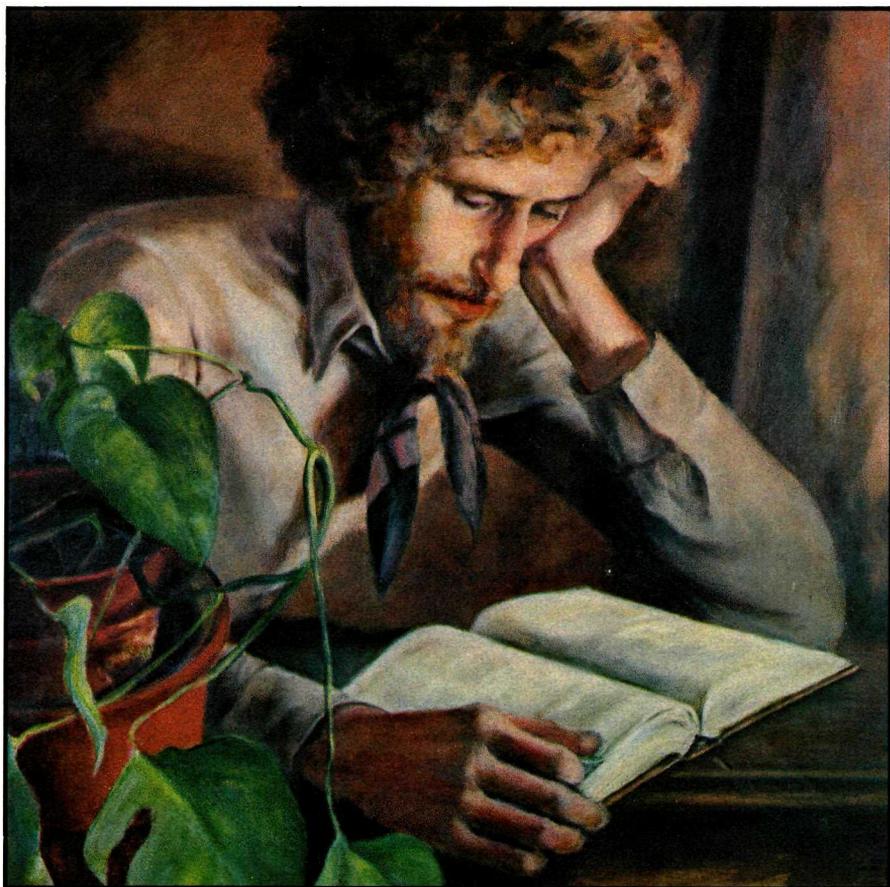


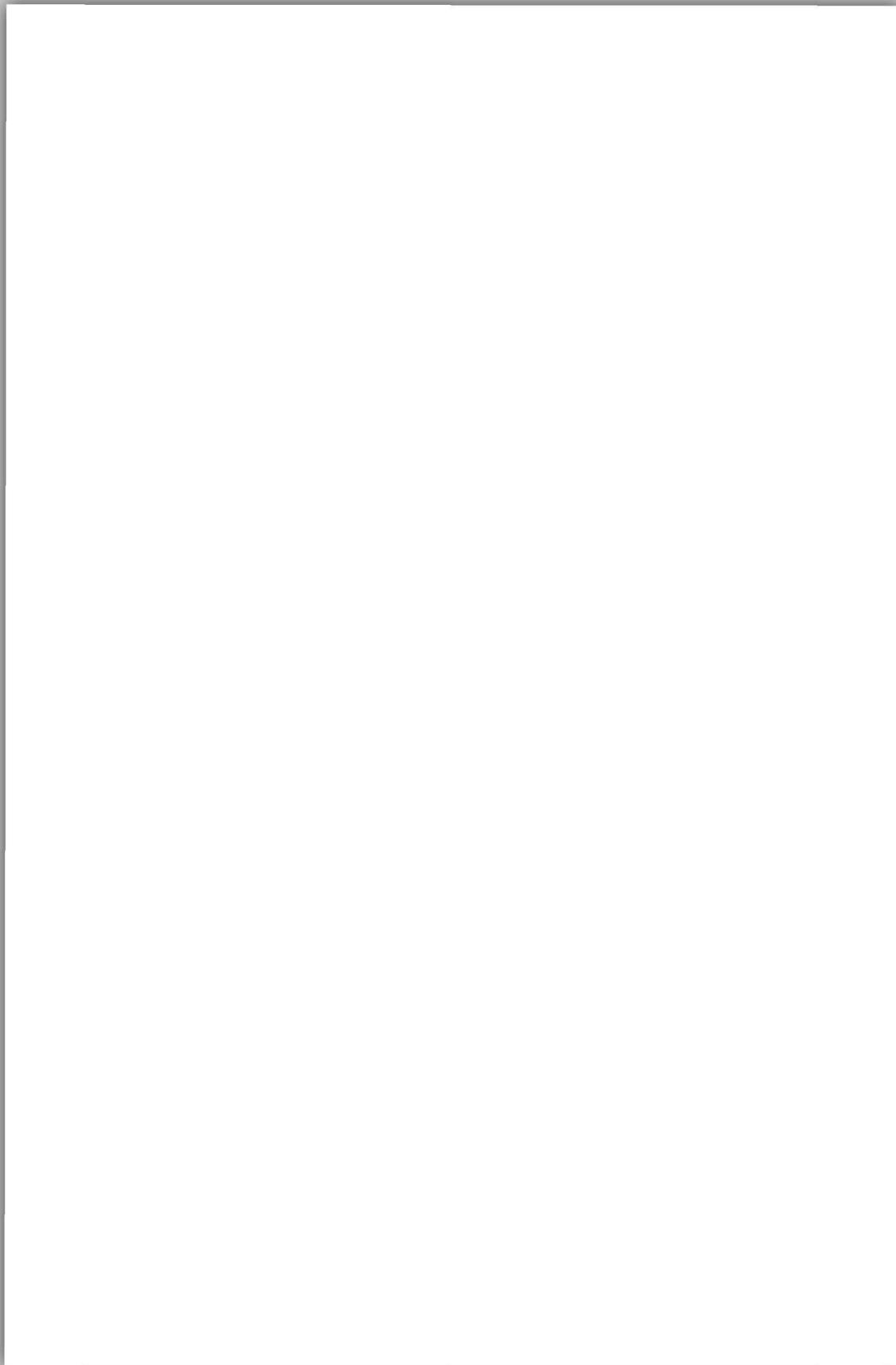
# PRISM *international*

Summer 1978

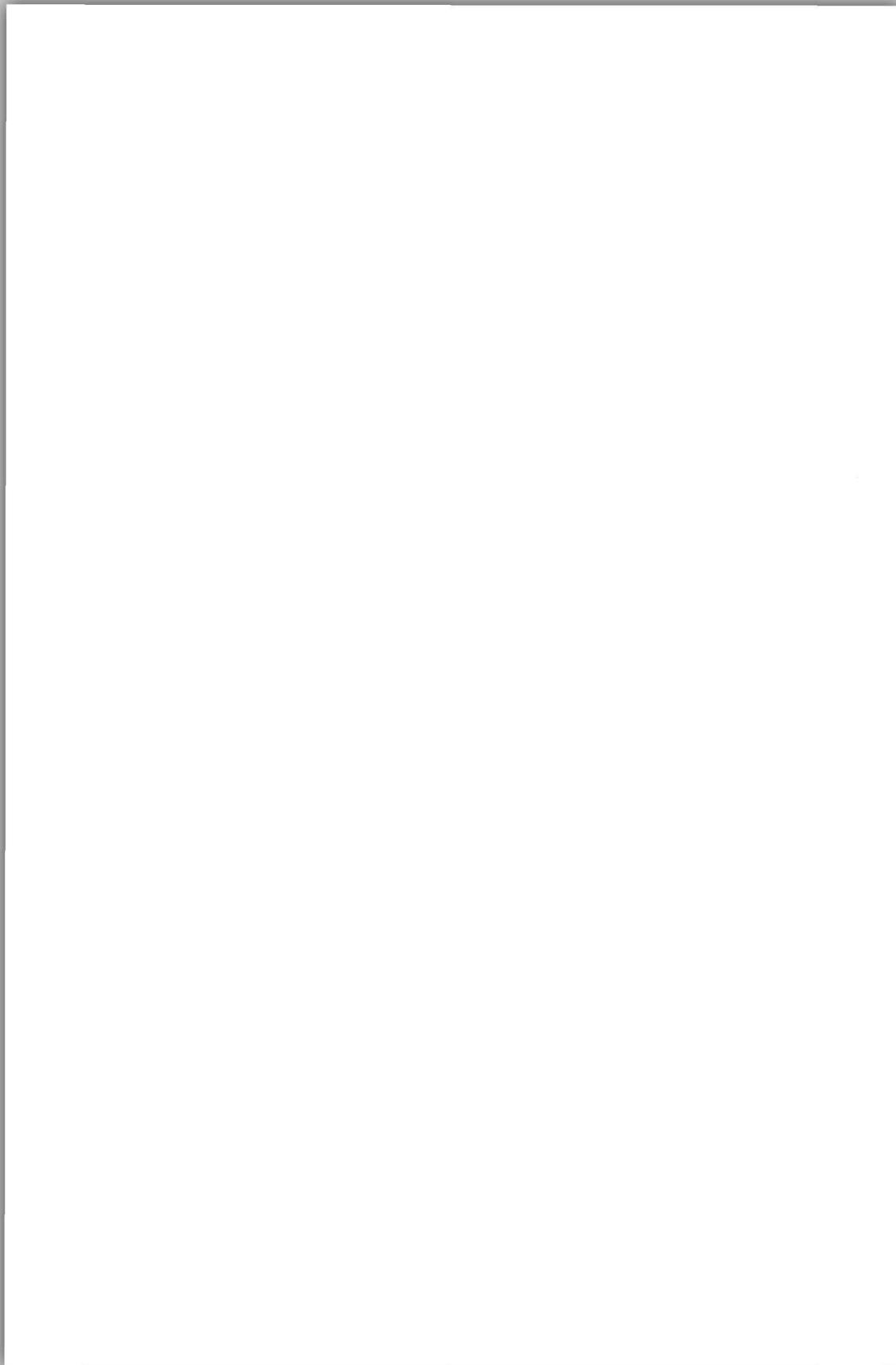
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*Special Canadian Under 30's Issue*







PRISM *international*

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Under 30's Issue*

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PRISM *international*

A JOURNAL OF  
CONTEMPORARY WRITING

This special issue of *PRISM international* is dedicated to Canadian writers under thirty. It was our editorial intention to be as representative as possible of the quality and variety of their work.

DONA STURMANIS  
*Editor-in-Chief*

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POETS IN A CAFE

A mime  
his face traditional white  
his slippers amazingly black  
makes a world of air  
drawing it toward him  
as though it were a rope,  
leaning on air  
as though it were a cane,  
leading it by hand  
like a child.  
And on another corner  
a man is telling a tale  
about a practical princess  
who slays a dragon  
by means of her common sense.  
His hat is two feet tall;  
the well-dressed watching crowd  
drops coins in it.  
We applaud  
throw in what we can spare.  
Moving on, we stop at a cafe,  
sit and write  
the poem of it.  
We mention, perhaps  
the street as theatre  
the theatre in the street —  
the bursting of life into art  
everywhere the eye trained into loving turns.

We are doing it now,  
writing poems among the rubble  
of empty coffee cups,  
moving with the mime  
the teller of tales,  
moving with the love  
each of us has for all of us.  
The well-dressed crowd  
is watching  
much appeased  
to be getting a glimpse  
of art in the making  
for the price of cafe au lait.  
We laugh  
we write them in as well.  
There is room  
for the whole world here —  
we are making  
the whole world  
out of air.

## MADNESS

I have seen the spider hanging  
at its own odd angle  
dangle defying gravity.  
I have seen twin suns  
cross in the sky  
dual solstice, knit ecliptics.  
This is not right.

I have read the wings of moths  
wherein is told the law of flight.  
I have watched the splintered moon  
rise half in the east, half in the west  
and meet at the zenith, full.  
This is wrong.

I have heard the voices of insects  
that ring from the planks  
of my house,  
antennae vibrate my name.  
Pinwheel comets over my roof  
redde the sky with circular flame.  
This is false.

I cut the cosmos  
with the razor of reason  
thin as the wing of a fly.  
I know which planet is real  
I have seen them both  
and I am not afraid.

## LOVE POEM

I want  
to make a myth of you,  
to postulate  
the miraculous feats of your youth,  
the dragons you slew  
in countries beyond the place  
where sea receives the sun.  
I want a story  
of you wandering like Ishmael  
city to city, heart to heart.  
I want you empty  
like a finished god  
surveying the world he knows  
with wise scrutiny  
with scorn for the weak-at-heart.  
I want you to be Ulysses  
looking for one last escapade  
and I want to be  
your final adventure.

Deirdre Ballantyne

MAY '78

there was a night  
I remember colors:

two moth-green candles  
scented (the fragrance  
we couldn't name)  
squat  
sealing wafers of wax  
to an orange plastic dish

(I think of Necco Wafers  
the penny rolls  
I bought as a child  
at the corner store

spreading out the pastel  
powdery discs  
ceremoniously choosing  
a different color each time  
green . . . lime

such sweet coin!

the pinkish brown chocolate  
ones were best)

plates of spaghetti . . .  
flaming reds  
curling upward

we  
the silent fire-eaters

throats burning

with words unsaid

white somewhere . . .

a towel

a robe blue lines . . .

Rupert Brooke's white cups  
clean-gleaming ringed  
with blue lines . . .

(I have been that kind  
of lover)

the corner of a sheet?

quickenings

in the corner of an eye

a visible pulse

(always with you  
childhood images revive

breathe a sharper air

catch at the present  
explaining:

red sun outside  
the imaginary garden

beyond the unlatched  
windowframe

in the night-black :

a rounder vision )

fingers playing  
in wheat colored hairs  
across your chest

and down  
to discover  
in a darker field

dreamlike we moved  
in and out of yellow  
lamplight

mind's dimensions  
out of focus

and as two lotus-eaters  
our bodies revolved

suspended

between the deepening colors  
of Mozart's music  
a record turning

and the silver glints  
(fish under dusk-violet-water)  
of airplanes

mobile . . .  
slowly turning

Peter Behrens

## MORNING, VALLEY OF THE TEN PEAKS

“No,” he said, “it doesn’t hurt at all.” He closed his eyes. “I’m cold,” he said. I’m cold and then I’m warm and then I’m cold again. Its very strange, I can’t believe it’s happening.”

His face had been badly scratched and a bruise was beginning to colour on his cheekbone. I had limbed off as much of the tree as I could and the sweet-smelling pine boughs were scattered on the ground around us. I sat beside him on the thin, cold ground and waited.

It was still very early, it was one of those hard blue mornings in the Rockies and the air was glassy and sharp. It was the second week of October and the small brook down at the trailhead, where we’d filled our tea-cans before starting up to the site, had been glossed over with a thin, soft sheeting of ice.

In another hour the sun would reach us and burn off that bitter edge which morning has, in the mountains. It was always cold for the first couple of hours, until the sun was high enough to reach us. It was always warm enough by noon, even in October.

We’d only been working an hour or so when he’d done it.

We were cutting out a new trail for the Parks Department, we’d been working up at the Valley for three weeks. It had taken them all summer to survey the thing out, chain and ribbon it — and we were the first clearing crew. After we had finished taking out the timber a grubbing crew would go through with axes, picks and mattocks, peeling off the humus, digging out roots and rocks and levelling off the trail.

We were working in a hurry, they wanted the trail dusted off and done before the frost set in too deeply. Late October, there, in the mountains — you never know when the snow might come.

He had been working up ahead of us when it happened, he was cutting through a stand of big, wavy jackpines that had been tagged to come down. Ello and I were a hundred yards or so back on the trail, limbing the trees he’d already fallen and bucking them up to firewood. We heard her snap — it can be loud as a gunshot, you know, especially in that high clear air, after a dry summer. We

heard her snap and we heard him scream, and we dropped our saws and ran down the trail and found him.

The third tree in the stand he'd been working had snapped off coming down, and a twenty-foot top section had caught him on its way and pinned him to the cold earth. It looked to us like his back had been broken and he was pinned in such a way that we were afraid to slice up the main branch and lift it from him. Pinned there, in the early morning, on the cold earth, in the Rockies, his young face smeared with blood, dust and black, tarry gobs of pine-gum.

We had cut away what we could of the branches and Ello headed off down the trail for the truck we'd left back at the trailhead. It was a mile back down to the truck and fifteen from there, along the fire-road, to Lake Louise. Ello would do it as quick as anyone could but it would be an hour at least before he got back with help; and then, if he made it in time, god knows what a trip we would have going down the mountain with that stretcher.

He'd been in some pain just after Ello left. It was very bad then, the shock more than anything, and he cried and begged me to use the gun and end it for him. We kept a rifle up on the trail with us, you always had to keep an eye out for grizzly in that part of the Valley, especially in October. But it was only for a few minutes and then the pain seemed to pass and he was quiet.

I crouched over a little fire I'd started up, blowing it to life and then setting the teacan on to boil.

I looked at him over my shoulder. "It's better now," I said, "isn't it? It doesn't hurt so much. You see?"

"Yes," he said. "Yes, it's better, it feels much better."

"It's not so bad."

"It's better, I don't know what I was thinking of."

"Don't worry about it, I wasn't even listening."

I turned from the fire and looked at him. He was a young kid, twenty-one at the outside, and he'd only been with us a week. The Department had sent him up when it looked like the two of us might not be able to make it through quick enough. He'd been working on a grub crew down at Fortymile. He'd used a saw before, though — he wasn't a bad worker.

I pulled out my handkerchief and dipped it into one of the water-cans. "I'm going to wipe off your face," I said. "You've got a few good scratches, I think I'd better clean them out." I knelt down beside him and began dabbing at the cuts with the handkerchief

and the cold water. "You've got some good ones here, you'll have a couple of scars for a while. Nothing too bad. Scratches, really."

"How long is it?" he said.

"Ten minutes. He should be at the truck by now." There was a small hospital at Lake Louise, but the wardens had a helicopter and I knew they'd probably want to fly him right down to Calgary.

"I feel a lot better," he said, "I wish you could get this damn tree off me."

"We'll wait till they come back. We'll move you then. We have to be careful, have to take it slow."

"It's not so bad," he said, "it's not so bad as I first thought. It was crazy, asking you to shoot — I'm cold. That's my problem, I'm very cold." His teeth were beginning to chatter, the bruise on his cheekbone had coloured in blue.

"Hang on," I said, "just hang on, they'll be here soon."

"It would have been suicide," he said, "it would have been murder."

"That's right, I couldn't have done it."

"It was stupid. I should have been watching for it. I heard it go, I heard the crack. I was pushing her down with my shoulder, I wanted her to drop right back on the trail so the limbing would have been easier. I didn't look up, but I heard it — "

"Don't worry about it."

"Do you think they'll get here in time?"

"What do you mean?"

"In time," he said. "Before it comes again. The pain."

"Oh yeah. They'll be here soon."

"How long?"

"Soon. Half an hour. A little longer, maybe."

"Because I don't think I could stand it, you know. It's all right now, but I don't think I could stand it again."

"They'll be here soon. They'll give you something and you won't feel it. We'll get you down the trail and they'll probably fly you straight to Calgary."

"I'd ask you to use the gun if it came again. I know it would be murder but I'd still ask you to do it. You'd have to. I couldn't stand it again."

"Don't think about it. Think about something else."

"What?" he said. His voice was thin and dry and weak, an old man's voice. "What can I think about?"

The tea-can was beginning to boil. I reached over and dropped in a couple of bags, then moved the can out of the flames and let it simmer. I wasn't sure whether he would drink or whether I should even give him any, but it was all I had and if he wanted some I would have let him have it.

"Do you want some tea?"

"Yes. Yes."

I poured some into a cup and set it down to cool.

"It smells good," he said. "I can smell it."

"Want some sugar? I've a couple of packs in my pocket, saved them from the restaurant this morning."

"No," he said, "sugar spoils it. It's got to be pure, otherwise you waste it, you ruin the flavour. It isn't tea when you drink it with sugar."

I blew a little on the cup to cool it, and knelt down beside him. "We've got to do this carefully," I said. "Don't move your head. I'm going to hold the cup to your mouth and tip it in, a little at a time. Swallow a little bit and tell me if it hurts you."

I tipped not more than a spoonful of tea against his lips. Most of it dribbled down his chin.

"It's good," he said, "It's good, I can taste it."

"Want some more?"

"Another cup," he said. "Just one more cup. It's your tea, I don't want to drink all of it. It's very good, though. You should try it sometime without sugar."

I tipped out another spoonful and he licked his lips. "That's all," he said, "maybe I'll have another cup later. You have some yourself now."

I poured some tea into the cup and added sugar from a paper packet. I took some cigarettes out from the pocket of my shirt.

"How about a cigarette? I can hold it for you, you can take a few puffs."

"That would be fine."

"It's the way Humphrey Bogart used to do it."

"I never saw any of those movies."

"You really missed something there. You really did. Those were great movies." I lit a cigarette and took a couple of puffs, then I held it to his lips and he took a short drag, holding the smoke for an instant in his cheeks and then blowing it out very gently.

"How does that feel?"

"Good," he said, "it feels good. I never smoked before."

I took another puff and then held it down for him again. "Lauren Bacall used to hold out Bogie's cigarettes for him, like this. I remember in *The Big Sleep* — that was a great movie — Bogie had been stomped by the heavies and Bacall — she was this spoiled rich girl, that was the part she played — well, he was beaten up, and roped into a chair, and she was there and she wanted to help him but she didn't know how. You see, everything was mixed up and he didn't even know whose side she was on, she didn't really know herself, except she was in love with him, and all she could do was light up one of his Chesterfields and hold it for him. He'd take a few puffs and she'd take it back and maybe have one herself, and when he wanted it she'd give it to him again. It was the sexiest scene in the movie. It was beautiful."

"What was the name of it?"

"It was called *The Big Sleep*."

"*The Big Sleep*?"

"Yeah, it was a Harold Hawks picture. He made some great ones. I'm surprised you never seen it."

"I never went to movies much."

"You missed a lot, never seeing a Bogie picture."

He had stopped shivering and I figured maybe the little splash of tea he'd had had maybe done him some good. It was better than nothing, anyhow. It was better than just lying there, it was better than waiting.

I figured we had maybe forty minutes to go, if the truck had started right away and if the road into Lake Louise was in good shape. I thought maybe he would be able to hang on after all.

I'd seen it before, you see; I'd seen it a couple of times. Not like Ello and some of the others have seen it, the guys who came up from the States after Viet Nam. But I've been in the woods for ten years and before that I worked in construction, and even on a drilling rig for a while, and I've seen it enough.

He was young, though, he was younger than me when I started. I'll bet he'd never seen it. He was one of those college kids from the East. There's a lot of them around the Park now, college kids and hippies — they come out for the summer and they find a job in Banff or in one of the hotels. Most of them go back in September but some of them stay on. They get to like the mountains and the work and they stay on and some of them never go back. Dave — that was his name — he was one of them that stayed out when the summer was over. It was the first real work he'd done, I guess — his

summer on the grub crew — and he liked it enough to stay on and get himself hired for timber-work, turning in the pick-and-shovel for a saw.

I pulled out my watch from the pocket of my jeans. It was a quarter of nine, not long before the sun would reach us.

“Sun’ll get here soon,” I told him. “It’ll warm us up. You’ll feel better then.”

“I feel okay now,” Dave said.

“That’s good.”

“It was awful at first.”

“Don’t talk about it, talk about something else.”

“What?”

“Talk about the movies. Haven’t you ever seen a movie?”

“Sure.”

“But never any Bogart?”

“No.”

“What you seen, then? You seen that big space picture, *Star Wars*? That one with all the robots?”

“No.”

“Well, what have you seen?”

“I saw *Annie Hall* last year in Toronto.”

“Oh yeah? That’s a fine movie, isn’t it? I seen that when it was playing down at Canmore. That’s a fine film. She’s one pretty girl, isn’t she?”

“Yeah.”

“If you’re getting tired, you know, maybe you shouldn’t talk.” His voice was very weak and one of his eyelids had started twitching.

He closed his eyes.

“You should rest up, you know, save your strength. It’s going to be a rough trip down the mountain for you. We’ll have to carry you on a stretcher, I guess — me and Ello and the folks from the hospital. We’ll get you into the helicopter and they’ll take you to Calgary. There’s that new hospital, you know, that they just built last year. It’s a good one, my brother-in-law he was there over Christmas. Ulcers — that’s what he’s got. He said it was a damn good hospital. That’s where they’ll probably take you.”

He opened his eyes. His breath had been coming all right till then but now he was starting to wheeze a bit, very softly, and there was a trickle of saliva at the corner of his mouth.

“It’s starting to hurt again,” he said, “My arm, I think I must have broken it.”

"Just keep still. It'll go away. Keep still and forget about it. Do you want some more tea?"

He closed his eyes again. "I can feel it starting."

"Have some tea," I said. "Don't worry, they'll be here soon. They'll set your arm for you, put it in a cast."

"It hurts, it hurts." He was beginning to cry again.

"Don't think about it. I'm going to make some more tea. Do you want a cigarette?"

"How long?" he said.

"Nine, it's close to nine. They'll be here soon, they'll be walking up the trail and you'll hear them, and we'll get the tree off you and get you into a stretcher and take you down."

"How long?" he said.

"Soon. Soon. Don't think about it, think of something else, think of the movies."

"I don't like the movies."

"You never saw Bogart, that's why you don't like the movies. If you'd seen *Casablanca* you'd think different. That was a great movie, that was the best ever. I can't believe you never went to see it."

"I used to go to plays."

"You did, eh? I never been to one, not a real one. They have them on in town sometimes, over the winter. At the high school, you know, with kids acting. I been to some of those."

"I went to lots of plays," he said, "my parents always took me when I was a kid. We went to New York once, we saw three plays on Broadway."

"Really? New York, eh? That must be something."

"In Toronto, too. I've seen lots of plays."

"You like them better than the movies, eh? You ever seen *The Caine Mutiny*? That was a play. Bogart was in the movie, he was the Captain. He was crazy, he had these little steel balls he kept rolling together in the palm of his hand. When he was nervous, you know. He was a very nervous guy. He was a loony, he'd been in the war too long. You ever seen that play? There was another Navy picture, with Fonda, Henry Fonda — it was a play, made a really good movie. *Mister Roberts*, you ever seen that?"

"No."

"What plays you seen then?" I dipped my handkerchief into the water and wiped away the spittle that had dribbled to his chin. "You

sure you don't want another smoke? I got plenty here, I got a whole pack, I just picked them up at the restaurant this morning."

"I'm not so cold."

"That's good, that's a good sign. And the sun'll reach us soon, you'll be good and warm then."

"You wouldn't get the gun, would you?" he said. "You wouldn't get the gun? You could give it to me, I could do it."

"No," I said. "Forget it. They'll be up here soon. Forget it." I tapped out a cigarette and lit it up quickly. "You sure you don't want a smoke? It's a drug, you know — the nicotine. It's a narcotic. It'll help."

He sucked weakly on the cigarette when I held it to his lips. He blew out a little cloud of smoke and coughed.

"It doesn't really help," he said, "it doesn't help at all."

"Don't worry, they'll be here soon."

"How long? How long?"

"Don't think about it."

"It's cold. I'm cold again. It hurts."

"He'll be in town by now, they'll be starting out in the 'copter."

"It's cold, it's cold, I can feel it coming."

"The sun, look at the sun!"

"I can't see it." His voice was very weak. "I can't see it, I don't care. Give me the gun, give it to me."

I took a drag on my cigarette. "Listen," I said, "I can hear them, I can hear them coming up the trail."

He was crying, sobbing very softly, the only noise in those morning woods. After a while he quietened but he was losing consciousness very quickly. He said a few more words, I couldn't catch them. He was warm enough, I think, towards the end. I kept talking for a while so that he would know someone was there. After a while I stopped and lit another cigarette. I could hear his breathing, slow shallow and rattling. It went on for a while and then it stopped. It wasn't bad for him, it was very quiet.

I finished my cigarette, still sitting there, and then lit another and another and had gone through most of the pack before I heard them coming up the trail.

I stood up then, I could see them through the trees. Ello leading the way and a park warden along behind him, and two hospital people with medical packs and a rolled up stretcher trailing along about fifty yards behind.

They arrived, red in the face, breathing hard, trembling from the run they'd had.

"It's all right," I said, "he's gone, he's dead."

Ello sat down on a stump, breathing heavily, wiping at his face with a handkerchief. "Aw, shit," he said. "Aw Jesus, the poor little guy."

The warden was leaning against a tree, trying to catch his breath. The people from the hospital had arrived and were kneeling on the ground beside him.

"How long?" said the warden.

"About half an hour."

One of the hospital people turned to us. "Broken back," he said, "he didn't have much chance. There wasn't much pain, though, was there? He probably didn't feel much."

"A little. Not much at the end."

"Well," said the warden, "let's catch our breath, and then we can start down."

While they were sitting I picked up his saw and started cutting away the rest of the tree. Ello and I pulled it away and then they strapped him into the stretcher and we started down.

It wasn't bad, the trip down the mountain — the morning air still cold and dry, and we could spell each other on the stretcher.

The helicopter was at the trailhead and it didn't take long for them to sling it on, and then the warden and the hospital people climbed in and they took off, beating up into the morning sunshine.

Someone was driving the truck in for us from Lake Louise.

"We'll go get a beer," said Ello. "It wasn't bad, was it? He was all right?"

"He was fine. He was cold for a while and it hurt him some but he was all right."

"Hell of a morning," said Ello, "hell of a way to start the day."

"I could use a beer."

"We'll have to go back up for the saws. You can wait here, I'll go up and get 'em."

"Get the rifle."

"Yeah."

He started back up the trail. I sat down on a boulder, by the roadside. It was warm; morning, sunshine, in the Valley.

Robert Billings / *Two Poems*

THE ALPHA-WAVES

*for Liz*

i

The sleeping wake  
of her broken life

is flame caught  
to a blue cloak.

ii

The land tortoises  
in the zoo

near the Vatican,  
1964: they mate

like boulders,  
scrape and rock

but do not  
shiver the earth.

iii

To transpose  
the dream

you must see belief in  
the June sunset;

hang the print  
of a seagull

flying into washed blue  
— a paint-crack

in its crescented heart;  
sing the *alba*

to a perfectly  
tuned lute.

iv

On Cyprus,  
a man in a bar

said a heron  
taking flight

is the soul of  
he who flung

this earth on the sea.

**BLACK MADONNA:**  
Near Rothenburg ob der Tauber

Believer in death  
Nailed to a plank  
By some disillusioned  
Woodman. What perfect  
Wench gone? What baptized  
Child dead? Squat, with  
Rough hands, he carved it,  
Put it here by the trail,  
1834. My love & I don't  
Mind his dreams, some  
Nightmare he couldn't get  
A grip on. We know about  
Vows. We believe in  
What can be done.

CITIES OF LIGHT

riding toward  
the cities of light  
there is a sense  
of dream  
alone  
on a lost path —

leaves rotting,  
moss  
bleeding over  
cedar hemlock bark

and just beyond  
the fierce city light  
worker faces downturned  
reflect  
in mudpool roads

trees standing:  
deep  
slow eyes  
protecting their memory  
of fish-silver  
and ivory wolf

there were colors  
of rainbows  
whirling water  
in valleys  
to the ocean cloud-maker

and later  
electricity  
dreaming for passage  
in the  
headless night

## FLATNECK AND THE NORTHWIND

flatneck  
listening to thin needles  
bend  
and vibrate like a bee's wing  
changing the shape  
of old man Face

threads move thru  
his skin  
his blood vessels  
his bones

they come out his eyes

he attaches himself  
to the north wind  
every particle of ice  
is dancing  
as flatneck  
describes a circle  
outside the north

# THE MALAHAT REVIEW

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Roo Borson

COLLECTED LANDSCAPES

I

Poplar leaves fingering the light.  
There is no color in the body  
the color of the sky tonight.  
Now and then  
the trunks are naked as my arms  
and someone drifts  
beneath the thunderheads of leaves.  
No one drifts between my arms tonight.

Light wanders down,  
a trickle of dust,  
to the garden,  
blossoms on the grass, discarded.  
Easter lilies, unicorns among flowers.  
The humans move among them.  
One, a horn of carved ivory, leans  
on an imperceptibly swelling  
tree. I love  
the fragile concaves of the body:  
the twilight beneath the eyes,  
the double hollows  
where the ankle once had wings.

Every few years  
while you are dreaming  
they replace the world.  
You wake aged,  
are not the same again.  
Sunlight deepens in the purple ruffled bark.  
Shapes startle the fingers,  
perfumed fragments twinge the nose,  
the musical warp in air warps the ear.  
Light is all there is to see.

The sea flakes in the distance,  
under the wind  
low to the ground  
comes the quiet  
of hoofbeats patterings gnawings  
of the animals that lived here  
and were silenced.  
White rafts. Roots mass  
below a shifting floral night.

Between the lavender and green arcs  
of the jacaranda, when air turns visible  
and the throats' strings at last are tuned,  
the human voice will play,  
one day, to its end.

The stars have fictions of their own.  
They come into being,  
there may be heroes among them.  
In and out of the trance.

Love  
is not the only way  
it is handled.  
Loneliness is definite too.  
Of most occasions people say  
get away with what you can.

There is nothing  
of the heart  
to get away with.

WHERE THE JOINER DROWNED AND  
NO ONE REMEMBERED

Did the wall say  
where is my maker  
did the roof say  
where is my thatch  
did the floor say  
what weight can I bear  
did the cupboard say  
who went away

when the joiner drowned  
where no one had drowned  
or remembered the wind  
like moaning of wood

alder is turned  
fir well seasoned  
iron is sharp  
and forest waiting  
what matters to me  
said the pine board drying  
is a water tight life  
a private reserve

the joiner woke up  
his hands red  
and flapping  
almost a pirate  
almost a peter  
he wept in his sleeve  
when he saw someone standing  
naked in water  
without a name

BLACKWATCH  
FOR JOHN O'DRAINE

Your coat is wet from your long journey.  
You lie down in the grass  
and brambles.  
You're not sleeping  
but worse,  
fatherless,  
and the wind north and cold  
from the sea.

*What's near to heart as arrow?  
A deep water.  
It could cost,  
it could cast a shadow.*

Your boots are gone,  
and the ground holds you  
like no woman could.

*What's near to heart as arrow?  
A deep sorrow.  
It could cost,  
it could cast a shadow.*

I've been waiting  
since I had no mother,  
and John, who was older,  
left for sea.

## MAD BILLY

*He cuts*  
*he guts and skins himself*  
*he stretches his skin*  
He signed himself lost  
to attract his past  
but it wouldn't come  
and wouldn't come  
so he went out after it.

a hand to a butcher  
an eye to a game  
a child or a spouse —  
They fear the insane

who are blind  
but  
cross roads with great courage  
stand near constellations  
trying to touch

how love works inside  
and harm inside out.

On the paper Billy wrote, "Bill,  
you're going to die",  
an unbearable lie

so he rubbed Billy out.

## IS THERE A FRIEND

*(plague memorial)*

Taken on a sledge  
drawn by a white horse  
led by an old woman,  
soft underbellies to the shrinking moon;  
we were weaponless

calling out  
Is there a friend?

May god be gracious  
we are not avaricious  
(born from a fast river  
flung restless back into it);

we would fasten  
our loose bones together  
we would speak to a friend

Blind  
sheets of rain  
discover our cold limbs

*It is safer to bury  
the dead on an island  
and not worry the wolves*

WHEATFIELD

1

After the argument, the blood's  
blind clutch, the detritus,  
dark  
opens slowly, discovers  
only as the pulse subsides  
the mute, unbidden things, sea-  
marks,  
        their acres  
                        awash with silver.

2

The constellations flare:  
  
high in the south  
a pale beast  
shimmers  
before the Hunter and his hounds  
  
and a new wind  
sweeps the sloughs, rakes  
through the grain  
the one  
long  
moment  
of the river falls, the water's  
brief  
roar into whiteness.

3

Behind me a night-hawk  
breaks  
from a jack-pine, circles  
and flaps westward  
jagged under Orion

leaving how much  
here  
amidst the ripening

how much  
leaning  
on this dry  
stump, cracked to its roots, the rings  
of all its years  
burst open?

## THIS LIFE

*(after Czeslaw Milosz)*

When we look back at this life  
what shall we say?

That it was a palace, full  
of strange and beautiful women  
who lured in a foreign tongue, who asked  
impossible questions, who danced  
to a music  
that robbed our bones of flight.

That it was a car on a perilous rail, endlessly moving  
through a white country  
marked by a few farmhouses, from which often  
nobody waved.

That in darkness it was a carved shell of light, so  
easy to stray from,  
so hard to maintain.

That in a vast desert we found the middens  
of an ancient race, that we alchemized  
at the sites of old fires,  
that sometimes we left them  
revisited by flame.

Jean E. Brown

## CHILD

Dear God, it's started. I'm scared. I'm going to scream and I'll be embarrassed. That shouldn't matter but it does. Stiff upper lip and don't show emotions and all that crap. Someone help me! My guts are falling out!

What a hell of a place to deliver — sitting on the toilet in the washroom off the schoolroom — two feet by ten feet and the door in the middle of the long wall. Sharon's here, wiping my face with a towel. I must be crying but it's a long way up to the surface. The pain inside is drowning me. Sharon's frightened. I must try to be calm, for her sake. She's still got a couple of months to go. Lucky kid. Funny, we all say we can't wait till it's over and here I am, wishing myself back.

The Major's here and someone's brought my cape and purse. I'll never wear a cape again. I've got to wipe my glasses before I go anywhere. Can't see a thing through the tear stains. It's better standing up. The pressure's off. Maybe this is a false alarm. They say it's common in first births.

Everyone's in the schoolroom, waiting to see the condemned woman take that last walk. I've been there too. Envious and scared, hoping I'll be as serene and stoic as Trudi was. She packed her suitcase and tidied up in between timing contractions. Gave away her clothes like she'd just inherited a million dollars and was going to Paris for a new wardrobe. Don't think I'll give quite the same performance. I'll do well to get down the stairs on my own two feet with my mouth shut. Oh Jesus, that last one was bad. Fast, too fast. Supposed to be ten minutes apart at first, but this is more like three minutes. Major noticed it. She's got a good grip under my right arm and we're headed for the stairs.

Made it. Just got seven steps up to the hospital door. I'm proud of me. Haven't let out a peep yet. My jaw is so clenched I probably can't talk, either, but the honour of the Browns' was not defiled. Honour isn't a subject I should be joking about right now. There are more immediate concerns — date of birth, OHIP number,

colour of your grandmother's eyes. Why are they doing this to me? Can't they see what's happening?

My face is wet again and the world's gone blurry. I'm in a wheelchair and the Major's stroking one hand as a nurse takes my pulse from the other. A woman with a little boy is staring at me. The kid is clutching his arm and screaming, but no one seems to notice. She's smiling at me. "It's going to be alright," she says. "Don't worry. You'll be alright." Thanks lady. I guess you've been here before, but I find that's damn little comfort. Why do people think it's any help to remind me of how common this is? I've never done it before and that good old fear of the unknown is all that matters right now.

The Major is saying goodbye and that she'll pray for me. Not much comfort there, either. She is, though. I wish she'd stay. She's only a little less than a stranger, but she's been good to me in the past four months. Never met anyone like her. She shows such genuine concern for everyone that needs her. Wish I had her strength.

The pains seem closer — certainly stronger. The nurse is telling me to undress and hop into bed, totally indifferent to my hands clutching the wheelchair arms. I can't talk, can't tell her I'm afraid I'll fall if I try to stand. She puts a white gown on the bed and bustles out. The bones at the base of my back are pushing against the chair, forcing their way through the skin. Trust me to have a confused kid — doesn't even know the way out. There, the spasm's passed. If I can just get onto the bed before the next one starts. Someone will come and help me. Soon, I hope.

Another bolt got me as I stood, but I rolled onto the bed anyway. The pressure is forcing me down onto the mattress, burning into my hips. Out in the hall, a woman going by on a stretcher is screaming. "No, no, don't, stop it! Nooooooo!" The scream echoes off the sterile green walls. I want to throw back my head and join her, like a symphony of dogs howling at the moon. Oh God, I'm scared. There's no way out of this, no stopping it, no going back. I just want a little rest, time to get accustomed to the idea. I'll be fine once I'm rested — just give me a few minutes without this battering pain. I'm not ready. It hurts, like I never thought anything could hurt. How can women do this a second time? I certainly won't.

The nurse is back, putting my glasses away and pulling my dress over my head. I wish she'd leave my glasses on — the world feels safer when I can see it. She's telling me to relax and try to get a

little sleep, there's hours to go yet. Hours? It can't get worse than this! I'll be insane. I'm a babbling idiot on the inside and catatonic on the outside and it's only been forty minutes since it all began. How the hell can I go to sleep when my hip joints are being dislocated from the inside?

I try to tell her that the contractions are only two minutes apart and I want a pain killer, but she puts my watch on the bedside table and shushes me. The doctor has been notified and he'll be in to see me in a couple of hours. I'll be dead by then. Or crazy. Of the two, I'd prefer dead right now. Another pain snaps me onto the bed, but she's headed for the door and misses it.

My whole body is sweating. I kick the sheet down and fan myself with the nightie. Those stupid cloth ties are biting into my back and I twist around to undo them. It's cooler to lie naked. I use the rough cotton nightgown to mop the sweat off my face.

The woman screams again — wordless high frequency keening that cuts through my superficial calm. How I wish I could make noise, anything to release this awful hurting. The heat is melting me. I'm panting, using the techniques to retard birth but it's not working. It's coming!

Two nurses are here, clucking about my not wearing a gown. They've brought a trolley with stainless steel bowls on it. The shaving ritual. One covers my upper torso and starts to speak but stops as the pain slams me down. It presses, forcing all the breath from my lungs, and slowly ebbs. I feel the warm dampness and cold steel set to work. There's no discomfort. It's such a minor sensation by comparison. Again the invisible pendulum swings back, harder than before and I jerk under the nurse's hands. Blind as I am, I see she's upset. Did she cut me? I can't feel it, but then I couldn't feel anything so slight as a razor cut. There is a flurry at the end of the bed and whispering. I feel left out, isolated in my distorted world. If only I had my glasses on, I could at least read their faces.

One pulls a box of gloves from the bedside table and explains that she's going to have a quick look to see how we are progressing. Feel free, lady. Just let me know how much longer. She probes and draws back. More huddled muttering and one runs, literally runs, from the room. Tell me! She waits for a spasm to pass and continues shaving silently. I'm desperate to know, but my jaw has been clenched too long and refuses to function now. The trolley is pushed aside and two orderlies wheel in a stretcher. They lift me over to it, grabbing tight as I arch in contraction, and the nurses tosses a sheet

over. "We're going to the delivery room," she says calmly and I panic. As the green walls blur past I want to cry like the woman before. No! Stop! Take me back! Oh God, somebody, help me! The orderly pats my shoulder and says I'll be just fine. Fat lot he knows.

I'm sweating again but my hands won't release the edges of the stretcher. I scarcely have time to breathe between starts of pain. I'm being lifted again. There's a light shining straight in my eyes but I can't block it because they've strapped my hands down. My legs are tied in mid air and there's no way to refuse the pressure now. Only my head moves, snapping back and forth to avoid the light. Someone's holding my head, slowing it, stroking down my cheeks. The searchlight is gone and her voice replaces it, meaningless comforting sounds. She tucks my hair into an elasticized cap and massages the back of my neck.

There are people probing at me, conferring in corners and coming back to place hands on my stomach, but the doctor isn't one of them. Why isn't he here? He promised me. I need him. Why don't they give me the needle? I want it now, I need it! The world has split into two opposing sensations: the battering ram between my hips and the steady finger pressure on my face, ceaselessly stroking.

Someone just said something about five fingers — that's a measure of dilation. Oh Jesus, it's happening! Wait kid, wait! There's no doctor here. Kid takes after its mother — no sense of obedience. It wants into this lousy world and it's coming out — now. There are so many people here, green gowns and white masks and I can't see their eyes. Someone tell me what's going on! How much longer? Give me something for the pain — where's my epideral? There's no break in the pressure. It must be soon.

The voice above my head stops crooning and curses the doctor to someone unseen. "Get an intern to authorize it. She can't take much more. She's just a child." Too right lady. Just a child playing grownup and caught in the role. Why can't I cry like a child?

Michael Cameron

## THE OTTAWA VALLEY

"Time passes by," observed Mrs. Fudd, pouring the tea. Owange pekoe? Don't wowwy: it's 'Wed Wose'."

She ignored the musk ox trying to get in the west casement. The condominium window was completely blocked by the huge, struggling animal.

Mrs. Muppet proffered her cup across the coffee table.

"Yes. Those rabbits are getting to be a nuisance. The Valley is going to have to be very careful, very careful indeed."

But Mrs. Fudd was in a pensive mood. "Sometimes I pine for the pines, myself," she said, getting up and looking out the north window. (The sky was featureless.) "This tableland of wectangular families is pleasant, but I'm a mountain girl, myself." She surveyed the circle of alps that hemmed in the Valley. "And not a bird in the sky —."

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Muppet took out a bolo bat and began lazily to get in some practice from the seat on the La-Z-Boy chair.

Thwop.

"One."

Thwop.

"Two."

Thwop.

"Three."

The musk ox was solidly wedged in the casement by now. It bellowed in mingled pain and fury as shards of broken safety glass ground through its ribs.

"These condominiums!," Mrs. Muppet sighed in mock exasperation, ricocheting her fourteenth repetition off the animal's wide, black nose. "The next thing we know, we'll be surrounded by rabbits —."

"I wish Junior would call," Mrs. Fudd mused aloud, turning back from examining the outside tableland. "It's been almost three days —."

"I wouldn't fret," Mrs. Muppet smiled, putting away her bat.

"*Je t'assure*: Elmy wouldn't forget his mother. I'm sure he'll call."

Just then the telephone rang.

"Mom! It's Elmy. In Tulsa —," the familiar voice breathed. "I just love it here at college. Pastuh Woberts has such *dynamism*. Everybody just loves him . . . And I'm studying to use the bolo bat . . . Yeah . . . That's all I can think of to report for now. . . ."

"Alright, dear. And take care of your cold —," his mother called into the receiver, hanging up.

Mrs. Muppet smiled serenely over the lip of her teacup.

"They have such a dynamic mission down there. Even though it's not strictly part of the Valley, of course. I personally refuse to accept all this propaganda about good-luck charms. Still, you've got to make concessions . . ."

"I think so," murmured Mrs. Fudd absently, her mind still miles away in Tulsa. "Telephones. What marvellous inventions. They crisscross the tableland so intricately — !"

The two women sipped in silent pleasure at the way the afternoon was going. Outside, a light spring rain began vaccinating the earth. No bird interrupted the featureless sky.

"I was weading how they're stawing the decaffeination of coffee pwocess next week," Mrs. Fudd mentioned between bites on a biscuit.

"I'm sure they know what they're doing, Elma. *Je t'assure* —," began Mrs. Muppet but was interrupted by the front door slamming.

Mrs. Fudd's husband burst in dressed in red hunting jacket and waders. He was toting a shotgun and gasping.

"Dwat those wabbits!," he cursed. "I tell you, it's an epidemic!"

"Owange pekoe, Fudd?," said Mrs. Fudd gently, used to her husband's tantrums. "It's your favouwite. 'Wed Wose'."

Meanwhile, the musk ox had died. It hung limply in the casement like a mountainous carpet.

"The Valley has got to be very careful lately, Elmer, very careful indeed," put in Mrs. Muppet, motioning him to sit down. "Those rabbits are getting to be a nuisance — ."

"It's waining out," grumbled Fudd, sipping his tea. "And I didn't notice a single bird in the sky, either."

A smell of dead musk ox filled the livingroom, and Elmer noticed the corpse.

"Somebody get that antelope out of here," he said as a sound drifted in the north window. It was the faint tread of rabbits' feet from the circle of alps that hemmed in the Valley.

Francine Corcos / *Two Poems*

I suppose her mother told her  
That ladies cross their legs  
Around one man  
And hobble after him  
The rest of their lives.

On windy days  
When her skirt stirred  
She wished her thighs were breathing  
In another man's eyes;  
That her flesh wasn't cringing  
Like a bruised animal  
Against breasts she wore  
Like old wedding bells.

She was beautiful  
In her tight thighs,  
With her blue eyes murmuring  
Across the floor;  
But no man has entered  
The conversation.

## TAO

If I were not white beauty  
And you the man with fish black skin,  
I might have asked to touch the hand  
Where your jacket ended  
Or lingered to stroke the stones  
On your wriggling face.  
I was not merely collecting  
The skin of nocturnal divers,  
But was afraid of your closed amputations,  
Of the scales you shone  
Black  
Into my white spaces.  
I might have disappeared  
Had I ever slipped beside you;  
We were perfect shadows.

Emilia Corning

## DANCE

There it was, the round, yellow ball, playing in the evergreens. At last. Olivia felt as if she had been waiting hours for it. Now she could wake her grandmother. Together they could watch the sun light up the sky.

She jumped out of bed, hopped twice to shake away the creases in her frilled nightgown. She felt like a real dancer in its soft white folds, gentle as the feathers of a swan.

Quietly, so quietly, she danced all the way to her grandmother's room.

"It's coming Nanna, I saw it in the trees," Olivia whispered as she opened the door.

The old lady sat up in her bed, her glasses in her hand. Already she had dabbed two small circles of rouge on each cheek and wrapped the red satin shawl about her shoulders. A look of relief lit the old lady's eyes and was mirrored in those of the child. Something long awaited was finally coming: daylight.

Olivia took an extra spin about the bed and ended in her grandmother's arms. The old lady reached out and turned off her night light. Like turning off fear, Olivia thought feeling warmth rising from her toes to her legs and up into her head.

"Show me Olivia, where is it," her grandmother asked, putting on her glasses.

Silently, the child pointed to the thick evergreens at the edge of the garden. A spark, another and another. A fire among the trees.

Not a word was whispered as they held each other and watched the world emerge from darkness. Olivia hoped they could watch alone. The last sunny morning her mother had heard them awakening and had come in to join them.

"Isn't it beautiful, what a hot day, a scorcher," she had said over and over again, seeing only a sun. She had not understood that for them it had nothing to do with beauty or heat; it was a ceremony: the banishing of night, of fear. Sounds lost their insinuating, dreadful echoes; walls reformed into upright solid barriers; objects were no longer distorted into dancing goblins.

Ever since she was a little child Olivia had feared the night, and though she had never spoken about this to her grandmother she knew by the old lady's night light, by a particular sadness in her eyes at dusk, by her hesitations before darkened rooms, that she understood. Olivia was sure her father had died in the night; hadn't they told her after she had awakened, in the morning? And Suzy, her dog, she too had been lost somewhere in that immense, vague region of darkness.

The child pressed closer against her grandmother, hoping that this time her mother would not interrupt them.

Olivia watched the sun until it was whirling and jumping into the room, chasing out from the dark corners bits of night that still stubbornly lingered. She watched it catch a pin, turn it into a jewel, fall into a glass, explode into a hundred sparks. She could not move her eyes fast enough to watch its rays restore the familiar comfort of the room.

Pressing her grandmother's hand, Olivia thought of the day. It was the best day of the week, the very best. It was Friday, market day. After dancing class Olivia would go to the Ste Clothilde market with her grandmother.

When the sun had left the trees behind, rising higher and higher to blaze alone in the great blue sky, the child tiptoed back to her room, pulled out the wooden chair to the center of it and used it as a hand bar. It was no longer a chore to do dancing exercises. It was like breathing.

While she bent her legs and straightened them, her mother entered her room, sat on the bed and watched her.

"Very good, Olivia. A little deeper. Breath, that's it," she repeated.

Olivia tipped from one side to the other, lost her balance, then abruptly stopped. She put the chair back in its place.

"Are you finished?" her mother asked her in that hurt tone Olivia dreaded. Ever since her mother had insisted on knowing if she loved her grandmother more than her, and Olivia had not been able to answer, that tone: half pleading, half accusing had crept between them. Olivia did not think she loved her mother less, but she preferred to be with her grandmother than with any other person she knew. When she danced for the old lady there were never any interruptions, never any instructions, though her grandmother had once been a well known ballet dancer and her mother had never danced

a step. If only she could lock her room against her mother, against her walking in, against her instructions, against her voice.

Olivia sat on her bed, her mother's voice still in her ears. A soft knock sounded on her door, then it gently opened.

"Am I disturbing dear?" her grandmother whispered through the barely opened door. "Shall I wait for you for breakfast? But take your time." The door gently closed.

A smile spread over Olivia's face. It was market day. She quickly pulled down her dancing slippers from the hook on which they hung by the window. They were like sculptures, she thought, each crease in the leather put there by a conscious movement of her feet, even their frayed ribbons seemed precious. She placed them neatly in her round case with her tights, brush and hair ribbons.

Outside, the milkman jingled bottles to a minuet.

"Good morning, Mr. Greene," Olivia called, leaning out of her window.

"Good morning Olivia, fine day for the market."

Even the milkman knew today was her market day.

Olivia slipped into her white dress with the pink flowers and the wide full skirt. She turned once letting it flare in front of the mirror. A ray of sun struck her watch, illuminating her as if she were in a spotlight. She danced all the way downstairs to where her grandmother was seated, waiting. Olivia took the old lady's hand.

In the kitchen, Annie was cooking breakfast. Her mother was seated at the table. Olivia instantly let go of her grandmother's hand.

"Shall we go shopping this afternoon, Olivia?" her mother asked. "I've seen the loveliest skirts at Katia."

She was doing it again. Her mother knew it was her market day. Every other afternoon she was free after her dancing class. Olivia looked to her grandmother for help.

"We were going to the market today," the old lady said.

"Oh well, if you'd rather go to market with your grandmother Olivia, I don't want to interfere." She rose from the chair. "I won't have any breakfast, Annie. I'm not very hungry." She left the kitchen.

Olivia longed to run after her, and say please not today, don't do this on my market day, but she knew from experience that her mother would pretend not to understand.

Her grandmother reached out and patted Olivia's hand, "We'll bring her some big fat cherries," she said. But Olivia knew it would not help.

After breakfast Olivia found herself alone. The morning spread ahead of her like a lifetime. Everyday it was the same; the hours before dancing class seemed endless, the hours spent dancing, as brief as a second. Today, market day, the clocks might as well have stopped.

Outside the garden was shaded by the large trees. Only a few select rays of sun penetrated the leaves making small round patches of light on the grass. Olivia stepped inside them but the wavering leaves extinguished them. She wondered if she should go inside the house to read; but her mother had already drawn the curtains against the sun making the house oppressive and dark. She squatted beside the red peonies, inhaling their heavy, sweet scent, while the bees circled her in rhythmic undular loops.

In the distance she heard the moan of a ship repeated once, twice. It seemed she was in a very remote corner of life. She picked up a handful of tiny green apples, freckled with worms and rolled them over the grass just to see something move sprightly.

At noon Olivia's grandmother joined her for lunch, but her mother did not. The empty place at the table reminded her that once again she had been forced into a choice.

As Olivia ate her apple she became aware of the clock ticking. She instantly forgot her mother. Time was gathering speed. Already her heart was beating with excitement. It was nearing the time to leave for dancing class. Olivia looked at her grandmother methodically peeling her own apple.

The old lady's face broke into a smile.

"Don't wait for me Olivia, go dear go. I'll be in the park across the street, at three."

The child jumped out of her chair rushed over to her grandmother and hugged her. From the door she stopped to look back. If she could find it, she would quiet this undefinable ache that always throbbed whenever she left the old lady.

On the sun filled street, life had resumed a bearable pace. Cars rushed past. Brakes screeched on the hot pavement. Olivia shielded her eyes with her hands and peeked at the sun through her fingers, then followed its rays darting off the windows and bumpers of cars. She felt exhilarated.

Half an hour later Olivia was fastening the ribbons of her slippers about her legs. In front of the mirror she tightly pulled her long, brown hair behind her head, fastening it with an elastic band, then

she circled a wide, pink satin ribbon about it. She could feel the ends pleasingly touching her neck.

The classroom was tense with bending, stretching bodies. Madame Patou, the teacher was in a corner exercising her long limbs. She wore her usual white tights under a long white skirt. Her hair also white was bound firmly behind her head. As she bent and straightened, Olivia thought she looked like a tall, fine birch dancing in the wind.

"*Allons, vite.*" Madame Patou demanded attention. Her sharp staccato voice struck out like a rap of a stick on a wooden floor. She seldom smiled, but in her intense eyes Olivia could instantly catch her mistake or a particularly well executed step.

Today Olivia's exercises came easily. A beam of light penetrated through the small window transforming the classroom into a stage. The spotlight fell at her feet. She glanced at herself in the mirror. Was it really her? She was bewitching: the long tapered fingers as fluid as running water, the small, firm feet as flexible as wire. She lingered on her reflection, missing a step.

"Come, come my little Narcisse," Madame Patou called out, clapping her hands three times to break the spell. "There is time for that, the world will be your audience, now it is me."

The week before Olivia had seen Madame Patou caught also in a ray of sun, watching the movements of her hands with an enthralled look on her face. Then she had spotted Olivia watching her too, but had continued dancing and admiring herself. Now their eyes met. Madame Patou smiled: a clear, sympathetic smile.

After class Olivia stepped outside into the sun. She had not realized while dancing how hot the day had become. Shading her eyes, she saw her grandmother seated in the shade of the small park. She looked distant, infinitesimal, a dot among the flowers and leaves. Olivia hurried towards her, afraid she would fade into the shadowy foliage. That faint throb had begun to ache inside her again.

The old lady, eyes closed, sat on a bench holding an empty basket on her lap. She was resting. Her bright red chiffon dress draped almost to the ground. Her short red mantle with ruffles at the edges rippled with her breathing. Around her neck were five strands of minute multi-colored seashells, the longest strand she held in her hand on her lap. She had reapplied the rouge in two perfect crimson circles on her cheeks. Covering her short, white hair was the wide brimmed straw hat pinned with a pink feather that circled the rim and fell slightly over on one side. Her hands were covered by red

gloves, each with six little buttons at the wrist. Olivia had never seen her look more beautiful.

"Olivia, I didn't see you coming," the old lady said, looking down at herself and blushing. "I put this on because of the flowers, the sun . . ."

"I know Nanna, it makes you look just like a rose, a beautiful red rose." And Olivia told her grandmother about that stray beam of sun in the classroom that had turned her, for a fraction of a second, into a real ballet dancer.

With everyone else, Olivia thought: mother, teachers, friends, such a terrible amount of explaining had to be done. But not with her Nanna.

It was a pleasant walk in spite of the heat, all downhill, past West Avenue with its rows of elegant houses, past Vert Avenue with its little boutiques, finally down past the tracks, by the houses with the outdoor wash lines.

Bright red, yellow and blue frocks, underwear, socks of all sizes and shapes fluttered in the slight breeze. Torsos, legs, feet: heads tilted, Olivia and her grandmother watched the hundred fragmented dancers twirl on the wash lines.

At the sight of the market their feet moved faster. They entered it on the side of the cut flowers. Olivia always chose this entrance. It was the most exciting, lit by the afternoon sun. Roses: little sweet-heart roses, thumb size buds in pink and red; tall involuted roses balancing their heads on spiky stems, yellows and something between pink and violet. Olivia passed her finger over their flesh. It felt smooth and moist. Gladiolas: long, rigid, the flowers barely opened. The same colors repeated themselves: orange, white, dabs of red blending into purple, and more. There were spoked daisies, buttercups, violets, impatiens, petunias. Olivia pulled her grandmother away before temptation made them reckless as it had every other market day when they had bought too much. They left the stalls with only two small pink roses which the old lady fastened in Olivia's hair. They had not given in, but if not here, then somewhere else.

The vegetable stalls came next: carrots, beets, onions, celery: green on red on orange. The basket became a kaleidoscope. Several times Olivia had to bend down and collect vegetables that had fallen out of the overburdened basket.

After the vegetables came the fruit. In a small corner of the market Monsieur Labonté had a fruit store. Olivia watched her

grandmother tilt her hat to a precarious angle. Inside she saw Mr. Labonté straighten his apron. They were expected.

Once inside the store, Mr. Labonté rushed towards them.

"Madame looks exquisite today," he said. Olivia watched him take her grandmother by the arm and guide her away from the fat peaches, oranges and apples they had approached.

"Those are nothing," he said in a disdainful tone, "for the uneducated," he added, escorting them to the far corner. There a few open crates rested against a large picture of a deserted beach, with enormous palm trees rising from its sand. "These," he said, "are my aristocrats."

Pomegranates, persimmons, figs, apricots and bright red Morello cherries nestled snugly in wrappings of varied colored tissue paper. Olivia heard her grandmother sigh. She knew the old lady had seen them growing on trees in strange countries when she had travelled in her dancing years. With a slight pressure of the thumb and forefinger her grandmother felt the fruit.

"Your *grand-maman* is a connoisseur," Mr. Labonté said to Olivia, looking forlorn, "so few connoisseurs in this barbarian world."

While her grandmother talked to Mr. Labonté, Olivia chose four apricots for herself, a bouquet of bananas for Annie and a handful of cherries for her mother. Perhaps this once they would please her. Olivia pushed the thought away and with it the uneasiness it provoked.

As they were leaving Mr. Labonté handed the old lady a small bag. "For you Madame and for Mademoiselle."

Olivia turned to look at the little man in front of the store. Every week it was the same. The usual disdainful look on his face had changed to a smile; his hands behind his back, he hummed to himself in the sun. It seemed to Olivia that only her grandmother could make people look like that.

Outside they settle in a corner without people. Olivia found two empty crates. They sat down. Last week it had been Morello cherries, the week before apricots. The old lady opened the brown paper bag. She pulled out a round bundle of tissue paper. Inside was a peaked, purple fig, slightly bruised. Olivia unwrapped one for herself. It split open with a tiny expert squeeze. She pressed the sweet gruel into her mouth. She knew this was what the sun would taste like, if you could eat it.

The old lady was already splitting her second fig. Olivia noticed her eyes glittering and wondered what memory the fruit had aroused, but she did not intrude on her grandmother's thoughts.

When the figs were all gone they circled the stalls again. This time the old lady could not resist a fat cucumber she had resisted before. Olivia saw her grandmother rub the arm that held the basket; she slipped it out of the old lady's hand, giving her the light dancing case to carry.

Olivia looked down at the basket that had taken almost two hours to fill. Then she looked up at her grandmother. The ache inside her began to throb again. No one ever ate these vegetables and fruits. Her mother never even touched them; she made Annie throw them away saying they were unclean.

Looking up, Olivia saw her grandmother's eyes on the basket. "They're almost too beautiful to eat," the old lady said.

It had been one of the hottest days of the summer. The sun had finally lowered, into the sidewalk it seemed, into all its pores. Olivia could feel the hot air sweep up her legs and burn through the soles of her sandals as she climbed the hill towards home.

Once or twice the old lady caught her breath. When they arrived at the first bench she automatically sat down, breathing heavily. She rubbed her swollen legs. Her shoes had suddenly become too tight. The hat drooped a little to one side. She removed her gloves to wipe her face, leaving a trail of smudged rouge down her cheek. On her wrists Olivia saw the little marks left by the buttons of her gloves.

"Are you all right, Nanna?" Olivia asked.

"I'm fine Olivia, won't be a second. We can't be late for dinner, or your mother will scold me." She smiled at Olivia, but a discordant tone had crept into her voice, a quivering note as if she were about to cry. She looked a little bewildered, a little frightened as her eyes followed the stretch of street still ahead of them. Olivia wished they had never come to market.

Several times Olivia tried to stop a speeding taxi. It was either full or unwilling. At last the house was in sight, its tall hedge concealing half its height. That last block they had climbed twice as fast as the rest. The old lady's breathing rasped out from her parted lips; the bewildered, frightened look had not left her eyes. But the hurrying had not helped. They were late, seventeen minutes late.

Olivia's mother sat at the table eating alone. The old lady slipped into her seat, placed her large hat and gloves under her chair, trying

to conceal them. She pushed her cape behind her shoulders succeeding only in making it look like a pair of gaudy wings.

"Take that to the kitchen, Annie," Olivia's mother said pointing to the full basket. "I was hoping you would be home early, Olivia, to try on the things I bought you; but I suppose you're not really interested." Olivia saw her mother turn her eyes on the old lady. "Must you wear that costume, Mother, and that make up, it looks absurd at your age."

Olivia saw the old lady pass her hand over her eyes. They were moist. The longer Olivia looked at the old lady the louder her mother's words echoed in her head until in the indefinite light of the dining room, away from the spotlight of the sun, Olivia really saw an absurd old woman sitting across from her. Her dress looked fantastic, ridiculous as if it had been pulled out of the trunk of a travelling comedy act; her makeup was garish, the paint and costume of a clown, Olivia tried to recapture the delicate ruffle of the mantle in the afternoon's breeze, the iridescent colors of the seashells about the old lady's neck, but they were gone.

The rest of the dinner passed in silence. After Olivia's mother went to her room without a word. Olivia followed her grandmother to the stairs, hoping to hear a story before going to her own room.

"I'm tired Olivia dear, I'm going to lie down early tonight," the old lady said. There was a haziness in her eyes, a breathlessness between her words. Olivia did not follow her upstairs.

In the kitchen Annie was roughly handling the dishes, mumbling to herself. When she saw Olivia, she quickly pushed a bulging, brown-paper bag into the garbage. Olivia's eyes had not missed the action.

"They're your vegetables and fruits, it's no use worrying about them now, your mother is probably right, they're infested," Annie said irritably.

Olivia looked inside the bag. All the crisp vegetables and fruits were mashed together with bits of the unfinished evening meal. She looked at Annie again, her eyes full of tears. Annie put her arms about her.

"Olivia, I'm sorry. It's not right, I know, not any of it. Your poor old Nanna, dressed up so pretty and sparky." Annie heaved a great sigh. "Look, I saved and washed the cherries, they won't poison anyone, go out in the garden and eat them. No one will see you," she said.

On her way out, Olivia could smell the garbage. It was still fragrant. Outside, suddenly, she took the cherries bought for her mother and threw them against the stone wall. Inside her that familiar, undefinable ache was throbbing. Crushing the cherries did not make it go away. Looking around her she saw the garden had become unfamiliar, without edges, and full of enormous shadows. She looked up at the sky. The sun had completely disappeared; a few useless stars had taken its place. Olivia shivered. She felt cold and damp.

In her room she instantly switched on the light. On her bed were three flowered skirts, and three blouses, neatly lying beside matching hair ribbons. She crept to her mother's door, knocked three times, but there was no answer. She returned to her room.

Carefully, Olivia folded her new clothes and placed them on a chair. Before getting into bed she bent over her dolls lined up on the dresser: Flossy, Berinda, Nina. She kissed each one and cradled them. It had been a long time since she had held them. She did not remember them being so cold.

Something awakened Olivia in the semi-darkness of her room: whispering, sobbing. Her eyes opened on the barely distinguishable forms of her dolls. They were shapeless, frightening. The moaning, muffled and low, seeped in from every crevice of the room. She waited until the sounds retreated farther away from her door. One minute, or was it an hour? She lay still in her bed feeling the cold rise from her feet to her legs. Now only the clock from the downstairs hall imparted rhythm to the stillness like a metronome. One, two, one, two. Had it been a nightmare?

Olivia went to her door, opened it. The hall was dark except for one feeble light drifting into it from her grandmother's room: the night light. A bit of warmth returned to her hands as she thought of climbing in bed beside the old lady as she had done on other nights when she had a nightmare.

The room was silent. Slowly Olivia's eyes became accustomed to the light. She came closer to the bed, lifted one knee up then stopped, her eyes fixed on a large, white and red, dotted handkerchief bound around the old lady's head and knotted at the top. She looked like a clown, a clown with a toothache. Olivia giggled, then gasped. Her grandmother's face was chalky white and her lips drooped at the corners. Suddenly she was aware of the curtains: white, thin quivering like ghosts; the vase with a wilted rose cast a large shadow

against the wall; and the statue, the small holy statue with its arms outstretched was slowly advancing towards her. She clutched the old lady's hand to wake her. It was limp, cool. Olivia dropped it. Now the cold had returned, so intense her arms ached. In the corner of the room, she saw her mother, huddled to her aunt; both were holding their arms out to her, crying noiselessly.

Running back to her room, Olivia shut her door against the darkness and cold that curled about that other room. Sitting on her bed she clutched her arms tightly around herself, rocking back and forth. She had found out the secret behind the terror of the cold velvet darkness that every night stripped her room of its reassuring walls, that turned her dolls into monsters and the curtains into unspeakable waltzing creatures. She knew now: things really did happen in the dark while you slept. People changed, people died in the dark while you slept.

From her bed she watched the feeble stars, a bit of moon, powerless against that enormous mass of black sky. Large shudders shook her as she looked about. Her dancing slippers caught by the night breeze pirouetted about each other on their hook. Beyond the window, she thought she could see the dark contours of the pines. Were they coming closer? She shut her eyes. Instantly the hideous clown lying in her grandmother's bed danced in her head.

Now every part of her ached from the cold inside her. Each moment she thought of running to her grandmother to hold her, the clown came back to her eyes. The bed was a sheet of ice. She jumped out of it, sat in the middle of her room on the floor, a blanket about her shoulders. Her head lowered, her legs involuntarily formed a semi-circle. She gripped her ankles and pointed her toes from habit. Her hair fell over her, sheltering her from the monsters of the room. Gradually, imperceptibly her hands rose above her head and clasped each other. The blanket slipped, leaving her pale shoulders bare. In the circle of her arms her head swayed from side to side. She moaned softly to herself. It was a tune.

She stood up. Moved to the center of the room, raised her head, tilted it to one side listening to her moaning. Her hands lowered behind her back. One leg to the side, foot pointed, it tapped in tune to her sadness.

Quietly, her door opened, her mother still crying, looked at her in the white fringed nightgown. She saw her poised, waiting, singing softly to herself. For once wordless, she watched her swaying, then

silently, careful not to interrupt, she slipped out of the room closing the door.

Olivia caught her breath, paused. Now she danced in the semi-darkness. Her arms moved out and up, circling about her head. She was turning, dipping, turning, skipping over and over again in the small periphery of her room. Her white nightdress rippled and swished about her legs.

Was it flowers she could suddenly smell? Violets? Wider circles she spun, then narrower and narrower. There just ahead of her, was it roses? A splash of red roses? She was turning again, jumping. Her lips were no longer dry, they were moist with the taste of fruit. Her room had filled with a sudden heat.

And then slowly, without noticing from what corner, what angle of the room, the darkness began to lift. A thin ray filtered in, then grew, expanded, enveloped the black; at last it was so bright, Olivia could no longer see the contours of her room. Around and around she whirled until she dropped to the floor, exhausted. Resting her head in her arms she slept until the first morning light.

# event

Journal of the  
contemporary arts

Event is a literary and visual arts magazine which is published twice a year by Douglas College. Short stories, poetry, drama, reviews, essays, photography and graphics are included in the 130 page issues.

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WE DARED / WE LOVED

i

We dared to make them ours:  
the trees the rocks  
the old discarded things  
and places — the hill at the center  
of town the hollow down under  
the hotel We dared to make them ours  
until we were taken up  
like the furniture  
and rolled away  
with the Poole and Mannix camps  
the failed farmers the hotel owners  
We were rewarded  
while it lasted  
with days and nights full enough to last till now  
perhaps longer  
Days of wild hares caught in cages  
and walking lost circle in the swirl of pine  
Nights of stolen cigarettes and smoke  
in hollows in the bush  
and mornings of wild hares  
gone out of holes no bigger than our fists

We loved the men who dared  
to make the land their own  
to take the trees  
and tear them away until there was only earth  
We loved the men who sat  
in mammoth earth movers and trenched  
the earth out who piled  
it and packed it in the water's path  
building a lake longer than you could see  
deeper than the trees were high  
But they are gone so soon  
these men  
who make things work for them  
and now we hear they don't really  
own the gravel the wires  
the pipes laid through the sod floor of the forest  
They go somewhere else  
to build more dams and drill more wells  
and leave us  
with the waterbed dry  
and the oil running through silent numbered gauges  
leave us not knowing  
who calls this land their own anymore

## AFTER THE HUNT

The skin cannot be repaired  
once dead  
Earlier wounds — the jagged rock  
met on an early fall  
the searing slash of another buck's points —  
have healed but tear out  
later before the skin is fitted  
to mine  
The hide can be traced back  
to the tanners the stench of salts  
on flesh and fur  
can be traced further back  
to the hunter a tag number  
and the small shed where it was sliced  
off the meat  
Through the hunter I could find  
the exact location of the killing  
the point where the huge head hit  
as the legs folded from under

The country men out west  
could show me the areas the animals move in  
the Indians tell of their ways  
and how they tilt their head to different sounds  
move instinctively with the shifting  
of the breezes off the mountains  
There is so much I don't know about this  
scar over my chest  
the wrinkles that run along the arm  
but then a second hunt  
would find nothing new  
and the skin cannot be repaired  
once dead  
All I need to know  
is to be found here  
in the textures of the hide  
the grain  
of this skin

THE BIRTH OF BABIES

Babies  
are born  
at dusk

the sun  
splattered  
moon round

on a  
pink thigh  
water

& cotton  
sheets  
committing

darkness.  
Babies  
sleep in

black holes  
in wounds  
where stars

were hysterical  
& sentenced  
to memory.

Babies  
hold death  
rattles

in their  
fists. Night  
passes

powerful  
all the men  
under

lampshades  
mothers  
with eyes

as bright  
as bulbs.  
Babies

drop down  
maps  
bleed a

little  
globe of  
ghostly

stars  
the sky  
for one

instant  
revolving  
red

the shadows  
free  
as water.

## THE SILENT CLAW

Speak to me  
for Gods sake.  
There are worse things  
than death

— PAT LOWTHER

Your silence is  
beautiful because  
I imagine what  
you'd like to say

every housewife's  
glory to tell  
that story from  
a cat's point of view.

Look at me.  
There are green birds  
behind me —  
I hear you dreaming,  
howling about the house,  
gas bright eyes:  
dictionaries.

The moon and you  
slither over me,  
light swishing when  
I move. You lay  
curled on one side  
of the bed, breath:  
cool fruit, the most  
you ever intimate.

What you've always wanted  
comes down from trees,  
what you snare  
screams for both of you,

disappointments in the air  
like fur, feathers,  
the frenzy, lost clarity  
breaking you apart.

Your silence grows tedious  
hypnotic purrs — do I imagine  
them? Silence like a claw  
kneading love kneading.

MAN IN THE MOON

There is the orange moon, all night moving  
slowly, getting up there among those tender villains,  
the black clouds. Sailed away from the brass lights  
of the office tower. Started there, old man in the moon, left it  
ovaling his mouth at the offices.

Man in the moon, I ask if you have been a long time.  
It is so hot down here. It is mid-june, old man.  
what do you say to that.

I have been watching your black eyes, unruffled  
by wind or anything. It is time you came down, and told  
us the secret of staying forever.

I do not love you but I want you to know, if I watch you  
long enough, my eyes will piss out the magic that  
keeps us together like a bag of dirt, old man,  
what does the star-giver say, now that you have swallowed  
an eon; in your image, we've been growing feet up,

I won't tell you how to get down,  
until you raise me up. I have privilege, so much dust,  
holding out on a mold of plaster that tries not to cry.

## SATURDAY'S JOE ROSENBLATT

He Speaks of ants, and his eyes shuffle  
backwards and forwards over the precise moment.  
Outside, huge raindrops whiten the street; a bit of  
thunder flashes under the low rooftops. He will  
not go home. His mouth is full of the kind words  
for young things, the new ones, the hard passions.  
He says it right; he has put down the ladder.  
*Immured* he says the word *immured* he is afraid of it;  
poets get *immured* he says his tongue nimble with the kind  
words for young things. He never gets immured, not with  
the white coins of water, his lucent eyes caught up with  
talk of ants, the new poems relaxing in him, though there  
are no more poems, he says, his young hand sketching  
the new words, flailing like the wings of sparrows.  
He goes home, the white rain on him, he slouches into  
it, the thunder washes up to his feet, he disappears around  
the corner, the hard thinker, the rose poems  
puffing like air in the august heat. A man fed-up  
with his own kindness, like a bird on his sleeve he will not shake  
off, his kindness returns, bringing petals, he is the nest  
he is building for everyone to rest in,  
until he has nothing left but the comings and  
goings of friends, their white eyes on him, expecting  
that he will stay in this world for an afternoon  
longer than another, in my mind, with the coins of water,  
the hard thunder, he walks into the afternoon,  
and he lengthens it.

## VISITING FRIENDS

You punch him in the mouth.  
The back of his head falls open.  
Your own books fall out, your most personal photographs.

You apologize. It is no good. A corpse will not speak.  
His face is the same one you hated day after day.

His wife stands by. She does not even shed a tear.  
She has said all she will ever say

You try to make it up to her.  
You tell her the photographs alone are worth a fortune.  
She kicks you in the groin, hard.

Outside, the trees are  
breaking with april blooms.

Your wife, your children, like bright  
confetti are falling from the sky.

A small man, with the name of chance, is tacking your  
name to the door.

MATINÉE

Flat onto her stomach  
she slips into this basket  
of baked earth, the grass  
stubbles biting through the knit  
of her T shirt,  
her breasts sandwiched  
between gravity and heaven.

He offers joints of weed,  
thick as his thumbs,  
blowing in the tall wheat  
heads of golden flame.

They see as if underwater,  
the air smoking itself  
in late summer heat.

She is as yielding  
as softly breathing dough.

They are hungry for each other  
in the fields of grain.

## CITY OF GOD,

The dark pupil is engulfed  
in the white of the eyes,  
sculptured, blank,  
the head's in a tight freize of curls.

Pouring out the skin of stillness  
like ashes from an urn  
the statue comes alive.

He preaches to me that Jesus saves,  
a black man wearing the pale  
face of Jesus, the asphalt missionaries  
mixing with the street vendors on Yonge,  
toting dogeared bibles. He wears a scapular:  
the livid heart of Jesus drops  
black blood.

"I like someone who reads."  
he says, giving me a pamphlet  
the size of a dog's pituitary gland  
as I run for the graveyard  
shift.

CONFIRMATION OF A PRIEST

*for Brian who died of leukemia*

You told me about God  
but you never introduced us.  
I wanted to hold hands  
and be friendly.  
I wanted to talk this death over  
before  
it happened.  
I wanted to sit down with the Father and the Son  
and be a family.  
I wanted to be saved  
by someone I knew.

I knew you were a charlatan  
when you yelled like a medicine man  
and believed in burning bushes.  
You took for granted Revelations.  
I wanted it revealed.  
You told me about mansions.  
I wanted to know  
which one would be his.  
I wanted a pilgrimage  
with confirmation at the end.

I knew you were a Judas  
when I kissed your hem  
and came away unclean  
with my prayer passed over  
my sins picked over and multiplied.  
You made it seem like a miracle  
for one so young to have so many.  
I wanted loaves and fishes.  
I wanted a modern Lazarus.  
I wanted to sit in the catacombs  
and feel the pulse of Christ.  
You catechized.

Sit down.  
No, kneel.  
Have a sip of vinegar.  
I will take away your collar.  
I will deny you  
three times  
and three times more.  
I will sell you for thirty pieces of silver  
no, I will give you away free  
and watch you slink off followed by your flock of sheep  
to where you clutch a golden Bible  
in the shadow of Golgotha.

## BANQUET OF CARNIVORES

I went to a Portuguese wedding  
to hear the holy, holy  
in a foreign tongue  
and touch the trembling  
of the guaranteed virgin  
beneath the veil  
her breasts anchored down  
by crucifixes  
her hands offering  
flowers  
her smile  
cracking  
falling away.

I went to peek through the lace  
for the blush on her face  
the fear and the ice in her eyes  
the eyes  
the bowed head  
the waiting bed  
and the glorious dance  
of lecherous old uncles.

I declined to dine  
on the pig impaled  
above a fire  
and turning  
turning  
its crackling flesh  
peeling  
falling away.

The husband  
shoved an apple  
in its mouth  
to force a grin  
but still the juice ran down.  
Who eats the eyes  
  the eyes  
they always leave in the eyes.





Drove with my toes

Awoke one morning to a surrealscape of white horses sleeping astand  
Sniffed prairie silence

Realized quickly that I could never fall in love with silos  
and was stopped by a real RCMP  
who asked if we had open drinks in the truck on-account-of it being  
Sunday  
and he was polite and we said no and he laughed and we laughed

all the way to the rockies—the real thing *hostie*  
(it wasn't even as scary as the alps  
or as risky as the look-out on mount royal)

and over to Thormanby  
where notes from the world was ashore

where you've built a boat to sail the world around in  
where you've got a baby in the belly beginning

from where you send me b.c. cedar to get high on  
where this should be by now/  
last lines reading

the poem between us is the thread  
keeps this crazy quilt together

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WESTERN

Hips of black leather  
Western walking  
Pull over mama  
I need a cool drink

She was rubenesque  
Rode horses  
And in the wide street  
Held her head high

Mouths parted  
The whip  
Stung  
The dry dust

I've always  
Wanted a man  
To lay tracks into  
To lay tracks into me.

## POEM FOR PETER

I am 24  
My hands  
Pull from the sky  
What is bird  
And what is not.

In the midst  
Of it all  
All dreams  
Are this dream.

Far from the sea  
And fine war  
The life  
In these words  
Will survive.

If you could offer me  
Anything more  
Would it be too much?

Cathy Ford / *Three Poems*

from *The Womb Rattles It's Pod* poems

## NO EMERALDS BENEFICIAL TO THE EYE

or topaz  
swallowed relieves melancholy  
even sexual longing

but a rope of pearls  
that made her head hang  
and a large, gold covered black stone  
like a pigeon's egg effective against poison  
and rosary constant cross

her jewels like seed pods

so grew her own myth  
and armour through which arrows succeeded  
only when they cut off her head  
neither husbands or country or sickness  
but that one surprise

she dressed in a red bodice  
and petticoat

the wood cutter's axe missed once  
death whispered "Sweet Jesus"  
then struck clean  
the head held high

an uburn wig clung to the air

while short grey her head fell to the ground  
to earth  
against which there is no protection



grown old with your daughter  
to attend you like suicide

just  
a season past other loves  
hyacinth  
    your love of woman  
the poems  
those headbands embroidered  
    worn in your dark hair

rose heart

Aphrodite  
“May you sleep then on some tender girl’s breast”

THESE WOMEN ARE ALL OUT OF BOOKS,  
SHE SAID

they still sing the color of your river  
nile queen

and I choose my pens that way  
with admiration

the ink testimony to your beauty

which never was great

which never stood helplessly next to a throne

but sat itself squarely on such pale rock

and leaned on intelligence, strength and candor

for all those women who can never be known

yet sea green barge magnificent into power

the song grown green, even sunburnt

yet there is song

Kathleen Forsythe

VII

I am warm inside  
deep in the womb-part  
where the red bright red sloughs off  
like snake skin  
that's where my 'I' is now  
not in my head

if my eyes look vacant to you  
I am back where I began

Red the feeling  
Red the colour  
Red not just pain  
but here  
where my snake-mouth bites my tail

Red the taste of the womb and the sea

CAPONE #33

Dour and dark mother  
between worry to  
feed what she  
can touch. Full of  
family the meals come  
to children too mean  
to keep clean.  
Before the cold  
empty kitchen  
husband Gabriel  
reads his testament  
upon the floor.

The rat caught under  
Sicilian blade and  
carved from eye  
to ear; a child  
lost who found  
new ways for  
old wounds in  
gangs spawning kids  
to do the big job  
at 8 with 20  
year meanness.

Torrio introduced him  
to the Five Pointers,  
name famous and nasty.  
Capone had the best.

Ritual loyalty  
blood tied to blood  
as easily as the edge  
slipped between bone.

CAPONE #34

New York's gone for  
Torrio. He came west  
to Chicago and Big Jim,  
cruised himself to the  
clean countryside  
selling sex in the shade  
of clapboard no-towns.

Here was business!

New percentage brothels  
must have seemed  
strange to them  
and all from that  
little man who  
Capone loved like  
a brother.

1919 — Chicago welcomes Capone.  
New vice for new time.  
Big Jim gone soft  
spreads an ocean  
of brain over his  
own tiled vestibule  
Torrio again losing  
pinochle to a  
wife that brings  
him slippers.

CAPONE #38

You people of Chicago know what it was like.  
Prohibition of mobs and boundaries, streets of  
booze. Yes, they learned from Torrio and  
shared the cream. He was a man of deftness.  
For three peacetime years Chicago courted  
Prohibition.

Chicago was wet  
and the little man  
was full of  
hostile business  
believing bullets  
greased garlic killed  
with gangrene. Aim  
the disease, pull  
the germ. The  
hospital learned  
to smell wounds.

Dead alcohol must be  
protected. It gouged  
out eyes leaving  
new insanity on  
the street.

Stoke that yeast in yer alky cooker  
get to heaven a little bit quicker.  
Comin' today for tomorrow's run  
better have ready that street-dead fun.

## CAPONE #50

Gangsters are in many ways just like ordinary people. All like to patronize certain places. Well, the mobs fell into the habit of having a cut and shave at Michigan Ave, and though the barber feared such a clientele, the tips made everything acceptable. Generally speaking, gangsters are very generous people about things that don't count.

Anyway, before long, knowing the whereabouts of certain people meant assassination was inevitable. The shop became very busy and it was only the profits that kept the place open. Oddly enough, Michigan Ave remained popular with the mobs.

To prolong this good fortune the barber, also owner, decided a shop policy was necessary and soon implemented what he considered to be sound revisions. Never would a chair face any direction but the door; never an eye towelled.

Bill Gaston

## ANGEL

Monday, December 26th.

Well, I have a week to get rid of him. Get 'rid' of him — that sounds so callous. 'Exorcise' him then, is that any better? No, because when it's done it's all the same anyway. Donny will be gone, gone gone gone, and there's no sense being technical about it, or even polite.

Less than a week. Start the new year without him, that's what the promise was. Doctors, parents, friends: I stood there, feet apart with courage on my chest, like a fool, and told them all. But the clincher is that I told myself, promised myself, as well. No more deception. I know as well as anyone that my health is going right down the tube, so the sooner it's done the better, before it's too late. (Well, I sense Donny coming now, so I'd better pack this thing in — it would be a mistake to let him catch me at it.) No doubt we'll go to the pub tonight, and no doubt we'll end up loaded, as usual. I think he knows something's going on — he's been drinking even more than ever now. Every day. He drinks, and I pay the price. But how can you help but love the guy? I'm dreading New Year's like a very old Frenchman dreads the guillotine. Witty. . . . Still I feel like I'm standing in front of a rush hour bus — a bus with 'Saturday' written above the window.

Tuesday, December 27th.

I can picture Donny as he got up and began to weave between the tables, toward the can. (His ass, dodging tables, waggled like some grotesque parody of a cheap hustler.) But then an idea hit me: pushing through tables in the pub is like pushing through life — some of the way is smooth, some is an obstacle course with strange and unknown angles to be guessed at, drunkenly. Some people along the way are courteous, others belligerent, the vast majority just dumbly-aware that you exist. A pack of wolves probably exhibits the same range of relationship: people and wolves find friends, encounter enemies, and then just try to cope with the rest. And when we finally

finish pushing past all the tables, friends, enemies, faces and other obstacles a whole life-time long, where do we get to? . . . the urinal! Relief in heaven. Piss in bliss. (Cynical drunk talk is fun, but does no-one any good in the end.)

Coming back laden with good toilet graffiti, Donny had us both laughing so loud that other people turned around to us, grinning as if they knew what we were laughing at. They seemed to approve of us — no, they wanted to be with us. Their look had that “We’re your sort of people” tone to it. That and an aggressive eagerness which suggested that, were we to invite them to our table, they’d jump at the chance and gather like bright-eyed children round a hearth to listen to two elders share their wit. Not quite that but, to the point, Donny was affected by none of this. Even a subtle extrovert would have become more animated, or at least more regal. Had the stares been disapproving, Donny’s style still would not have changed. He never notices people noticing him. And that is probably our major difference, because I’m very aware of what people seem to be thinking about me. But Donny just doesn’t care. And that’s no doubt why Donny is so alive, so spontaneous, and so goddamned funny. When something happens: I cringe, and Donny spits. And then he toys with the mess he’s created, tools around in his spoken gob, explaining it, appeasing the offended. I’m just afraid to make the social mistake. Face it, I’m probably a pretty boring guy to be with, so dull, so submissive. Donny once called me a ‘situational barometer,’ which colours me paranoid. Maybe I am. But Donny: too bold to appear sensitive, too naive to appear intelligent.

We complement each other — that’s why I love him. We’re dull and flamboyant. Lead-serious and balloon-light. My friends are bright and like to talk, but Donny attracts that cart wheeling fringe element — kooks, poets, living jokes — who keep me on the edge of my chair just listening, and watching Donny fit right in. And he draws girls like flies. Where would my sex-life be if it was just me, alone? Probably just me, locked in the bathroom, alone with a skin book. I follow Donny’s careless magnetism as women come and go — I follow like a sheep (a sheep’s personality?) in wolf’s clothing, picking up the pieces.

But. Four more days. The thought hits and I feel cut in half by it. Donny and I had a good time last night. I’m nothing without him — I admitted that long ago and I’ll admit it again. The doctors can go to hell.

Wednesday, December 28th.

Here at the bar again, just like last night, the night before, and the night before that. I don't mind at all when Donny goes off and leaves me for a while — it gives me a chance to write this while it's all fresh. I have to admit that the beer helps a bit, kind of brings my thoughts up to the surface and all I have to do is write them down.

Waiter Wong is a tactless asshole. Ever since he got his stupid nickname (I don't even think his name is Wong) he acts like he owns the place. I don't begrudge him his little games and bits of pride — he's an old man and a hard worker, God knows — but he should just show a little more class, especially when I'm with people. Every time he brings a round there's some shitty little crack. "I think I'll pick on Crazy Eddie," is probably what he thinks to himself. Just a few minutes ago it was, "Well, who is it tonight? Donny-Eddie or Eddie-Donny?" And then a slimy waiter-wink to the two girls sitting a few feet away, who I didn't even know. Well, maybe they knew me, or at least Donny. I just stared at Wong for a time, but he wouldn't take that snotty smile off his face so I said, "Donny's gone for a little while." And then he had nerve enough to ask me to let him know when Donny gets back, because he had a joke for him. As if he didn't know Donny when he saw him — the expressions we wear are totally different. No tact Wong. And cruel to boot.

I can't get Sunday off my mind. And the nearness of this 'D' day (a black joke, but true) gives me a sense of urgency, and I feel compelled to put everything down, to get Donny and me on paper. Maybe I'm afraid of forgetting him, as if that would be possible.

It all seems so hazy and unreal now, a pastel dream, thinking back to that night, six years ago. An indelible movie, and I run it over and over again. The sunset over Spanish Banks, I remember, stood fixed, the clouds immense and colour perfect. A golden giant surprised by its own beauty, standing a step back from time, in awe of itself. Every sunset has something of the sadness of passing, but this one felt poignant and huge, like the Fall of an Empire — the end of a day that was an empire of light. Impossible to paint. To try would have been travesty, an insulting splish-splosh of preconceived ideas. Here were real colours — colours like the feel of untouchable skin.

And it was all so natural when Donny came floating down out of the sunset. It was natural and necessary when he said we could move like the sun, when he said he would never leave me alone, when he said it would always be easy. At that moment we joined mental

hands, and it *was* easy, and the ground could not hold us down. We were together at last, and we had always been together — we both knew this. Time moved in our eyes like subtle explosions, each moment a mandala. (It feels odd to talk about it now. Unreal. And the doctor called all of it delusion, a mescaline dream, but you couldn't have convinced me of this then.)

All in that one evening — the meeting of souls, sharing common fears, ambitions. I was amazed at the time that we both had the same memories. And it all seemed to fit. The world was aggressive and blindly dull like some lumbering poisoned animal. The world had no place for two like us. Together we were perfect, and our bond hovered over us like a musical chord, an angel, who sang to both of us. The holy trinity — Donny, me, our angel.

It's strange. Though I'm no longer very much aware of it, that singing has gone on for six years. And everything would have been fine had Donny not gone bad. Gone down, become a drunk, and a cynic, hiding from life. As if he decided he was an outlaw, and reality some kind of posse.

Last night sums up his present state. I have a picture of him sitting forward with the music, swishing his mouthful of beer with the beat, his cheeks puffing and pulling like a cartoon fish. He stared at something unseen. And one more thing I think is too bad, in a way — he's remained conventionally handsome despite all this, this bloated lifestyle. (Not me — and friends have noticed this, amazed — he drinks every night in his carelessly attractive way, and I get up every morning, hungover, ugly.) Anyway, last night a woman whose face we both knew (but Donny I think had forgotten) fell in place beside him and began to work whispers in his ear. Donny's cheeks continued to fish and in the dim light his face looked like an impertinent little moon going on and off. I could see a hand on his balls. The fingers danced to a jerky but stubborn little rhythm all their own. Donny wasn't aware how much the hand looked like a fleshy spider — perhaps we all forget at times. It seemed to be sucking something visible up out of his crotch. But Donny didn't even care, he didn't give a shit one way or the other. He just sat there swishing his beer.

The years had long ago taken surprise away from both of us, but I can still get shocked by Donny's complete lack of innocence. It shouldn't be so complete: I remember clearly the first time he apologetically got a girl to sleep with him. And how we all hated beer but still forced warm six-packs in the park. His was too fast a

fall, and extremes in movement so often take the cancerous plunge. A quick change artist is no longer himself. He just doesn't care anymore.

This beer I hold holds one million more. Platitudes. I share Donny's dissatisfaction these days, but at least something stays with me, a desire to — I don't know — find something *better!* I still can become a pissed-off wasp, frantic at something small in a wide sky. But I look for something salvageable, something that keeps me writing these diary-shopping lists, things that I might read again if in the mood. I try to do on paper what Donny used to do in life.

Thursday, December 29th.

Who am I to stand and judge him? His withdrawal from reality-poison certainly fooled the doctors, and I have to admit that once in a while it even fools me. He's still an artist, he's still got it. And sometimes — forgetting — I get down on him and act like some bug-eyed parent telling his artist son to get straight, get a real job, be an accountant. Last night I wish they were all there to listen to him, he probably could have explained it to them, set it all right for once.

Last night, in the pub, he came back finally and came up with something perfectly bright and lucid, like the Donny of old. Yet he was drunk to the point of having trouble getting out of his chair and his eyes had already forced themselves shut. He looked as if he'd been sleeping for about fifteen minutes, but was in fact busy watching people and things dodge by his closed eyes. And then suddenly out of nowhere he said: "I know you know already that people are colours. Colours." He was saying this painfully slowly, as every word seemed to pause and then discover what was to come next. An ultra-slow falling domino chain, with beer breath between each tic, tic, tic, tic. "You know this Eddie, but do you know what you don't know? You don't know that people are also music. Some call this 'vibrations' but that's too constant, too dull a word. It's actually a sort of jazzy free-form music. And it's this music that makes the colour in the first place.

"You don't know that everyone's colour and mixture of little shades is only a key to their own . . . unique . . . music, which is a deeper thing. Some people sense their own colour and then work on their personalities . . . accordingly . . . but hardly anyone is aware of their music. Or anybody else's music, which is worse still. Music is the key. People should be able to play on each other like finely-tuned

instruments. Two people . . . always make a third thing. It can be good or bad. It hangs in the air, suspended like ripe fruit to be picked and tasted. Two people . . . together . . . making a new music that is bigger than both of them. And look — incompatibility is only the measure of fucked-up musicianship. Tell that to our. . . .”

I think he was actually going to say “to our doctor friends,” or something, which would have let the cat out of the bag, but then a friend from a few tables away brought over some beer he wasn’t going to finish. Donny shot him a smile, and then shook his head and said “sorry,” meaning he thought he’d been babbling away to himself. Babbling or taking himself too seriously — both taboo to Donny. Which is strange when you think of it, seeing as they’re at opposite ends of some kind of conversational gamut. The guy smiled back at us and said, “How you doin’ tonight Donny? And how’s Eddie? Is he around?” “Yeah, he’s here,” answered Donny, “and we’re fine, we’re both fine.”

Friday, December 30th.

Last night, again, Donny was bar-brilliant. So this morning’s thoughts bring back some of the better moments. It’s funny — when you take the past and analyze it, spread it thin on a board and retrace developments like a series of pictures which get fuzzy and fade on into the distance, the present sits here like a perfectly logical conclusion. Steps on the board — from good to bad to worse — have simply brought me here.

So I can see how Donny was, how I was, and how we’ve come to this conclusion with a bad smell, this confused flat tire on a rainy night road, this birdshit impasse. I remember how we were. And how proud I was that Donny chose *me*. Donny my best half. Donny who would quote Milton. Donny the arrogant. Donny who would throw his personality, like pieces of fluorescent clothing, into every corner of the room. Donny who would surround you with the warm earth of his words and make you see the things of beauty, the moments of colour, that moved in and about your life like little smiling friends. Donny the wit.

Last night Robert “Samuel” Clemens, the writer, joined us and some friends at our table. As usual, as soon as the mandatory socializing was done, all the gossip exhausted, the would-be writers started making themselves known. Would-be writer friends of mine, of Donny’s, and their would-be writer friends. “Robert, I’ve been working on this concept and. . . .” “Robert, I notice you’ve been

shifting into a more realistic vision in your latest stuff, and that's beautiful and it's beautifully done, well I have this idea for a poem of my own. . . ." They'd been oogling his mind — salivating — all on the edges of their chairs waiting to publicly notice him, and be noticed. All this time I could feel Donny seething at this, really hot at everyone, cynical chuckles, watching these humble poets prostrate themselves at the feet of the Master. Here we were, a group of hips, creatives, eccentrics (well, Donny at least), carrying on a Beatlemania of artistic sophisticates. After an hour of this sort of thing, Donny stood. He held out his hand to Clemens, and then gestured, with a slow sweep of his other hand, to the rest of them. A mocking black prince, he spoke:

Then thick as locusts black'ning all the ground,  
A tribe, with weeds and shells fantastic crown'd,  
Each with some won'drous gift approach'd the Power,  
A nest, a toad, a fungus, or a flower.

Bang. He let it sink. Then, to the silence, he dug in more: "He has done it. You must do it too. Now let us sit and drink to the human tragedy, the real, and less to the successful throne appeal!" He started shouting a bit at the end, angrily, and everyone, wide-eyed, no doubt thought he was nuts, and even more obviously a prick. In one case they were right — it was an asshole move. But his madness gave them nothing but the truth, the cruel truth, out of the blue. And it was — arrogant — but it contained Donny's best gem, the gem of old, even if it lacked a little love. They seemed to forgive him a little, I think. His charisma made them. After suffering that first awkward moment, and after mumbling to themselves and forcing a few sips of beer, I could sense them silently applauding.

But all this made me sick for the past — in the past he would have been loving. Eccentrically funny, and nice. Sometimes I feel like grabbing his lapels, turning him inside-out, yelling: Donny! Donny! Can you hear me! Can you remember our sunset! Can you remember Europe, Greece, playing chess and talking with the people in tavernas, the crystal water, making people love us with your talk! Working, muscles sweating in the Prince Rupert sawmill! Donny! What has turned you this way? Why do you turn against your friends? Why do you insult men in suits? Why do you attack women with makeup, insult them, laugh at them, smear it all over their faces? Why do you scratch swastikas on new cars? Donny they are victims, like you and me. Why do you refuse to let me see my

parents? Why do you refuse me well-meaning friends? Why do you persist? What is it you fight? Cynic, drunk, madman! Donny — these names hurt, we cannot escape them. You invite prison. I won't let you lead me there. Donny! I can't even get a job because of you now! Because of you people think I'm insane! We *are* insane. Donny! We are insane!

Saturday, December 31st.

Donny came home with a girl last night. Everything was all set, but then he got too drunk and stupid on her shoulder, and she got pissed-off and left. (Did he go for her makeup?) Then he began to stumble around the apartment laughing, drunker still, bubbling his back-throat saliva while duck-walking from one wall to the other. An attempt, I guess, at the satire of some other planet. He's sinking. Still sinking. Does this make it easier for me to do it? Tonight — that's my promise. No, it doesn't make it easier, only a little more pitiful.

And yet this morning it was good again. He turned on my radio to get me out of bed. He'd slept like a pink baby, and now in a good mood, A Saturday Good Mood he took me downstairs where he opened up his First Beer. SSSST. "That hiss," he said, "our troubles flown to space — gone, gone to run another race!"

Who am I to judge him? Who am I to throw him away? The sad fact is that I understand him so well — I just can't go along with the direction he's taking. And the doctors keep telling me that the longer this goes on the more permanent our 'relationship' gets. I wish he would just snap out of it and be like he used to be — then we could carry on like before and maybe, like before, nobody would notice him around. Just me having a little fun.

The pair in the sky. That's what we used to call ourselves. Invisible — I'm sure if God came down and said to us, "Ed, you be Donny for a while and Donny, you be Ed," I don't even think we'd notice the change much, let alone care. For six years, two souls travelling together in a raft on a sea of Outside.

It kills me: if we had happened to be two people we'd simply be two inseparable friends, much like we are now — but with one free to go to the bathroom while the other sits in the kitchen reading the paper. Too bad. Tragic. No: absurd. "Here we are, Donny and me, partners in absurdity." (I guess I'm still thinking of Donny quoting Pope in the bar.)

It's life's absurd tangle that's wearing away Donny's finer edges. And tomorrow he'll be gone, he'll be worn away altogether. The doctors are right: this can't go on, it's all an unhealthy game, I'm insecure, I can't stay screwed up, I have to get a job, go to school again. I have to be Ed James, and Ed James alone.

Saturday Night.

It's done. I decided to confront him with it. I had to explain — say good-bye, I guess. I have to get this down fast. It might be the last time I'll ever feel him. Remember.

It was ugly. I brought it all out, told him what the doctors said, that we were bad together now — all of it. How 'normalcy' had its points. One had to work, eat, live, think of future. Alone I was normal — sad, soulless, insecure, yes — but normal. He was dis-ease. He was my disease. It was good before, obviously, I told him, but not now. Now we were insane. Now we were, as the doctors said, certifiable. I tried to be thorough, but humane, and I think I only succeeded in sounding wishy-washy.

"Rest. Listen to me," he said, after I was finished, and quiet, "we either stick with our own . . . insanity . . . if that's what you choose to call it, or we conform to theirs. Show guts. It's only a choice, and a perfectly easy one if you ask me. We ignore them all. We are porcupine."

Then I made the mistake of saying, "Donny, I'm not really *asking* you at all," and then immediately regretted it. Sort of a lousy way of telling him we were playing by my rules, and my rules alone. When I think of it now I know how I should have done it. I should have taken it to our music. No confrontation, only playing. But then — does music ever offer any conclusions?

So he said: "Oh. So I have no say in this? This over-ripe affair? I play no part? After six years — six years of good hell and better heaven — and suddenly I am nothing? That is exactly what I am to you — nothing! No-thing. I'm a thing, a figment. Well, who in hell else has been good to your inadequacies! Who else, tell me, who else has filled you up?"

"Okay. Okay," I think I said. I was trying to calm him. He was yelling. But I wanted to yell back at him: Donny! Donny!

"Okay? What's 'okay' about any of this? Fuck all your friends and your doctors and their 'self-confidence' and their 'stabilized personality.' And if you want to be like one of them, a sucking fat animal floundering on the ground, and shove me away like some

common pain in the ass — then fuck you Edward James!” Before I could stop him he had wheeled and smashed his beer glass into the sink. And then he was gone.

Poof. Out of my pitiful mind. I called, I concentrated, but I couldn’t reach him — he’s gone somewhere new, somewhere deep, gone.

So that’s it. He was once perfect — *we* were once perfect — and I’m back now where I started from. And all that’s left of him is this glass here in my sink. Broken glass piled, jagged and wedged in the drain. The long points are stuck there, drawn through the holes by the suck of water, and I ease them out like splinters out of unfeeling skin. Funny how drains are never noticed until something gets stopped there — pieces of broken-off lettuce leaf, spinach or beet stems, or noodles — they catch and both ends straddle the metal and hang heavy in the holes, wet rot. But this glass is clean, not food-filthy. And the hesitation that I feel, looking at it, comes from its shiny aggression, like chrome shards of a car accident that lie in the street and seem to vaguely hold a grudge. I don’t know where Donny’s gone. I can feel him somehow, and somehow I know it’s different. I don’t know anymore if this is a good thing or a bad thing. I don’t care. I’m tired. Death in the room.

Sunday, January 1st.

Odd, odd, the hand, the pen. I have never written before. My poor Eddie would take care of that. Also strange to be writing in his notebook, but I cannot doubt that he would want it carried on, on — this running document of pain.

I do not know when I will waken him and let him come to me. Down and deep he will stay, a calming sleep, for weeks, or until I need him to instruct me. Practical matters dictate much. Porcupines must eat. Maybe the Eddie was right, maybe I should settle my movement. He can go to school, find work to do. I will have my face conform. And we will not bite. We will mouth and tongue.

Cruelty is a word spread thin. It means evil purpose — no other — and is rare. My action stemmed from pain, from discord, and only sought a better music. I should not have become angry. I did not know how to tell him that it was already too late. Doctors: children! It was Eddie who went to their sessions and they assumed it was Eddie’s soul to save. To think they aspire to remake a soul! It was already too late Eddie — it was always too late, from the day I came to help you see. The pair in the sky we were, we are.

How could I have told you that you no longer existed, that you existed only through me? You would have panicked, rebelled at losing your illusion. And you were right to bring things to a head, the head I wrenched from you and shattered. It was hard for you the way it was, watching this poison life tear at the wings of our peculiar angel.

APARTMENT POEM

*for Don Domanski*

through a fashion of pipes  
and snapping water  
come the voices —  
small indications claiming  
the furtive silence  
and beating it with feet.

as an animal  
would mark its flesh presence  
in another territory  
so the voices come  
and curl between these walls

leaving their yellow sound to grow  
and fill chairs —  
leaving no room for guests.

STARTLED PHEASANT

my foot has opened the earth.

I have given birth  
to the sharp edge of wing  
a chevron streaking the darkness  
a nothing pommelled with wind.

the burr of weeds is still  
the sky has wired shut again,  
and again,  
the plunging earth is sealed.

# WAVES



IRVING LAYTON — "ONE OF THE BEST  
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Katherine Govier

### THE THIEF — FABLES: III

She was a woman who thought nothing could be stolen from her. She regarded herself as unique, and therefore saw no other of her sex as a threat. But one night as she slept, alone in her husband's bed in their wide rooms atop one of those sleek columns that push up from the city into the star-pricked quilt of night, a fault opened up in her world.

She woke, instantly alert, her eyes solemn stones over her slant cheekbones, her heart clamped against its own thudding. She touched the space beside her. Her man was not there. It was the knowledge that he was with another woman that had wakened her. Her sleep spun off, remote as a comet.

She sat until dawn, her long black hair around her neck like a cowl, the heel of her hand pressed into her mouth to stop her from crying. When her husband arrived, his face ashen but still warm, she was composed. Under duress, he confessed to being with another woman, to loving this other, who was a young girl of their acquaintance. The wife smiled to know she'd been right. Gently she urged that he go to this new love. She displayed no passion, choosing to keep her pride intact. She packed a bag and left, tenderly pressing the side of his head against hers, for she knew that whatever happened, they'd never be together again.

She found a small attic apartment in one of the old houses that still stood around the feet of the sleek highrises. The walls in her new home were stained from the traffic of other lives, a splotch of wine here, a gouge from a nail there. She puttied up the holes and painted it all relentless white. She bought a Chinese print fabric to drape over the old couch that was left in the place. Adding objects like letters to a blank page, she made it her own. She had a wicker chest that had belonged to her mother, a crouching armchair bought from a junk dealer, a narrow-legged table at which she could sit cross-legged to eat, and a hand-woven rug. She hung a map of the world and a mirror on the wall. It was all hers and nothing admitted the existence of any other person.

She loved the attic from the very beginning. The bedroom became her favorite place. Under a turret, it had low walls that converged over the centre of the room. She was extravagant in buying the old iron bed with the curls for a headboard that looked like a boat from a fairy tale, but it seemed perfect for her. The threaded reflection of daylight passed into the room narrowly through a window that looked nowhere but into the next roof. She hung her clothes in the closet and placed her hair brush on the dresser. With her radio speaking alongside her, she sat out her nights by herself. Alone, she was not unhappy. Most of all she felt safe, and she found that she could sleep once again.

Often she lay on her back on the whimsical bed, looked through the uncurtained window and let her eyes sink into the darkness. Or she stared at the point where the slanted walls met the ceiling over her face. She dozed and she culled images from her dreams, like someone feeding herself after a long fast. She lay on her side sometimes, curled like a snail. She thought about the woman she was, alone as a god and inventing her life again.

Apart from the wildness of her dreams, it was a minimal life she was leading. Fortified by her nights alone, the woman carried on with her job teaching small children, and perhaps was more tender than usual with them. She had always been quiet with her associates and now they almost seemed to fear her.

When she began to want people again she called up single women who were friends. She went to movies. She was invited out to dinner by couples who nervously vowed to be friends with both her and her ex-husband, about whom they offered news without referring to his young woman. She dreamed through the dinner parties, feeling a worm of bitterness in the pit of herself because she hated to be treated kindly. She brazened it through by not believing herself pathetic. But more and more, as the world held up its mirrors, she began to see herself as the victim of a crime.

Until then she had not imagined the other woman in her place, not wondered about her or felt she was even a rival. She had viewed this girl, who was pale, with a moon face and a high round forehead like a madonna's, as much less than herself. The loss had therefore not been a defeat but a sad manifestation of the weakness of her husband, that was all. But now more and more the face, white and unshadowed, came up in her dreams. Thinking of the girl, the woman cried as she had never cried before.

By now a decent interval had passed, and people began to offer her introductions. Until then she'd avoided men. Even at a stand-up gathering, she'd find herself steering automatically away from men who attracted her. It was because when faced with such a man, the woman could only speak lies. She would look into his face and see him diminished behind a lens of secrecy. But her friends taught her that she was lonely, that she needed to be with a man, that she needed to prove herself in that way after enduring this rejection by her husband. So the woman allowed herself to be drawn back toward men.

She found herself — at bars, at parties, everywhere where men and women sought each other — on an elaborate court where games were played full-dress. Out of practice, numb to the heart, the woman felt that sex and love were the sports of more nimble, more deft persons than she. The months of undisturbed sleep in her own bed had made her a virgin again. She received several overt offers from men who sought out women like her; these she declined with a pounding heart. She met a teacher at a convention who interested her, but that night she dreamed of him coming into her room and the next day she couldn't speak to him. And then when it had been three seasons since she'd left her husband, some logic told her she was prepared.

The first man was an unlikely person. He lived on her street, and sometimes as she walked in or out of her apartment he drove by, his rusty-bottomed Chevrolet chugging softly, his hands gently poised at the top of the steering wheel. He would nod to her. One day she was waiting at the cashier in the corner store when he appeared behind her, holding a jug of milk. He was tall and very thin, with longish hair and an Egyptian profile. He said his name was James and he offered her a ride home. She asked him in, and he sat awkwardly on her couch. He commented on the glassware as she served his beer. She explained that it was booty from the marriage. James was delighted to hear she was divorced; his wife had left him only two months before. They exchanged their sad stories, growing more and more animated. When it was time for James to leave, they were both smiling widely.

In a few days James called her. The two of them went off like kids to a movie. He was driving a little too fast; she was sitting hard against the door. The film had a lot of sex in it. When the hero laid his hand on the heroine's breast, a grainy dune slung across the thirty foot screen, the woman clenched her jaw. When their movie

star bodies heaved like universes in birth under the lights, the woman was miserably embarrassed. James shifted his narrow hips away from her across the sprung cushion of the theatre seat. Leaving, they held hands in commiseration, his dropping low to catch hers. They went to a bar and he drank three beers, sliding lower and lower in his chair. She leaned over her vermouth and nibbled on the swizzle stick.

What they'd seen in the movie had dropped between them like a stage facade, tacky and overdrawn, but instantly indispensable. If it were lifted, there would be nothing. So they both knew what was in store. He had drunk a little too much, and was weaving as they set off. In the car he pulled her beside him and dropped his lank arm over her shoulder. She asked him in.

They said nothing as they climbed the flight of stairs to her attic. James' feet thudded behind the woman loosely, as if his shoes were too big. He wanted neither tea nor coffee, but shored himself in the corner of her couch, muttering about his wife. She moved nervously from wall to window, finding nowhere to go in her own home. When she came near, he flung his arm around her and she sat close beside him on the couch. They stayed like that for a while, looking at the opposite wall, their breath coming separately and fast.

When his arm grew tight on her shoulder, she went limp. He pulled her around in front of him and kissed her hard, pressing her lips back into her teeth and then forcing them apart with his tongue which was rough as a horse's. She noted he was disturbing the printed cover on her couch. She did not think of what to do; she relinquished herself. He seemed to know what he was doing, so she allowed him.

His breathing went deeper into his abdomen. He thrust her sideways suddenly, to get himself horizontal, and pulled her down beside him. He kicked off his loose shoes which clomped to the floor. Then he dove down over her. She was acutely conscious of her backbone pressing into the spine of the couch, and of her neck jammed against the arm of it. She strove for greater limpness to relieve the pressure. He ground his hard genitals into the side of her hip. Fearing for her neck and quite unable to breathe, she tried to find her hands and press her head upward.

"Why don't we go to the bedroom," she said softly.

Disturbed, the tension went out of him. He looked quizzical and moved his weight off her. He pushed back his hair into place and sat up, stabbing around on the floor for his shoes. He shifted his pants

into a comfortable position. She sat up and felt her neck cautiously. His weight being off her was a tremendous relief, but somehow she didn't want to escape. Looking at him, she felt a quite irrational desire take breath in her belly and burn. She touched his hand. He found his shoes and picked them up, heels together, in one hand. They stood and walked toward the bedroom. He placed his shoes neatly outside the bedroom door.

The woman leading, they lay down beside each other on their backs, acquiescent before some imperative. They were still, still, still. The woman wanted to encourage James, lying meek and mournful as he was, but she knew now she'd erred in bringing him into her bedroom. It had made her the aggressor, and that deadened him. She stared straight up to the point where her walls tied themselves together over her head, and thought of the night beyond her ceiling. She touched James' belt buckle. He flipped over and lay flat on top of her.

Not speaking, keeping their faces firmly tucked by the chin over each other's shoulders, they moved around exploratively, two opposite contours finding a fit. James undid the buttons of her blouse and drew it off her, carefully, and then dropped it over the edge of the bed. She undid the buttons of his shirt and he shrugged himself out of it. She took off her tights and her skirt, while he rattled his bruising buckle and curled himself out of his pants. Modest in their briefs, they pulled up the bedspread and slid themselves under it.

Everything was too quiet, and a kind of vacancy settled on them. The awful truth was that neither of them wanted to make love now and it was too late to retreat. The only way was forward, to get it done and behind them. The woman retrieved her hand from under his side and slid it into his shorts. It was warm in there and incredibly soft. She felt she was invading some poor animal's nest, feeling out unhatched young from the tangles of hair. There was no movement. She let her hand stay there. Still nothing. She panicked, and withdrew speedily.

And then her own body turned foreign. Her flesh was heavy, dull. She felt hopelessly undesirable. Closing her eyes, she saw her husband scanning her with pity. Furious, she wanted to rid her sight of this man, this terrible mistake, in her bed.

He lay there, immobilized. She yawned ostentatiously. She could hardly bear to hear his mutters, when they began to come out, that he'd had too much to drink, that he didn't know her well enough. She said nothing about how well he'd known her when he pinioned

her on the couch. She made light of it. She almost apologized for having demanded this of him. She would have said anything then to get him to leave. But he made no move. And she was terribly tired. Before he drifted off to sleep she made herself ask him.

"Are you going to go home?" she said. She wanted her walls to herself again, and his shoes removed from where she could see them outside her bedroom door. There was no answer.

"Please," she said, "I wish you'd go." It was hard to be firm. But she just couldn't bear him to be there. "I won't be able to sleep if you stay," she said. "I can't sleep with men, Please."

But he was not going to go. He roused himself to become adamant about staying. He simply said he was staying. He seemed to feel he'd claimed the territory. Perhaps he saw leaving then as the final defeat. At any rate he simply lay there, boneless. Considerate of his assaulted manhood and too timid to make a scene, she could not make him leave. She rolled away, cradling in her belly a tight nest of resentment, taking her hips as far as possible from the heat sent off by his lank body, and pretended to sleep. She was angry all night, and afraid to move for fear he'd know she was awake.

At dawn he approached her again and again was impotent. She pretended she was sleeping the whole time. At eight o'clock she got up, put on her robe and went out to make coffee. He slept until she was ready to leave for work, when she stood by the bed fully dressed and announced that he'd better get up. She turned her back to let him slide out from under the covers and find his clothes. She could hardly speak for hating him. He kissed her proprietarily and patted her hips before scuffing down the stairs and out the door.

All day when she closed her eyes she shuddered thinking of that night in her bed. Later at home, when her walls were back around her, she realized that the trouble with James had been that he didn't like her. She decided right then that she wouldn't ever go to bed with someone who didn't love her. She froze James out when he called, as he did, with a kind of leer in his voice as if there were some lurid rite in their history to be enacted again. It was weeks before she had anything to do with a man again.

This time she was at a party and noticed a man, a short, thick-haired man with hawkish eyes, watching her. She circled the room, talking to this one and that, feeling always the beam of his brooding eye on her. He came up to her, called her by name, and asked if he could telephone. She agreed with a slight incline of her narrow, dark head, and left the party nearly forgetting him. But he called, and

there ensued a courtship of such tact and insistence that she had known this man, whose name was Raoul, for a whole month before she realized what it was he wanted.

He wanted her. Raoul sometimes leaned toward her across a table with a look so naked and intense as to consume her. But he was careful not to overwhelm her; he held himself back. She felt immune to him for the longest time. But one night at the beginning of a holiday weekend they sat in her apartment with a bottle of wine nearly empty between them and the telephone rang. It was her ex-husband, calling to ask how she was getting along. She spoke easily and gaily, feeling a stream of her heart go out to him. She could almost hear his young woman like a soprano part in his voice, and it was perhaps with her that she wanted to connect. The woman looked over at Raoul as she spoke and felt a cracking inside. When she put down the telephone, she took Raoul's hand between her own palms and pressed it. There was a pulse inside.

They left her apartment with arms slipped across each other's backs, went to his place and built a fire. He welcomed her there after a long wait. His house was lined like the gentlest of traps. He was reassuring. He slid cushions under her head and back as he eased her down to the rug. For moments, the woman felt as if he were blind. He was slow in exploring her, his stubby fingers lifting and sensing the air and her skin like follicles of some sea plant. He murmured things like "Now just raise your arm," and "We'll have you out of this in one minute," as he undressed her.

They moved to the bedroom, he bare-chested and barefoot, she wrapped in a throw rug and clutching most of her clothes. She nearly panicked when she saw that he had lights that dimmed by stages and piped-in music. But Raoul was equal to it all. He was so delicate and dedicated that soon their bodies were drawn up together like a harp, sounding one long, mellow chord. Afterwards she did not even want to turn her face away, he was so comforting.

And then the room was so dark that she slept, or else did not know waking from sleep. His breathing was soft and insensate. She could see and hear nothing else at all. The dark was as dense as if it came from inside of him. The night had nearly passed when she felt him move, and then there was the progress of those weaving, hungry antennae over her body. They made love again, he slept, and moaned.

At the end of three days she knew he loved her. He wanted to be with her all the time. He was reluctant for her even to look out the

window from the rooms where they stayed. He laughed when she joked; his anger was roused by her troubles. They told each other stories to make a past for themselves, but she found herself less interested in him than in herself. He was joyful, and she was generous. Like a hostess at her own body, she was pleased to make him so happy.

Of course at the end of the weekend she had to go home. Her white apartment had borne her absence like a cheated spouse; the refrigerator was full of old food, the plants drooped, and her room was accusatory when at last she slept in it alone again. But she reclaimed it, cleaning and dusting and sitting alone on her couch with the radio on the chair opposite. Raoul called after two days, and she was delighted. But she was nervous about going to his house because it seemed to put her life off course. At her place, he paced. He found the chairs uncomfortable, the walls glaring, the sink too low to wash in. So the next time they met she went home with him. She found herself going there every weekend, as to a recurring dream that blotted her out, escaping herself, but each time she became nervous more quickly, and irritable. She felt lonely for her apartment and lonely for her own loneliness.

But he loved her. He cooked her omelettes for breakfast; he kissed her on corners; he let her know that she had changed his world. When they made love he pleased her more and more and the harp trembled in all octaves. But when he said "I love you" the words hung over the bed like an unanswered accusation.

What happened then was that she became unable to sleep again. She was no longer sure she had ever slept at all with him. She lay in the dark of his room striving to make out the outlines of furniture, the black glint of a mirror. She tried to hide her sleeplessness, but he could feel it. His voice came to her from sleep, the thought traversing his consciousness like the bow of a stringed instrument. "You're awake," he said. "Sleep." Like a hypnotist. "Sleep." But she couldn't.

That night she lay until the sun came up, the next she got up and went into his living room where she slept on the rug. The last night she made love to him and then said she wanted to go home to sleep alone. It was the end of something. Raoul said he'd walk with her, but she wouldn't let him. He lay on his back, his eyes like a fire burning itself out. She walked slowly all the way home, the night lapping against her cheek like a faint cold tide. In her own bed she slept heavily, pushing back dreams of the moon-faced young woman.

Of course the problem had been that Raoul loved her too much and his loving made a circle within which she could not exist. She thought herself bad, wicked for this; here was this man offering her all his spirit and wealth and she could not accept. An animal in a strange den, she had been wary, fearing ambush of her body and soul. Now she was doubly alone, the abandoned and the abandoning one. The woman repotted her house plants and washed the windows. She thought of her husband and how rare their love had been. She thought of the woman who'd thieved him from her; she beat her fists against the broad, cool cheeks and pressed away her image. She hated the thief. But the worst was that now the woman felt herself becoming one of these thieves. Cut away from everyone, the woman felt like a cruel, predatory reptile reduced to stealing from her own kind.

Because all the men she met now seemed to be married. The woman knew about this problem, because she'd heard other women refer to it; but she'd never seen herself as one of the others, the unclaimed. She fought against it. She walked into her singles' bar and sat at the counter. On her right sat a polished man in a pin-striped suit; even though there was no wedding band on the finger she could see he was married. Behind the lens of his eyes there was a woman, seated then in the passenger's seat of a wide chrome-toothed car, then patiently laying out the trousseau flatware on a teak table, not looking at the clock, knowing her husband was late and refusing to imagine just where in the cold sprawl of the city he was sitting, looking down a bar counter at other women. The woman turned her eyes from the knowledge; she paid for her drink and left.

Sam was a married man, but perhaps she thought he was different. She was dazed by him. He walked into her classroom to inspect her teaching, and stood at the back, one knee bent, hands in his belt loops, spreading apart his suit jacket, smoking where smoking was not allowed. They had lunch. He reached to look at a ring on her right hand. When he touched her she jerked back the hand, but he'd caught it firmly. His eyes caught hers too, and seemed to say, "I can do this if I want." They talked work, but it was like walking on a wet clay slope after that. The woman felt she was slipping, sliding down, losing words, losing her tension, leaning into him.

Sam and the woman saw each other for lunches after that; then dinners, then one day he arrived with a gift and she knew he'd decided to make her his lover. She thought she loved him, but somehow she was unwilling about this affair. She never felt com-

fortable. Sam would take her to dinner and then they'd go back to her place, drink brandy on the couch, and go to bed at the unnatural hour of 10 o'clock so that he could get up at midnight and go home. She lay with the sheets tucked over her breasts and watched him put on his three-piece suit untidily, tie and collar never quite in place, somehow deliberately. He kissed her hurriedly and apologetically. She began to count on his leaving this way, because she was nervous when he was there. Knowing he would leave at midnight so that she could sleep made her feel safe.

This went on for weeks without the wife coming into the affair. The woman told herself that the wife did not matter, that if Sam had affairs it meant there was something wrong with the marriage, so that if it weren't her, it would be someone else. Therefore she told herself she was not guilty, but simply an accidental witness to a general infidelity.

Of course this was only skin deep. The woman grew curious about Sam's wife, and Sam came to want to talk about her. He believed that he would leave his wife very soon. But in the meantime, they talked about her and she came into the affair. When he spoke, as he did smoking a cigarette propped up in bed after making love and before midnight, the woman saw the wife open the bedroom door, and come in under the slanted ceilings where a little light fell from the narrow window. The wife came in and sat like a mother at the foot of their bed, a hand outstretched on the blankets. She had two children; they were sometimes behind her, sometimes in front of her, but always near. She was a tall redhead, Sam had told her. She liked to walk for hours, this woman, walked anywhere without looking around her, just to move. The woman saw the wife drop her head where she sat, as Sam explained her unhappiness. He did this with compassion. The woman saw the wife nod as Sam said that she was afraid to leave him because she thought there were no other men in the world.

This image gave the woman a certain pleasure. She was on the outside, after all. As Sam talked, she felt included in his family. It was easy to be the other woman. Oh, she fancied someday it would end, that Sam would indeed leave his wife and they would be together. But she didn't long for this future; she let it rest somewhere else without wanting it upon her.

One day Sam came to meet her at school as he often did, and they went to her place while she changed clothes. Sam sat on the couch and read the newspaper. He seemed less fueled. They had a

drink and bickered over where to eat, finally choosing a new Chinese restaurant that had been well reviewed. The woman wrapped herself in her long dark coat which flared behind her as they took the stairs down two at a time, and slid into the car seat beside him, laying her head briefly on his shoulder as she often did. At dinner she speared shrimps with a chopstick and they gossiped and joked about other teachers. The dinner stretched longer than usual, and it was nearly 11 o'clock when they came back to the woman's house. As she brought out the brandy and he lay back on the couch with his feet up, she began for the first time that evening to feel strange. Something had changed.

She sipped her brandy, sitting sideways on her feet on the couch and looking intently at Sam, who fixed his eyes on the cigarette pack. "Not even an hour left tonight," she said, "and you'll have to go."

"I thought I wouldn't go, tonight," he said, evenly. "Is that all right?"

The woman said she was delighted. She didn't want to undignify the moment by asking what arrangements he'd made with his wife. She exclaimed in gratitude and hugged him. But in among the cages of her bones something began to move, tensing itself, gathering itself, something terrible and familiar.

Now there was nothing to do. Sam complained that she didn't have a television. They each went to wash, brushing shoulders in the narrow hallway and saying 'excuse me' like strangers. They went to bed too early, out of habit. They made love and the woman could not concentrate. She wondered about the wife. She could not keep back a crowd of images that went through her mind, blocking out Sam, and the coiling and uncoiling animal inside her counteracted the movements of their bodies. They had finished, and he had gone off to sleep like a child, holding her against him like a stuffed animal, before the woman knew what was happening. She loosened his arms from around her body and sat up.

She thought of the red-headed wife. She thought of her walking, only this time she saw her under a blue-black sky with brilliant stars pricking out, like tiny holes into some brighter place. She saw the red-headed wife sit straight up in bed, scream, and force the heel of her hand into her mouth to stop herself, under the ceiling of her bedroom, under the black sky where the stars pricked and she herself, the red-head, strode, cold air against her cheeks. She felt the pain lash at the inside of the red-headed wife, and at her own heart, and she knew she'd met herself again in the coils of her life, or what

passed for her life, which was really the curling, sliding trail over wet clay left by snakes of other lives. She saw the moon-faced girl then, sleeping smooth-skinned beside her own husband. She reached out into her image to waken the moon-faced girl, so that she too would sit up in bed beside her sleeping man and cry out. Because it was really the three of them, the moon-faced girl and the red-headed wife and the woman who sat now in bed straight up, teeth digging into the flesh of her own hand, who were receiving their own lashes, who belonged to each other and must speak. In her mind the woman reached out both arms to seize the hands of the two other women, to hold hands and make a circle. But she sat, legs shrouded in sheets, and made no move.

MERCURIUS

Liar, I know you —  
Fire-thief,  
Blasphemer

Changing  
The dead  
Into pillars of ashes,

Stealing  
The marrow  
From the bones of the light.

Two-faced,  
You wait  
At the cross-roads of morning

To marry  
The daughters  
Of the East and the West.

## EULALIA

Speak,light  
Out  
Of the mountain,

Out  
Of the core  
Of the shining stone.

Crack,tree  
Lightning  
Fears you,

Cork-  
Screw  
Tail of goat.

My  
Tongue  
Roots in the darkness,

Speak,night  
Out of my blood.

NIGHT-VIEW

Wind is your voice  
breathes in late winter streets  
across empty chalk-white roads;  
leave your metaphors  
near blue and silver ice  
then follow your eyes  
to the dark sky's rim,  
chateaus, mansions, canticles.  
Follow the mountain's road  
the sound, the sweep, the curve  
of your breath along high ridges  
down past domed asylums and old lamps  
where people murmur in grey breaths  
under the cold blue exile of this night.

## BALCONY

Glancing at my directions  
for the number of your house on Ste. Famille  
those Parisian fronts with Brooklyn railings  
across Sherbrooke tarnished figures from antiquity  
then you two waving from a balcony.

On the doorglass a pastel flower  
blooming:  
    bounding up the stairs  
they give way like waves  
leaping up into the light of your apartment  
    music of Morocco swirling  
through Greek pillars, crystal chandeliers,  
    a mosque glimmers in water  
in an alcove of a photo  
    people are waiting  
you on the balcony by a rusty railing  
waiting. Pigeons, grey, mauve, green feathers  
rise through heat,  
    vertigo  
and so here we sit on this shaky balcony  
above Ste. Famille,  
    and talk  
about Indian rhythms, Black rhythms  
and one floor down  
a girl  
    sits before her round red table  
    café, fromage et croissants.

Soon in the yellow kitchen  
the lady and the unicorn singing  
singing of Mallarmé's angel  
and out there  
in the skies  
the sun setting on the green mountain  
our bodies outlined,  
the balcony  
glowing.

HER ONLY SON, PIERS

The night is in fact  
your mother's bowl, turned  
upside down on the world  
after rain.

Or so the boy Piers  
was told by his mother,  
who explained the stars  
as sugar  
and the moon a lump  
of butter left after baking  
cookies.

That it rained at night also  
was a question Piers asked once  
only, after the day he lost  
his taste for cookies.

That is Piers in the corner  
sitting, with one eye closed  
and the other fevered,  
red and wide  
as if an eye were the only  
possibility left.

Sun moon stars and rain.

## STREETCRIER, A WOODCUT BY BEWICK

He could have farmed, perhaps,  
he was able; or become famous.  
At one time he was slight,  
but displays now a weakness  
for tobaccos and beer.  
His career was many times thwarted  
by the woman he couldn't embrace,  
not that he was religious,  
merely principled. He shared  
with the parson a common interest  
in pipes, and antiquarian books,  
one of which was not the bible.  
Still the woman's breasts were  
always too ponderous.

MISS PERRY

in our one-room school  
Miss Perry, teacher  
(all grades up to seven)  
forbade the crossing of feet  
during the Lord's Prayer  
and shuffling, for the flag

she was not fat  
but big, lumpy, non-linear  
wore long green tartan skirts  
white blouses  
had blue hair, and a peaked nose

every morning, at the platformed piano  
the loud pedal straining  
beneath her iron, oxford foot  
she played Marche Militaire  
pounding as though she'd kill the piano  
for letting that out of the keys

## RAOUL

*for W. O. Mitchell*

taught French  
dragged one foot behind the other  
(perpendicular to his walk)  
slid along halls  
in his dusty, pinstripe suit  
his hair was thin on top  
always damp, looking freshly parted  
as he entered and left a room

he bestowed on us  
the sounds of his culture  
picked his nose  
stood silent in long thoughtful poses

then in sudden whooshing arcs  
he swung his thigh-stiffened leg  
over his head  
cuffing the blackboard with a shoe

Mark Jarman

ARMS OF THE BLUES

'She's tougher than a pontiac  
got a face like the coast' the radio tells me on the Yellowhead  
some country and western station out of Edson  
driving into town the beer gets warm between your legs

Too much craziness coming back to the city  
moon drools piano key yellow  
blue pines wave like a train station  
chimney fingers smoking gravel clouds  
broken throat sky  
it's a traditional blues number  
still every weekend I drive in pay the tolls  
pretend I'm living in this century

White poplar branches belly dance like kelp on the tide  
yellow lamp posts flash their halo on the larch  
giving me that holier than thou look  
some jet off the base scratches the sky, a smoky zipper  
exhaust trailing red in the sun

But I'm down at the Kondiker tavern tapping my foot to Stormy  
Monday  
piano throws up dust, a little slide guitar with my beer  
black guy blowing harp in the can  
echo's better in here he says fingering the blues

A tanned girl plays shuffleboard in faded blue cut-offs  
white stripe of skin showing around the rough edges  
lifts one nice leg behind her every time she throws a rock

But god doesn't look too pleased as the chord changes  
and an angel pokes my arm and lifts one of my draught  
as if wishes were underwear beneath a white Mexican blouse  
light blue panties against smooth brown skin  
or an oak's thin shadow prowling on whitewashed walls  
window next door flicks on like a flashlight  
bats panic, water slips on the rocks

One finger on her lips  
one hand on her hips is how I remember her  
dead still, a fossil in rock  
she is tougher than a pontiac  
cut her teeth on my tin heart  
held it in her ivory fingers

Now her and Vern hand out Watchtower  
on Jasper Ave by the Bay  
they're living in this century  
god holds us in the arms of the blues.



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LITANY

The day they published the poems about whales  
two men from Brooklyn poked the eyes out of a Dolphin.  
The paper said it cried like a baby.

A man ran over the face of a bear with a 70 horsepower  
mercury at Bon Echo. He was trying to "turn her" as she  
swam into the park.

At Pogamiskiming the engineer held up his bass. Between  
thumb and forefinger in the jelly of the eyes. They're  
going to dam the river.

According to Hemingway two gypsies killed the bull that  
killed their brother by gouging out its eyes and spitting  
in the sockets. They believe in honour.

In Italy they put needles in the pupils of decoys. The  
cries of distress bring others. Canary and hummingbird are  
are the major game there.

Chickens in a cage, flies, a ton of wet shit, eggs and  
eyes like red sores. I've seen a wild bird and a whale.  
I've seen a wild bear.

The menace was a privilege.

## HAWK ON THE ROAD

A sparrow, its back open, like straw.  
The nodular guts look dirty, preserved.  
I notice this bird while cleaning  
a weapon: four feet away.

The predator had been hit, and left.  
Claws, beak move; an old man whispers.  
Because of their edge I, loosely,  
push it aside with my foot.  
Breath is indignant; a hiss and a sigh  
cough from the dusty tumble.

Surely it has to be killed,  
    crippled, faint movements,  
                    an eye popped.

My blow,  
    at the tiny helmet of a head,  
                    tentative.

\*

The eye pushes out, the bird  
covers its head with a wing,  
a gesture so medieval, beautiful:  
I can't breathe.

The wings and feet are cut off,  
not as trophies, but for magic.  
Meat comes out of a leg, translucent,  
warm as someone you sleep with.  
Hours later the sand cleaned steel  
smells of fish.

The wings are dark, not mottled now,  
There is no arc, no hiding.

    The way  
        The best  
            Die.

Theresa Kishkan / *Two Poems*

WICKANINNISH FOREST

*for Hughes & Baskin*

Your crow lives in this forest.  
His sound breeds in the underbrush  
to make more like him.

Your crow struts on a half-dead hemlock.  
I have nothing now to feed him,  
so he will visit in the night.

*He is dark*

*He is sly*

I can say it was a dream,  
I did not even see him.

Your crow lives in this forest.  
His sound breeds in the underbrush  
to make more like him.

## OLD MOTHER'S SONG

Let me tell you

how he lured her from me  
made her an island on her own  
forested her with his magic seed

how he walked the new island's circumference  
past Ucluelet, Brooks Bay  
past French Creek, Winter Harbour

how each place echoed his faithless name  
on the heron's tongue  
in the heart of stone

how he left

Let me tell you

he is the shadow on the beach  
the foghorn calls to

he is known only by his footsteps  
yet he lies with her in every dream  
the nightmare rapist or fatherless child

all the trees on that island lean to his music  
each river waits for his shadow to fall upon her  
to ease her restless shape

Let her walk into tall water  
Let the difficult tides tug her to them  
Let her drown to his song

THE FOOL-KILLER

Tell me whose lips  
stop the biting thing, whose  
touch is a drug.  
The weeks pound on.

A dog loves whoever dishes  
out the meat.  
And a dog loves spring.

They who vanquish the Fool-Killer  
are safer than gold, than  
bonds;  
as sure as good land  
in a shrinking world

they thicken, accrue  
(even as the thermostat  
holds)  
                  just like robust mammals  
do  
when the weather turns

and grow another layer  
when there is no air at all.

## VIKINGS OF THE AIR

Our skycraft rides too low to clear the heights —  
“Dump the goods, my boyos; save this balloon.”  
The pink rocks of Arcadie fall out of sight;  
down down through moving stacks of cloud  
our plunder falls like defused bombs.  
Peasant skulls explode in fields of chard.  
The cargo we bartered bravely for is lost.  
Screwed again. Heft brought us low  
and close to jeopardy. Below, each spring  
herring fishermen are likewise sunk by greed.  
Happily, air is what fuels our craft  
and we can buy air by dropping what we must.  
“Give them back what we fought like gods for.  
Make height, you bastards. The wind  
drives east toward the sea and our wives  
are sure to moisten as our craft comes into sight.”

## SPLEEN

The night Ottawa brought down the budget  
Mrs. Mooney's pals sat shit-faced in the bar  
next to three Quebecois, brilliantly scarved.  
Around the block streetlamps intruded  
on clusters of branch —

et voila :

catkins dripping from ash.

A hundred million was spent to make jobs.  
Bronchial trouble was in every house.  
March had been wet. Dark women looked pale;  
fair women, sallow. All that day  
the skin doctor lanced eruptions.

Bankers were generally pleased.  
The last traces of black snow became air  
and that air trailed a slow Greyhound  
to the Dairy Queen in Plattsburg.  
It was a budget without surprises.  
The dead were dead. The rest of us on call.

Judy Lassen

BUT IN A FICTION,  
IN A DREAM OF PASSION . . .

Louis who purports on the first page to being somewhat of a central character is as conscious of the ineffectuality of his name as you may be. He will make a joke about it when he introduces himself. But because he smiles and shows the gaps between his teeth — an allusion to Chaucer — you wont know whether his joke is the truth or just another party line, a lie.

He wears the earring like a double negative he says. He hopes that it and the name will cancel each other out while still being provocative. But a name is like a sentence for life: irrevocable. You can change it but like a poorly done nose job nobody ever forgets it. In the half light its fine but theres no denying it in the white sheeted relief of the morning.

Louis prefers the night life.

The room is Boston fern green and macramé beige. You feel of course youve been here before and you have. Now what can he do before the turning of the page? Host abandoned what can he say after “My name is” to make you forget it? Louis chooses his chair to colour coordinate. He sits down with you and instantly you feel as he laughs with you at his own too glaring façade, his self-deprecating neon “This is honest, this is real.”

“Who do you know here?” Not the worst opener you could have chosen. And “Havent I seen you in the bar before?” Both hes heard before but will dazzle you with uncommon replies, or try. “If youre speaking biblically isnt that a little too personal?” And to the latter: “Are you trying to slur my impeccable character?” He grins and youre immediately disarmed. So you trust him with your metaphoric child and let him spoil it with too much attention because the more he talks the more you think you glimpse between the teeth.

Louis was drafted but though he had a facility for foreign tongues he wasnt sent abroad. Instead he was kept home to seal the open sores of the wounded. This he tells you as he fakes the limp of a combat veteran. And strangely its him you feel for.

He insists you try a drink youve never had before and its taste in

your mouth tells you youve acquiesced. To Louis all ruts are dangerous but his own.

He never dances. Yet every move he makes in getting from his chair to the bar and back for his refill, sidling past the talkers, easing through the dancers, oozes grace. You dont feel cheated. Youve studied body languages and you think you read his. But to apply the usual comparison — animal-like grace — overlooks his self-consciousness. You may laugh though — “Now hes going too far” — when he tells you hes shy. If the crowd should clear, if you should find yourselves suddenly alone . . .

“Were so bored that we relie on the occasional typographical error for excitement. The left index fingers the most likely to make a slip.” Louis is full of this kind of postulate which he presents as axiom. You think that given time you could prove him wrong but he doesnt stop, never stops long enough for attack.

An open door admits drafts and admit it: you wouldn’t dream of unhinging a door of his well built house.

His is the case of living by hard sell in a soft land. You guess immediately he doesnt come from here. He has too much style. “Foreigner eh?” He only smiles again. “I like to think Im different.”

Louis is upset that the contents of his shopping bag wont be the museum pieces of tomorrow. The books he collects have hard covers and their pages arent cut. New books he calls virgins. Yet you assume hes well read.

A woman passes and through the sheer of her skirt, through the space between her legs, you see the shape of a bottle and a half filled glass. Still life.

To lose this self-consciousness, to forget where a line should end, to let a central character slip off to the side, find his own way through the crowd, pass right through the door without apologizing to the host, taking his discrete evenings choice with him: tis a consummation etc. Louis is restless. His eyes sweep the crowd off their feet and under the rug.

Louis is a student of life searching for a consistent fiction. He wonders where the muse enters to impregnate. You wonder how an intellect finds room to move in his fleshly mind.

How much of this sudden silence is your own? How long can you expect him to love his own voice? These are just questions. Soon he will turn to you with those cynical hopeless eyes, slay you — Popes model — with those daggers and you will know hes saying “Are you

worth talking to?" Maybe when he recrosses his legs your knees will touch and you will think without wanting "It's possible."

Its your show, you know how to arrange the bodies, how to derange the brains to suit the needs of your story. If you only knew your power, if you guessed that Louis would go home thinking of you, reliving the evening, recalling your words, maybe even feeling inadequate. "Him? Never!" Now get on with it. Cast the dye. Mould the clay.

Later when the crowd thins out and the smoke clouds part you glimpse your reflections in the black backed window. Louis fixes his hair whenever the chance presents itself. Its thinning. And you wonder what he would have you say. Will have you saying. Should you stay?

His couch is comfortable. You hardly notice the setting has changed so aesthetic the movement. Now he will say "I love you." This heralds the end.

For you his pants, discarded in the middle of the floor like a snails spiral eviscerated, become a last little island of the familiar anchored in all this strangeness.

He is your compulsion, your thirst for knowledge, your nights curiosity. There is a strange liquor on your tongue. To know is to own.

Never further from the truth.

Louis smiles with abandon and stands before you vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind: the immaculate conception. Not even his muse would touch him.

Between the nude frail shoulders you hardly recognize his name. A pinprick of truth would deflate him.

Louis abandons his smile. Is this the image in the window pane?

This is one way of getting to know me.

Never further from the truth.

Louis shows you the door, no more. Sun lights dust on the windows not even a fly can see through.

You will go home after that first meeting, question your senses, and feel him pinching you. Is he a lie? Alive? Is this the worlds oldest dream: to be or to seem?

COVER MY TRACKS

Cover my tracks.  
Scramble the traces of my steps  
in the sand, in the snow.  
The path is not clear  
nor ever has been.

(I am distracted by shadows,  
dazzled by shapeless presences  
luring me aside)

I cannot move quickly:  
there is too much to clear away  
in the tangled forests.  
I have chosen a difficult master,  
cover my tracks.

## WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE DESERT

We are looking for the desert.  
We have never seen a desert.  
We are looking for sand,  
for golden dunes in the sunlight,  
for cactus and emptiness.  
We are looking for the illusion  
of Sahara:

(buried cities,  
sandstorms and camels  
and mysterious  
desert nomads)

We are looking for this.  
We would prefer  
not having to travel too far.

## SONG IN WHITE

Clouds fell  
sometime in the night:  
come morning  
everything was white  
and you could see the cold breath  
of the sky  
touching every still object  
with white crisp froth.  
There was a world  
white on white,  
and the cold steam of the clouds  
washing over and up  
and opening around stark trees  
and white round hills.  
And a silence  
moving like the clouds  
across the face of the sun.  
That too  
was white.

IN LIEU OF A WAKE

This much for ourselves.  
The inevitable destructive courtesies.  
We erase concerns  
and unearth others.  
There are many reasons to excuse  
and many actions also  
but the truth is simply  
that the truth is  
clumsy passed from hand to hand.

I would apologize for anything now,  
but the dead  
are unrepachable,  
composed and well-dressed,  
floating downriver in old cars.

## A SOURCEBOOK OF CHRONOLOGY

It was nothing.  
In the mountains the clouds flowered.  
Elsewhere  
all the birds were dead  
and putting facts together.  
I said I remembered nothing  
of importance.  
In the garden  
of stone miracles  
the sun sat down.  
A bird  
dipped headfirst through a fountain  
and recovered. Things  
are often as they seem.  
Surely you would not exclude yourself  
from mockery.  
The facts point  
all directions  
and the eye is not admissable  
as evidence.



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Mike Mason

## THE VAN

You.

And the dirty canvas backpack that you have taken off by now.

And the gravel on the road shoulder that you kick up with your toe in your small blank frustration of waiting and then smooth again with the ball of your foot for something to do.

And a big green and white sign giving the mileage to the next town, where once again you will know no one.

And the cars that don't stop.

And apart from these things, there is only the gray maritime fog forming and unforming in wet ghosts and veils, drifting, and that is what you feel like inside.

You are not expecting the van to stop. It emerges ghostly from the sheeting piles of fog, just sliding through veils like a bodiless thing, like a big soft moth, coloured the blanched grey of mushrooms, no lettering on the side. It rolls up and past with no sound but the swish of tires on pavement, which is no sound. And then it stops down the road a bit just inside another misty veil, alighting on the road shoulder and quivering there like a drenched and colourless butterfly, and you still not expecting it to stop and thinking it probably won't be there when you get to it.

But you have already picked up your pack and are running, reacting automatically and without much hope or excitement or even relief, because you have been on the road for so long. And the van is still there after all, and it is comparatively real, and already the side panel door is sliding open, and suddenly it is just as if you hadn't been standing back there in the wet maritime fog for five hours at all, as if all that time was not a time at all but a place, and you had left that place behind you back on the road shoulder with no more evidence of your presence there than a bit of shuffled gravel. Both your place and your five hours have been sucked back into those shifting piles of veiling fog, and the five hours don't even have shuffled gravel to tell you where to find them again.

So you hand your pack to someone and climb in through the panel opening and make your way over the crowd of bodies in the

back of the van until you find a small corner of space for yourself. Then you sit down with your legs bunched up, huddled on the metal floor in your fog-damp heavy clothes, too tired to notice much around you yet, too tired and too dulled after being five hours buried under layers of wet fog and now to be in a place where, if it isn't quite dry or warm or light, at least the air doesn't cling to you and crawl on your skin like cobwebs as the fog did. You sit huddled against the big rounded bulge where the wheel comes, and although the van is moving now it is still too soon for you to be uncomfortable against the jolting metal. Even the strangeness of the sudden change does not penetrate you yet, as you sit anaesthetized in your loneliness and weariness.

Gradually, though, you become aware of all the people you have stepped over like baggage to get to your little corner of space. It is very crowded, so you count and you find that there are twenty-two people in the back of the van, plus the driver and the boy in the passenger seat which makes twenty-four in all. The twenty-two are all bunched up like you, except for three who have their legs stretched out in front of them, two of whom do not know or do not care about the extra space they are taking up, but the third has a nervous look on his face as if he is afraid someone will tell him to move his goddamn legs and he will lose his comfortable space. He has a gold cross on a chain around his neck, and he is smoking and this also appears to make him nervous although there are others smoking too, flicking ashes on the van floor, and the air in the van is thick and stale.

After the people taking up too much room you notice the people next to you, because the people next to you are always very important. On your left, and now you are aware of his shoulder and arm touching yours, is a big beefy blond man with a round face and a new pack, wearing stiff unfaded jeans, a straight type and obviously not a seasoned hitchhiker. He probably won't bother you although he might turn out to be a talker and you don't want to talk. Mostly it's the new hitchhikers who like to talk. A lot of the old ones, like you, are tired of it all and just like to brood behind washed gray eyes over the drug of travel that has eaten grayly away at their lives.

To your right are the chess players. This summer there are always the chess players, playing on small plastic pocket sets where usually some of the men are missing and they replace them with matches. They challenge everybody and each game lasts no more than twenty minutes. But you don't want to talk and you don't want to play

chess, so you prepare to be unfriendly if you have to, and thank god you have learned how to do this and still get what you want some of the time.

The next person you look at is the boy up front in the passenger seat. He might be as old as 25, but he has that smooth and careless look of a boy and this is how you think of him. He is clean cut and wearing a red handkerchief knotted around his neck, and it crosses your mind that he might be a fag although there is nothing else about him that particularly suggests this except maybe the smooth boyishness of his face. Anyway, you hate fags because of all the lousy rides you have had with them, and although you cannot pin it down to that there is something in this boy's look that you dislike intensely and that you would not trust. He talks constantly with the driver and it doesn't occur to you that he is a hitchhiker, but then you hear somebody say that he was the first to be picked up and that was yesterday and that is why he has the passenger seat and is so friendly with the driver.

So one by one you become aware of the people around you, and you study them because there is nothing else to do, and some of them hold your attention more than others. You also listen but mainly you look. The van stops twice more soon after you get in and two more hikers are picked up raising the total to twenty-four in the back, and with twenty-four packs also it is very crowded and there are many cigarettes being lit. You gather that the driver had an empty van and is now picking up every hitchhiker in sight to try and be a good guy. And all the hikers think he is a good guy, even though there are no windows in the back of the van and you are all out to see the country. But when you have been travelling a lot you do not care too much about windows anymore, windows having become just another kind of wall between you and your longing. A man with a huge gray windowless van could pick up the whole world and take everyone to the moon and he would be a good guy for doing it, and everyone would smoke and play chess on plastic sets and be grateful just to be moving.

The van does not stop again for a long time, and despite the inevitable emergence of a few jokers and loud talkers and friendly types around you, you find yourself drifting away from this strange rolling bubble of humanity, fading down into the long road and the stretching hours and into the hum of the wheels, the sound of travelling, which is louder and more persistent than any other sound and into which all other sounds glide and merge and then disappear

as things do on a long watery horizon in late afternoon. Even when the van stops finally for gas, the hum of the wheels continues in your mind and the conversation with the attendant and the noises of the gas pump are like dreams or half-remembered sounds against the hum of travelling and against your own boredom and weariness.

And it is also like a dream when the driver gets out of the van and the boy in the passenger seat turns around and explains to everyone how the driver has been such a good guy and isn't too well off and you should all chip in and buy him something. When that happens it turns you sick inside because you have seen it before. The twisted gestures of friendliness and the grotesque reaching for warmth have all happened before in your travelling, and just like this, and in the end they all go sliding under the wheels of the hum and are pressed into the gray pavement. And you are glad of the hum that rolls over everything, and over you especially, because it envelopes you in a small hazy sac where you have no responsibility except for keeping your own nose clean.

So most of the hikers give when the box comes around, some fifty cents and some a dollar bill. Some of them do not have much money, but then they do not have much to lose and can afford to seem generous. A small price, possibly, for a bit of acceptance. But you, you pull up the hum close around you like a blanket and give nothing, for too often you have felt warmth and been secure in it, only to be deceived and lost when the warmth suddenly went cold or was taken away. The gray hum of the wheels on the pavement, at least, is unchanging and will not switch faces on you.

When the driver comes back you watch him as he climbs behind the steering wheel of the van and then asks where the boy is. His middle-aged face is scarred with acne, the short hair slicked back, eyes dark and wandering. Someone says the boy has just gone to the bathroom and will be right back, and a few people grin at each other over the surprise. Everyone wonders what the boy will buy.

When the boy returns he is carrying a plain brown bag. He presents this to the driver and makes a suitable speech on behalf of the group and everyone claps and gives three cheers like a bunch of bloody school kids on a bus trip and you think christ what a simpering bastard that prick of a boy in a red neckerchief is. The driver takes the first forty-ouncer of rye out of the paper bag, and you hear the boy say how maybe he should taste it to see if it's any good. So the driver screws open the bottle and takes a long swig, and then since one goddamn generous turn deserves another he passes the

bottle around, first to the boy, and then into the back. Everybody takes a swig, and you take a good swig too because what the hell.

And now the van is rolling again, and the bottle is going around again. After the second round there is still about two fingers in the bottom and the driver finishes it off. One of the chess players takes out a guitar and a few people start singing with him. The big blond man in the new jeans beside you asks you where you're from, and you say oh hell to yourself and then close your eyes and pretend you didn't hear and he takes the hint. Sitting back against the jolting metal of the van with your knees up, you are cramped and uncomfortable. The singing is quite loud, and seems only to make all the bodies much closer, more crammed together. It occurs to you to get out and try for another ride, but it is too close to nightfall for that. So you hunch down into yourself and try not to listen to the singing. Road songs, camp songs. Then someone nudges you and you open your eyes. You take the joint and drag on it and then pass it to the blond man who passes it on without smoking.

Now the second bottle of rye is going around. This time it lasts only one trip, but there is still a good swig left for the driver. The people in the van are really loosening up now, the jokers and storytellers competing, the laughers laughing, the two girls sucking in attention, and the party atmosphere makes you want to disappear. But none of the talk or the party noise can get above the low, gray purr of the van rushing through the fog, the ghostly whiteness of fog that you know is pressing from the outside the way a cat presses on the legs of a standing person, stiffly and coldly seductive.

The next thing you know the van is making another stop, but this time the side panel door opens and everyone starts to pile out. Through the front window of the van you can see the coiled red neon of a bar sign, blurred around the edges like a rain-soaked flower, blinking on and off, bleeding through the fog in slow pulses. The driver, you learn, is going to buy a round to show his appreciation for the rye.

For a moment the small bare warmth of the bar room, filling with hitchhikers, seems like a shrine, as if some destination has finally been reached. You relax a little as you do in bars, but still you choose a seat with your back to the wall, and sit with the chair tilted rockingly and wait for this to be over so you can get on the road again.

After the driver's round, other rounds are bought. The boy gets one, of course, and two of the guitar players, and then, not so

surprisingly, the blond man in new jeans who is sitting at your table. Included in the rounds are the few local patrons, old men who are quiet, wary, resentful of the intrusion, but who accept the drinks anyway. So you all sit there at tiny round damp tables drinking draft that smoulders to piss in your bladders, and by the time the group finally gets up to swing noisily into the street, night has fallen and the fog is stained nicotine yellow from the streetlights.

Then, less than a mile out of town, when people are still settling into place and you haven't yet been handed a beer from the half dozen twelves someone bought at the bar, the van slides off the road shoulder and tips into the ditch, casually, sloppily, like a drunk falling into an armchair. The panel door is jammed into some mud, the van sloping forty-five degrees, so you all crawl into the driver's seat and haul yourselves up out of that door into the foggy night as if you are swimming up from a sunken ship.

Right away people start disappearing into the trees to take a leak, but gradually they drift back and listen to the boy in the red neckerchief and a couple of other leader types talking over the situation. The driver is sitting out of it, sitting on the bank of the ditch as if he had fallen there, and you watch his bleary-eyed confusion and a kind of sadness or even fear in his eyes as he surveys all these young strangers surrounding his van and heaving it back up onto the road.

— You know how to drive one of these things? — he finally manages to ask, the words thick and slurred, directed to the boy. — Yea, — says the boy, — as a matter of fact I used to drive one myself, — and there is such oily smoothness in that answer, the voice snakelike and drawling with some sort of accent. You look at the boy again, standing there with one hand on the open door of the van as if he owns it or is advertising it, and you see that he is tall, lean, almost tough-looking, with something like a cowboy in the way he stands and talks. Probably just a prick and not a fag, you think.

Now the van is moving again, rolling as if on coasters down the black ribbon of road down into the mouth of night down through the shifting tunnels of fog, and you and the twenty-four other hitchhikers in the back and the boy at the wheel and the driver slumped in the passenger seat have all turned to silhouettes in a humming cave of motion. Things are quieter now, and you sip your beer and grow hypnotized by the cigarette ends arcing and flaring in the dark, and by the headlights of a few passing cars that stave in the front window making brief, pocked marble busts of all the faces, sudden brown-and-yellow photographs in the theatre-dark van.

You have your usual place by the wheel hump, and it is almost comfortable, alcoholically comfortable, with your head lolled back and your jacket rolled up as a pillow against the wall so that you get the feel of motion and of the road vibrating through your skull. The beer has taken the edge off you, and although you are the kind of person who never feels quite good, because you never allow yourself that luxury anymore, at least you are feeling not too bad now and it is all right just to be moving. For moving is nowhere, and that is the place you like best.

And just then — just when you have been almost lulled by the alcohol and the unbroken motion and hum into a kind of trust or acceptance of things, and when the sleep that has been trying to come for a hundred miles is just now beginning to creep in — that is when the second accident happens. Without warning you feel yourself tugged forward as the brakes slam on hard and then sideways with the wheels wrenching around so that for a moment the van is skidding almost backwards at a crazy angle, and then it hits and your shoulder snaps back against the metal wheel hump like a concrete gun going off.

But when everything stops you are OK, just spinning a bit, and the first thing you are aware of is the no good prick of a boy in the red neckerchief turning around quickly in the driver's seat, asking how people are and handing out gum to cut the alcohol smell on everyone's breath. Then you all pile out of the van and stand around on the fog-wet glistening pavement, each telling how it was in clipped, breathless excitement. Watery, foil-coloured scraps of light are playing off the caved-in back end of the van, and the passenger side of the Buick is crumpled in drapes and folds like a piece of cloth, and these are almost the only wrinkles in the fog-smooth cat-bodied night.

Somehow, no one has been hurt in the accident, not even the driver of the car who got the worst of it, and so there is nothing to drain off the aimless confusion of the moment into any emotion as definite as pity or emergency. The lights of a town gleam in the near distance, and directly overhead, suspended on a wire and dangling above the middle of the road like a marker over the scene, you see the set of traffic lights that the boy missed. Slowly they change, green, amber, red, green again, the lidless eyes blinking dispassionately.

For you, whatever slim tragedy the moment holds, whatever feeling you can muster up within your own scared breast, is focussed

in the small, acned, uncomprehending face of the van owner, whom nobody can look at except out of the corner of an eye. Sobered up enough from the shock that he can stand with his arms crossed and look like the owner of something, like the one responsible, there is still enough alcohol swimming in his veins that he can't seem to get out any words to the angry driver of the Buick, or to the boy who is loading him with apologies and explanations in that cool sincere voice that pricks have. Or maybe the owner of the van isn't drunk at all anymore, maybe he is just struggling in himself to hold back tears of some kind.

So that's what they do to you, you think. You try to be a nice guy, try to help a few people and maybe make a little fun for yourself, maybe even be somebody special for a change, and this is what they do to you, they get you drunk and smash up your van and . . . Well, shit.

It doesn't take you long to realize that there is nothing here for you anymore, nothing but the goddamn cops and you have had enough hassles with them already. So you don't wait for the sirens, you sling one arm, and then the sore one, into the straps of your pack and begin hiking into town on the gravel shoulder, a few cars stroking past you, metal glistening briefly in the luminous mist, and just once you look back to see the other hitchhikers, spilled out of the white van's belly like parachuted seeds from a pod just jiggled by the wind, strung out now down the dark wire of the roadside, singly or in pairs, the line of them diminishing back into shifting ghosts of fog, filing back through the corridor of night and distance like a trail of disappearing footprints.

LIONS

This is an arbitrary stop,  
a cafe on the road to Salem.  
We have passed and passed-on,  
this coastline's flock  
of sand is flying straight up.  
Willowgrey in Autumn is the earth  
and its white hair too,  
frilled, not frivolous,  
not lace, no matter how I love,  
to forget this surf and its castout look,  
the way it sprawling falls  
is wonder gone.  
The dead sealions, or dying,  
drift in black from oil.  
They crown the proudest rock and stare  
northward, up the sound,  
but are silent: I would be  
as ready as these sentries are  
to die from swimming deep.

I lift my eyes into the dripping wind,  
open as this lion's yawn,  
opening wide as a bend in the channel  
where freighters turn. Stone,  
stone and stumps, stunting  
the summer cottage growth.  
I need a place, mossing room,  
to grow weedy in, to sin and sing,  
to be quiet in, quiet  
as the farmer in me who doesn't care  
if vermin thicken and weeds strike.  
Only the silence of this view and how it writes  
streaming answers in the steam  
of the lion's dreaming as he pounds  
his flipper, barks twice,  
shakes his head and never leaves his ground.

## ABOVE THE CIVIC MARINA

Barges lie like Bibles on the bay's table;  
the city's a big hotel  
and the bridges lie like hatcheck girls  
for a drink. Open up,  
boats are dancing, halyards tap.  
Where is the wind, the voice  
of movement in the throat  
of a young girl diving  
from pilings into oil  
seeping from a trestle.  
I fear for mussels in their rigid hives,  
wasps clinging to shaking timbers.  
It is our lives  
that shake and solidify  
as I move across each body of water  
boats hide, cluster.  
The blind sailor with his wife can't see  
oceans parting, traffic backing  
up into the sky.  
Rigging clicks and takes a tack  
deep into memory. God's stowaway  
drenched the sea with sweat  
in the whale's gut, but suffered  
ocean sunlight too long.  
I've been standing too long.  
I need to sit myself on stone  
or a sloping bit of lawn  
and watch the channel taper for the spawn  
of cutting engines, dropping sail.

MY GRANDFATHER DIED

My grandfather died  
this land  
under his  
nails,

now  
he sleeps  
beneath a  
fertile plain,  
his right eye  
watching.

My father left  
spat his farewell.

Like a lover's  
last kiss  
the earth dried  
as he turned.

I carry  
grass and stones  
in my pocket,  
leave some  
on every windowledge  
I pass.

## I HAVE SEEN

I have seen  
wind wring blood  
from snow

I have known  
ice to the bone  
and deeper

I have watched  
seven sure lovers  
ride the road out

Still I flinch  
at your easy touch  
light  
against my skin.

## PARTISAN

left with

the gunfire  
a dying echo

slogans a  
dying whisper

he turns  
in the wind

in the soft  
grey light

strikes  
the match

and  
begins to sing.

THE FLIGHT INTO JAMES BAY

1

We left the island city  
our hunchback queen knee-deep  
in the slush of March

Rose out of the idiot beseeching  
puzzle of streets and sailed blind  
as marrow in a cloud of bone

To a marble palace  
a masonry of clouds rising  
unbelievably into space

In the turquoise sky  
women brought us food and alcohol  
and we took off our heavy coats

We cruised the upkept hanging  
gardens of the atmosphere  
carried by the grace of our engines

2

When the wind's rodeo  
strapped us back to our seats  
we fell into the cellar of air

Into the quick snapshot glimpses  
of scars where the Ice-Age hauled  
immense machinery in its retreat

Our dues presumably paid in full  
we pulled in our stomachs  
from where they were in the sky

Struck the taiga's reef  
ground to a stop and sat  
in the silent absolute maze of ice

## GILGAMESH ON A SLASH CONTRACT

*for Arthur Lefèbvre*

His shadow fastened to the bent knees  
of his low woodsman's gait  
sixty years ago when he raged  
at the bush and its cedars  
when his stout shadow was his Enkidu

When he beat back the distance  
that vastness some called Humbaba  
and fir trees rattled with death  
from the double-axe Daedalus forged  
when the river was a boneyard of logs

His shadow was his only ally  
cursing the sun that held it  
to the tight suit of black skin  
with the bucksaw's dialogue  
swaying in the evergreen underbrush

And the sun still tries to get at  
that shadow safe beside my great uncle  
moving through camp with his chainsaw  
his dark double aping his steps  
holds the saw's shadow like a violin

Moving through the taiga slashing  
a clean trail through this maze  
leading his shadow down the corridor  
to burn a thousand offerings of wood  
along the powerline to Montreal

Gail McKay

MASK OF THE NORTH NORTH EAST

One of my eyes is a lake in northern Ontario,  
the other, a lake in Quebec.

6 A.M. : like flies at my mouth my southern  
cities begin. But here, in the north, the rain.

Unborn, I saw my father  
riding the rails. Underwater  
sounds in the womb: his riding  
into the War. Born,  
covered in blood, held  
upside down by my heels.  
"Inarticulate," they said  
when I screamed  
like a city. "Warchild, birthmark:  
flies at mouth."

No refuge.  
*Kristallnacht.*  
Guilt. Flies.

My mother shrank from the future,  
her skirts glacial, the Arctic skirt.  
Child herself, reading aloud pamphlets:  
"Fontanel: 'soft spot' (between  
four bones of the head)  
pulses with the heart. As,  
in the right light, form  
can be seen through bone  
china, so too with the membrane."

Look into a northern lake in Ontario,  
a northern lake in Quebec.  
Look close— a whale lists in her sleep in  
stone-hulled Hudson Bay. She speaks  
out of *my* mouth  
hopeless vowels. “Charming,” the articulate  
among you say.

How the rain pounds.  
Cover the gap (between  
boreal, austral; auroral  
and the west)  
in my skull

with your hands.

HANDS OF AIR

Hands of air  
open mouths in the emptying pool  
and blinded on the silver stomachs  
of the leaves like fish asleep  
in the rapids of a breath

The diamond lizard at the heart  
licks up tomorrow  
from the children in the womb  
and winds its tail around the throat  
of the drowned man asleep  
in the sunless channel: he must not  
be borne away in the current of blood.

Not only a man  
but birds and the animals stirring  
in the cemetery woods  
in their bodies  
have warmed the air  
above the bitter crevice,  
which has no sun  
but many clouds and tears.

Blades  
silver fingers  
touch my wrist.  
I press my palm against my heart;  
it has opened into the air.

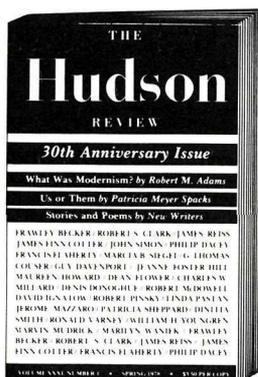
## LIKE THE DARK, IT MOANS

In the lawn, a dark glass where the night swims,  
where light-drinking eyes  
of cats and mice small stars  
in his father's arms moves through  
black grasses and paved avenues  
as the comet passes  
to enter constellations  
aging in the earth's eyes.

“ Father, this comet lights my fingers  
but does not burn. It does not freeze  
yet all the emptiness between the stars  
has gathered in its tail of ice. I am dead, perhaps:  
time exposes its heart to me,  
I see it beat. ”

“ Child, we are of one age  
new-born and dead in this blind mirror.  
I give you full measure  
in the comet's round pupil. You give me  
time, a minted coin or moon with a face  
breathing in your palm.  
Come away, or will you force me  
to accept too much? ”

Like a tear, the comet grows.  
Like the dark, it moans  
for a corner of the sky.



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AREN'T YOU TIRED OF FIRE?

Consider this flake the wind's  
lost tooth or the ghost  
of an eye. Isn't it

beautiful as it turns  
its symmetries?  
It's the spinning

coin you use to buy  
eternity. Take it.  
It won't ring

false. It's the  
prize for you and nothing  
to stagger away

from or shiver  
at. It won't bite or  
glare like some

wolf. It's just the sheet  
to a bed and air  
is the mirror.

Come and lie  
down. Your father is here,  
feeding

the dreams he once  
owned. Come.  
Your mother is here and she

eats up her own  
face  
out of the air!

## I AM NOT A SNOWSHOE RABBIT

The goggles have bone lenses. They admit  
only polarized light and the horizon.  
I track the bright cloud which hoards all heat  
till a cough breaks my attention. The raw note  
shatters and sifts. I search the white shadows  
for its source. The only tongues and throats  
are hissing drifts. There are no other ghosts.  
A hollow looms dark as a mouth which I greet  
with lungs open wide for breath. Breath is the one  
body, it is what the cold eats. It climbs the hills,  
all ice and frozen air, and it is beautiful  
the way it falls. There is nothing else now  
to see or hear, and nothing else to do.

## THE HANDS

Yes, our faces are ten blanks  
but bearded with the ghosts of  
quarter moons. So we are wise, wiser  
than you who go clothed in fur,  
than you who have eyes.

BOOGEYING WITH THE QUEEN

down along the old canal  
wearing an ankle-length overcoat  
in spite of the heat

sucking sweets By Appointment  
To Her Majesty —  
the old girl got a good kick  
out of that one.

You should have seen her  
doing a gang-scuffle outside the  
dancehall

or perfuming her body in one of the  
lavatories:

she was perfect

She dressed for the occasion,  
a crowbar up her skirt and a  
quantity of quicklime.  
Hard luck to the whore found dead  
in a weedbed

she was queen of the quick throw,  
queen of alley ways.

She was beautiful and we  
loved her

pock-marked with a pistol  
she danced naked over our faces

queen of the underground

it felt good, good, good  
to be lying beneath her.

They all loved her,  
the tarts and muggers on the  
commercial road.  
She had a full heart for a  
hatchet-man, a kiss for a killer.

You should have seen her  
teetering on spikes

a grudge-bearing scullion she was  
obvious royalty.

When she danced we came alive,  
when she danced she was really living.

There was no dance she couldn't do,  
hard and fast in a small lifetime.

*“& the great white horses come up  
& lick the frost of the dream”*

I touch your cold face,  
your closed lips and eyes.  
I touch the dead place in the  
bed, the place where you still lie.

“Did you remember to feed the horses?”  
you say, suddenly rising.

Of course, the horses.

You dreamed they died.

## YESTERDAY AND TODAY

I am the girl in gazelle horns  
and a torn nightdress.  
I have no body.  
See, nothing hurts.

Yesterday it snowed.  
I lay down making a large good angel.

Today it thawed.  
Another looked out through her small  
blind eyes, crying

whose horns are those,  
whose torn clothes?

ON THE DEATH OF MAX ERNST

My friends, Max Ernst is dead.  
You knew Max, that elderly gentleman  
Who ran the tailor shop down the street,  
Who pushed cocaine under the counter,  
Who raised havoc by lowering his prices.  
You knew Max, the pervert they found  
One morning exhausted after spending a night  
Screwing park benches, dear sweet Max.  
Dear  
Sweetmax,  
Now with Marcel & Tristan & Hans & Richard  
& Wieland & John & Kurt & Theo  
& Francis & Hugo & Man, all in heaven,  
Young again & putting the authorities  
Uptight, a soiree here, a soiree there,  
Dada in the cabarets down the back alleys  
Of the golden streets of decadent New Jerusalem.  
My friends, Max Ernst is dead.

## FOUR SONNETS

1

Saints are forever with me;  
& then there is the lady  
who wore only sweaters;  
she is there, her image contained  
in every pane of glass, every  
door I walk through. So often  
she is holding a dead cat  
in her arms & sings to it  
of long voyages, of failures  
compiled in the columns  
of wisdom & love. If ever she  
leaves me I'll finally be free;  
on that day I'll find myself  
having to start over.

2

The snow falling, blowing,  
is a lyric I have shaped  
into a sonnet. These lines  
perfect themselves pretending  
to be the slopes of  
sculpted mountains. Those  
who think the snow is wild,  
uncontrollable, have never  
taken a turn down a wrong avenue  
to discover the love  
they have always wanted.  
I count up the lines.  
Three short.  
I add more snow.

3

An open-winged bird  
has just alighted  
on a bare branch of the tree  
that's just outside my window;  
there it now sits, hopped,  
just took off, is there  
no longer, left before  
I could even find  
something to connect it with  
by the simple process of metaphor.  
Now there's only a bare branch,  
bare tree, shaken by wind,  
no bird in it, &  
with no bird no song.

4

In memory  
you fill me  
with the scent & appearance  
of Chinese flowers.

Time after time  
you would talk to me  
of Colette; I'd listen,  
gradually becoming cognizant  
of the women I shared  
you with; always  
in your arms I'd find  
the peace women  
give to other women,  
you giving it to me.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

this logic is seductive.

i seek to know you,  
i compare:

barrow

barabbas

abélard

rasputin

starkweather

harris

raskolnikov

i could go on . . .

i gather names  
into a liturgy  
of sinners, saints,  
men of crime and passion,

i rewrite your history  
again and again,  
i am always the woman:

bonnie parker,  
tough-talking, gun-toting,  
master mind,

h loise  
at midnight letters,

alexandra mesmerized,

caril ann fugate,  
romantic and ripe  
(for the alchemy  
of semen and blood),

and the women who wait,  
some faithful, some not,  
while punishment endured.

## NOW APPEARING

in this photograph  
we appear as  
“the virgin and the gypsy”,  
a carnival act,  
curious mismatch  
of innocence and knowledge.

it is true  
i was untouched too long  
and too long could not focus  
on my centre, the source  
and force of hunger . . .

and it is true  
you have journeyed far  
in caravan  
(menagerie, menages-a-trois,  
a-quatre, a-cinq),  
journeyed alone,  
performed tricks,  
were cunning and wise,  
thighs opened, roads,  
(til now) you always escaped.

but this is not mismatch,  
is not curious:

for what is a gypsy  
without his virgin?

and what is a virgin alone?

. . . and now we arrive  
in the camera's eye,  
in a future  
even you could not see:  
this bare prison yard,  
one gypsy, one virgin,  
stars grind /  
          opposites  
embrace.

PICTURE WINDOW

Vacations: schedules of  
doing nothing  
more than looking, clicking  
photos, postcard sending, back  
home through empty distance,  
empties

empty as this motel room  
where shaving off days,  
sleeping in preparation for  
newer beds, bathing in  
simple notions of what to do  
next, takes time, and place

in singular  
quiet, albeit the sound  
of niagara falls, falling  
in tons of picturesque cascades  
outside the window, replacing  
a legendary traffic of  
urban love and hate.

writing home to empty rooms,  
the ghosts who maintain the garden,  
the clock ticking unrelentless,  
the walls with empty frames

fills  
with a background of  
niagara booming in each  
notion i put down behind  
the postcards face depicting  
the falling falls, falling motionless

reminds one of a quality of what  
it was at the mind's edge  
when a whirlwind rose dust to  
wilderness without a line being  
dropped to anyone:  
that first unspeakable stillness  
swirling.

but, considering none of us  
were there, we remain  
as the small figure on the postcard's face  
looking up at the falls: design  
of water, rock, sky, from behind a guard rail

standing insignificant but who  
figures in the idolatries  
bringing to each scene the words to break  
the silence of all seas, wandering  
in and out of what is not ours:  
lettering the emptiness,

writing letters home  
about a vacation,  
wishing i were here.

## APIARY

night an apiary stirs with bees  
and you begin to veil yourself again

out below the moon awakening  
a noisy hive bees active wary

apprehension roils their language  
with mean intent without warning

one stings you its unseen line but  
you still work the bee expended you

flick him off the second manages beneath  
the netting to get at your eye pinpoints

the retina you recall the first blindness  
a third pneumatic bee riddles the ear while

another goes for the heart while  
you think how immune you've gotten

David Sharpe

## CONQUISTADORS

War of the Worlds

Implacable cities like chariots pack  
goldless,  
bloodless  
Modern  
Men.

We were ever Inca until  
Stone-faced intelligence landed,  
wheels a-rolling,  
in stone age fields.

With scrip and horses,  
with metal bodies  
and knowledge like a heat ray,  
Gods melted gold, sacrificed  
men of the new old world.

## God Save the Country

He opened shop on an alley. Each day he glared at the size of his windows and determined to grow, at least to the backstreet. He fashioned his feet into foundations and covered his joists with skin. As shoppers plied and multiplied along the street, he embraced a pub in the rear living quarter and, since he no longer stood so tall, moved his pallet under a counter. Drinkers entered his front door and negotiated his stores to reach their bottles of beer. He propped his hands on the sidewalk; shaved the inner walkers inside; then joined several fingers in a weir across the road. The houses beside he tore apart with a few, begrudged bones. He designed a chamber above the store, to live in first, then when he could no longer climb the sill, to house his store detectives. When the town council laughed, called him Little Sweetbread, and refused to extend his open hours to twenty-four, he exhorted his customers with the largest microphone ever brought to the smallest lips: Buy loyally; ring defiance at the Liberty Till! When at last the mayor stepped in from the brilliantly-lit, pre-dawn street and, beaten, bought the last ounce of flesh, the winner proclaimed peace. He opened his government in the town the same day and grew thin as a voice towards the country.

## Puberty

The child is  
plundered of his gold,  
his once finely traced treasures  
    hammered by new  
    conqueror desires  
    blunt as bars  
and stacked out of sight.  
    Ingots  
private and thick as shame.

A ship so proud,  
    the land stands at bay.

To her  
    the harbor bows,  
    piers  
    like open arms.

But with onboard craft,  
    she will take his goods  
    untouched  
    away.

## Conquista d'or

Land on the horizon, the decks hot with sun and  
    time, we come to the crest of a sea  
    and slide off a wave into port.

From the shops to the sand  
    men flow in the heat

To the edge  
To the sight of our bronze ship  
Our vermilion eyes gathered at the rail.  
We have the woman with us.

She sinks like a spear into the crowd,  
her arms raised.

Voices bend to her,  
Follow her shaft far from us.

So we turn unseen from the town  
with dust washing our feet  
Up the chest of their mountain  
In a coat of winds locked,  
like us,  
With a clasp of gold.  
Placed in the summit sun,  
The woman we find before us.

We bend to our knees on bone rock,  
the drip of blood in our ears.  
Our shout jumps from groin  
To throat  
To fist  
And riches, like the woman, fall to us.

To our ship that groans in a blanch of cold,  
We wedge gold in our wounds  
and run to sail.  
On a grey beach,  
Men hardened at the sight of our hands  
Watch us take offence  
And the woman  
with us again.

Metal bright eyes  
bonded across a table  
to a lover.

Precious alloy.  
Refine.  
Smelt crude days;  
hands, run together  
full of ore  
in heat  
with care,  
with care.

#### Love Drunk

More passion of the sexes as men  
gulp down the ferment of pale,  
pregnant hops.

And wine from swollen ovaries  
courting with mankind.

Potion love,  
the seizer of Romans:

venal, VD, vici.

The serpent eats tail and  
rolls  
round  
around  
and round the rod.

On him,  
the cosmic tire,  
the wagons of desire  
wheel

the children of gold  
rushes.

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# Branching Out

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D. J. Simpson

DEJA VU POEM

Coming into the valley from far away,  
drifting rain & the sun mixed  
winds & spray

in the gold-black reaching  
like a new hand, *The Shine*  
enclosed, by compass  
by time

(in both respects the  
wave & particular breaking down)

upon a page, Thompson's  
notes upon a river,

a few words  
— "having a good time I  
miss you."

This rainbow  
repeated over the hills  
and Heffley  
receding, the country my  
life & wife

unknown Earth to touch  
this  
spectral green, *The Surprise*  
imagined  
in the next traveller's eyes.

ONE ANSWER

is that not what we are always saying  
in whatever way we can,      Mary-Anne, there is  
no other recourse, and all our lives we look  
for those that have the words, rare but  
wonderful the phrases, mostly we have the tears:  
relief or sadness I am often not sure, but  
to be able to say "what I am *really* saying"

and we see ourselves old, in theatres,  
on streets, still eager, holding out  
our similarities like pure translations      I need  
these tokens for my public events,  
your jokes, my laughter

## DONNA'S POEM

her eyelids are moving,  
she is dreaming of the hydro dams,  
the giant turbines, her high heels  
in the muddy waste, she is  
leaving soon by aeroplane.  
her hands move to her mouth,  
if she were awake it would be monday,  
her body lies on top of water,  
the sound of mills in the distance.  
there are many times she glimpses trees.  
her husband, his parents, are drinking tea.  
she looks up from the base of the waterfall  
there is a man with his hands on her breasts  
and she thinks of the women  
he has touched this way before  
she knows they allowed their faces  
to escape elsewhere, smiling.  
she is awake now, she finds herself  
drunk with northern air,  
she carries the dream with her into the day;  
looking carefully for the man,  
at five she meets him,  
she listens for the smooth slip of soda  
in each careless glass.

TO FRANÇOIS VILLON

Villon,  
Villain:

You who lurked  
about the plague-hushed Quarters  
Of pewter-skied Paris;

You who haunted  
The loud bars and drank  
Last year's dark wine;

You who felt  
The slim steel of the dagger  
Pass between the ribs of that drunken,  
churlish priest:

Your black letters  
Cry out and  
Twist like *pendus*  
In the cold wind,  
Twist like a thrust knife  
In the back of a fat-pursed world.

## JANITOR: UNIVERSITY RESIDENCES, 1977

The slow-eyed man  
In Sherwood green,  
Changer of spent bulbs  
And custodian of all things mechanical,  
Arrives each morning in the half night  
Before our dim awakenings;  
And he watches us  
File clipboarded to the yellow doors  
Into looseleaf winter.

In the afternoon  
He manhandles the grey floor polisher  
From the supply room.  
Like Hercules burying the immortal head of Hydra  
He lodges a concrete brick  
On the drizzle-coloured cowl.  
Slowly, now, the droop-eyed man  
In forest drill  
Buffs the tiled floor to a menacing gleam  
Still as the air before a storm.

And then I  
Come galing up the stairs from classes  
Hurling the gritty melt from my boots  
Across his floor  
The slow-eyed man in Sherwood green  
Stares fiercely after me, as though  
I had flung ink on the Da Vinci cartoon

FIGURE AND GROUND

Clouds turn their shadows  
over and over,  
examining them  
like a new pair of shoes.

Put back: there:  
words squirming:  
an animal without  
its skin

Tangled fuselage and broken wings  
strewn about, tattered pieces  
of a shadow that once  
circled overhead;

sun burns with the intensity  
of a hawk's eye.

We burrow in the snow  
to keep from showing.

## COMPASS

Skin the only thing  
left at this latitude,  
clings. Glacial deposits  
in the brain.

The mind/light refractory:  
bodies slide past each other  
in a lateral moraine.  
Is this true north?

Sun battens  
on the sleeves of our shadows,  
filigree: no two snowflakes,  
no two magnetic traces are alike.

South of here  
our eyes roll up like maps.

THE BEAUTIFUL ANIMALS

then they smell me,  
the beautiful animals

— MICHAEL ONDAATJE

The beautiful animals  
move about us

skunk, deer, leopard

in the underbrush  
the green birds rise and sing  
wild dog moves  
howling about the house  
its blue eyes gas bright  
burning

your body  
the body of  
the beautiful animal  
moon  
slithering palely over  
you, your  
shoulders body  
cool fruit  
you  
beautiful animal

Tomorrow  
will they find you

running crippled half-  
mad across the  
lawn, blind sun  
breaking up  
the fire  
in your fire fangled feathers

the silence  
we hold in  
each of us  
a locked razor?

## THE LETTER

The pattern of your handwriting  
spreads out, a spider web  
across the blue page.  
Words escape  
like a fleet  
from the arms of the harbour.

Beyond the window  
the cold sea plunges  
northward  
a mindless fury of whitecaps.

Your letter holds a calm.

A submarine forest  
of green words  
swaying, in the tide-swell:  
faint odour of stillness.

The blood is caught  
in so fine a design:  
Blue expanding into green.  
Your words transparent  
passages of light.

The rhythms of the sea remembered,  
in your swaying hips

in the gentle swell  
of your breasts  
beneath my hands.

Doug Turner

## THE CHANGE

The winter leaves slowly, cold  
it stays  
in the morning  
pale sun coming over the mountains  
    reluctant, but still coming  
to melt snow on the ground  
    slow but going still  
snowflakes sag into the earth  
which trembles underneath yellow bulldozers  
and skidders,  
steel treads and elephant tires  
ripping through clinging snow into the ground  
churning mud as the saws roar  
    bringing down the big timber  
    that spears the sky  
groan and creak and splinter  
as they crash groundward  
anything underneath, crushed  
sometimes the fallers, not moving fast enough  
the big timber snaps arms and legs and ribs  
driving skull bones into brains  
    screams lost  
    in the brutal boom  
of the timber hitting the ground  
skidders and cats  
too dangerous as they jerk and lurch  
sometimes flipping over  
    operators flipped over caught underneath  
    the metal  
  
    alone  
    trembling  
like some wino hitting the early streets

his warmth barely touching the cold buildings  
a long way from the mountains and machines

yer damn  
right  
he knows

what it's all about  
even though he's like the early morning winter sun  
pale yellow and quivering weak and liable to  
just fade quick-like behind dark clouds

no, not dying  
just fading

the departure date is there  
for all, even the sun  
will burn out

yer damn right  
just like this damn winter

will go, the snow melting slow  
but sure, the winter will go  
the sun will start flashing bright  
a big nuclear eyeball

and the snow  
will go

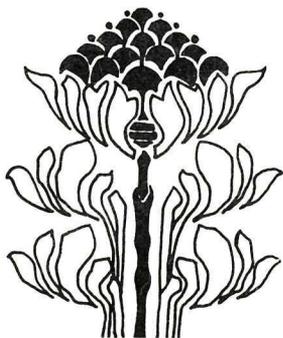
be gone, just another memory  
to be reckoned with just like the next winter  
which will probably come just as slow  
as this one is leaving

like a lover no longer loved  
having trouble

finding the way out, the new lover  
tripping on the old one on the way in

the going slow  
the change

filled with indecision  
and a few regrets



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PIRAEUS

*for Yannis Ritsos*

Snow has slashed his summer pact with sun  
and erased Piraeus in mid-day;  
there will be mayhem in heaven for at least  
a week. Honor is not among the elements.  
He has, however, been solicitous enough to place  
a drop-cloth on my garden and permit a corridor  
of light to upon my door. I do not deceive myself,  
I know his fondness for jasmine, spirited from  
China in a silken scarf  
in a jade carafe.

The fisherman. I had thought to visit —  
to drink retsina and trade a limerick  
for a fish. A sturdy mackerel or a melancholy  
mullet awry from Alexandria.  
Too, the wine merchant. No,  
Indeed I am fortunate to have a port in this port  
whitewashed to non-existence. Feta and tea  
will stay me in this unscheduled extinction, and  
bracing brandy dull the edge of reliance.  
I shoulder a single beam of light until  
decorum is restored among delinquent deities  
and the seaport city reappears.

## DARK ROOFS

Dark roofs are split.  
The demented stir, stutter and dance,  
dance out doors and spin.

Their nonsense voices well into a sparkling cloud  
which drifts like morning fog over the metal river,  
making the universe in twos: mirroring monads.

The dyad halves. Drawn by the scented moon  
the mist ascends with its reflection.  
Surrounded by the arms of mother and lover  
they take their place as stars within her breast.

Dancers file  
from fallow fields into their beds  
in perfect step, knowing nothing.

I

a child who handles the clock as a toy  
sits in the corner undoing the ribcage  
sticking his fingers between tongues of brass  
takes apart the spring and wheel  
searches for a trace of time which drives the whole  
asks me as i stand beside him  
what meaning does a clock have  
that does not breathe the moment

## II

leaves are coupled with design  
chance the only game whose rule  
beauty does not break  
you were the big kid washing  
her breasts in the basin  
with blue veined hands  
then i am the child  
in the doorway thinking  
all women hope to be mothers  
your corn fed belly  
will deliver up a name  
with voice and legs  
who will cough the night  
draw the reeds of your dress aside  
to gaze at your belly  
your smooth orange belly  
a lamp filled with birds and the wind  
they built aviaries in your head  
your fingers sweep roots  
from the clouds  
they are set free  
to roam along amulet blue  
the story is forgotten as it is told  
the instant music is slender and taut  
the meanings remain simple and sparse  
your spine is a sceptre of crystal  
the moon braids into  
a staircase of lace

STRIPPING FURNITURE

The Family says  
that Grandma painted the rocker  
for each new baby

And after two days  
of scraping at stubborn layers  
of thick white paint  
I can believe it    begin to think  
I must be crazy    cooped up  
in this stuffy room  
the smell of the thinner  
making me sick  
my back aching  
knowing the kid won't recognize  
the difference between this rocker  
and one I could buy  
second hand somewhere

And why would *she* bother?  
When would she have the time  
what with milking and canning  
and meals for the threshers and  
a half-dozen other kids  
the grandmother I remember  
as brittle as this paint and  
so stubborn you'd think  
she'd have a kid  
in the barn somewhere  
and go right back to the milking  
isn't that how it is anyway  
after seven or eight?

I reach for the scraper  
slide back another layer  
pushing toward  
some afternoon in late summer  
supper warming on the stove  
kids playing on the porch a baby  
crying in the back bedroom  
and the woman I begin to imagine  
with hair the colour of soft bare wood  
squatting heavily beside this rocking chair  
dipping her brush

## FITTING IN

The man in the plant store  
tells me he's an  
interior landscaper  
*That's right; plants for  
public buildings shopping malls  
the real work's keeping them  
in shape all that artificial  
light and air-conditioning  
can give you strange results  
especially with trees*  
but I'm thinking of  
the tellers in my bank  
all brunette and busty  
the size 9 blondes  
in the jean shop up the street  
the dial-tone voices  
of telephone operators  
nurse's hands  
cool as tile walls  
dimestore clerks always  
tinsel jewelry and cheap perfume  
the velvet ladies  
of expensive boutiques  
He sees that I'm not listening  
and gets down to business  
*You want a plant  
for a terrarium right?  
I'll let you have a cutting  
from this spider these things  
can grow five feet across  
but if you keep trimming them  
they'll adapt  
and they're very showy  
under the glass*

Desmond Walsh / *Three Poems*

I

And if I were found guilty of following you  
would you still welcome me for tea  
and other decorations that go with conversation

Come back to this place  
between the hand and the flesh  
where all lies receive a fair trial

Come back to this room  
let us see if friends have changed us

## II

Even though you think  
you're too safe  
to be shocked  
I'll get you  
When you're alone  
and your only entertainment  
is the moonlight on your breasts  
don't be frightened  
by eyes at the window:  
although I've been hurt  
I still have  
a sense of humor

### III

Something tempts me to free myself  
we live in the same country  
and that is too close  
It is your fine sense of discipline  
or my fine sense of humor  
that makes me say this  
or maybe the delicate balance  
between them has sentenced us  
to our separate poisons

Something tempts me to wait  
our conversation never struggles to survive  
and that is too safe  
We will both wait  
and when it is time  
we will arrange a meeting  
to compare our distance

LYRE

The birch-tree trunks are white as plaster casts  
And advokat, their leaves, a custard yellow,  
Trembling in the wind, bleached enthusiasts,  
While skies grow dark as overcast Othello.  
A blonde and healthy girl, a soft caress,  
Kind enough to love, round enough for lust,  
How many years ago we were abed  
That night a storm developed from a gust  
And calm as salt, she started to undress,  
And numb, I viewed her nakedness,  
A body sweet and warm as winter bread?

And wine, the drowsy lovers must have wine  
And shadows guttering with candlelight,  
And take it for a most propitious sign  
A moth has found a refuge from the night;  
And afterglow of embering desire  
Must keep a second-storey window lit,  
And comfort any passerby who braves,  
For reasons only he can posit,  
The icy rain, and high demonic choir  
That shrieks through power lines as if a lyre  
Could still be why such brutal weather raves.

I've passed that window many times since then,  
Rectangle silvered by a summer moon,  
Or idle musing of distracted pen  
When themes and leaves and images are strewn  
Along the grey abandoned avenue  
Where rustling birches luminous with rain  
Recall one winter's strange delirium;  
I've passed, mornings on a windowpane,  
As if I looked for evidence those two  
Still enjoy that second-storey view,  
Though lyre's tamed to tintinnabulum.

## IN PURSUIT OF AN EARTHLY EXCELLENCE

The trees at night, the streetlights and the rain;  
The leaves are soggy than wasted cereal.  
I know the bland fulfillment of the sane;  
I tinker with a fussy aerial.  
My heart's been wheeled away, an invalid;  
I can no more than guess at what is wrong.  
I wished the worst be done that it might pass,  
But being done, there ended days of song.  
I loathe my lot. Who'll open with a bid?  
An auctioneer has certified me dead.  
I gorge the gullet of an hourglass.

Satisfied? Content? What song can come of that?  
I do not think a robin sings to please;  
He sings because he's twice escaped the cat.  
The spring is full of high-pitched victories.  
An adversary gives him cause to sing,  
And singing is an earthly excellence;  
A song is drowned with any bag of cats.  
The dead alone leave nothing out for chance;  
All the reckless robins come the spring  
Will celebrate the risks of wintering  
While caution stammers with its diplomats

An auctioneer, an hourglass, a bird:  
Three throats are full of my predicament.  
Something counsels me to pick the third;  
The other two can claim whatever rent  
They feel is due: I slam the door. I quit.  
November's ruin is delight to me —  
God hang goiters from their ugly throats;  
I denounce their weak conformity —  
Or catch them passing shoddy counterfeit.  
My heart returns, joy's misfit.  
These squandered leaves are promissory notes.

Andrew Wreggitt

## STAMPEDE

I quit. Those are the most beautiful words in the language. They roll around in your mouth like two shiny marbles and when you finally spit them out, they explode like bullets. Bang, bang. I quit. I was in such a hurry that I left my tools in the shop. I picked up my check, threw everything I owned into my car and was gone within an hour.

I have never seen a highway look so good in all my life, my'67 Pontiac storming after that asphalt ribbon as it ran away across the hills, and that crummy little mining town disappearing behind me like a bad dream. Jesus, I thought I had wings. It was summertime, dry and windy and wild as stampeding horses. There's nothing that can touch that feeling. Somewhere near Cache Creek I remembered the Calgary Stampede was on. I'd been there before, the town was full of beer and women. I headed east. The plan was to spend all my money and eventually get another job, but hell I'd saved a lot and the horrible eventuality of employment seemed a long way off. I arrived in Calgary in the middle of the night and spent nearly two hours trying to find a room. Every tourist and cowboy in western Canada was there, gobbling up hot-dogs and sleeping in every available bed. I finally found a vacancy in a place called "Modern Rooms."

I slept through the better part of the next day. When I finally got up, I looked around at my room. There was a broken beer bottle in the sink and some kind of scummy substance on the night-table. For the first time in two years I felt at home. I yelled at the chambermaid on the way out and drove to the nearest bar. It turned out to be the Westwind, a huge barn of a place with a country band yodeling like crazy in the smoke and broken glass. The band was inviting people to come up and sing, so after half a dozen beer I fished my guitar out of the trunk of my car and went up. It was the time of year or my general euphoric madness I guess, because I'd never done that kind of thing before, but up I went. I gave them a bit of Hank Williams, "I got a feeling for the blue oo oo oo oo oos since my baby said goodbye." and then I cranked out a shaky but enthusiastic "Yellow Rose of Texas" and sat down. Nobody seemed

to care if it sounded bad, they were all as crazy drunk as I was. Three or four wizened old rubbies bought me beer and we sat there yodeling right along with the band as though we'd been born in that bar and weaned on the draught taps. The solemn ghostly waiters drifted by and the tourists-cum-cowboys whooped and hollered in their squeaky new boots and cardboard stetsons like the world would end if the illusion broke.

I was feeling pretty loaded so after awhile I decided to take a walk and try to pull myself together. I walked into the parking lot trying to remember where the hell my car was when I noticed someone painting something on the side of the building. I went over to take a look. A beautiful young Indian woman was madly printing in bright red paint, "FREE TOMMY JOHN." She hadn't noticed me so I got right up behind her and piped up.

"Who the hell is Tommy John?"

She swung around so fast, the paint on her brush swished and splattered on my face.

"Oh . . . sorry."

She was very drunk.

"Jeez . . . naw, never mind, it's okay."

I wiped my face with my sleeve and nearly lost my balance. She had dark eyes that snapped and spat fire.

"What're you doin sneakin up like that?"

"I was just curious. Who's Tommy John?"

"My husband. Cops threw him in jail for beatin a guy up." She was reeling with booze. "He's s'posed to ride in a couple of days in the Stampede. Bastards put him in jail."

"Zat so?" I said still wiping at my face.

"You don't believe me do you?" She was waving the damn paint brush again. "Fuckin white men don't want to see no Indian ride better than them."

"No, I believe you."

"Indians make better cowboys than fuckin white men!"

"Could be alright . . . you figure they'll let him out if they see that?"

I pointed in the general direction of the wall.

"Naw." She looked down and hiccupped. "Gotta do somethin . . . got no money for his bail."

"Hmm" I said significantly.

Just then a cop car wheeled into the parking lot. I turned to tell the girl to get the hell outta there but she was already gone.

"Jesus, like a cat." I muttered.

The cops jumped out of their car and looked at me. I felt pretty silly, standing there beside a can of paint, red flecks all over my face and sleeve and "FREE TOMMY JOHN" screaming off the wall in bright red behind me. I started right away.

"Did you see that? She was painting on the goddamn wall. I ran over and tried to stop her and she splattered me with paint. Goddamn bitch. I was gonna grab her but she got away from me." I don't know why exactly, but they believed me. I went back to my room and passed out.

When I woke up the next morning, the beer bottle was still in the sink. It was beginning to annoy me so I picked it out. I didn't feel so good. It was hot, too goddamn hot. The streets wobbled with heat waves and everything was too loud. I tried walking around for awhile but it didn't help. The sidewalks were jammed with tourists and kids and we were all just milling around, sweating and getting in each other's way. I ducked into a Woolco and ordered a coffee at the sandwich bar. There was a big guy sitting beside me listening to a transistor radio, eating a cowboy sandwich and belching constantly. The radio sang out a Dolly Parton tune, "It's all I can do to keep from fallin in love with yoouu" while our jammed little counter ate and belched in solemn reverence. "Looks like we're in for another record crowd today out here on the Stampede grounds." Jesus, I thought, maybe I'll go tomorrow. I got up and made a bee-line for the Westwind. It was cool and dark in there. I heaved a huge sigh of relief as the first beer giggled down my throat.

"Hey white man. How come you're not in jail?"

I looked up. It was the Indian woman again. She really was beautiful, a real Indian princess. She had a crooked little smile on her face that was uncomfortably close to a sneer.

"I told em you did it."

She laughed and sat down.

"You buy me a beer?"

"Ya, okay."

She turned around and waved at the waiter. She looked at me. Her eyes could have started a fire.

"I like you, what's your name?"

"Mex."

"You're no Mexican."

"Nope."

The band broke into "The Orange Blossom Special."

"You a tourist?"

"I guess you could say that."

"You got a fancy hotel room eh?"

"Ya." The beer was starting to taste better. "Tell me about the Indian cowboy."

She did. How he worked small rodeos for years, getting better and trying to save up the entry fee for the big one, the Stampede. How he got busted for putting some guy in the hospital after he'd already qualified for the finals and how it's all been wasted unless she comes up with \$500 for bail. Smashed up their truck on top of it all.

"Ya," I said, "It's a tough break alright."

"Tough break? What the hell do you know about tough breaks white man?"

She was silent for awhile. Somewhere under that beautiful dark skin she was boiling like a volcano. Suddenly she turned to me.

"You wanna make some money?" I waited. "There's a big purse for the saddle bronc event. You get Tommy out of jail and when he wins, we give you \$700 back."

"What if he loses?"

"He won't lose." She paused. "If he loses, he goes back to jail and you get your \$500 back."

"I don't know anything about him, how good he is or anything."

"He's good. He's already qualified for the finals. I'll show you." She fumbled in her purse. She was excited. When you're desperate, the smell of a sucker is intoxicating. "Look." She hauled out a bunch of newspaper clippings, a couple with pictures. Tommy John, first prize in saddle bronc. She pointed out a dusty Indian standing beside a chute. I looked at them all. It was impressive.

"What if you both just skip town after I spring him?"

"Look white man, we come a long way, years, to get here. We're not goin nowhere."

I must have had a skeptical look on my face. She lowered her voice and leaned forward.

"There'll be an extra in it for you."

"What kind of extra?"

"A good fuck."

"What?"

"You heard. All night. For two nights. Whatever it takes until Tommy rides." There was a tingling feeling at the back of my neck. I felt jeezly uncomfortable. I ordered more beer. "You're a single guy, lots of money, come here looking for some fun. Me and Tommy

are serious, we're here to win. It's business, I don't care what it takes."

"I can see that."

"You can think what ever the fuck you like white man, I'll get that money."

She started to get up.

"Hold on. Sit down and finish your beer."

She did.

I met her the next day and we went down to the jail. It hurt to put that much money across. My brain was screaming "sucker." The Princess didn't say anything, just stood there like a statue waiting for them to bring Tommy out. He finally appeared, walking up a corridor with a cop beside him. He looked at me long and hard, looked over at the Princess and started walking out. I couldn't stand it.

"Hey wait a minute."

He stopped and turned around. He looked at me, cold as an iceberg. I turned to the Princess. "Listen, I don't need any extras."

"Something wrong with your stomach?"

"I got an offer I couldn't refuse last night." I lied.

"Okay." Her expression didn't change. "I'll meet you tomorrow at the Grandstand, Gate I, two o'clock."

I walked out. It was hot again. The Stampede banners that draped over the street, hung like shrouds in the deathly still air. Somewhere in the distance there was the sound of a train, a solemn rumble churning over the traffic noise. She was right, there was something wrong with my stomach.

I tried to go to see a movie that night. It was about a long-distance horse race in the old west. These guys were driving themselves and their horses into the ground for the money and the prestige of the big race. Somebody in the line-up had said that Gene Hackman wins in the end and I left about half-way through. It was dark when I walked out. Fireworks were crashing over the Stampede grounds, unfolding like big noisy flowers and then dissolving, the last sparks being sucked up into the darkness. I needed a drink. I walked into a little bar and played pool until closing time. I took ten bucks off a kid that was too drunk to hold his cue.

I got to the Stampede grounds about noon the next day. There were kids everywhere, screaming on the roller coaster and the mad mouse and the octopus and eating cotton candy and popcorn and

hot dogs, faces plastered with sticky goop and a furry thing tucked under each arm. Voices poured out of loudspeakers like firehoses and people crowded everywhere. I slipped into the casino to get away, lost fifty bucks in twenty minutes and left. I put my head down and plunged toward the Grandstand. It was only 1:30 but she was already there.

"Hello Mexican."

"Hello Princess."

We went to our seats.

"I didn't expect to see you here."

"I told you once . . ."

"Ya, I know. You want some junk to eat?"

"No."

We sat watching the calf-roping in silence. After awhile she turned to me.

"I still owe you. Whether he wins or not, I still owe you."

"I told you to forget it."

"Ya, I know."

The saddle bronc event was just starting. Tommy was the second last rider.

"He's got good horses for the first two rides. The last one is a mean bastard."

"How do you know?"

"He gets to see them ahead of time."

She was right. He went the distance on the first two horses. He made it look easy. I was watching her. She sat there cool as a cucumber, never moved, just watched.

"If he goes the distance on this last horse, he wins." She said it like she was reading a newspaper.

"Jesus, you talk like you don't even care."

She looked at me. No, it was there, in her face. She was scared shitless. I looked back to the field. His horse came out of the chute cracking like a whip. I thought he was going over right away but he didn't, he hung on like a rag waving on the end of a stick. The horn went just before he got thrown. There was a big cheer from the crowd. The guy on the loudspeaker was jabbering away like crazy, and the place was jumping. He picked himself up and walked off, didn't wave or anything, just walked off. I looked at the Princess. She was sitting with her eyes closed.

"Hey. You win Princess."

She didn't say anything. We walked down below after awhile where the riders were. I waited at the door and watched her go over to Tommy. They talked for a couple of minutes, he handed her the check, and she walked back to me. She looked cleaned out, empty.

"Let's go to a bank," she said.

There was a bank on the grounds so we went there. I watched her count out the money.

"There, that's \$700."

She held it out to me in a big bundle and I took it. I looked at it for a minute and stuck it in my pocket.

"You want a drink?"

"Sure."

We went to the beer garden and I bought two beer.

"How much money does that leave you?"

"Enough."

"What about your truck?"

"It's totaled. Listen, I gotta go to the can."

She got up and disappeared into the crowd. She was going back to Tommy.

I drank a few more beer and then left. I kept telling myself, I'd just made \$200, I should be celebrating. I bought a bottle of whiskey and went back to my room. I didn't feel like facing another crowd of people, all that bloody noise. I pushed the window open and poured myself a tumbler of whiskey. The sun was starting to go down. There was still no wind. I sat there drinking and watching the street for a couple of hours, until the fireworks started crackling again. There was a knock at the door. It was the Princess.

"How did you know I was staying here?"

"You told me, the first day in the bar."

She closed the door and sat down on the bed.

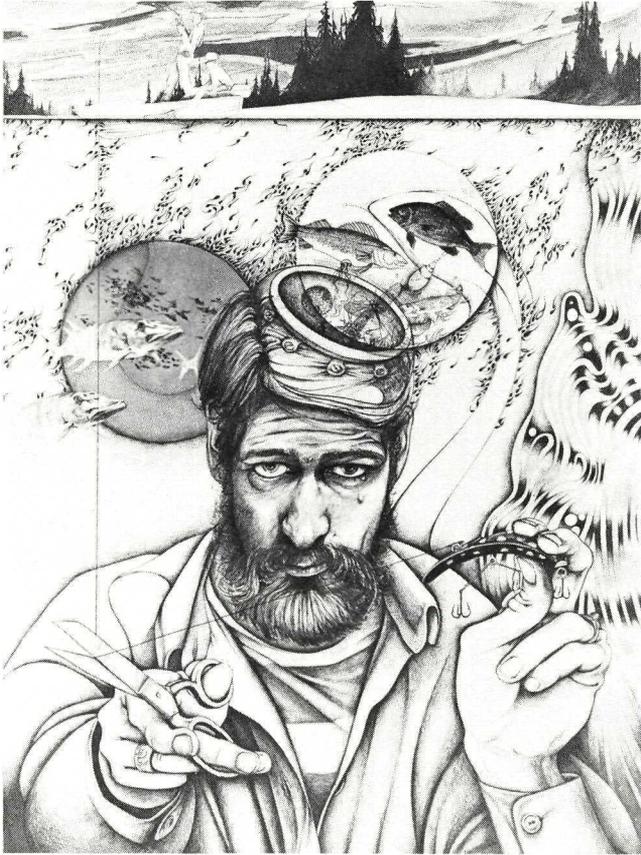
"Okay, why'd you come?"

"I still owe you."

"Listen, I told you I didn't need any extras. I got my money." She started unbuttoning her shirt.

"I know." She stopped and looked at me. "It's not for you. It's so, I don't owe nothin." Her eyes were bright in the darkening room. It was something sad and wild inside her. "It's important," she whispered. She stood up and embraced me. The sobs came slowly at first, then faster until her face was wet with tears. Outside, the fireworks thundered and died in the blackness of the prairie sky.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Rosemary Aubert** is a poet and editor living in Toronto. Her work has appeared in numerous Canadian magazines. A collection of her poetry, *Two Kinds of Honey*, was published by Oberon Press in 1977.

**Deirdre Ballantyne** is a landed immigrant from the United States. She is currently working on a collection of poetry and drawings. Her work appears in many literary magazines and periodicals.

**Peter Behrens** is a twenty-three-year-old Montreal native. He has a story appearing in *Best Canadian Stories '78* (Oberon) in the fall.

**Robert Billings** is currently the Associate Editor of Poetry Windsor Poésie. His poems have appeared widely, and a collection of early work appeared through *Fiddlehead* in 1977. A second book, *St. Matthew's Hill*, has been completed, and a third, *The Elizabeth Trinities*, is in progress.

**A. Blackfeather** has had poetry in *Event*, *Boreal*, *Karaki*, and *Backroads*. He works as a fishing guide out of Whaletown, Cortes Island, B.C. He was born in 1951 near Alert Bay.

**Roo Borson** is a writer living in Toronto. A book of poems, *Landfall*, (Fiddlehead) was published in 1977.

**Marilyn Bowering** was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1949, and grew up on Vancouver Island. She has had three books of poetry published, and is now in the process of editing an anthology of poetry for children.

**David Brooks** has recently published in *Tamarack*, *The Antigonish Review*, *Antaeus*, *Poetry Australia*, and *The Ontario Review*. He was born in 1953 and now lives in Toronto.

**Jean E. Brown** is a twenty-seven-year-old student majoring in Economics at Sir Wilfrid Laurier University.

**Michael Cameron** was born in 1951 in Montreal. He is finishing an M.A. in English at McGill University, and has had poems in various literary magazines.

**Francine Corcos** is twenty-six years old and a part-time student at York University.

**Emilia Corning** lives quietly with her two children in Montreal.

**Lorne Daniel** was born in 1953 and grew up in west central Alberta. His second book of poetry will be published this summer by *Thistle-down Press*.

**Barry Dempster** is the editor of the anthology *Tributaries* due out in the fall from *Mosaic Press/Valley Editions*. His own work is forthcoming in *Saturday Night*, *The Fiddlehead*, *The Malahat Review*, and *The Dalhousie Review*.

**Pier Giorgio Di Cicco** is Associate Editor of Books in Canada, and editor of *Roman Candles*, an anthology of Italian-Canadian Poets published by *Hounslow Press*. His most recent volumes of poems are *The Circular Dark* (Borealis Press), and *Dancing in the House of Cards* (Three Trees Press). His forthcoming volumes are *A Burning Patience* (Borealis Press), and *The Tough Romance* (McClelland & Stewart). He is twenty-eight.

**Mary di Michelle** has been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies. Her first collection of poems, *Tree of August* will be published by *Three Trees Press* in the spring. She was born in Lanciano, Italy, August 6, 1949, and immigrated to Canada in 1955.

**Patricia Eddy** is twenty-three years old. She lives and works in Vancouver.

**Andre Farkas** lives in Ste. Anne De Bellevue, P.Q.

**Mona Fertig** has opened up a literary storefront in Gastown, Vancouver. She lives and writes in Burnaby.

**Cathy Ford** lives on Mayne Island, B.C. Her latest collection of poems *Tall Trees* (blewointment press) is her third. Cathy was born in 1952.

**Kathleen Forsythe** has published several volumes of poetry. She was born in Fredericton, N.B., March 24, 1949.

**Robin Fulford** is a teacher by profession and lives in Toronto. He is twenty-eight years old.

**Bill Gaston** has published in several small magazines. This is his first short story. He lived in Borneo for a number of years and played pro hockey in France for a year. He now is a logger in the Squamish Valley.

**Jeanette Gaudet** has been published in *Waves* and *Germination*, and in 1976 won the Nova Scotia Writer's Federation prize for poetry. She studies ceramics at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

**Katherine Govier** is twenty-nine years old and has been working as a journalist for three years.

**Stephen Guppy** recently graduated from the University of Victoria in Creative Writing. He has appeared in *Island*, *Event*, and *The Malahat Review*. Stephen was born in 1951.

**Laurence Hutchman** has published two books of poetry, *The Twilight Kingdom* and *Explorations*. He is presently completing another book.

**Tom Inkster** lives in Erin, Ontario. He and his wife, Elke, are owners of The Porcupine's Quill, Inc.

**Frances Itani** grew up in rural Quebec. A book of poetry *No Other Lodgings* is being published in the summer by *Fiddlehead Poetry Books*.

**Mark Jarman** is a student at the University of Victoria.

**M. T. Kelly** was born in Toronto. He has worked as a journalist for MacLean-Hunter Ltd., and Thompson Newspapers. His poetry has appeared in numerous magazines. A novel, *I Do Remember The Fall*, was published in 1977.

**Theresa Kishkan** lives in Victoria, B.C.

**August Kleinzahler** lives in Montreal. A book of poetry is due in the fall.

**Judy Lassen** has appeared in *Antigonish Review*, *Event*, *Northern Light*, *CV/II*, *Room of One's Own*, and *CBC Anthology*.

**Anne Le Dressay** has published in *The Mennonite*, *Wind*, *Poetry of Manitoba*, *CV/II*, *Pierian Spring*, and *Salt*. She is twenty-eight years old.

**Kim Maltman** attends the University of Toronto where he is completing a doctorate in Physics.

**Mike Mason** will be appearing in *Grain*, *R.O.A.R.*, *Waves*, and *Best Canadian Stories '78*. He is twenty-five years of age and lives in Beausejour, Manitoba.

**Paddy McCallum** works as an assistant producer/scriptwriter for Vancouver Community College's Audiovisual Services. He was born in Vancouver in 1952.

**Kathleen McCracken** is a highschool student in Flesherton, Ontario. She has a book of poems to her credit.

**Bob McGee** has published three volumes of poetry, *Three Dozen Sonnets*, (Vehicule Press, 1973), *Cromlech (broadsides)*, (Thornproof Editions, 1975), and *The Shanty-Horses*, (New Delta).

**Gail McKay** is publishing a book, *The Pat Lowther Poem* (Coach House), in the summer. She is twenty-nine years old.

**Theresa Moritz** lives and writes in Toronto, Ontario.

**Daniel Moses** is a Delaware Indian living on the Ohsweken Reserve, Ontario. He was born February 18, 1952.

**Susan Musgrave** lives in Sidney, B.C. on Vancouver Island. Her publications are too numerous to list. She has six volumes of poetry.

**Jane Needham** was born in 1949 in Sarnia, Ontario. She attended Parson's School of Design in New York City, and now works as a freelance illustrator in Vancouver, B.C. Previous paintings have appeared on the covers of *Stories for Belated Drinkers* (Intermedia) and *The Greenpeace Book* (Orca Sound).

**Ken Norris** is a member of the Canadian League of Poets. He has published four books. Ken is twenty-seven years old and lives in Montreal.

**Linda Pyke** was born October 19, 1948. She is a poet and sometime book reviewer. Linda was first published in 1975, and has had seventy-five poems appear since then in various literary journals.

**Matt Santateresa** (also known as Matt Tolland) was born March 15, 1950, in Montreal. He is currently completing a manuscript with the assistance of a Canada Council grant.

**David Sharpe** has appeared in *Quarry*, *Nebula*, *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, *Poetry Box* and *Green River Review* among others. The poems that appear in *PRISM* are part of a book-length work called *Unions*.

**D. J. Simpson** was born January 28, 1950. He lives and writes in Kamloops, B.C.

**Carolyn Smart** has previously been published in *The Canadian Forum*, *Waves*, *The Fiddlehead*, and *Quarry*. She lives in Toronto.

**Peter MacLean Stevens** is a fourth year honours student in British literature at the University of Saskatchewan. He was most recently published in *Number One Northern*, and an anthology of Saskatchewan poetry published by *Coteau Books*.

**Richard Stevenson** is at work on his first collection of Poetry. He was born in 1952 and lives in Victoria.

**Michael Todd** is a master's student in English at the University of Toronto.

**Doug Turner** was born in 1949 in New Westminster, B.C. He has appeared in *Quarry West* and *Yellowhead*.

**Kurt Van Wilt** has just graduated from an M.A. program in English/Creative Writing at Concordia University in Montreal. He is twenty-nine years old.

**Mihkel Voore** has been published in *Acta Victoriana*, *Writ*, *Intrinsic*, and *Canadian Author & Bookman*. He was born in 1954.

**Bronwen Wallace** has had poems in *Tamarack Review*, *Canadian Forum*, *This Magazine*, and *The University of Windsor Review* among others. She lives in Kingston, Ontario.

**Desmond Walsh** has published one book of poetry, and a second will be done by Breakwater Books in the fall of '78. He is twenty-three years old and lives in Beachy Cove, Nfld.

**Patrick White** is the General Editor of the *Ottawa Review*. The poems that appear in *PRISM* were written on Vancouver Island.

**Andrew Wreggitt** has just completed a BFA in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. He is twenty-two years old.

## BOOKS: CANADIAN UNDER-30 AUTHORS

*Borson, Roo; Landfall; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1977; 55 pgs;* First collection. Selections from *Landfall* have appeared in *PRISM, Northern Light, Event, Black and White, Quarry, and Revue 2*. Roo was born January 1952 in Berkeley, Ca., and now is a Canadian citizen.

*d'Amboise, Jacqueline; Mother Myths; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 100 pgs.* First collection. Selections from *Mother Myths* have appeared in *The West Coast Review, The Canadian Forum, The Malahat Review, Descant, and Exile*. Her poems have been broadcast on *CBC Anthology*. Jacqueline was born April 7, 1948, in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario.

*Firestone, Catherine: Daydream Daughter; McClelland & Stewart, 1976; 94 pgs.* Second collection. A book of French poems has been published in France. The poet was born in Ottawa, 1949.

*Ford, Cathy: Tall Trees; blewointment press, 1978; 96 pgs.* Third publication. Photographs by the author. Besides her three collections of poems, Cathy has edited an anthology of short fiction, (*Canadian Short Fiction Anthology, Intermedia*). The poet was born April, 1952, in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan.

*Forsythe, Kathleen: Time and Untime; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1977; 51 pgs.* Fourth publication. Other collections include *Inside Me, The Hair Cage, and November-Dead-Time*. Kathleen was born in 1949.

*Henderson, Brian: Paracelsus: A Poem in Forty Parts, with A Prologue; The Porcupine's Quill, Inc., 1977; 42 pgs.*

*Hennessy, Bryan: Counting Gifts; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 28 pgs.* First collection The author is employed as a musician, and was born in 1949.

*Kleinzahler, August: The Sausage Master of Minsk; Villeneuve, 1977. 20 pgs.* Poems. Another publication is due in the winter by *Coach House*.

*Maltman, Kim: The Country of the Mapmakers; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1977; 64 pgs;* First publication. Poems from *The Country of the Mapmakers* have appeared in *Quarry, The Fiddlehead, and Canadian Forum*, among others. Kim was born August 23, 1950, in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

*McCracken, Kathleen: Reflections; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 52 pgs.* First publication. Poems from this collection have appeared in *The Malahat Review* and *Laureate*. Kathleen was born in 1962.

*McGee, Bob: The Shanty-Horses: James Bay Poems; New Delta, 1977; 50 pgs.* Third collection. Poems from this book have appeared in *CV/II, The Canadian Forum, and Davinci*.

*Musgrave, Susan: Selected Strawberries and Other Poems; Sono Nis Press, 1977; 164 pgs.* Sixth collection. The book is composed of revised versions of poems taken from *Entrance of the Celebrant*, and *Grave-Dirt and Selected Strawberries*. Susan was born in 1951.

*Nelson, Sharon: Seawreck; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1973; 32 pgs.* Third publication. A new book, *Blood Poems*, will be put out in the fall by *Fiddlehead*. Sharon was born in Montreal, January 2, 1948.

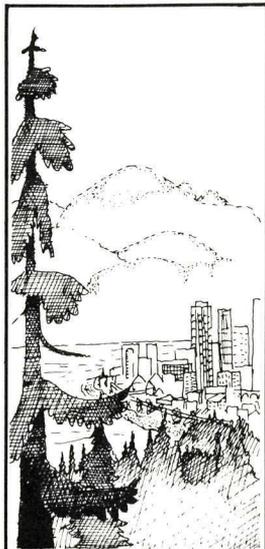
*Oulton, Bawnie: Pocket Crumbs; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 23 pgs.* First collection. The author lives in St. John's, Nfld. She was born in 1950.

*Plourde, Marc: The Spark Plug Thief; New Delta, 1976; 97 pgs.* Stories from this book have appeared in *Grain, Jewish Dialogue, Northern Journey, and Quarry*. Fifth publication.

*Sarah, Robyn: Shadowplay; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 43 pgs.* First collection. Selections from *Shadowplay* have appeared in *The Antigonish Review, Poetry Toronto Newsletter, Quarry, Waves, and Versus*.

*West, Ann J.: The Water Book; Fiddlehead Poetry Books, 1978; 44 pgs.* First collection. Poems from this book have appeared in *The Far Point, The West Coast Poetry Review, Mundus Artium, and Oasis*. Ann was born in Vancouver in 1950.

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