pp.

Cut Bank 2, 1973, published University of Montana, poetry/fiction, subscriptions $3.00 per year, $1.50 per copy, 92 pp.

Fiction International I, Fall 1973, Semi-annual Journal of letters and arts, published St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York, subscriptions $4.00 per year, $2.00 per copy, 136 pp.

Journal of Popular Culture, Summer 1973, Volume VII, No. 1, subscriptions $15.00 per year, $4.00 per copy, 248 pp.

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Mosaic, VI/4, 1973, A Journal for the Comparative Study of Literature and Ideas, published by the University of Manitoba Press, 236 pp., subscriptions $8.00 per year, $2.25 per copy.

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