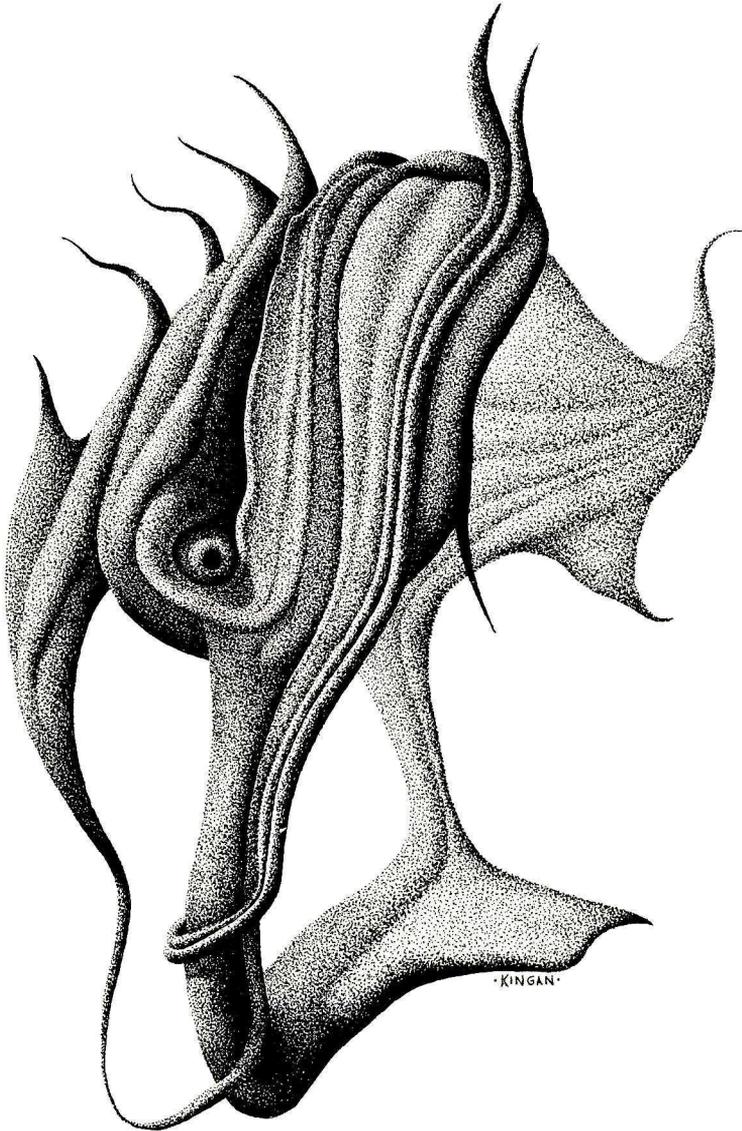


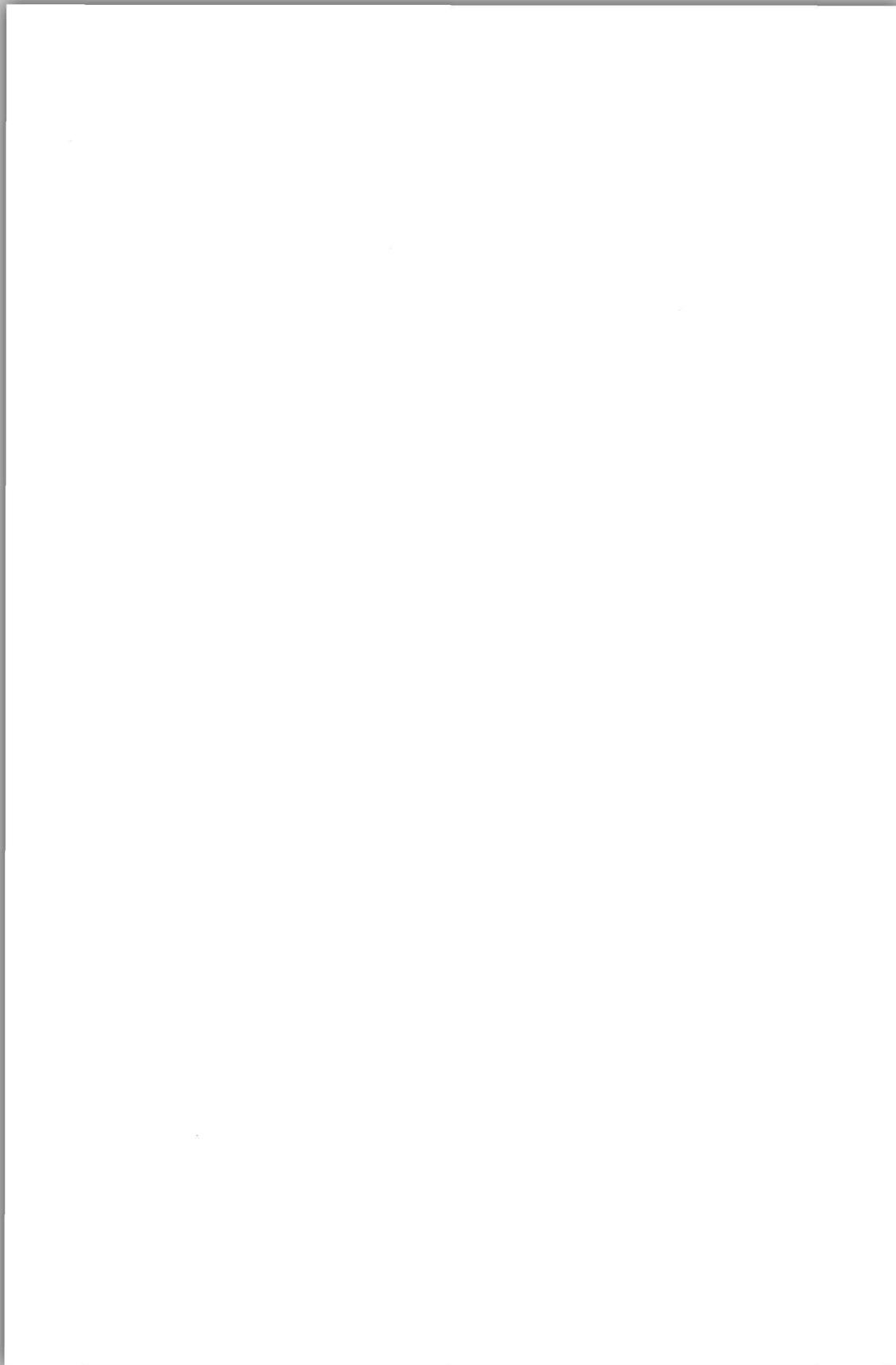
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CONTENTS

VOLUME FIFTEEN NUMBER ONE SPRING 1976

Kobo Abé	The Dog	4
	The Dream Soldier	11
Nicholas Catanoy	An Interview with Kobo Abé	19
Roo Borson	Migrations	23
Ted Kingan	Paintings	31
E. J. Carson	Sou' by Sou' West: To Gran Canaria	41
	The Lansdowne Lunatic	42
Peter M. Cummings	The Egg and I	43
	Long Weekend Out of Town	44
Pier Giorgio Di Cicco	I Poeti	45
	Poète En Famille	46
	Bar-Room Poets	47
Donna Dunlop	Cut Stem	48
	Five Pages	49
	Underground	50
	Short Walk on a Long Day	51
Mark Finkenbine	Frankenbine	52
Irena Friedman	A Photograph, In Black and White	75
Mark Frutkin	Forgetting a Face, It Returns To Itself	82
	Chiaroscuro	82
	"The Wood Is Consumed But the Fire Burns On"	83
Kristjana Gunnars	A New Life	84
	In Spate	85
THREE GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST POETS		
Translated by Michael Hamburger		
Hans Arp	where are the leaves	86
	The Red Man's Song	87
	when the ground was taken . . .	88
	In a certain house	89
George Heym	Afternoon	90
	Your Eye-Lashes, Long . . .	91
	And the horns of summer fell silent . . .	93
Yvan Goll	Electric	94

Shizuo Ito	Looking at the Gleam of the Lighthouse	95
	Clutching An August Stone	96
	Bright as the Depth of Your Sorrow	97
	Anonymous 1	98
	Anonymous 2	98
	To the Wintry Blast	99
	Improvisation	100
W. P. Kinsella	Caraway	101
Linda Lerner	Love-Props	108
	It Isn't Enough	110
Rosalind MacPhee	The Fault	111
Morris Panych	The Great Prokovana	112
	Footnotes On: <i>The Scholar and His Wife</i>	113
Anne Pitkin	Failed Aphorism for a Small Son	114
	Glass House	116
	Waiting for a Diagnosis:	
	Against Statements of Faith	117
Helen Potrebenko	Have a Nice Day	119
Nahid Rachlin	Mother and Child	128
Rikki	Now The King Is Buried	135
	Origins	136
	Mythology	137
Jeffrey Schaire	Three Selections from "The Songs of Purchase"	138
Gail Trebbe	Reunion	140
	Dawn Poem	141
Robert Tyhurst	Winter Planting Song	142
	In the Guatel	143
Lorna Uher	Dependence	144
K. White	Poem	145
Janine Zwicky	Shades	146
	Release	147
A. Delaney Walker	Review	148
	Notes on Contributors	152

The cover drawing is by Ted Kingan, more of whose work, together with a biographical and critical note, appears on pages 31 to 40 of this issue.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The cover drawing for 14:3 was by Julie Amaro. We regret that the credit did not appear in that issue.

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Kobo Abé / *Two Stories*

Translated from the Japanese by Andrew Horvat

THE DOG

I can't stand dogs. The sight of one is enough to make me sick to the stomach, but I got married all the same. Naturally, both you and I are well aware that a dog and a marriage each present separate and distinct problems. In my case, the important one was the dog, not the marriage. The truly disgusting wretches, though, are not the dogs but the dog-lovers. Those who raise dogs for some particularly useful purpose, to guard sheep, or to pull sleds, or even as a minor part of their means of livelihood, these people are okay. It's the ones who raise dogs just to tie them up on the porchsteps of their good-for-nothing houses, that's the bunch I really can't take. As far as I'm concerned, they're the scum of the earth.

My partner in marriage was a model at the studio where I used to teach. For a model, though, she didn't have a single redeeming quality; no style, and no intelligence to speak of. And it wasn't as if other people had to tell me about her. No, I was very well aware of her faults myself. As I am by principle against the use of nude models, at first I never even stopped to say hello to her. But F, my friend at the Art Réalité Studio, took quite a liking to her so she was constantly going in and out of the place. Even when she had no business being there, she still hung around the studio. Somehow she always stationed herself in front of toilets or around the corners of hallways, waiting for students to try to fondle her as they passed by. Though, when someone actually tried to pet her, she would raise both her hands above her head as if protecting some breakable object, and wail loudly. Of course she'd allow herself to be petted, giggling all the while. You may think this is pretty silly, but it got to be quite the thing at the studio. The person who started this custom was F, naturally. According to him it was the materialization of flesh, that is, one of the everyday exercises necessary to make a model out of a woman. I myself thought quite the opposite; was it not in fact a fleshification of simple matter? So Fauvism doesn't work after all. As for the students, they were much happier helping her with her so-called exercises than in doing their own.

At first I felt we should hire another model. But, the students

wouldn't discontinue their custom even with other models and there weren't too many girls who were willing to go along with their particular habit. Consequently, she was always called back. The students, their faces contorted with excitement, could hardly wait to get her alone. With nothing to do, they would hang around aimlessly, waiting their turn. As soon as two or three met, it was usual for them to argue excitedly about her in aesthetic terms. At such times, they would lose track of whatever else they were supposed to be doing, for example, listening to my lecture. I came to detest commuting to the studio. Work became a series of humiliating experiences. As soon as I crossed the threshold of that building, my brain would turn into a rotten banana.

One day I caught a student just as he was trying to fondle her right in the middle of the studio. I slapped him. The fellow remained calm; didn't even blink an eye. Irritated, I slapped him once more. Suddenly, he struck me back. He was several times my strength.

"Why, just what the hell do these fellows think art is all about! These guys can't be playing around. On the whole they seem to be a serious lot. She must be the cause of all this," I thought. F and I argued about this a whole night. I began by pointing out several of her faults; as an example I cited her habit of constantly winding bandages on her neck, arms, feet, thighs, or any other place for that matter. To which F replied: "She is obviously a hypochondriac . . . you see, she doesn't lead a productive life so she wants to become a symbol . . . why, she is exactly what you're looking for!"

"That's the sort of sentimentalism that makes me shudder. She's no symbol; she's more like a parasite! You don't seem to understand that you're making a mess of her?"

"Yes, yes, of course," said F without yielding so much as an inch. "But it's not her bandages that are in question. You see, I'm looking at her inner self and things like bandages don't get in the way, but you, on the other hand, are fascinated by her flesh, which is precisely why you notice such things . . ."

After that F and I had a violent argument over what would happen if we were to decorate the Venus de Milo with ear and nose rings, but both of us grew tired before the question could be resolved. Next I dealt with her dog, but let me skip that for now, as I'll have to go into greater detail about that later on. Finally F said: "You're being too emotional. You sure you aren't suffering from nervous exhaustion? Perhaps there is something you would like to

let me in on; I mean about you and her, you know? If it's anything like that, feel free to tell me all about it."

I left the studio in a rage. As I was walking down the corridor I felt something clinging to my legs. It was her dog. Raising my head, I saw her standing before me. So she had overheard our entire conversation! "What are you doing out at this time of the night?" I demanded, but she only raised both her arms as if I was going to try to embrace her, and wiggled her body, giggling all the time. I took a step toward her and repeated my question: "What are you doing out at this time of the night?"

She only bent her head back farther saying, "The boys from the studio are out there lying in ambush."

"Let me walk you home," I said taking another step toward her. At that moment I landed in her arms. Her hands were all over me.

No, don't say a word. After all, it's not the sort of thing you would understand. No matter what you might say, I couldn't help marrying her. But to make things worse, she insisted on bringing along her dog.

I wouldn't have minded an ordinary dog but this one was a regular freak. It had an abnormally large head attached to a long and narrow abdomen, and a body that was always twisting and turning. The body had no tail but that didn't stop it from almost splitting down the middle with wagging itself at the sight of absolutely anyone. Its head was so heavy that at such times the hind legs would somehow float up and the whole animal would end up doing a complete somersault. A most ridiculous sight! The animal was utter canine trash.

As if this was not enough, the beast never barked. "Duh, duh" and wails like some stammering deaf-mute were the best the dog could manage. The only time that animal ever raised a dog-like howl was in the presence of male dogs. Naturally enough, my wife's dog had to be female. I'm ashamed of it but to be honest I could never bring myself to look the beast in the eyes. The bitch always glared back at me with an expression of ill-will like some sexless widow, someone with an overabundance of common sense. She never took her eyes off us no matter what we were doing. When I asked my wife to put the dog outside, she ignored me, saying that she liked it better that way, being watched by the dog. If I attempted to glare back at her, I wouldn't even have to so much as raise my hand for the bitch to cling to the floor and let out a yelp like someone about to die. Until my wife rushed to her side and

patted her head, the dog would not quiet down. Such demonstrations always left me looking like a fool. I was thinking that if I had to have a dog, why couldn't I have at least a more dog-like dog.

It seems, though, that the dog was from pedigreed German shepherd stock. The fact that its parents were supposed to have been flown over from America by their G.I. owner was a source of some pride for my wife. It was just like that dog to ruin the whole thing by being born of an incestuous relationship. Nevertheless, having chosen the path of marriage, I began my daily struggles with the dog.

I continued my struggle with the dog. She too, undaunted, continued her fight with me. At first I didn't think it would take anything to get the best of a dog. After all, dogs have neither memory nor self-awareness, and if I could just pretend not to notice her disgustingly fawning manner, at best I should have no more difficulty than fighting a thick shadow. Actually, at one time she used to curl up in a corner and sit there in melancholy fashion, never bothering anyone. Soon I was to understand my mistake in having underestimated the bitch. I came to comprehend that a dog can be a bother just by existing. That's just it! Why do they hang on the way they do? But then their existence isn't their responsibility alone. The reason dogs exist is because we let them. I was completely unable to think of a single reason why I had to let that utterly meaningless object live. If there had been some meaning to it, I wouldn't have minded it one bit, but sustaining this dog had no meaning, so I did mind. I was thinking that if I had a pistol, "bang," just one shot would be enough, when all of a sudden the animal let out a howl and clung to the floor.

Her taste in food was another source of irritation. She couldn't munch on bones like other dogs. Cold foods would not do; she ate only hot dishes. If the *saké* was good, she would drink quite a bit. The weirdest thing about the dog was that though she could be wretchedly sloppy, at times her behaviour would make you think she could understand human speech. One day when I had washed her toilet pan and left it on the window sill to dry, she got the urge to relieve herself. She kept sniffing around the usual place looking very puzzled. What a foolish sight, I thought. Just as my wife and I were laughing at what we took to be animal instinct, all of a sudden the dog produced some old newspapers from somewhere, and after defecating on them, carefully wrapped the whole thing in a bundle with her mouth. The beast then took the package between its teeth,

and placing it in my lap, curled up ever so comfortably at my wife's feet. After that, whenever I notice the dog eavesdropping on our conversation, I held my words in check. Maybe the whole thing was nothing more than another case of "The False Words of Hans, the Talking Horse," simply a groundless fear on my part. After all, I kept thinking to myself, dogs can't possibly understand human speech, but then again I couldn't be sure.

The idea of training the beast first occurred to me when she lost all pretence of being a watchdog and came instead to beg for affection from strangers even more than from us. I couldn't stomach the innocent spirit with which that bitch would excitedly do somersaults at the sight of even the garbage man. After the punks from the studio began hanging around outside, it got even worse. At such times the beast would run up and down under the windows. The fellows, seeing her, were certain to drop by. She got to be such a nuisance that I would want to kick the living daylights out of her. Thereupon my wife would restrain me with some banal cliché like, "It's cause you don't love her enough," and my sanity would return and I'd put up with it. Then the dog would turn those mean, sharp eyes up toward me as if gloating in victory. If only she'd do me the favour of being more like a real dog, a dog-like dog, then I wouldn't have to hold her in such contempt. I then began to revamp the dog's German shepherd training along more spartan lines.

But without any positive results. When I began her exercises, she simply lay on her back and played dead like some overturned beetle. There was just no way of handling her. Should I get the least bit rough with her, she'd raise a yelp three times above any necessary volume. My neighbours must have thought I was a sadist.

At that point I changed my plans. This bitch had an awfully big head. Perhaps she really did possess intelligence. Maybe she was the forerunner of some future breed, perhaps the product of mutation? Why not train her to become a wonder-dog? Perhaps a circus would buy her for a large sum and my wife, to whom money is everything, would gladly let the animal go. I could finally get rid of that dog and make some money as well. Two birds with one stone, so to speak.

I quickly abandoned past methods, and embarked on training that would integrate the dog's life into that of humans as much as possible. My wife too became interested in this effort and co-operated wholeheartedly. The dog came to have a pleasant disposition, and fawned for affection with three times the usual fervor. Soon, she learned to blow her nose using a paper napkin, to smoke cigarettes,

even to spit with a masterfully sullen air, then finally to nod and shake her head. It was laughter that she could not manage to learn. It was, after all, too much to expect of her to comprehend the psychology of laughter.

The picture I entered in the group exhibition this fall was a portrait of the dog trying desperately to laugh. Her expression was rather funny, so I fell to thinking that I should paint it; almost as if she were a canine Mona Lisa, you might say. This is off the subject but I thought I'd tell you, after I began living together with my wife I completely lost all interest in abstracts. I admit, you were right about me. I seem to have become entirely a realist.

Then, just at the very moment I had finished painting that picture, something frightening happened. My wife was in the kitchen, doing the laundry. The dog was on top of the bed, on the point of leisurely biting into a jam sandwich though both my wife and I were putting up with having to skip a meal. I put my brush aside and relaxed. I ordered the animal to laugh so as to make a last comparison between the canvas and the model. To my surprise she really grinned. "Well, I'll be," I mumbled to myself without thinking, "she's finally laughed. Must be in a good mood."

To which she answered, in a moaning voice, "You're in a good mood yourself, aren't you?"

It was a little muffled but you could pick out the words easily. I was frightened beyond belief. My legs gave way and I sat down automatically. I attempted to make a reply but the lump in my throat would not turn into speech. I heard the sounds of my wife's footsteps. Gathering all my bodily strength, I barely managed to say to the dog, "I beg you please don't speak to my wife. She'd get a heart attack and die on the spot if you said something all of a sudden. Please keep quiet in front of her." The dog gave a magnanimous nod with the tip of her nose.

It's frightening enough to think that a dog can come to speak with human words. That night the dog waited for my wife to go to sleep. Here are the words the dog whispered into my ear: "You know, dogs aren't half as stupid as you think. We have brains enough to know just what humans are thinking. You thought you had me thoroughly fooled. Well, I have a splendid set of teeth. They are excellent for skinning humans. No, the secret of my success is my ability to appear to be fawning for affection. But whenever I do that, it's only for a purpose and it's the same thing with pretending to put my tail between my legs. I had calculated it all beforehand.

You'd better treat me well or I can be pretty mean. 'Cause you know you haven't got what it takes to keep me tied up."

(I bet you never imagined dogs could speak in this manner.)

Well, about ten days ago the program for the fall exhibition came in the mail. My wife browsed through it, then she suddenly raised her head and started coming at me: "Is this supposed to be my portrait! Well I should think that the greenest student could do a better job!" Then from that mouth of hers which I had known only as the source of the most common platitudes, there came forth one after another a series of very rare expressions some of which I hadn't even heard until then. It all made me cringe so much that I couldn't even answer back. By some mistake "A Portrait of My Wife, by S" had been printed on the program. The next morning, my wife was gone.

I tied the dog to the bedpost and gagged her mouth. She was showing her true self now. She was going wild and she bit me on both arms and legs. Nevertheless, at this point I, the human, am still stronger. The dog cannot stand erect and has difficulty supporting the weight of her head. Furthermore, an unfortunate thing at that, she has a decisive disadvantage in that she cannot use her fingers. But her last words before I stuffed the gags in her mouth were: "Stop being so proud! Those who are not meant to rule will lose in the end!"

I fought with the dog. I shall continue to fight with her from now on as well. As for the ruin of my marriage, well it's just too bad, but I feel no remorse whatsoever. I knew my wife's baseness without your having to tell me. I knew it better than anyone else. Though we lived together for only a short period, the whole affair was a series of hopelessly painful events. When we were eating, she wouldn't feel at ease unless she sniffed her food before putting it in her mouth. The food wouldn't taste good unless she put it in just when all her saliva was flowing. Then she would chomp on it as loudly as she could. She just couldn't relax without scratching some part of her body, and she always had her back-scratcher with her. She went in for rings too, wearing three on each hand and changing them at least once a day. And of course she liked any man that would pet her.

Despite all this I shall wait. I shall persist in my fight with the dog. While I am waiting though, could you do me a favour and get me a job illustrating books or something?

Even now that dog is making terrible eyes at me. She is smart and

maybe one day she'll find out how to untie her leash. Besides, both she and I are on the verge of starvation. I don't suppose you should have any difficulty understanding what that means. I'm asking you. Please lend me a hand. Even at this moment I feel I'm fighting for humanity.

THE DREAM SOLDIER

On a day so cold that dreams froze
I had a frightening dream.
In the afternoon
The dream put on a cap and left
And I did the latch on my door.

This story took place about fifteen years ago. Although truth is supposed to be timeless, it is time that this story needs the most. Perhaps that is because there is no truth to the story.

Tucked away in the mountains near a prefectural border, the village had been since the night before entirely engulfed in a snowstorm. The wind howled as if in agony. A company of soldiers who from early morning had been engaged in cold endurance exercises made their way from the town over the hills. Dragging their large straw shoes in the deep snow to the tune of a marching song, they crossed the village with unsteady steps, only to disappear like shadows into the snowstorm.

The wind died down at nightfall. In the police substation at the entrance of the village a solitary old police officer was leisurely peeling potatoes while warming the soles of his feet by the heat of a red hot stove. The radio was on, blaring something he wasn't listening to. He was immersed in a series of daydreams.

"There's a thing or two I know about this village. I know that the mayor and his assistant, in cahoots with the head priest, are diligently embezzling the village rations, and they hide everything underneath the temple floor. But I don't say a word. They know that I am keeping quiet. Mind you, their sending me things, from time to time, isn't so much to shut me up as it is from a feeling of goodwill. If I were to retire I wouldn't have to run like other resident officers. I could even settle down and stay here. Maybe I

could get together with a widow that's got some land and pass my last days in peace. As long as you are modest about your needs, there's no better life than that of the farmer. And then, when my son comes home from the army, why I'll need a house to welcome him home with . . . Thanks to the war though, this village has three women landlords. Of course, for the time being all three have sons. But who is to say they won't give up their lives for their country. No doubt I'll be able to make a nice match. I don't recall having done anything that the villagers could hate me for, and the number of landed widows is steadily on the increase. Now now, hold your horses; no reason to lose your head. Just calmly think things out. The size of the paddy fields added to the number of relatives, divided by two . . .”

Suddenly the telephone rang causing the policeman to drop his half-peeled potato into the ashes. Picking it up, he rubbed it against his shirt-tails; then he stretched himself as if in pain and got down on the earthen floor. Picking up the receiver with the inattentive motions that are typical of his occupation, he began to answer in an unconcerned tone of voice. But his expression abruptly turned to fright and the fingers with which he held the potato began to tremble.

After leaving the village, the soldiers continued to march straight toward the mountains. Along the way, they passed through valleys and forests, practising their high terrain manoeuvres. It was well after three by the time they arrived at the last mountain ridge. The wind was raging with yet greater intensity. Although the soldiers could hardly even breathe, they were ordered to return double-quick on nothing but their empty stomachs. Despite the stiff punishment that they knew awaited them, six soldiers dropped out of rank. As this was a special exercise to test the effects of exposure to hunger, cold and fatigue, it was expected that some would fall out of rank, and for that reason there was a corps of medics following from behind. Upon returning to base, however, it was discovered that the medics had picked up only five stragglers. One of the soldiers, it seems, had disappeared for good.

The soldier is starving. He'll have to call at the village. But if the villagers lay themselves open to attack he might not stop short of violence, should he need some clothing or something.

The old policeman put down the receiver. Drawing up his shoulders, he slowly returned to his place near the stove. He took a noisy breath through his nose and for a while just scratched the top

of his balding head. He raised his eyes to look at the clock. It was seven-thirty. He didn't want to move. It was too cold outside. Besides it wasn't clearly a case of desertion yet. At any rate an awful snowstorm was raging. Could it not simply be that he had become separated from his companions and lost his way? It'd be a fool who'd want to desert in weather like this. He'd leave tracks in the snow and they'd catch him for sure. He may have just lost his way. By now he must be frozen stiff . . . On the other hand, should the wind keep on blowing, the snow might be safer. The wind hides footprints. Then again he may have counted on that. It could have been a premeditated crime. For all that, the wind has died down completely. He may have fallen into his own trap. I guess there's just no successful precedent for crime . . . I've received a report. But that doesn't mean I've received an order. Anyway, this fellow is under MP jurisdiction, so he's none of my business. Deserters, compared to escaped convicts, are, after all, just well-intentioned cowards. Leave him alone, leave him alone. No good has ever come from butting into other people's affairs. Besides I've never heard of a deserter that's made it yet.

He thought he heard a light tapping on the front door. He turned around quickly. He tried straining his ears for a while but he heard no noise. Maybe he was hearing things, he thought. For some reason, though he began to feel uncertain about things. It wasn't any usual uncertainty either, rather a feeling so close to fear that he could not explain it to himself. Of course his fear was in no way directed toward the deserter.

Unlike with ordinary criminals, he did not feel hatred suddenly well up within him against this one. And because he did not feel this hatred he realized the existence of something which ordered him to hate. This was something he had not been aware of before, being in the secure position of a pursuer. It was only now that he came to peer into the hell that separates the pursuer and the pursued. He stood up. Stricken with pangs of conscience, he tried shouting. "I won't allow it!" he cried out. But then shouting has never been of much use in dispelling uncertainty. This feeling of uncertainty was still only that very tiny inner feeling, because from outside there came a much greater feeling of fear to overwhelm him. The inner feeling was, after all, the uncertainty of being an accomplice. It was a fear that everyone in the village might have felt. But not being able to flee from his uneasiness caused him to sense a yet greater anxiety.

"Well, I guess I am getting too old," he thought to himself. Indignation welled up within him. "When the time comes to settle the matter, it'll be settled. It's not a case of me, myself, alone, bearing all the responsibility." The back of his throat had a strange wet feel to it. He cut off the air that was going to the stove, put on his sword, turned up the collar of his overcoat, and went outside.

The snow was light. It rustled, releasing a pleasant crunch at each step. It's easy to recognize footprints, but it's impossible to tell whether or not they were made by shoes. Immediately upon rounding the corner on which the fish-market stood, he reached the mayor's house. It was the only house in the village equipped with a Western-style window. A bright lamp was burning in it and someone's heavy laughter spilled onto the street. It was the head priest's voice. Instead of going around the back way as he ordinarily might have done, the policeman boldly pulled open the front door.

The atmosphere in the room stiffened as if everyone had been startled. The mayor's dull voice trembled above the sound of china-ware being hurriedly put away: "Who is it? At this hour?"

A little too early for fright. The policeman just cleared his throat and purposefully refrained from answering. The *shōji* screen opened revealing the assistant mayor's face. "Well well now, if it isn't the resident officer?"

"Come right in, come right up," said the head priest leaning forward. The *shōji* slid open. All three smelled of *saké*.

"Something awful has happened," the policeman began saying.

"What is it? But save your breath, just step right in and close the screen and have a drink."

"Some soldier's run off to Mount Kita," the officer continued.

"A deserter?" the head priest peered over the edge of his glasses and swallowed the lump in his throat. "If he is going to Mount Kita, then no matter what route he takes, he's got to pass this way."

"That's the message I got . . . and it seems he's aiming at this village."

"Aiming at?" the mayor slid a finger along the ridge of his nose in a somewhat annoyed fashion.

"Yes, and they say he's damn hungry," the officer added.

"That means we're in for trouble."

"What do you mean!" the assistant cut off the mayor in a spirited manner. "Deserters are generally traitors, aren't they? And probably cowards to boot. What's wrong with going up the mountain, hunting him down and catching him?"

“Hold it a minute! He does have a gun. What’s more he’s hungry, and he might be pretty desperate.”

“In China,” the mayor sighed, “no matter where you go, they’ve got castle walls around every village.”

“They’re not castle walls,” the assistant mayor retorted.

“No, those aren’t castle walls.”

“Those are ordinary mud walls.”

“Yes, just mud walls, that’s all.”

Suddenly they all heard a sound, as of a chain grating. Instinctively, they all turned toward the noise. It was the wall clock just on the verge of striking eight. The head priest impatiently resumed his previous position. “Well then, what are we going to do?”

“Like I said, catch the fellow and tear him to pieces!” There was a good explanation why only the assistant mayor carried on in such a bragging manner. In all the village he was the only man in his thirties who was still not in the army. Even so, compared to his previous outburst, his tone of voice had weakened considerably.

Not wishing to dampen anyone’s spirits, the policeman nodded and said, “Yes, by all means, after all the fellow’s a treacherous dog. But then again . . .” he lowered his voice and tilted his head to one side, “he does have a gun, and you never can tell what may happen with a hunted down, starving traitor that’s got a gun.”

“Yes, it’s like letting children play with swords.” That was the head priest speaking, gesticulating toward the assistant mayor while looking at the policeman’s face. “What do you think we should do?”

“What should we do, you say? Well that’s . . .” the mayor leisurely let the words slip while holding his nose. “You sure this deserter isn’t a fellow from our village?”

“He can’t be,” the assistant’s jaw dropped. “No, a fellow like that’s gotta come from some warm, comfortable place,” he said in a loud, earnest voice.

“But then why did he decide to desert here, in such a cold climate?”

“Well, for the life of me . . . anyway he won’t get away with it . . . feel sorry for his parents.”

“Mind you, I heard a story about a widow in some village, and she hid a deserter in her loft for over two months.”

“That’s an old story! No traitors like that around nowadays.”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Look at them, all with their hearts in their mouths,” the policeman thought to himself. “But I guess anyone else would be frigh-

tened under the circumstances. They're afraid of being mixed up with a criminal. Should they find out, though, they won't be able to cover things up without dirtying their hands. If they stopped their ears, their hands would hear the fellow's cries for help. Plugging the ears itself is a sign that one is already an accomplice . . . that is to say, these people are completely in cahoots with each other."

"Well, if you'd like to know my opinion . . ." he said expressionlessly, sucking air noisily up his nose. "I think we should let everyone in the village know, by means of an extraordinary circular or some such thing, that as there is a deserter approaching the village, all doors should be securely fastened, no one should even step outside, that just like during air raid warnings no light should be allowed to escape through cracks, and that should anyone ask them anything, they are not to answer. Engaging in conversation means getting involved. For example, first he asks for water. 'Well, if it's only a little thing like that,' and the fellow gives him water. But next it's food, and if the fellow gives him food, next he'll be wanting a change of clothing, and after clothes, it's money. And what's he going to ask for next? He's been completely taken care of, but it's no good, 'cause someone can now recognize his face, so finally, at the end, it's 'Bang!'"

All three held their breaths waiting for the officer's next words, but as there was no indication that the speech would continue, the mayor asked quietly, "And that's it, is it?"

"After that, I suppose the MPs would step in . . ."

The head priest stretched himself and said, as if the whole thing sounded very unpleasant to him, "I think I should be going. It's pretty far to my place."

As the mayor started hurriedly to phone the militia guard room, the assistant followed the priest and left his seat. "Guess that fellow'll be starting to wander around the village any minute now."

It took less than an hour for the message to permeate the length and breadth of the village. As if a typhoon warning had been announced, every house had its shutters barred, all the weak spots had been boarded up. There were some who even prepared bamboo spears and hatchets by their places of rest. After ten o'clock the whole village, with the exception of the police station, sank into total darkness. An animal-like fear enveloped the place.

Despite their fear, though, most families gradually went to sleep. Only the old policeman, as if waiting for something, stayed up all night continuing to strain his ears for sounds outside. Of course the

villagers, behind their boards and shutters, had no way of knowing . . .

The next morning, just as dawn was beginning to break, from beyond the hills to the south there came the shrill sound of a train whistle continuing to blow a long time in rapid succession. The foreboding cry streamed unmercifully into the village beneath the low clouds. Most of the villagers woke to its sound. The people who understood what it meant quickly opened their shutters.

The policeman, his eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, gazed through the south-facing windows toward the hills. His eyes could clearly see the single straight, gray line which extended beyond the hills. The whistle stopped blowing. In a while the assistant mayor, carrying a pair of skis, appeared accompanied by two men. "It seems somebody's thrown himself in front of the train again. I think I'll go and take a look. It might've been that traitor. Want to come along?"

"No, I'd better stay. Could get a call from town."

In no time the three skiers came upon the gray line that extends beyond the hills. Nodding at each other, they began to follow its path. The old policeman finally left the window and crouched in front of the fire.

When the assistant mayor returned he found the policeman dozing in the same position. The assistant tried waiting silently until the old man woke up. Just when he was about to give up, the old man opened his eyes and asked in a whisper, "Well . . . did you get a look?"

"Yes, I sure did."

"Well, then you . . ."

"You must have known all along?"

"Yes, I knew."

"Then was it you that made him do it?"

"Well, you see . . . I know, you know just how ashamed I am . . . he didn't have to do it so close to the village. It must have been out of spite toward me . . . I can't think of a fellow like that as my son . . . but you might do me a favour and keep quiet about this."

"But the two fellows I went with, they already know."

"I guess you're right. I'll have to take what's coming, won't I?"

"His body wasn't badly deformed or anything. His gun was right beside him, hung on a branch."

"Well . . ."

“By the way, hadn’t we better erase the footprints under your window?”

“I suppose you’re right.”

Ten days thereafter, the old policeman left the village, dragging a small cart behind him.

On a day so hot that dreams melted
I had a strange dream.
In the afternoon
Only a cap returned.

Iowa School of Letters Award for Short Fiction 1977

This annual \$1,000 Award is for book-length volumes of short stories by authors who have not previously published a book of prose. Book-length entries of at least 150 typewritten pages will be accepted until September 30, 1976, for the 1977 Award. Inquiries and manuscripts (with return postage and wrapping) should be sent to: Iowa School of Letters Award for Short Fiction, Dept. of English, English-Philosophy Bldg., The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242.

Nicholas Catanoy

AN INTERVIEW WITH KOBO ABÉ
from "Orpheus and the Machine"

N.C. You have a medical degree but you never practised medicine. May I ask you why?

K.A. To put it straight, when the time came for me to graduate, one of my professors told me, 'I'll let you have your degree, if you promise never to become a doctor.' You see, I began to study medicine during the war, not because I was particularly interested in the subject, but because I couldn't think of anything better to do. I cannot really say I was a diligent student. But then I was really quite upset by the war. I can only describe that period as having been a void. Once I interrupted my studies for a whole year. I left school with a friend, to return to Manchuria. My father was a doctor there. I forged our sick leave papers. Our plan was to join some mounted bandits, but don't ask me why. At any rate, I did not become a doctor.

N.C. Will you please tell me something about the beginning of your literary career?

K.A. I first started writing poetry when I was at medical school. I liked Rilke's *The Book of Images*, and I think the poems I wrote took their inspiration from that collection. In 1947, I put these poems together and mimeographed them in a little collection called *Poems Without Names* (Mumei Shishu), but quite quickly I turned to novel writing and finished my first work, *The Road Sign at the End of the Street* (Owarishi michi no shirube ni) during the same year. I don't really consider it a novel. I wrote many short stories after that, but my first major effort was a little story called *Dendrocacalia*. I turn the hero into a vegetable. But you should read the story.

N.C. What authors have influenced your writing?

K.A. This is an interesting question. You see I did not receive any formal training in literature, like other Japanese writers. As a

student I read authors like Heidegger, Jaspers, Nietzsche, but I cannot say that my style as a novelist was influenced by them.

N.C. What Japanese authors do you think have influenced you?

K.A. None. I must say that I enjoy reading non-Japanese authors. Bernard Malamud and Arthur Miller. Without wanting to overemphasize their Jewishness, I feel that they have a very strong and direct appeal to Japanese readers, more so than non-Jewish writers. The reason I think lies in a similarity in insider-outsider relationships between Japanese and Jewish society.

N.C. Some critics claim your early stories, particularly *Karma's Crime* (S.Karuma shi no hanzai, from the collection, *Kabe*, with which Abé won the 1951 Akutagawa Prize), were influenced by the works of Kafka.

K.A. *Karma's Crime* was inspired not by anything Kafka wrote, but by a cursory reading of *Alice in Wonderland*.

N.C. Your most famous novels abroad were *The Woman in the Dunes*, *The Face of Another* and the *Ruined Map*. Do you think these three works have something in common?

K.A. Yes, very much so. In fact I consider the three works as a trilogy. They are about people escaping, running away from the city, in search of a face, or looking for a missing person, who himself is escaping. Of course they cannot escape; they always come back to the same place. The works are also tied together by their concern with the city. You see, the city is the place where people first had to deal with a stranger who is not an enemy. I think they still have not succeeded completely.

N.C. What does literature mean to you? A way of exploring life? A message? A way to entertain people?

K.A. Sartre was once asked the worth of literature and he is supposed to have replied that it is worth nothing compared to the hunger of a starving child. I wonder though, if without literature we would ever be aware of the far-off, lonely, starving child.

N.C. What do you think of the influence of television on literature?

K.A. I am extremely disappointed with television. In its present state, it offers practically nothing with which artists can work.

N.C. Are you writing for a special group of readers?

K.A. I am told so by critics who say my works are difficult to understand. But, I do not think so, as I know that many high school students read and I suppose comprehend my novels.

My next work *Hako otoko* (The Box Man), though, ought to please my critics: it'll be difficult to digest.

N.C. There are many ills in contemporary society, such as rising crime rates, drug addiction, delinquency, violence, air piracy, pollution, starvation, etc. What opinions do you have about these phenomena?

K.A. With the exception of pollution, none of the above problems are acute in Japan. Our crime rate is actually on the decline. Delinquency is not so rampant as in other societies, but I wonder whether, in the case of Japan, such a lack of delinquency is actually a good thing.

N.C. Which political form would be the most appropriate, in your opinion, to serve the interests of the majority?

K.A. I would not point to any existing "ism". I think the ideal state is one that, while doing its job, makes its presence least felt by its citizens.

N.C. May I ask about your literary projects?

K.A. At long last, after six years of writing and re-writing, I finally finished *Hako otoko* (The Box Man. To be translated by Dale E. Saunders). This means I'll be able to devote more time to my plays. Modern drama is in a terrible state in Japan. Plays are performed one after another in rapid succession after very short runs, and acting styles are hopelessly outmoded. For the past few years I've run my own actor's studio, and last year we put on a play of mine called *Gaidobukku* (The Guidebook).

Starting January 1973, we're going independent, that is my actors will cut their ties with other groups and we will form a repertory theatre — the first of its kind in Japan.

My idea is to get out of the rut that *shingeki* (new style

theatre) has gotten itself into. Actors must be allowed to think for themselves — and they must be stimulated to do so. We will have many rehearsals, many of them public, and we will actually have a number of plays — some of them mine, some of them by authors I like, such as Harold Pinter, — that we will be able to put on any time.

Also I hope to finish my first play for the new theatre group by the end of January, and to put it on stage in June, by which time the construction work on our playhouse will be over.

MIGRATIONS

I

The falls throwing down earth, air.
You dream of daylight somewhere.

Night
and the darkness in my body
balance.

II

We agree in the open sunlight of our skin.
But there are openings
like the sun's
shadow.
There are places inside us
only for so long.
When I close my eyes I enter
your body,
the starlessness.

III

Sometimes I wake in my body
and it is a long white wing
conveying the earth.
Sometimes I wake in another language.

There are mountains not made of earth.
There are wilds of the mind.
I want to turn and look
into the dark corner of my face.
Instead I touch you
with these borrowed fingers.

IV

Your face is a letter
that has never been written.

What I want
has no face, no fingers.

We are the wings
of a hurt bird
migrating
to a climate no one questions.

Calm the winds of your eyes.
Let your voice
evaporate.
Close your arms around
the bird with no body.
It carries our names in its beak.
It will drop them
when everything else is written.

V

Mirages run toward me,
seeking themselves in my face.
I turn in all nameless directions.

Your eyes mirror all things
from a distance.
When I come too near
what I see
conceals itself in the air.

This weather
admits only itself.
Whatever I came for rippled
away in the heat.

I have wandered years
toward the flat horizon of your lips.
Even the smallest distance
is halved, infinitely.

VI

There is a word between us
so long it is unpronounceable.
No one knows what it means.

Making love to you
is like turning
in a crowded room
and finding no one.

Your words
scratch my image on glass.
You are the claw
of some
larger
beast.

VII

A daylight animal
drinks its face in the pond,
walks in time to itself.

No matter how differently I return,
I recognize you more.
Hands have as much to say
as prairies.
The eye accelerates to stillness.

VIII

Small absences
leak in around the window.

I see you leaning
into yourself,
eyes closed, listening
to each string
snap.

When I lie
still you look
out from my body.

If I move
distance ripples,
disturbing you.

I tried to break everything.
Look into my hands.

IX

Mountains look at me
with the soul of something that does not exist.

A dog peers
through exquisite glass.

Don't.

I will try to slice
nothing in two,
for both of us,
as I go where I am needed
less.

X

Uselessness
darkens
everything that needs to be said.

You are the bright edge of town
where my pain
paces, howls.

I've read the future in my palm.
I've taken to wearing gloves.

I'm going
where you'll never dare to look for me.
In the bags under my eyes
I smuggle dreams.

XI

It is impossible
to adjust
to this darkness.
I open my eyes.

Your voice has burned off.
Your face is the coin
I save with secret fingers
for the time when everything is spent.
Your fingerprints eddy
on my innermost skin.
No lover will find them.

XII

So long alone
my face
is honed to a blade.

The trees have no use for words.
My name runs on animal paws.

Ice crystals form in my eyes.
I close them. Granite.
Earth peeled from bone.

Black water runs deep in my wrist.
Nothing can touch it.

XIII

The moon unrolls
where one is clothed and alone
among the magnolias.

One picks one
because it is an oval bird,
a quarter moon, a white heart.

One gathers heart-shaped stones,
or stones like globes.
One hoards resemblance. It is

what one has come to.

XIV

The lens of rain
has left the field
larger than it was.
We turn the brightness in our hands,
exchange a bit of it.

Piece by piece
my body is returning.

XV

Let's say
tonight the city contains no wives
or husbands,

just multi-colored lights,
streamers wriggling at water's fringe,
the harbor
dark
round
lit with ships,
waves, lightly drunken,
pawing the islands.

In your hands
my breasts
are soft plums.

TED KINGAN

Ted Kingan was born and educated in the North of England. As a child he produced Surrealist drawings long before he knew the meaning of the term or understood the inner compulsions which motivated him. His first significant involvement with the Surrealist movement occurred in 1948 when he met and exhibited with Desmond Morris (author of *The Naked Ape*), Frans Baljon, Mervyn Levy and other members of a group of painters whose common credo stated, in part:

“The reckless, irresponsible and deliberately pointless excursions of the spirit in unpremeditated flights represent, when translated into an art form, the measure of the liberty of the citizens of any society; so that at all times the arts are a true indication of the growth or decline of any civilization. In a society where the artist is subordinate to the ideal of the corporate state, this liberty of action is diminished and finally extinguished altogether.”

After service in H.M. Forces, Kingan received his formal art training at the Blackpool School of Art and at the Regional College of Art, Manchester. During his years at Blackpool his Surrealist beliefs were held up to ridicule by the Principal and he was threatened with expulsion. Kingan responded by organizing a stage performance which parodied what he and other students felt were the conventional and repressive attitudes of the School. He was not expelled and, in 1953, was awarded the Art Teacher's Graduate Qualification.

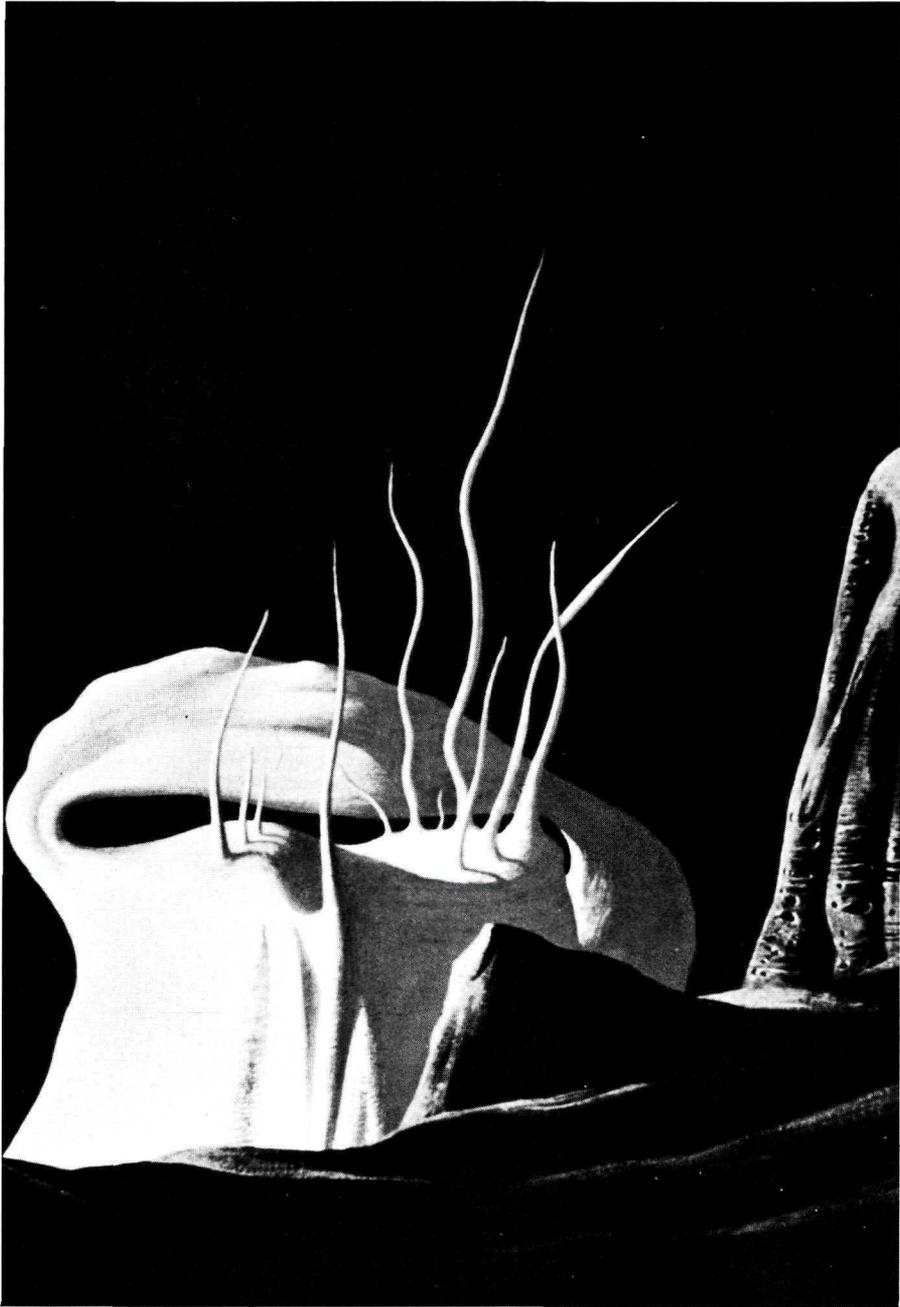
Following six years as an art teacher in Nottinghamshire, Kingan emigrated to Canada in 1959. Since that time he has lived in North Vancouver, B.C., where he is presently Art Co-ordinator at Capilano College. As a member of the B.C. Society of Artists he exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery and at the Bau-Xi Gallery. His first one-man show was with the Bau-Xi Gallery in 1971, followed by several group shows at the Galerie Allen. Two of his works were purchased for the B.C. Government Permanent Collection and his most recent show was at the Alma Mater Gallery, University of British Columbia.

In recent years Kingan has concentrated on a series of extremely small gouache paintings, executed with meticulous care. He readily accepts categorization as an 'automatist' and, during the painting process, his direct brush-work permits one form to provoke another in an impromptu fashion until a sense of visual unity is achieved. His paintings are intentionally enigmatic. There is no attempt to pre-determine 'content' or 'meaning'.

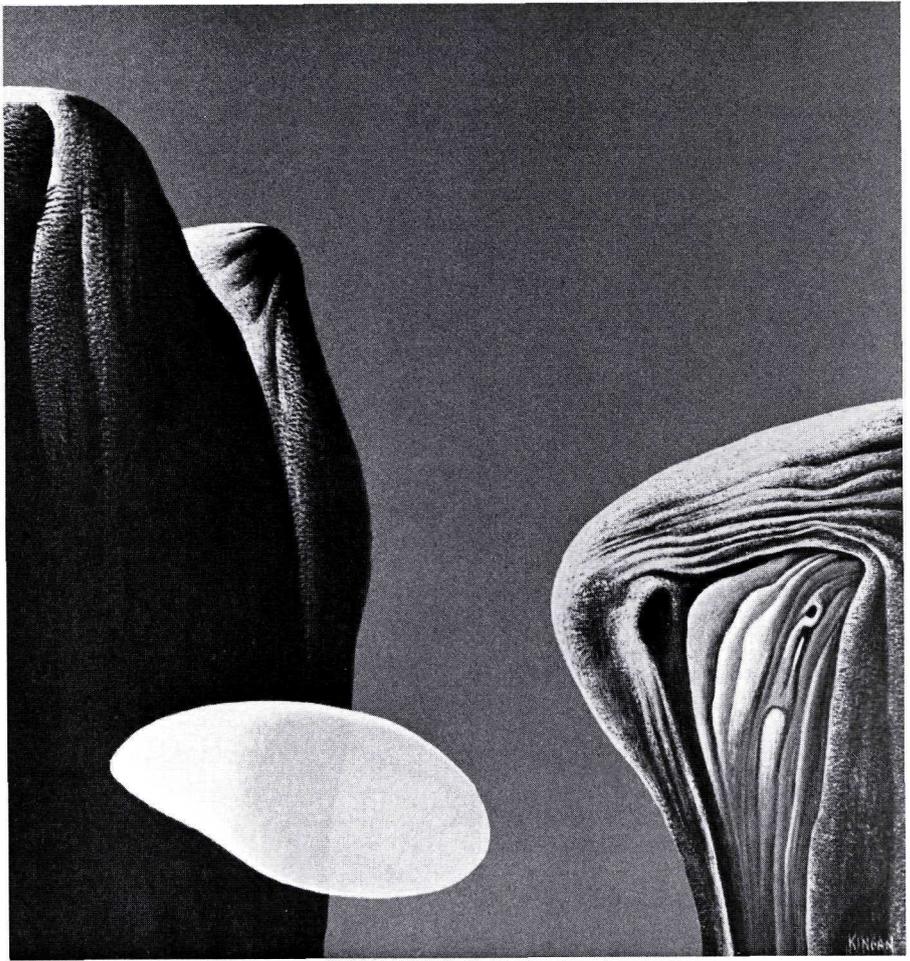
On the occasion of a group exhibition at the Galerie Allen in 1974, Art Perry, a leading Vancouver art critic, wrote as follows:

"One end of the exhibition is given to Ted Kingan's fine miniature paintings of fantastic rocks which writhe with an organic inner growth. When one views Kingan's work, both Tanguy and Flemish Realism come to mind. With precise and magnified detail, Kingan has created a type of Surrealism which produces gem-like and precious works of art. His scale may be small, but his craftsmanship turns this to advantage."

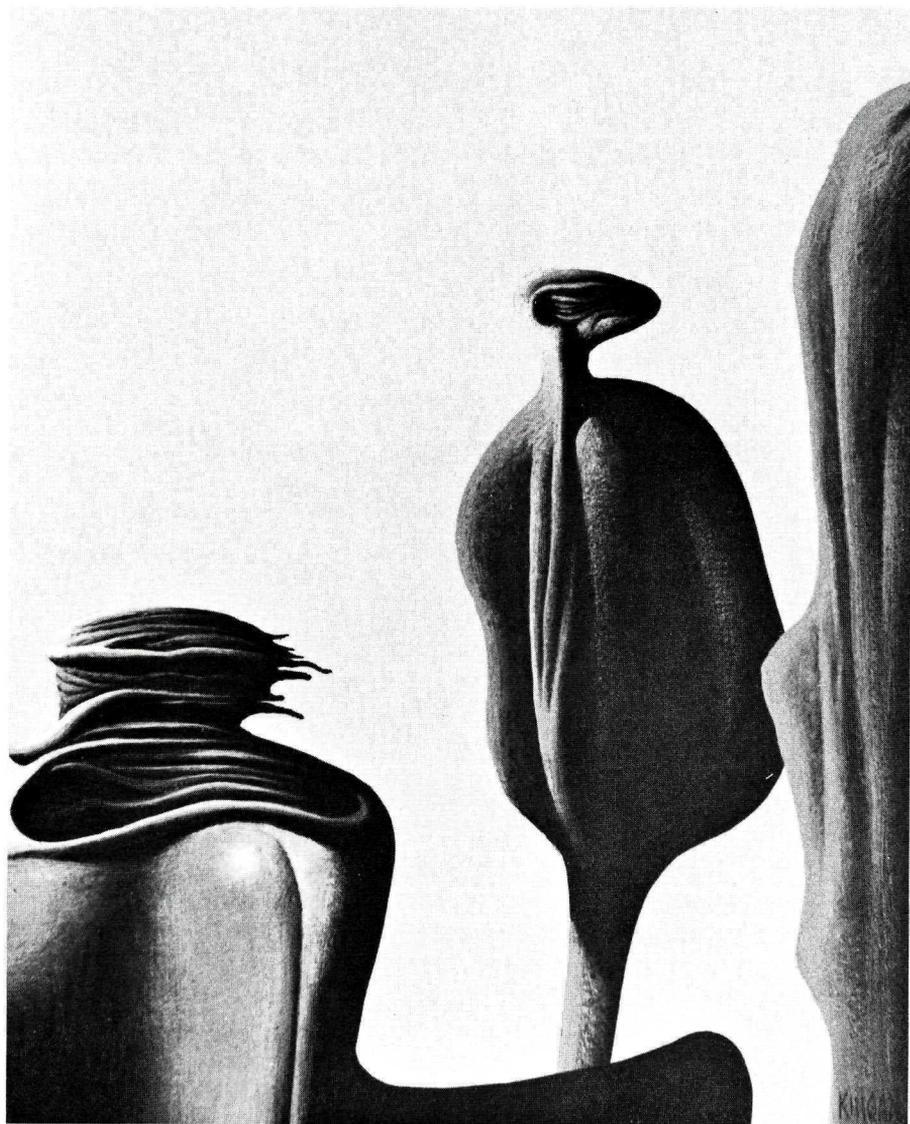
The photographs of Ted Kingan's paintings were taken by Michael A. McCarthy



"Untitled" 1971 *Gouache* 5½" x 3¼"



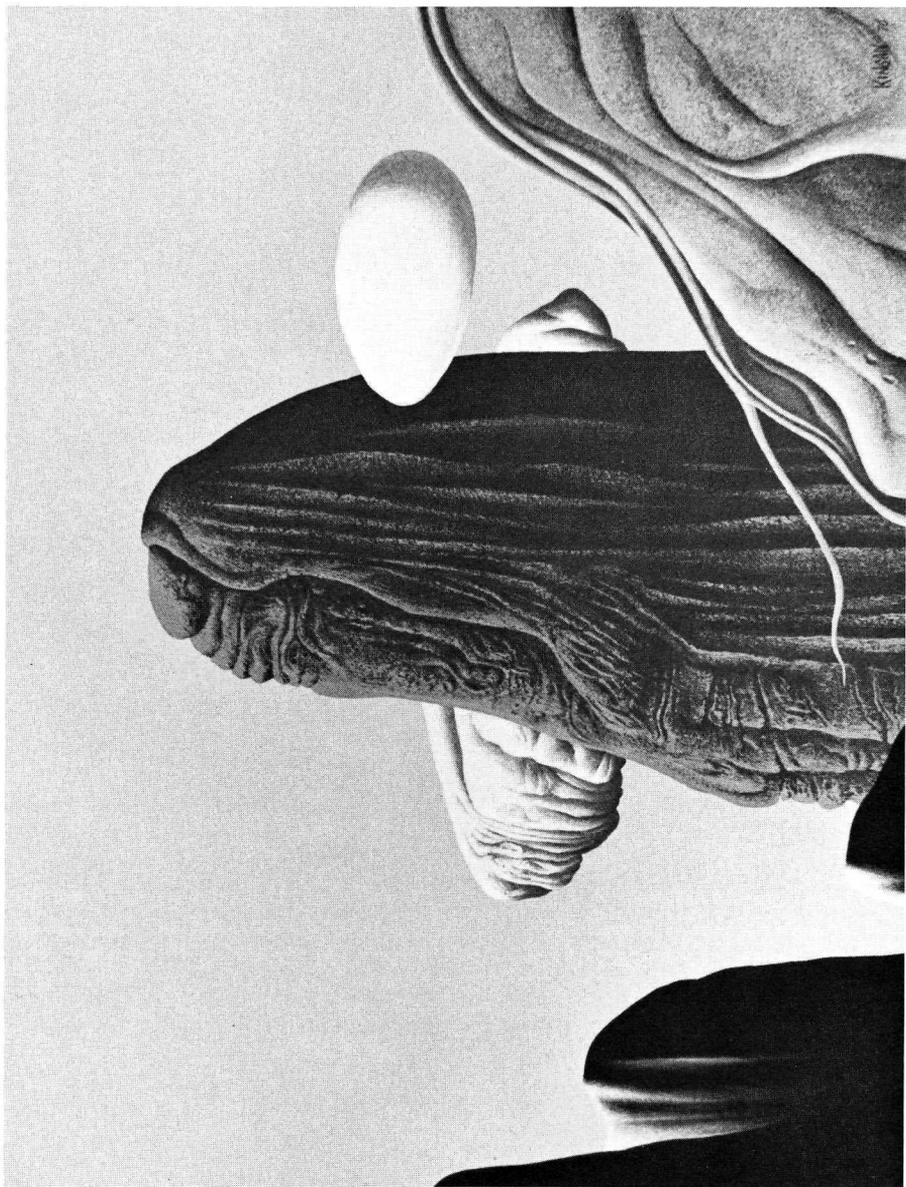
"Untitled" 1974 *Gouache* 5¾" x 5¼"



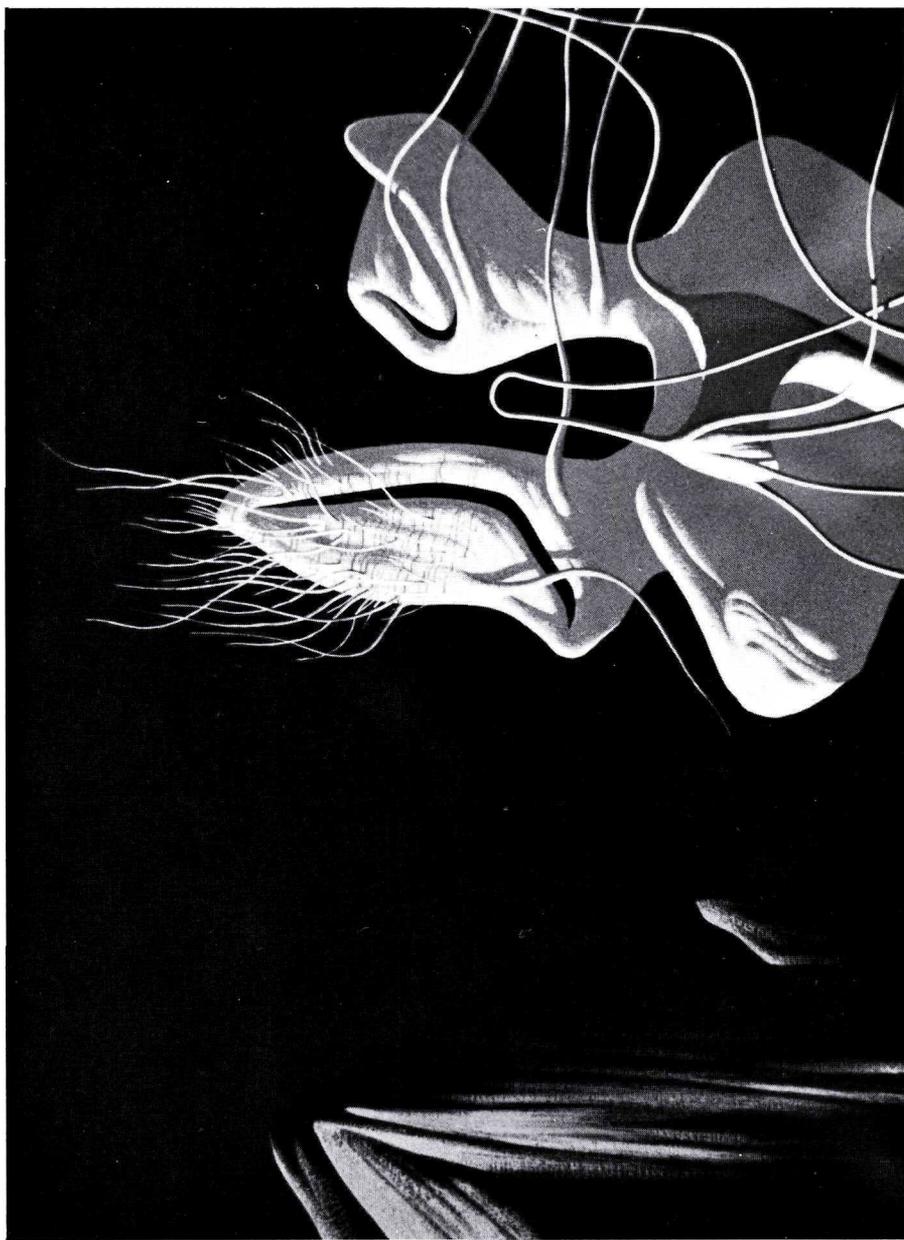
"Untitled" 1973 *Gouache* 5" x 3¾"



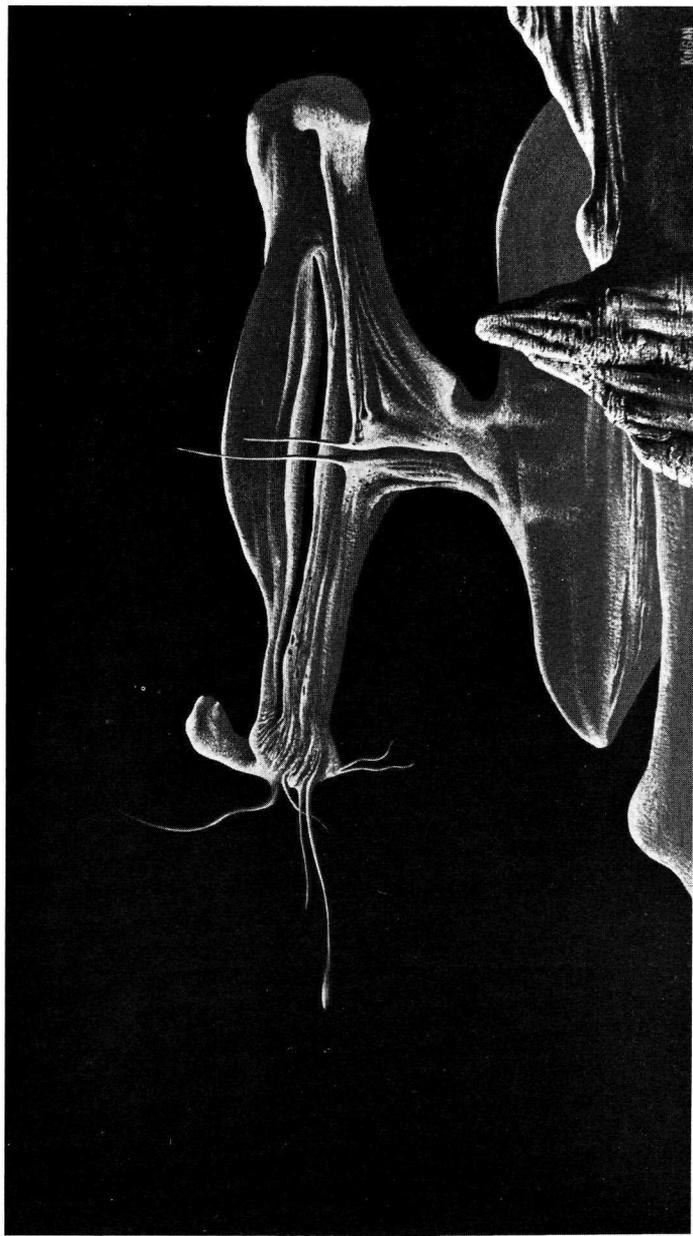
"Untitled" 1976 Gouache 5 3/4" x 7 1/4"



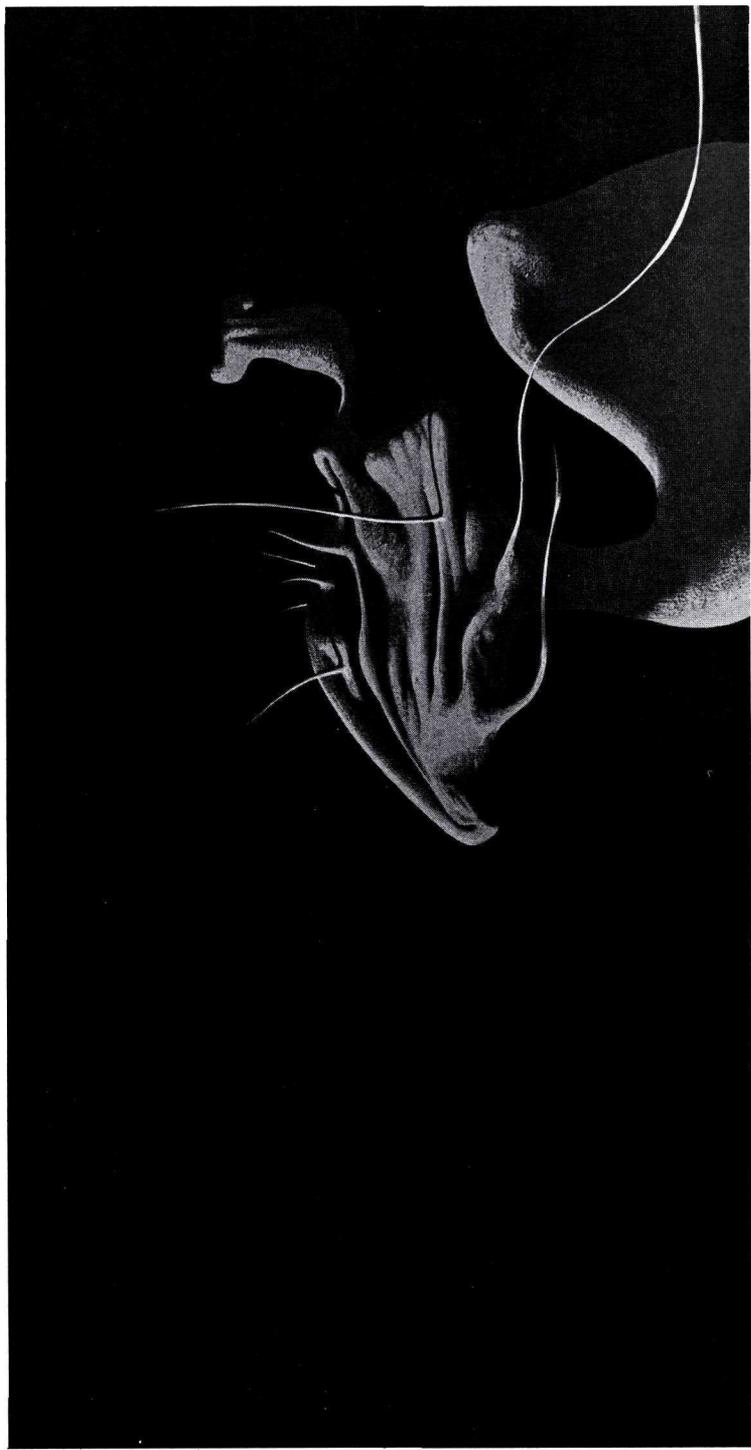
"Untitled" 1976 *Gouache* 4 3/4" x 6 1/4"



"Untitled" 1970 Gouache 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8"



"Untitled" 1971 Gouache 7 1/2" x 13"



"Untitled" 1971 *Gouache* 7" x 14"

SOU' BY SOU' WEST: TO GRAN CANARIA

Where? We are beneath heaven; how
far has yet to be verified.

Which sounds unfathomable, though
I can't imagine it. Divided
from its moorings, our ship becomes
the real thing. No myths

mysteries, lank white sails, riggings —
only the slow engine, our heavy wheels
breaking into the road, eyes cast up
setting watch on the sun.

From the West there's news of Ronnie
missing these six years on leave
from the sea, catapulted
into the bay with his car

like a stone sent down by a god.
Our movement makes you ill.
These words we use, they match
old Belsen's fires, you say

Lies, lies. Even the birds are laughing.
And once well into the trees we slam
the rusty doors. You shake your hair free —
falling, softly falling, softly; silence

THE LANSDOWNE LUNATIC

by the moon, the traffic rolls by
and we roll about in cars, from
corner to corner
counting our monies, bread & honey.

And he, despondent over the price
of sanity threatens his wife
with a knife, and the terrors
of transformation. The kids
make it a game; dart between armies.

Now in his glory golden laurel crown
the reward of the slave, so fortunate
to find his masters sleeping;
he simply walked away from harm
into this airy region.

The report sounds like escape:
a daring feat of costume, naming
guards by name, stopping for cigarettes.
Embracing holsters, tear-gas, magnum
shells in copper jackets & leather bags,

the law lays down the law
& night responds with meteors.

I'll stand aside, poetry & metaphors
being the shape I'm in.
You're not deceived. This is suicide,
not murder. And here, my heart.
Hold out your hands for the wheel.

Peter M. Cummings

THE EGG AND I

I move effortlessly through the bizarre geography of dream and settle, in the last moments of deep sleep, in a highschool biology laboratory. A bank of unusually fine microscopes is lined up before high stools on an impeccable slate-topped table. There is a chill precision in the atmosphere of the well-kept place of science. Here are the instruments of naming, classifying, that ardent willfulness that hardly has time for wonder. There is no sound.

With a simple ripple the surface of the image blurs, clears, and suddenly every stool is occupied. I've seen some of the students before, long ago. Some are only the backs of heads or anonymous curves of cheek and brow. We listen to the instructor:

"I direct your attention to procedure B, the oil-immersion technique. Place drop on sample centre, dial slowly only fine adjustment, aim the light with care, fingers at the mirror's edge."

The penalty for not paying attention and following directions seems to be a shattering exclusion from the possibility of knowledge. I must obey. With antiseptic touch I angle the concave silver sheen to catch the fluorescent glare. Light stabs rudely up through the barrel of the scope. Ready now. From the broken yolk of an egg I find myself sucking a sterile eyedropper full of viscous gold. Carefully at the centre of the slide I squeeze out the tiny crucial hemisphere. Now oil, clear as polish in another dropper, covering the mound. Centring, dialing down, breaking surface tension, into the liquid world. Breathless, micro-dialing with my fingerprints themselves, I coast the slide minutely back and forth on the flawless surface of the stage. Patience. Back and forth with the left, dialing up and down with the right. And then, at the centre, somehow the very centre of the space and the moment the room and my mind and the town and my life, somehow quite far away, very deep into the thickness of that buttery yellow: a motion; a colour. The motion *of* a colour conglobbing into its own, aggressive and innocent, remote and secret. Redness the shape of a heart, with unmistakable hints of a beak, of an eye. Pulsing there like time at the heat of noon. In there, alive.

Peter M. Cummings

LONG WEEKEND OUT OF TOWN

heading south
October sun-struck
orange wake of leaves
behind the car
tires humming
monotone

and here's my wife beside me now
hair let down for Saturday
in lines of satisfied desire
a harvest colored scarf of silk
that catches light around her neck
and sends out russet green and brown
like a pheasant in a field

Logoi spermatikoi the rays of sun
from off dry leaves and barns
and slant of windshield glass
implode like meteors in my eyes
translucent vitamins in rainbow sheen
the rampant potency of light
spilling pregnancy like vital rain

this weekend out of town reveals
other places than the place we're in
other time than what we spend
as new horizons ripple into view
the life of the mind goes on
in a province we can leave

POETE EN FAMILLE

A ton of roses is lying in the yard.
They appeared, unnoticed.
We pick a rose up, day in day out for
years.
A hand is seen stretching from under the last batch.

We can hardly wait. In the final months
we can make out your mother's dress.
It has begun to rain.
The last rose garlands your mother's neck.

You run against the fence, impale yourself
on the clean white spokes.
The rain on my tongue is black and cool.
The neighbors are watching.
Slowly, a little sadly,
I pick up the last rose
and begin to paint the scenery in.

BAR-ROOM POETS

They sit around, drinking beer,
all budding writers, telling fantastic jokes.

they publish each other's things.
in comes the daughter of a famous gal.
the talk thickens, niceties.

at night, in bed, they count their sayings,
make up new strategies, make up improbable scenes
of success

they go about their daily lives, friday
they come out poets, shaking hands with
so and so who happens to walk in, long hands
over the beer, reaching far far into
the grip of chance.

something is crying.
don't you hear something crying;
it is the large rooms of the brain
emptying between fingers, it is the poems that
have gone away to be still.

the crying becomes an echo at night, circling
the harried brain like birds around a tree,

the poems are washing out their colours
in their sleep.

these men are laughing,
wildly,
the way grown men shout "mama" in their sleep
these men are laughing,
and the room grows deaf to nothing but themselves.

CUT STEM

More than useless —
impossible, to hold
the green instant
in your body
luxurious
it travels on
elsewhere
and you
the cut stem
cannot flourish
or die
only bend a
little and drink,
the sparkling dregs
of spring.

FIVE PAGES

On page one
there is a figure,
the head a question mark exclaiming nothing
the body a lithe green stem
the mouth a tiny scar and cruel
the hands could belong to anyone.

On page two
there is a field of growing snow
being overturned by a dead wind
a small animal cries.

On page three
lakes are being eaten alive
by other lakes
the beach delivers a rind.

On page four
the one they call brat
has painted a fine yellow sun
and then smudged it with her fingers.

On page five it says
there are no accidents.

UNDERGROUND

The rain is harmless
I watch my breath
moving outside of my mouth
like the only thing
connecting me to the season
and leaves appear first
on the ground where the
snow has melted and kept them;
last year's autumn, having
in this way, outlasted all and
the black thickness of mud
feels nothing more than good
good but thunder begins under
what must be years
of leaves and the brilliant
green moss on dead trees
is, if not miraculous,
at least beyond speech
which will not come here
on a day like this when
I could sing but would rather
just slide in under these leaves and
sleep unobserved beside thunder.

SHORT WALK ON A LONG DAY

I follow the textures of grey
on the ground and note
how small twigs
make brittle maps
on which feet fall and
the large trees groan
towards what seems to be death.

I look
at the white veins in the ice
always there is the crackling
and groaning. I remember
seeing a partridge once, rabbit
tracks and it occurs to me
that my coat is fur and separate
from my shoulders
moved by a life of its own.
Perhaps I am just carrying it
back to the beginning but
did my mother I wonder
ever feel this way
when she wore it? I can only
speak for myself.

Mark Finkenbine

FRANKENBINE

Mark studied his penis flopped flaccid on his thigh, thinking, "If I don't get it up, how can I handle this job?" He thought that it might stand at attention just because he was paying attention to it, but instead it was sliding down to cower between his legs. He bounced it up and down on his hand and laughed at this picture of a pinkish, purple-veined eel flopping around out of water, but reminded himself that laughter is the enemy of lewd thoughts. How long had it been? What would happen if he had to confess he couldn't rise to the occasion? His forehead glistened, though the room wasn't hot. He stood up to piss, making sure that no conflicting bodily sensations would interfere with business. He closed his eyes and wished his fantasies had come true.

The Ideal Fantasy

He gave his name and stated his business. The Chinese woman raised her eyes from the form she was filling out, gave him a glance through a flutter of luxurious lashes, then hurried to fill in the rest of the blanks. She rose and glided to the carved oak door and ushered him into an opulent bedroom, mirrors reflecting silk and velvet, a trace of musky incense mingling with the delicate tingle of her perfume. She closed the door and gestured for him to sit on the bed. She sat beside him and opened the door of a stand beside the bed, pulling from it a large water pipe crawling with Chinese calligraphy and carved with eldritch dragons. She filled the bowl with opium from an ivory box, and he felt divinity spreading from his lungs into every cell of his body. His godhead centred in his crotch when she rose and unzipped her dress to let it rustle to the floor. Her naked body was warm gold, and she took off her nurse's cap, undid her bun, and framed her charms in a cascade of ebony hair. He sat awestricken, so she helped remove his clothes, then practiced on him every erotic technique that ever inflamed human imagination. And finally she revealed one Oriental trick that had astounded the profoundest sages of her own country and was a mystery undreamed

of in the Occident. She rose and contracted her vagina, neatly spitting his just-released semen into a Dixie cup. In the variations of this fantasy, various mouths or hands were substituted for the vagina, but the final receptacle remained the same.

The Semi-Serious Fantasy

The person who took him to the room was either formalized by vestiges of embarrassment or else joked lightly, sexy without obscenity. Mark couldn't decide. The room had a glass which was a mirror to him but behind which sat bored employees, studying the way he was hung and wisecracking about his techniques. Or else it didn't have a mirror. The details didn't matter. The main thing was the stack of magazines, from the antiseptically nude Playboy through pictures of women sucking men, women licking women, women fucking stallions, women doing everything you could pay women to do. He visualized coming out and asking why there weren't any erotic pictures of men, knowing he wouldn't do it because they would think he was a homosexual. The Dixie Cup with its load of what looked like coagulated milk was the culmination of this fantasy as well.

It stood up! (A little fanfare on the mental trumpets!) His cock was ready! He stroked and stroked. Nothing. He opened his eyes for a visual inspection, but that reminded him that he was in a sterile, brightly lit little bathroom, sitting on a cold toilet seat. His fantasies had stiffened the tool of his prospective trade, but his nerves weren't responding. Eyes closed again, a vision of lips descended on him, but then his perverse imagination put those lips on men, former girlfriends, withered grandmothers, so he imagined the nether lips, the petals of a vaginal rose, and thrashed himself unstintingly; the Chinese beauty was on top of him, her body closed around him like a fist, her breasts pendulous, her moans ecstatic. His body's surrender was sudden, barely allowing him time to grab the cup. He could just imagine himself missing and having to kneel on the linoleum to scrape it up. His shirt was sweat moistened when he finally opened the door, leaving the cup on the back of the toilet.

"Were you . . . successful?" The little man had hustled up behind him. Mark said he had been, thinking, "I was in there so long he probably thought I died." The man told him to have a seat, that they'd be with him in a minute.

There was another guy Mark's age already on the couch. Mark's stomach muscles tightened in anticipation of laughter, and he was ready to lean over and ask, "Are you here to jack off too? How did you get it up?" But he kept a straight face and opened up his book. He didn't read. He kept imagining goading the guy beside him. "Did you see that cartoon about the elegantly dressed lady going to the clinic and recoiling in horror from the hideous bum who's stumbling down the steps counting his money?" Or, "Do you think this is really legitimate? I have positive proof that they use this stuff to make a very expensive face cream." No, no, "a very expensive protein diet." In fact, if he could weird away all the other donors, the doctors would keep him so busy he could make a fortune. But he kept pretending to read his book. It was *The Joy of Sex*, a present from Mary that morning.

The little man finally returned to ask Mark into his office. He was chubby, and Mark wanted to give him a playful little slap on the flab and ask, "Ever think of exercising some of that away with sex?" No, no, "sexercising some of it away?" He also wondered why he was so giddy. First he had to fill out a form. Under ethnic background, he put "Caucasian," but the man explained that he meant nationality. Mark laughed and said, "I'm German on both sides of the family, so if anyone wants an Aryan, they can have me." The man was unamused. Mark was glad he hadn't offended even himself by thinking of any Nazi jokes. The man went out and came back in with a plastic bag full of little medicine bottles. "Your sperm count was excellent, so if you want to do this, we'd be glad to have you. We'll set up appointments for you, and you can just put the bottle in an envelope and send it over in a taxi."

Mark was out on the street waiting for Mary to show up. Bundled up in his coat against the autumn wind, he felt like Santa Claus with a green plastic garbage bag of sperm bottles slung over his shoulder. When he saw the ponderous Hudson wheel around the corner, he stuck out his thumb like he was hitching. All she said when he got in was, "Well?"

"Well, I'm hired."

"Oh no. What was it like?"

"They set up a tin can on a wall ten feet away, and if my aim was good enough to hit it, I was hired, and if I could knock it over, they'd give me a bonus."

"Oh sure."

“Yeah, well, I put a dent in the can, so they just turned over the whole place to me.”

Mark was in a bar that night, having a few beers to celebrate the new money source. The regulars who clustered around the TV every evening were starting to show up, and they had exchanged a few bits of gossip with Mark already. When the audience was big enough, Steve came rolling in. He was an instant crowd; the decibels rose sharply in any room he entered.

“Well, well, well, look who’s here! Haven’t seen you for a long time. Where ya been, buddy?” Mark tried to answer with just a shrug. “Aw, come on now, we’ve been looking for ya and wondering where you were. Why, we even considered being worried about it. You tired of the crowd down here at Moriarty’s Bar?”

“It’s not that, exactly. The money’s been a little tight lately, that’s all.”

“Boy, don’t I know it. But we can always scrape together a few cents for a beer. That right?” He nudged Mark in the ribs until he’d nudged out an assenting nod. “Well, glad you could make a guest appearance. You got some coins rolling in?”

“Oh yeah, a little bit.”

“Don’t tell me you’re working.”

“Sort of.” He figured he might as well see what would happen. “I’m getting paid to father children.”

“What? Wait a minute. You’re going to have a kid?”

“Not a kid. Any number of them.”

“Who’s the mother?”

“I haven’t any idea. A number of different women around the city.” He could see that Steve was too bewildered to ask the right questions, so he explained. “You’ve heard of artificial insemination, right? Didn’t you ever wonder where they get the raw materials? Well, I’m a supplier.”

“No shit! And they pay you for that?”

“Ten bucks a shot.”

“Can you do it any time you want?”

“They set up appointments for me, but I think it’ll be fairly often.”

“No kidding.” Steve thought for a second before realizing that the story was too good to be a secret. He got the attention of the regulars by turning off the TV and announcing, “Listen to this!”

That started the wit-poor flurry around Mark's ears. "So what's your technique? One fist? Two fingers? *Two* fists?"

"Henry Miller has this bit in *Tropic of Cancer* about hollowing out an apple and coating the inside with cold cream, and then you stick it . . ."

"No, man, since it *is* a business, it should be *run* like one. Go to a dairy, buy a milking machine and plug in ten of these guys at once . . ."

Mark hadn't thought he would be self-conscious about it, but now he was beginning to wonder.

A Typical Work Day (flashback to two weeks ago)

8:00 a.m. (or 9:00 or noon)

Yawning, stretching, grinding crumbs of sleep from his eyes with shaky fists. Coffee! A whole pot of it, sometimes reheated from the night before. A vicious, viscous brew, cousin to creosote, so ass-biting mean the Navy could use it for stripping barnacles from battleships. A hangover would whimper and faint at the mere sight of it.

9:00 a.m. (or noon, or later)

Retired couple, occasional motel work, call 234-6736

Masseuses wanted

Babysitter

Beautician

Busboy

Is God a stranger to your child?

ABE-ESL Lead Instructor

Yawn. A single copy of the Dispatch Informer cost a quarter, and he didn't even understand what some of the jobs were. What is a PB-XBAR Operator? On those mornings when he could remember where he'd left his balloon-tired, hundred pound, cast iron Schwinn, he'd get on it to toddle off and beg for employment. He looked for signs in windows. The want ads were useful only as an apron under the cat's shit box.

1:00 p.m.

A record store. He'd drool through the jazz albums, sneer at most of the rock, clutch his ecstatic heart at the wonderfulness of Deutsche Gramophone symphonic sound. But only in the bins at the back, among the one or two dollar cutouts and used records,

would he sort through the bulge of nickels and dimes in his pocket. So most of the records he bought were 3 years old or more.

An adult book store. Why not? Lots of glistening phalluses (phalli?) and cheeks spread to give the beholder a baleful stare from an anal eye. An aphrodisiac? No. Anaphrodisiac.

A plant store.

A tea store.

A park.

A tattoo parlour.

And the excuse? It was all experience, raw material for the writer in Mark, education. What a wonderful excuse.

5:00 p.m.

"Hey Mary! What do you want for dinner? I don't feel like cooking, do you? Where shall we go? The good Mexican place, or neon taco?"

7:00 or 8:00 p.m.

"What's on the tube?"

9:00 or 10:00 p.m.

"Ralph! Hot damn! Haven't seen you in weeks. And Teresa! Got any juniper berry gin by any chance, instead of that lab alcohol? Fucking aye! Gordon's! It's a party!"

1:00 a.m. (or any time after)

Where was the work, the writing? Another day shot. *Again?* A time for remorse and resolutions.

Atypical Work Day (flashback to a week ago)

By the afternoon, maybe he'd decide he couldn't find a job and the rain would keep him from wandering the streets. He'd sit at his desk. His mind was as much of a tabula rasa as the paper before him. To one side was his list of Great Titles for his Masterwork: "Furthering" or "Growing Up Weird" etc. When he did write, it usually went like this:

"Greetings, Sol!

I was thinking of hitching out to Colorado and wondered if you could put me up for a night. Or two. As I said to Mary just the other morning, I wonder . . ."

Wouldn't Sol be surprised! Mark had to go back in time further and further to find people to whom he could address fresh letters.

Mark Changes His Day (Now)

“Free at last, free at last, Gret Gawd A’mighty, I’m free at last!” The sperm checks started coming in the mail, so Mark resolved to spring from bed in the morning, rabid to get at his work, frothing at the fingers, so to speak. The one thing that didn’t change was the coffee. The inside of his mug was tarred black from past pots of coffee, and he wouldn’t let Mary wash out what he referred to as “seasoning.” He didn’t have to check the want ads. He could just sit at his desk and work.

To work! It was a good thing that Mary had a job that took her out of the house for 48 hours a week. He was almost afraid of her reaction if she was around and saw him in action. Right now he was pacing and jabbering to himself. He visualized a setting and warmed up his fingers by churning out paragraphs of description. The set was ready to be peopled.

If only the coffee would ease up on his nervous system. His leg was jittering time to the song racing through his head, his hands clenched and loosened. The coffee had a laxative effect, so he had to get up. He got up again to drink some water, get the coffee taste out of his mouth. He got up again to eat an apple, because his mouth still tasted like bitter fumes. Finally he threw on a coat to go walking, settle down and think. Snow was swirling, so he went down to watch it dance into the river. By the time he got back, he’d walked away the day and had to start on the cleaning.

Mark Changes His Day Again

No coffee, no morning paper, nothing that looked even vaguely like a distraction. Just wake up, do some stretching exercises, then right to the desk. Ta-da! Result? He not only memorized the wall-paper pattern, he memorized the irregularities therein. The style of one or two of his doodles approached Dali-ity. He at least felt conscientious doing all this from his official work seat.

The Day Changes On Mark

Mary was a nurses’ aide at Riverside Methodist, and the aides’ schedule declared that she must clean shit from beds during the evening shift rather than the day. Mark’s routine switched to waking up, usually to a good morning fuck, making breakfast,

settling back to chat or read, usually something light (since Mary *would* interrupt). A big lunch would slow him down to the point where he was usually napping when she left for work. Maybe he'd write in the evening. Maybe. After 9:00 p.m., it was, "Hello, Ralph? I just got some outrageously righteous weed. Hows about coming over for a sample? We can listen to the new Rhasaan Roland Kirk album." After midnight, he sat with pen in hand, hacking his way to an arbitrary page quota he'd set himself. He'd look out the window with a terribly martyred face and groan, "Honest to god, folks, this is no fun." RESOLUTION — this partying has got to stop.

The Day Inverts

Mary went on the graveyard shift. Mark resisted joining her, but quickly realized the obvious; one or the other of them would always be trying to sleep. Rather than play necrophilia with her slumbering body, he adopted the inverted hours too. He scarcely saw sunlight anymore. Finally, after a number of nights chafing at the desk, with nowhere to go, nothing to do, he admitted that he'd been glad of all the interference. As long as he could do mental tricks on himself to make it appear that events were conspiring against him, he didn't have to worry that he didn't have much to write. He had started several weeks ago, highly excited about an idea that had surfaced as he sank into a bored doze one afternoon. He quit in disgust when he went to the movies and discovered how similar his story was to a minor novel that had been technicolored into a thriller that was boffo at the box office. Whooppee.

When he started sharing that graveyard with Mary, he was inspired again. His body was protesting the new schedule and somehow all the turmoil farted forth a new idea. Taking chilly back alley walks after midnight, he'd been amused at all the larcenous thoughts sneaking into his awareness. He thought of a burglar, made the burglar a woman to add to the interest, pictured her gliding one night into the house of a helpless old man. He starts talking as she robs, eventually captivating her, then shocking her witless with a pyrotechnical display of thaumaturgy. Mark was so pleased with his idea that he considered his work done for the night and finished off a bottle of tequila. He would worry about what he meant by "thaumaturgy" later.

After a few nights of work, he was twiddling his thumbs again.

At the time of the idea, he had felt a distress that he interpreted as the stirrings of great implications. But all that was coming across on paper was a vaguely pornographic thriller.

His inventiveness had nadired. A weary frustration would stultify him and drive him to bed well before he expected Mary home. If he woke up when she got in bed, he'd make an effort to rouse himself, or she would drape herself over him until he responded. They had a couple basic routines they went through and he was perfectly satisfied. No gymnastic improvements on the Kama Sutra came into his somnolent head.

One problem did require imagination, and his lack of solutions was starting to bother him. There was one possibility. He told Mary the plan and eagerly asked for her encouragement. She shrugged. "How do *I* know? Call Mr. Jism and find out."

Was he embarrassed to call? No, he wouldn't admit to that foolish modesty. "Hello? This is Mark, and I was wondering . . . would it be possible for me to use a prophylactic, then transfer the contents to a bottle and send it over?"

"No, that wouldn't work. Condoms contain spermicides, which obviously defeats our purpose."

Damn it. He couldn't do his collecting inside Mary. He told her the answer, then complained, "He probably lied to me. He doesn't want me to get too much enjoyment out of this. After all, it's work."

"Aha! Penis paranoia!"

"No, really, why couldn't I just clean one thoroughly and then re-roll it? That way I wouldn't kill my albino tadpoles."

"But what if it broke while you were, ahem, collecting?"

"Oh. . . I guess I'd just have to scrape you out."

"That's real likely. Where are you going?"

"Uh, the bathroom."

"Going to 'work'? Ha, ha, what a killer. Be careful. I'm going to check for splatters on the wallpaper and the mirror."

"Leave me alone."

If he thought about it too much, he'd get self-conscious and *déjà vu* to the feeling of sitting limp in a bathroom. Mary was kind enough to help. When he'd follow her through the apartment with his fly down and his tool dangling, she'd pout out her lips for her icky-poo voice, gurgling, "Aw, the poor widdle dahling! Let's make this bashful soldier stand up and salute." She'd kiss him erect. Once, she interrupted her sweeping to use the vacuum cleaner hose

on him. He *was* embarrassed to stash pornography beside the toilet as a visual aid.

Even when it was up, there was the problem of depositing everything in the small neck of the bottle. One slip and he'd glue his hand to the glass. But the practice was starting to give him the speed and efficiency of a machine. Mary would give a low whistle of mock amazement when he'd finish in a minute or less. She called him Sperm-O-Matic. But when he'd strike a nonchalant pose to phone for a taxi, she'd collapse on the couch, snorting and choking with laughter.

"By the way," she said, "since you are acting as a sperm machine, did you know that breeders ejaculate bulls instantly with an electric shock?"

"Great. I can just stay plugged into a wall socket and be a rich man."

Nature Is A Mother (working title)

— two very hip guys (college kids) travelling in van through mountainous area south of Pittsburgh, rhapsodies about wonders of Nature, pick up girls at girls' parents' house, confrontation with parents, off down the road, backpack up into desolate area, past silver-painted bus where people live, girl tells them about about wild kid who burned baby brother in a cardboard box, they can't believe she knew that and still came up here, confrontation with wild kid, girls intimidate him (gratuitous feminist message? delete?) caught in storm, stumble down mountainside, wish only for comforts of civilization

Cosmic Cops (working title)

— episodes alternating between view of girl in reform school and art instructor at that school, she is brought to school and is frightfully violent, other kids punish her so that authorities won't punish them all, she uses other girls to get her revenge (fists, knives, or psychology) but stays clear herself, growing infatuation with artist (tie together elements of their separate episodes) she steals van and abducts him, gradually it's revealed that he was a prisoner as well, they're both fugitives, they drive into mountains, massive storm cuts them off from civilization, they have their freedom and they're scared shitless (everybody's a prisoner? political statement?) (reform school run by nuns? religious overtones?)

What the hell was he going to write? Story ideas kept attacking him and he'd succumb for a few days, working feverishly from the rabid bite. Then he'd read back over it, see a very linear, boring progression that narrowed claustrophobically rather than opening the vistas he thought he'd glimpsed. The same problems drilling into him time and again, air hammer for an air head. Atmospheroccephalic.

Then he got a shock. A poem came to him. He was thinking about Batman being played by Adam West. The old Adam, founder of the sin business, was created in the East. So he pictured Adam West as a company name, a subsidiary branch of an ancient Eastern firm. Then he pictured his superhero Adam being tempted by an apple of rationality, an apple that would cause him to discriminate between Right and Wrong and all those other big-time dualisms. This was the first time he'd considered writing a poem since high school. He even got out his teenage gushings, but then spared himself the shame of reading them. The title of the collection was "Poems of Love and Unadulterated Thought", a marijuana marathon, a triumph of rhythm, the Big Beat, over sense. He had to admit that poetry intimidated him. He felt more at home playing demolition derby with word than juggling them artfully. But now he had a poem! He got brain-scrambling high to celebrate, and whizzed out this:

A Pop Atheist Converts

Superman randy, ready to rut
Lewd Lois Lane spread on the bed (the slut),
BUT
Nerves of steel, no pain but no pleasure,
Superman frantic inside his treasure,
Plowing and plowing, his load still unshot,
No way to unman him, short of a plot
To lure him into a kryptonite twat.
Poor Cluck Kent exits shaking his head
While the husk of Lois smolders.

The eldritch sign flashes in the sky.
Bruce Wayne flounders from a bog of ennui
(ennui in spite of his millions) to reply.

Batman, hero in guise of a beast,
Flashes from his cave, at least
A zillion miles an hour in the Batmobile
With sidekick Robin beside him, a real
Ass.

Ambush, WHAP! Robin wails,
"Holy poetic justice, they've salted my tail!"
The villain swoops down in garlands of garlic,
Crucifix flashing. Batman looks sick,
As well he might. Someone's on to his trick.
A wood stake plunges through a broken heart.

Peter Parker wrapped in webs,
A backfire from his Spiderman threads.
Crush him, we'll have years and years of rain.
"Who knows what evil's in the heart of men?"
Thanks to Freud, all of us can guess.
The Shadow might as well be L. Cranston again.

Poor, cynical me and my vacuous gods
Whose earthly disguises make them even worse clods.
A metamorphosis misfire.
What will I do with nothing to cling to?
I try to distract myself, turn on the tube.
A nasty ad blares, "Buick!
Something you can believe in!"
Safe! They didn't even mention sin.

When he woke the next morning, his head felt stepped on. He reinflated it with two cups of coffee and sat down to read what he had scrawled in his notebook. His head recoiled and he asked aloud, "huh?" Where had Superman and Freud come from? Why wasn't his inspirational metaphor even written down? He frowned over it for at least fifteen minutes, but he had trouble visualizing it in any form other than what he had already drafted.

He was noticing trends. In his story ideas, he showed people being confronted by hostile forces, especially uncontrollable Nature, and the people cringed. In his poem, he debunked some heroic figures of his culture. So what chance had a mere mortal in an impersonally hostile universe, when even Superman is a failure? What Mark

found hyper-exasperating was that he didn't even think he believed what he had written.

What could he do? Nothing to write, and too many hours to write in. He had gotten some of his best ideas when he was in bed waiting for sleep, so he hoped for some productive result from his tendency to doze every couple of hours. A couple times in the past he had projected himself into the character he was writing about and had felt very vividly the reactions of that personality. No good action plot had come to him, so he was going to try visualizing a character first, Mr. X, and let X react to the same stimuli that worked on Mark. Maybe something writable would emerge.

X couldn't seem to get up from the couch. He would flop down and start to concentrate on his sensations until they ganged up on him. The draft from the window would be so quite essentially gentle, yet chilling. It would subtly caress his skin before subcutaneously jangling his nerves with frigid fingers and a breath of snow on black, ravaged trees. Nuances burgeoned in every breeze, hints of overshoes and wet wool socks, the air combed into separate strands by pine needles. His nerves couldn't take it, so he huddled under a crocheted afghan. Rather than being dulled by the constant scratchiness, his skin built up a cumulative wildness of sensation that sent him leaping from the couch to pace until Mary came home to distract him. He wasn't developing a distinct character, but he was getting well acquainted with a glow in his head that brightened as his concentration intensified.

Electrocephalic Therapy

Shock I. Grappling hooks bit into the wood and scrofulous pirates swarmed aboard like rats on cheese. A giant with an eye patch ripped the cabin door from its hinges with one hand and was momentarily paralyzed by the beauty, preternatural even in peril, of Countess Catharine. The pirate's one eye leered enough for two. Foam flecked his lips and his hand wasn't fast enough with his trouser buttons, for they were popped off by a savage erection. Mark removed himself from the Countess, picked up a rapier, and sprang to her defense.

Shock II. His airplane shook epileptically around him. When he glanced down at the controls, he could see the spreading stain, his life being sopped up by the uniform he hated. As he wrenched the aircraft into an engine stalling turn, he had time to think, "This

school will never forget the year I infiltrated ROTC." Flak burst around him, and he was close enough to see the surface to air missiles swivelling his way all over campus. He wished he knew what traitor had managed to put duds in his bomb bay. But was he totally impotent? Not by a long shot. He climbed, nosed it over, and screamed, "let's play Zero!" As the ground amplified in his sight, he could hear the air screaming into the cockpit, a divine wind. Shock III. The quarterback faked a handoff, then stuffed it in the stomach of his star halfback, who cut to the right and lateralled to Mark. The moment of confusion had further infuriated the defense, who came rampaging at him. They looked like convicts behind the bars of their helmets. No time for fear, though he knew his tender ligaments would shred. He cocked his arm for the pass of his life. Shock IV. (Let's be realistic.) She should have known better. A child wouldn't have done it. But now that she knew not to start a campfire with gasoline, she probably wouldn't live to regret it. At least unconsciousness had stilled her screams. Mark didn't need any distractions as he raced down the mountainside, his tires squealing their own agony. The hospital wasn't far away, but it was taking an eternity to get there. And then the one little detail the local yokels had neglected to mention — the washed out bridge. Lacking room to even stop safely, he floored it and hoped the Buick would leap.

Prognosis — X will continue to get higher on the couch. After slamming his imagination through four shocking adventures, he hadn't titillated himself to anywhere near the extremes that were continuing to build in his prostrate body. For a while, the only thing that approximated that feeling was sex with Mary. He first recognized it on a night when they thought they were going to sleep and ended up coupled. He had lavished attention all over her anatomy, and after rocketing to higher and higher apogees, she was limp beneath his pistoning. He, with eyes closed in a dark room, was dissociated enough from himself to notice with surprise a familiar feeling building, a feeling like being stretched with dynamo nerves on the couch.

That surprise was topped by the amazement he felt one working day in the bathroom. Where before he sometimes had had trouble standing at phallic attention, he was now so engrossed in cataclysmic sensation that not only his penis but his whole body felt turgid with pounding blood.

After several equally draining shifts, he found he was almost too

agitated to phone for a taxi. So he switched to calling first, since there would be a substantial wait for the cab to arrive, then he'd hurry into the bathroom, after which he only had to put the bottle in an envelope, totter downstairs and leave it in the mailbox.

His mind twisted to the point that merely entering a bathroom sent the blood supercharging crotchward. Most of the time a piss was taking ten to fifteen minutes; into the bathroom, pull out a luridly coloured erection, try to wilt it under cold water or walk it off, and finally, a minor triumph over his own rebellious parts, piss.

On the couch again, a too familiar position. He had just sent off another production in a cab, and was trying to recover. He wondered if the cabbie had any idea what he was carrying, and what the cabbie's reaction would be. He tried to project himself into that character, and failed. Tried being a nurse, tried being the doctor, *tried being the potential mother*. Failed. Tried to remember that it was himself who had just sent out the seed, and didn't even feel like he was part of that. His search for a usable character, patched together in his mind, his mind a jumble of fragments from the past — that search was turning out a creature he couldn't control. He wanted something that would sound good on paper, but what he had was a glow of pressure on his back, afghan scratchiness crackling on his bare arms, molten gold like lava erupting up his spinal column to the jewelled crown of his head.

He was almost blank to the world when Mary came in and whispered in his ear, her casual "Hi" melodious as a yodel whooped into an Alpine valley. She removed the afghan, his and her clothes, and slid on top of him. He thought he had milked himself dry of penile sensation, but there it was, more inflamed than ever, performing. It was hard to get the dead weight of his nerves moving, but once they were in motion, gaining momentum, they juggernauted through every restraint and he died.

No, no, no, no, no. He didn't die. It just felt like it. "Mein Gott!" He clutched his heart.

"What is it? What's the matter?" Her eyes crinkled with genuine concern.

"I was so far gone, I didn't think I was coming back. Ha! Can you imagine if I had croaked in the middle of that?"

"You find that funny?" She sat up and pulled the afghan around her shoulders.

“Just think of the rigor mortis! You could keep thrashing around on top of me until you orgasmed yourself silly.”

She had clamped her lips shut with her teeth, but a snicker snorted through her nose. “Oh no. Now I’ve encouraged you.”

“Picture the coroner’s report. He couldn’t say, ‘He fucked himself into a heart attack.’ He’d have to make it sound very serious and official. ‘A mid-coital myocardial infarction.’” He flung the afghan from her, and before it hit the floor, he was on and in her.

X was now so far removed from what used to be Mark’s personality that he couldn’t think of it as his own any more. Now even when he was sitting up, his flesh would liquify and energy would tidal wave up his spine. He came close to being seasick. He might be anywhere, the dinner table, taking a shit, standing in line to renew his driver’s license, when the clear white light of the void would beam into his skull and he’d resurrect some unknown time later. His cheeks hurt from smiling so hard, his jaws were painfully clenched to keep him from laughing himself hilariously hoarse. If the frequency increased, he’d scarcely have time to eat, and his only sleep would come when his brain was forced to submit to bodily exhaustion.

Somehow he had to grab the reins in a decisive way. Just so that fucking wouldn’t be his only exercise, he had been doing Yoga. Now it was time to get beyond the muscle stretching stage and tame that brain. He would exercise, then sit in a lotus pose, then exercise some more. Several times he pretzelled into an asana, surrendered to a nirvana flash, and came back to find himself nearly frozen in place. Unwinding was sometimes painful. But it seemed to be working. His whole body wasn’t being consumed by energy. Just his head split open. Then every time he took pride in his progress, he had to earn his sperm money, and the physical hurricane he unleashed would destroy most of his work. He had to admit it felt good, though not so intense as that ego-cidal climax with Mary. That became a holy event for him, an absolute summit, so naturally it was shattered when, on a day like any other, he went into a lotus and his existence did this:

EPIPHANY!

You thought that page was blank, didn't you? "Is that Nirvana?" you ask. "Nothing?" Look again. First of all, notice that the page is numbered like all the other pages. It's a natural part of a continuing process. Now look closer. It's not a vacuum; it's paper, it's the background you ignore because you concentrate on the business of words. Closer yet. See the texture? (Use a magnifying glass.) Think of the process of making paper and all the different grades that are produced. Think of all the people working to produce it, market it, buy it. Think of all the people cutting down trees or recycling newspapers for the raw material. Think about all the newspapers. Think about the trees and the earth they grow in and the watering rain and the photosynthesizing sun and the planets whirling around that sun and the galaxy it's a part of, and then try to visualize altering that galaxy in any way without breaking the chain that leads to that supposedly blank page. You see? What you thought was empty was actually the entire universe.

Re-entry

Theoretically, this should be done slowly so you don't get burnt up by the friction. Rather than easing in, Mark came straight down in a screaming plummet. After being dissolved in the cosmos, it was a shock to feel the localized sensation of his nerves blazing. It was like plunging into old age. After his senses had supernovaed, it was a relatively decrepit feeling to know once again that his skin shielded from the world, to see and hear everything through the thickening, befogging atmosphere. Finally, a dive into a sea like death. He started to think about himself, to realize, "Hey, that was me, Mark, that did that." The millstone necklace of pride. "Hey, lookit what I did! I was so damn high!" He was so damn high he could never express it. From being all that there is, he had shrunk to fit the coffin of his personality, and he was nailed in and sinking.

His feelings bobbed to the surface again. He had died again, not through penile overload, but through ego disintegration. Now he was alive again, only physically like his old self. Alive to new possibilities, to transcending the verbal, becoming more than just a writer. "It's time to turn the gem brightness of that mental state on my day to day tasks. Time to become a real creator, an artist of life!" But first he had to go to sleep. He was so drained, he only

grunted when Mary asked him what was the matter. This dulling of his momentarily heightened sense felt like a hangover after a binge on Wild Irish Rose.

He shivered awake the next morning and went stumbling downstairs to turn up the heat. By adjusting the thermostat, they silently fought over whether the house should be economically freezing or extravagantly tolerable. He grouched back upstairs to put on a second bathrobe. He wanted to be warm as he munched into his bowl of cornflakes. When he cracked a perfectly soft-boiled egg, he scooped the egg into the garbage, threw the shell into his dish, and stared blankly at his stupidity. So he was in no mood to be amused when he went down to fetch the paper and found a dog yellowing the virginal spring snow. Only after he'd kicked it yelping across the front yard did he remember that he was an Artist of Life.

Time to regroup his forces. He slumped into an easy chair to regain his equilibrium. Eyes closed, he concentrated on his breathing, his blank mind. Without being conscious of the change, he found himself inspecting his nails, picking dirt out from under them. He forced himself to close his eyes and concentrate, but it wasn't long before he was looking at a skin bump he had scratched red. A flash of anger again, and then he decided just to think about the wonder of his body. He studied his skin, the back of his hand lined like the cracked bed of a dry river. He watched his finger move, his wrist swivel. Great. Even walking into the bathroom to piss, he was amazing.

He tried to transcend the mere physical and revel in the glory of Being. Not his own being, but all Being, whatever that meant. Those abstractions were hard to keep in mind, and after he'd run through his few thoughts on the subject, there was little left to think.

Gallery

Painting — Mark attempts to preserve in his head the Clear White Light of the Void. However, never having had any training in emotion control, he sometimes chameleons into a thoughtful yellow, a peaceful blue, a productive green, and, when he slips badly, an angry red. Water colours washing back and forth, as hard to tame as water. Kinetic painting. Final color — black. Sculpture — Poised motionless over his notebook, brow crinkled, Mark tries to think of something to write. He's been leaning on his forearms for so long that the desk has become an integral part of the piece. This

piece will stay frozen in place. Literature — The blank page returns his stare. What to write? What purpose can a blank page serve? No purpose, right? But it could be provocative. A chapter of blank pages? A book of blank pages? Blank pages with words cut into them rather than printed on them? While puzzling, he has doodled big block letters that cover the page, spelling “BLANK!” Drama — Mary sticks her head into the bathroom to ask what he wants to eat. He considers saying, “You,” but he’s used that joke before. He ruffles through his collection of marginally witty replies, decides that economy and aptness of thought are best, freeing his mental energy for better things, so he ripostes, “Corn flakes.”

Music — Mark drums his fingers on the window sill, whistling random notes, a piece called *Ennui Resurgent*. Multi-Disciplinary Performance. — A complex piece. Painting — the glossy green walls of the kitchen. Sculpture — a table, a chair, a bowl. Literature — *Time Magazine*. Drama — Mark belches. Music — radio muzak. Television Arts — they flicker in the other room. Cinema — the flicker. Culinary Creation — corn flakes.

Audience Reaction — Mary yawned.

Mark looked up from his corn flakes and saw her critique of his work of art. He’d been watching her because she was closest to him and likeliest to react. Two weeks, so far, and still no salutary effect. She wasn’t transported out of herself by the poetry of his living, she wasn’t startled into uncharted reaches of her own existence through his all-encompassing interaction with her. In short, she didn’t see any change.

Mark knew he was in trouble when forgetfulness turned into deliberate sloth. One night he decided to stop thinking about what he was doing and just watch TV. First a show about a family living in a trailer in a mid-city park. Gruff but lovable father, well-meaning, bumbling mother, mouthy but darling kids. Then a show about Hungarian refugees being as moronically bland as any other nationality. A show about garbagemen and the rough gems of wisdom they deliver as they sift the trash for treasures. A show starring a young career woman and all her daffy dates and laughable lays. A drama about a plastic surgeon who has to give a man the features of a Shetland pony to keep the man’s friend from detonating the atomic bomb he has assembled in the basement of the orphanage where the doctor’s illegitimate son has been hidden.

Local news, highlights being a purse snatching and live films of the world's kidney-bean-eating champion. And finally a movie about a monstrous ferret that chews a dozen people at a time, can only be killed by sound waves, particularly Kate Smith singing God Bless America at deafening volume, and destroys Prague in its death throes.

When Mark flopped into bed that night, his stomach was churning popcorn and diet soft drinks that bit into his mouth with chemicals. Since no one knew what he was trying to accomplish, he could slack off any time without being caught. All it took was the time to rationalize his lack of commitment to himself. Shame. Something would have to change.

MARK

a one-person show

! ART THAT LIVES !

a work in progress at the Beaupré Gallery
Indianapolis

Indianapolis? Well, why not? So repellent a setting would test his sincerity. It was just a fantasy, but he wanted to make it happen. A work of art lives supremely in its intentions, the material production of the idea being only a coarse approximation of the perfection of the original idea. Making a formal display of himself would force him to abstain from the ill-considered. The crowd could see the vessel that held the art refined to pure Idea. He would have a hell of a time explaining this.

Messenger 1. An Oriental clad in black thrust this before his face. "Benjamin Vautier developed this idea and was on display for a week in the window of a London gallery."

Okay, okay, so it wasn't original, though it was new to him. But it didn't say what thought process Vautier was working on, or what exactly he had done in that window. What Mark wanted to share with the world was his blinding flash, the utterly abstract blank. What had helped induce the flash was sex. Maybe Mary could help with his display. In fact, time for practice. He found Mary in the kitchen cutting onions, kissed away her tears, dragged her into the

livingroom (too far to the bedroom) and onto the carpet, wrestled her clothes off her laughter-convulsed body, licked, kissed, went joyfully rooting for a clitoral truffle, entered every inviting orifice. Now *that* was Art.

He always liked to curl up and sleep after a sex bash, so he crawled onto the couch and pulled the afghan over himself. Shaking her head, Mary returned to the kitchen. It took two minutes for him to realize he wasn't the least bit tired. His big Nirvana experience had turned him around. (Come to think of it, maybe he ought to title that experience, name his creation. Irving? Come on. Heaven? Hell no. Wait, now, yes. The Large Glass. Because he could see a lot through it.) His Large Glass had turned him around. Sex wasn't draining, it was energizing. Plugged into Mary's socket, he would be a human atomic pile exhibit. Actually, though, why complicate things by adding another whole person with all her variables? Why not keep as close as possible to pure, abstract sex and just beat off? His cock rose to signal a vote of Yes.

Messenger 2. Another Oriental in ominous black robes. "Vito Acconi, in his work "seedbed," hid underneath a ventilated ramp built in one end of the room, and masturbated while a microphone broadcast his sound."

Damn. Mark could carry it further. His seed could come out a ventilation hole, slide down a trough into a little medicine bottle, and be sent to the gynecologists. Still too derivative? And sick besides? Mark was feeling ulcerous.

It was starting to seem like nothing he could do was original. (For example, those messengers that destroyed his plans were imaginary. The way he found those bits of information was by consulting books. He couldn't hope to have his own show without having a name for himself, so he was finding out about the world of Art in order to rebel against it, become a sensation. All he discovered was that he was derivative. He imagined those messengers because they reminded him of Japanese puppet theatre, where the puppet master is in plain view on stage, but clad in black so that the viewer can block out the picture of him manipulating. And Mark didn't even find out about the puppet masters from the theatre, but from a movie that used that same device of shadowy black directors. He'd steal tricks from anybody, anywhere.) Maybe the only way he could be new, be Art, was to be signed by some other artist. "Mark — A

Mobile” or “A Markmobile,” perhaps with the artist’s name carved on his heel. He would be a Readymade work of art. It would do odd things to him. He’d feel like two Ballantine beer cans made from bronze by Jasper Johns.

He needed to take a walk, air his spinning head in the warm June sunshine. All those dreams. Even when he had no idea what he was going to do, he had pictured to himself the giddy life of a rich artist. Champagne by the pool for breakfast. Stogie-sized joints and cocaine like snow drifts. Women. His Chinese dream was at the foot of the bed, slowly pulling the satin sheet off his body. On hands and knees she crawled over him, her stiffened nipples gliding over his calves, thighs, erecting prick, chest, and then . . . ahem. Let’s not walk down the street with so obvious a bulge in the pants. All those dreams had evaporated. He was an offshoot of so many other artists. Why did he keep falling into so many stupid traps? He had hoped he was a little wiser after *The Large Glass*. He had felt like he was born anew, but he was the same old schmuck. Karma. All the evil in his past was haunting him in the present. He was father to himself, Schmuck and his monster, Schmuck Jr.

And then, absent mindedly, he glanced into a baby carriage and saw himself. Had it been nine months? The mother was stopped too, staring at Mark in horrified fascination. Fortunately her husband was oafishly inattentive, and he dragged her and the baby carriage away with him. Once again Mark had come screaming out of the mental clouds, but on this re-entry he’d hit solid fact, and he felt like a grease spot. He told himself, “Pal, you’re an *actual* father.” The baby had looked just like him except for the eyes, two milky, cataracted blanks.

Irena Friedman

A PHOTOGRAPH, IN BLACK AND WHITE

When, at the age of thirteen, the daughter became a woman, her mother had just celebrated her thirty-third birthday. If anything, she was even more beautiful now than on her wedding day. This was the daughter's observation as she watched her mother dress for a new year's eve party (an observation based on countless hours spent with the family album). As she zipped up her mother's dress and watched her arrange the string of pearls, she noticed too that her mother's neckline was much lower than usual and wondered how her father felt about that well-exposed cleavage. Her own breasts were as yet quite small, though she had her mother's generous frame and somewhat flat buttocks. Her face, on the other hand, was unmistakably her father's: dark and intense, with a defiant look around the chin. The daughter felt that her mother was somehow disappointed by this particular resemblance. She herself certainly preferred her mother's fair looks, but disliked what she thought of as her mother's frivolity — her habit of standing motionless before the mirror — as though entranced by her own image — a way she had of laughing sometimes, especially on the phone. It was the laughter of a courtesan, the daughter thought (she had recently picked up the word in a book of Oriental stories). Her father didn't seem to mind, but her father, she thought, was much too busy to notice.

The daughter's menstruation started on Christmas eve. And now, on its eighth day, she still walked with an embarrassing awkwardness, having missed a school dance and unable to wear her new pant suit. It was abnormal to bleed so much, she was sure, but she said nothing to her parents. Secretly, and in spite of herself, she blamed it all on her mother. And though every night she cried in her room, she knew she would never again cry before her mother. Anyway, she understood it wasn't the blood she was crying about, though the blood certainly frightened her. She remembered how her mother had teased her about hiding her bras from her father and, now and then, she thought of that first day when her breasts had begun to grow.

She had been eleven or so then and, walking up the hill to her German piano teacher, the sudden ache made her stop in the middle of the road in fear and wonder. Although no one had ever told her that was how it would happen, she had known at once what this tender pain meant. And for the next hour she could hardly keep her mind on the Bach score before her. She was poignantly aware of the flesh of her thighs pressed against the stool, of the hair on the back of her neck, the sensation of swelling in her lips. She felt a terrible revulsion toward the old woman beside her; toward her immense hips and the white flesh of her arms which trembled, gelatin-like, with every movement. It was a revulsion so intense it made her flesh tingle, and she was frightened by the things which were suddenly happening to her and over which she had no control.

But on the way home something was released in her and she almost sang with the sense of sudden accomplishment and the knowledge of so perfect a secret. For some time she had been eyeing the lacey bras in the department store and she now felt a sweet complicity with Lena, the one girl in her class who already wore one and who, her mother said, had a provocative walk.

The blood, however, was different. Though she had known about it for a long time, and had in fact looked forward to the day, it frightened her when her mother said: "Now you are a woman." She wondered how other girls felt and why she bled so profusely.

For the first two days, she hardly dared move. She was sure that with any exertion, some delicate dam would break within her and no one would ever know what had happened. She observed her mother more closely than ever. She reflected on all sorts of events that had happened over the years, and she took to studying the photo album with a feverish interest. She became obsessively curious about the women in the album. She asked incessant questions about her grandmother, her pretty aunts; the woman in tweeds on page two, the laughing girl under the lilac tree. When she got to the end, she would go back and start again with the photograph of her grandmother at sixteen (her father's mother, for there were no pictures of the other who, she was told, had died in childbirth). She loved this photo best of all, not only because of the shyness of smile which she thought resembled her own, but also because of the chalk-like quality of its pastel colours. It gave her a sense of her grandmother's times, of all the years that had passed since then and brought with them the splendid colours of her own photographs.

Some of the other pictures confused her though. She found it

particularly disturbing to look at the black and white photographs of her mother's adolescence — clear and glossy as though they had been taken only the day before. The wedding pictures in the album were another source of confusion. Page by page, she studied the women in her family — saw them first with their dolls, then at school or on bikes, then in their prom dresses and then, only a page later, as brides with strange young men suddenly standing beside them. It all seemed so swift and inevitable that she sometimes panicked, and at such times she passionately renounced her kinship to these women. But she was fascinated too by the process and by her own future role. She often wondered how she would look when she was all grown up and what young man would be standing beside her several pages hence.

There were only two photographs in the album which she truly disliked. The first was a picture of her mother and herself, at the age of four. It had been taken in their country garden and both she and her mother looked very tanned. What embarrassed her about the photograph was the fact that her mother seemed to be wearing nothing but a pair of white panties and bra (now and then she thought it might be a bathing suit but it didn't quite look right). She learned to skip over this photograph, but she wondered each time whether her father had taken it, and how her mother could laugh without a trace of embarrassment when one of the neighbours might have walked through the gate at any moment. Most of all she was embarrassed by the fact that her mother had kept the picture in the album. Often, she was tempted to pull it out and tear it into shreds.

The other photograph had been taken in a professional studio and was her mother's great favourite. It was a large and glossy photograph in which her mother wore a dark, severely-tailored suit and a white angora sweater. She had a diamond brooch below her neck, and her fingernails sparkled with bright polish. What impressed the daughter most (even as it horrified her) was her mother's hat — a black hat of felt or perhaps velvet which, slightly tilted, completely covered her mother's hair and — most incredible of all — had an audacious white plume sticking from its side!

The photograph had a terrific power over the daughter. She thought her mother in that haughty, professional pose looked like Greta Garbo or some other actress she had seen on the late show. The dark, severe outlines would linger in her mind long after she closed the album and, for hours after, she would follow her mother

with her eyes, perceiving her movements as a sequence of highly dramatic gestures. Unlike the other photograph, this one attracted the daughter again and again, and each time she perceived something she had failed to notice before. So it was that on the first day of her period she opened the album and, for the first time, became aware of the glint in her mother's eyes. She stared at the photo for a long time but could find no name for the expression. On the second day, she thought she had it, and she at once closed the album and didn't open it again until the eighth day of her period, the thirty-first of December. Her mother had noticed her interest in the album and was amused (the daughter thought she was pleased; it touched her vanity, she thought).

On new year's eve, after her parents were gone, she took the album into her room and locked the door. She was alone in the house, but she decided to lock the door all the same. That was when she identified the expression for the first time. It was scorn, she told herself. Scorn which she felt certain was directed at her and, maybe too, at her father. She didn't understand it, but she was sure it was.

That night, at the stroke of twelve, she burnt the photograph. She thought it settled something once and for all, doing it just that way.

The missing photograph might not have been noticed for a long time were it not for the arrival, new year's day, of some distant relatives. The photo album was back in its usual place on the living room table. From the moment the relatives entered, the daughter watched it. She also watched the man and woman as they moved from room to room, picking up a nick-knack or admiring a plant. The two lived miles away and had never seen the house before. They made a great deal of fuss over the daughter, in turn saying how she had grown and pinching her right cheek. Now and then, the father would smile down at his daughter and she, moved almost to tears, clung to his arm. When the mother came in with tea, however, she at once let go and returned to a distant spot by the wall. Her menstrual flow was at last coming to an end. She knew what was going to happen, and she waited.

After supper, with all of them back in the living room, the daughter sat by the fire and thought of her friend Lena whom she had been forbidden to see. What she mostly thought of was Lena's steady. She had been told that having a steady boyfriend meant you would go all the way. She wondered whether it was true of

Lena and whether there was anyone she might want as a steady. But she was perfectly familiar with her family's rituals and so she watched them finish their liqueurs and stared away into the fire a moment before the visitors picked up the album. She knew the exact order of the photographs and could even predict which ones were likely to attract special interest. She also knew the ones her mother was particularly fond of and, with her back turned, she listened to her laughter while recounting some event or other. Her father, she knew, had little interest in the album but for politeness' sake he made an occasional comment. The mother too knew how her husband felt, but she enjoyed immensely these nostalgic moments and never failed to try and get her husband involved. The daughter knew exactly how she would exclaim when the moment came. Deep inside her she felt warm pleasure at the thought of her mother's surprise, but a greater part of her was tense with fear, and with each turned page her breath grew slower until the moment when she held it altogether and braced herself for denials.

It all happened then just as she knew it would — her mother first puzzled but, almost at once, suspicious.

"Pauline," she said (she usually called her Paulie), "whatever happened to my best photograph, I wonder."

The daughter knew that the question had been carefully phrased for the benefit of the guests and, turning ever so slightly, she asked: "Which one's that, mom?"

The mother stared. She seemed to be waiting for her daughter to give herself away somehow.

"Which one?" the daughter repeated.

"Why, the one with the hat, of course," said the mother, holding on to her daughter's eyes.

The daughter shrugged her shoulders and turned back to the fire.

"Pauline!" the mother said, "look at me when I speak to you."

The daughter turned around and stared at her mother with a look of perfect surprise. Her mother was about to address her again when she caught her husband's meaningful look and, after a moment's hesitation, she turned to her guests.

"Well, it's bound to turn up somewhere," she said, glancing again at her daughter. The guests mumbled sympathetically and the daughter stared away into the fire. She was thrilled with amazement at how calm and indifferent she had managed to remain throughout. But though her father's look had temporarily stopped her mother, she knew that her suspicion had not been relieved and

that the subject was bound to come up again whenever the visit was over.

As it turned out, the relatives spent two days with her parents. All this time, the daughter went about her usual activities, making a special effort not to avoid her mother. She had briefly considered running away and once or twice thought of confessing the whole thing to her father. But each time she thought of her mother's eyes in the photo, this impulse hardened into a stubborn resolve and she knew she would keep on denying whatever happened. Despite her tension, she felt curiously free now that her bleeding had stopped. Also, somehow more sure of herself than she had ever been before. She made up her mind that when accused, it would be best to express indignation, then walk away at once. She felt that too many protests would put her at a disadvantage and she worked out exactly what she would say and how.

She was, however, totally unprepared for the slap that stopped her when she tried to execute her plan. She was surprised mostly because, somehow, she felt that she had paid for her deed with all the lost blood, and she was outraged to find herself treated like a naughty child.

The rage the daughter felt was all the more intense because her father was not home. She was sure that her mother had planned it that way; that she would have waited had her father been there. But now, for the first time in her life, she found it possible to control her tears and to say, calmly and with all the scorn she could muster:

"I'm going to tell dad."

What she meant, at first, was quite simply that she would tell her father how she had been slapped for an as yet unproven act. She was sure he would come to her defence not only because she was no longer a child, but because she knew he disapproved of physical punishment. The mother too knew this and her daughter's *sang froid* made her eyes flash with rising anger.

"Tell him what?" she shouted, taking a step forward. She was about to ask how she planned to explain the business of the missing photograph, but she was stopped by the look on her daughter's face.

The daughter stood at some distance and calmly watched her mother's enraged face. Her own rage had nearly subsided and her mother's flashing eyes reminded her of the burnt photo. While her mother had moved toward her, she had been thinking of the white feather and the expression on her mother's younger face. And now,

as she remembered the perfect scorn in those lovely eyes, an idea was beginning to take shape in her head. For a moment she thought she saw something like fear in her mother's eyes and, not quite sure of what she had in mind, she said:

"I'm going to tell him everything."

Something about the way she said that made the mother catch her breath.

"What?" she shouted, quite beside herself now, "What can *you* tell him?"

The daughter turned to leave. As far as she was concerned, the case was closed. She had no intention of speaking to her father. All she ever wanted was to be left alone and never hear again about the photograph. The mother too had all but forgotten the photograph. What she felt most of all was surprise and fear at her daughter's sudden disobedience. It was this unprecedented response — this new adult dignity — that made her slap her daughter for the second time.

The daughter was a good deal less startled this time. She had half expected her mother to do it even as she had started to turn away. But in the few seconds which had elapsed she had succeeded in gathering ammunition. And, for the second time then, she turned to face her mother and she said, with her new, infuriating calmness:

"Children remember things, you know."

Only, the moment the words were out, she regretted them as she had never regretted the burnt photograph. Seeing her mother pale and lean speechless against the wall, she was astounded by her own power even more than by the words she uttered. By now, she knew with painful clarity what had been on her mind, and she understood that nothing she might say would take the two of them back to the pre-Christmas days.

The daughter walked away and locked herself up in her small room. In the following hours, her head in the pillow, she dwelled over and over on a single memory: A living room couch in their old apartment and their neighbour — the balding father of her friend next door — pressed against her mother's body, kissing her neck with great fervour. They had been fully dressed, she remembered, and she had a vague recollection of intense movement between them. What she had trouble deciding, what she hopefully tried to remember, was whether her mother might have been struggling to free herself from the embrace.

Mark Frutkin / *Three Poems*

FORGETTING A FACE, IT RETURNS TO ITSELF

Face of mist under a soft siege
by time's winds,
Wings folding in and in until nothing.
Reflection in a stream that refuses to stone.
One by one an entire mountain sheds its leaves,
and I am left a long white winter
staring at the dark center of your eyes.

CHIAROSCURO

Small birds frequent a row of abandoned houses.
Down the street, a dog barks.
Everyone is either chasing after or fleeing his shadow,
The city a chiaroscuro of desire and fear.
So many walls before the sky.
Twice as many hands as faces.
Someone plays a flute.
The door squeaks open, the music stops, a baby cries.
Many paths cross in our heads.
We are stones and the river does not cease
Flowing over us.

**“THE WOOD IS CONSUMED
BUT THE FIRE BURNS ON”**

(After Chuang Tsu)

It matters not.
Blue and yellow birds weave among the birches.
Men have left their fingerprints in concrete
On the walls of the city.
I remember the moon in autumn pools
And the lilac blossoms blowing away.
Now, cars pass on the street below.
Mountains immoveable as fire
And fields of untouched snow.
Now, the animal voices of men
And streets lined with throbbing mirrors.
The pure water and the clouded sun.
One window in a country house,
Thousands of windows in the city.

Kristjana Gunnars / *Two Poems*

A NEW LIFE

for my father

Our ancestors dug
in the mine of time.

Shovelfulls were laid by the way

of maggots, germs, worms
and melancholic bile;
entrenching profusions.

They gave up.

Only you kept the last spade
pitifully sweating

inch by inch

until the worn handle at last pierced
the fresh air
and you pushed us out before you:

my sister, my brother and me,

three buds in the sun.

Can you hear me over the miles now?
I am cold.

Smoke from the explosion
infests the air; I can-
not
blossom

IN SPATE

Your festal autopsy
is prepared, patient crows.
You can now plunge in
to my eyes.

On your winter perch
you have watched
my clouded vision draw
water and trickle
over the stagnant snow.

Here is your spring thaw:
Let the creek begin gurgling
like a salivating mouth
ceaselessly drinking

the downpour
from this exhausted sky.

Three German Expressionist Poets

Translated by Michael Hamburger

Hans Arp / *Four Poems*

From THE DAY'S SKELETON

where are the leaves
the bells wilt
no ringing is heard in the earth
where once we walked
the light is torn
the wakes of wings lead into the void
where are the lips
where are the eyes
their heart between heads was horribly dashed to pieces
the last breath drops from the body like a stone
where once we talked our blood flees from the fire
and the shapeless wreath turns in the blackness below
for ever invisible is our beautiful earth
never again will the wings hover around us

1930: *Transition*

THE RED MAN'S SONG

high up
high high up
the red man sings a song.
red fiery feathers grow on the red man
and time passes.
I dream and write.
now I recall the painters and sculptors
whom twenty years ago
I saw sit in the café odéon.
lumpy and gloomy they sit there
immersed in the disagreeable business of interiorization
wrestling and growling with themselves.
already those gentlemen vanish again
and smoking eggs lie where they sat.
if I don't watch out
I shall write a poem now.
drinking and singing come back to me.
we drink and we sing
and time passes.
it sings and wafts
and walks in the light.
one day we all rustle off like dead leaves
crumble to dust
and turn again into sparks and stars
and sing and drink
and blissfully walk in our fiery mantles.

(1939)

From HOUSES

In a certain house
all the occupants had the same dream
They dreamed
that each day they grew smaller and smaller
and finally died.
Providently therefore they set to work
converting their coffins to coffinettes
and always carried them around
under their arms.
They did the right thing.
Although at first their growing smaller
was not worth talking about
and also happened sporadically
even stopping once for several months
it suddenly exceeded every expectation
One fine day
the occupants of the house in which
all had dreamed the same dream woke up
small as dolls
and fitted perfectly into their coffinettes.

1956: *Häuser*

Georg Heym / *Three Poems*

AFTERNOON

The autumn poplars
On the roadside
Tremble with cold.
A couple of children
And a few women
Carrying sticks
Come from the wood
Down an empty road.

A harsh wind
Chases the leaves,
Always,
And every thrust
Makes hundreds drift
Brown and red,
To fall at last
From a sky gone out
Like birds, dead.

September 1911

YOUR EYE-LASHES, LONG . . .

To Hildegard K.

Your eye-lashes, long,
Your eyes' dark waters,
Let me submerge in them,
Let me go down in them deep.

The miner descends to the pit,
Waving his lamp's dim light
Over the gate of ores,
High up the shadowy wall,

Look, I am going down,
In your lap to forget,
Far from what blares from above,
Brightness and anguish and day.

At the fields' edges twists,
Where the wind halts, drunk with corn,
Tall thornbush, tall and sick
Against the sky's blue.

Give me your hand,
Let us intergrow,
Prey for a wind,
Lonely birds' flight,

In summer hear
The organ of feeble thunderstorms,
Bathe in the autumn light,
On the blue day's bank.

At times we will stand
At the dark well's rim,
Deeply to look into stillness,
To look for our love.

Or else we'll emerge
From the golden wood's gloom,
Into the red of a sunset
That gently touches your brow.

Religious sadness,
Silence of lasting love.
Raise the jug to your lips,
Drink from it sleep.

One day to reach the end,
Where sea with yellowish foam
Softly gushes into
The September bay.

To rest above
In the house of thirsty flowers,
Down over the rocks
Shivers and sings the wind.

But from the poplar tree
That looms into heaven's blue
Already a brown leaf falls
To rest on your neck.

July, 1911

AND THE HORNS OF SUMMER FELL SILENT . . .

And the horns of summer fell silent in the death of the meadows,
Into the darkness cloud upon cloud floated off.
But remotely the bordering forests were shrinking,
Muffled in morning like men that follow a hearse.

Loud sang the gale in the terror of fields that were fading ;
It drove into poplars to shape a white tower between boughs.
And like the sweepings of wind there lay in the waste land
Below, a village, drab roofs in a huddle of grey.

But on and on, as far as the pallid horizon
The tents of autumn extended their fabric of corn,
The numberless cities, but empty, forgotten.
And no one was walking about in the streets.

And the shade of the night sang. Only the ravens still drifted
Here and there under leaden clouds in the rain,
Alone in the wind, as down in the dark of our foreheads
Black thoughts revolve and recede in disconsolate hours.

August, 1911

Yvan Goll

ELECTRIC

Up the Eiffel Tower's ladder climbs the Blue Machinist
To hang out
The Moon
Trademark of perfumes
And the signs of hairdressers —
But the world's radiance extends
Copper torrents splash down the mountainsides
Rhone
Montblanc
Mars
Electric waves flow through the blond night
Discs above us
The laughter of railway stations
The pearl necklaces of the boulevards
And quiet, leaning against a lime-tree in the park
Mademoiselle Nature
My fiancée

1922: *Der Sturm*

Shizuo Ito / *Seven Poems*

Translated from the Japanese by nozomi

LOOKING AT THE GLEAM
OF THE LIGHTHOUSE

How gentle, over the dark sea, looks
the green gleam of the lighthouse.
Flickering and circling,
it wanders all night long
through my night.

And you
give my night
various tones of meaning —
inexpressible lamentations
and wishes . . .

Ah, how gentle are lamentations and wishes.
Though there's nothing there,
the green gleam of the lighthouse wanders
all night long
through my night.

CLUTCHING AN AUGUST STONE

Clutching an august stone,
a fortunate butterfly's life has ended.
Knowing his destiny,
who could survive in this fierce summer sun?

Destiny? Yes, indeed.
Ah, we ourselves are lonely radiant objects.
The outside world is white.

Look! Over there the sun has created for itself
a small area of deep beautiful shade.
I, too,

fallen on a snowy field,
dream for a while,
of a wolf's bluish eyes
hungry for food.

BRIGHT AS THE DEPTH OF YOUR SORROW

A giant crane flies across the night sky
or perhaps it is stamping in the moonlight,
thundering on the dark roof of the house in which I am sleeping.
She whom I forced to leave is gone now . . .
The green wheat of April
has already been gathered as food for regret.

Around the woods where the Devil King expires
and in the garden where a silk tree blooms,
a swarm of children jeer
and mimic the sad voice of my beloved . . .
“Go and paint those places in color as
bright as the depth of your sorrow.”

ANONYMOUS 1

It is hard to distinguish
this year's autumn
which withdraws deep into the mountains
and mingles with many older autumns.

ANONYMOUS 2

Eating a shadow upon the water,
transformed into a flower's scent,
the concert goes on endlessly.

TO THE WINTRY BLAST

What fun for the night is the wintry blast! With the hurrahs of trees
and hurried knocking on all the windows, it wakes the exhausted man
who, falling asleep early in the nostalgic, lonely evening,
will not sleep into the empty, bright blue morning.

The true loner wishes always to be awake amid the bounties of
Nature. Through the window, my eyes strive to reach beyond the
Ocean.

But this storm, which rocks my house, rushes, kicking angry billows
upon the dark Ocean under the star-lit sky from which all clouds
have been blown away.

A willow tree is shaken like a mad woman's tangled hair.
Unpicked, rotten grapes were thrown upon the ground before I
woke.

The leaves of a plane tree, like a bird with broken wings,
one after another, tangled and torn away.

I wonder how you are now, chrysanthemums and roses of the corner
of my garden.

But I feel no pity for you.

Everything blossoms because it has its season of decay.

How sad that to your proud mind the storm, somehow, is the cause
of grief.

How vigorous I feel! When I look at the room, my eyes
flash in the mirror, glittering in the lamp light.

O wintry blast, now gallop away. When I gaze out of the window
though they say the leaves have now turned autumn red,
the fields look colorless, sad and pale in the distance.

IMPROVISATION

To tell the truth, I don't need poems and verses
nor do I need to write them.

To my wonder the ocean rolls on
and a new moon is in the sky.

Days drift away quietly — too quietly.

Regret and adoration, in spite of me,
walk by themselves
around the curiously bright field.

W. P. Kinsella

CARAWAY

. . . in some of the Northern tribes
the caraway plant was believed to
hold supernatural powers . . . the
placing of the white bloom of the
plant on the eyes of a dying or
recently deceased person was believed
to condemn the spirit to eternal
fire. . . .

Tales of the Great Spirit, Vol. 2.

I was about twelve the fall that Ruth Buffalo killed herself. One shot from the 22 gun her father, Joe Buffalo, kept in the back bedroom of their house was all it took.

Ruth was, I guess, the most smart Indian girl ever come from around our place. She was the only Indian kid around who didn't live on the reservation. They say there was a big stink by the white people when she went to their school instead of to the Indian Affairs school on the reserve. She got better marks than the white kids and the government end up paying her way clear through university because she so smart. She is study to be a teacher, and the kids who had her — she come back and teach us Indians at the reserve school even though she could have gone anywhere she wanted — say she is the best teacher they ever had. She can even speak our language and the kids in her class don't hate school as much as everybody else does.

But she killed herself anyway. What I hear from Joe Buffalo a lot later is she stay late to the school one night and something is happen to her on the way home. She is run into her house and scream and cry to her Papa that she been had by a farmer live across the field aways, Mr. Russell Bevans. Old Joe try to talk to her but she is gone crazy in her mind. "I be dirty forever, Papa," she say to him, "Forever and ever." And then she run to the bedroom and shoot herself.

Old Joe Buffalo he is no ordinary Indian. He is not a reserve Indian. He is own his own farm across the highway from the reservation. Old Joe, he is old enough to be around when reservations is made up and even way back then he is have so much pride he say he not take nothing he don't earn with his own hands. He bought the land so long ago nobody remembers how he got the money.

"I a funny old bugger," he used to say to me. "That's what the people in town say. They figure cause I old I don't hear. And they figure at the bank that cause I can't write my name I can't count. Them girls try lots of times give me less than I should have." Joe is too old to farm no more but he rents his land and gets paid for it.

Nobody like Old Joe much. The reserve Indians don't like that he don't be like them: do nothing, and the white people sure not like it when he thinks he can be the same as them. That's what the white people think . . . Old Joe, the last thing he ever wants to do is be white.

Everybody wonder about him some and like most kids I wonder too. When I about 10 me and my friend Frank Fence-post go sneaking around his place. We crawl down from the highway on our bellies and make pretend we are tracking buffalo and that make it a big joke to us.

We crawl right up to the back of the house and boy we is some proud of ourself, when all of a sudden I feel something cold on the back of my neck, and there is Old Joe Buffalo with his shot gun. I don't know how he got there . . . I never hear nothing.

Frank he see what happened to me and he break and run. Old Joe turn and fire the shot gun at Frank, but I see he shoot way up in the trees make sure he don't hit him. Frank he yell like he been hit anyway and run until we hear him hit Old Joe's barbed wire fence really hard.

"What you do sneak around like a thief?" he say.

"We don't mean nothing. We play at track buffalo."

Old Joe smile a little on me. "You just been caught by oldest Buffalo in this part of country," he say, and I look at him and see that his face is all brown and wrinkled up like Eathen Firstrider's hand tooled chaps. "Who are you?" he asks.

"Silas Ermineskin," I say. For some reason I don't know I not scared of him at all.

"You never do nothing but scare away game wearing white man's shoes," and he look at my running shoes with my toes hang out.

"Soft as moss," he say, and point at his own moccasins. "If you drink tea, Silas Ermineskin, you can come in my cabin."

He got on an old red and black mackinaw that he wear everyday for years. His face all wrinkled up but his eyes clear and shiny like a little kid's. His pipe poke out of his mackinaw pocket, and that what his house smell like, his pipe. He don't smoke tobacco but bunch of leaves and roots he collect himself. All the furniture in the house Old Joe made himself is what he tells me.

"You like to learn track game like real Indian?" he ask me.

"Sure I would," I say. "And do ceremony dances and make mean face with war paint. Could you learn me that too?"

"If you want I teach you." He pour us out tea that he cook in a tin pan on the woodstove. He tell me some stories then about when he was a boy and there hardly any whitemen in our country and it not even called Alberta then. And he tell me about his daughter and how proud he is of her going to graduate the university that year. Old Joe tell me he was 70 when Ruth born and already work on his third wife who was only 20 or so. When Ruth is about 2 her and her Momma take the measles and the Momma is die. I count in my head and figure that he is most 95 years old.

"I hear your family coming to look for you," he says then. I forgot all about Frank and how I been there all day already.

"I don't hear nothing," I say.

"Be quiet! Be still as a post and stretch your ears out."

I don't hear nothing even when I stretch my ears, but in a few minutes my Pa, Sam Standing-by-the-door, Frank and some other kids is come through the trees. Pa is carrying his rifle.

They is happy to see me o.k. but my Pa tells me, "Silas, don't you never go back there. He's crazy old man thinks he too good for us Indians." So of course I went back every time I got a chance.

Old Joe he don't read or write but he is look around him and understand lots. He say us Indians got to go forward or backward. Our people is gonna die, he say, if we sit still like we do now on the reserves.

"Look at our women," he used to say. "They don't like be called squaw no more. They drink beer, ride around in white-man's cars. Our women the most proud and feared anywhere around at one time. It hurt my heart to see them now. And the men sit around all day curse the whiteman with one hand take his money with the other."

I think of Chief Tom Crow-eye who is most of the time wear a

suit and go to meetings in Edmonton and Calgary. Yet nothing ever change for us.

Old Joe and me get to be great friends. I spend a lot of time there and he tell me the stories his Mama used to tell him about how the Great Spirit make the land and the people and all that.

"I get signed up by the missionaries long time ago," he say like he don't feel quite right about it. "I do it for my old squaw. She is want to believe in whiteman's God so I say o.k. The church people say we got to believe only their way and forget ours. So I never be what they call a religious man. Ruth, she's good catholic. Go to church three times on Sunday. I'd rather lay out muskrat traps."

We is all, most of us Indians, catholic. A long time ago the missionaries come around get everybody join up the church though most people don't understand what it is all about.

Somebody asks us what religion we are, we say, "Catholic, . . . I guess."

Even when Ruth come home to teach I hardly ever see her. She is always stay late to the school or work sometimes for the church.

Then come the time Ruth is kill herself. Poor Old Joe, it sure hurts him to be an Indian then. He walk to the store at Hobbema Crossing and call the R.C.M.P. but they take 4-5 hours before they come. Old Joe tell them what happened but they don't hardly listen to him, he says.

"I tell them it Russell Bevans done it, but they just makes faces to each other like I don't know anything," he tells me.

Russell Bevans he look like a giant to me, then. I guess he was six foot or so with big wide shoulders and a head like a basketball with thin red hair on top. His eyes was pale blue and close together like a pig. His hands make five or six of mine, big like baseball gloves with big black fingernails. He chew snuff, "snoose" he called it, and it was what you smell about him when he come close to you. Everybody know he been after Indian girls lots of times before. Some he get, some he don't. Some older girls go with him for maybe \$5 after they been to town drinking.

The R.C.M.P. guys talk to Russell Bevans. He say he don't know nothing about Ruth, and his wife, a scared little white lady with grey hair, say he been home in the yard all that day, and his son say so too, he is about 14, fat, like to beat up Indian kids, and got the same pig face as his Pa.

Nobody ever thought to have a doctor look at Ruth. She is just an Indian.

In town I hear ladies talk in the Co-op Store.

"That Ruth was kind of an uppity one," they say. "And kind of strange like her father. She was probably up to no good of some kind. Had something to hide."

"I bet," said another one, "that if they checked her out they'd find she was pregnant. Indian girls are all like that. And imagine her accusing Russell, why he'd give you the shirt off his back, and he hasn't missed church in ten years."

The worst for Old Joe is when the priests from the church say that Ruth can't be buried in the church grave yard because she kill herself. Old Joe swear that everything he say is true. He swear it to the R.C.M.P., the priests, and to me. But I the only one who believe him.

"It not matter to me," he say, "but she care plenty about it. Her spirit not rest unless she can be buried there." But it don't matter what he say the church don't change its mind.

Joe is build a coffin for Ruth himself. I never feel more sorry for anyone than him that day. He is just an old man who don't hardly speak the whiteman language and don't understand why nobody do nothing for his daughter.

He hires two Indians, Rufus Fire-in-the-draw, and Charlie Blanket, to tear down a granary that he don't use no more and pile the boards up against his corral fence. Then he have them put the coffin on top of the boards and he is set fire to all of it. He had went to the church and ask the priests come down and two of them do.

The sun is going down and a storm is blow big clouds across the sky. The fire roars like wind as it burn up against the dark. Old Joe Buffalo is kneel down in the corral, raise his arms to the sky and cry the death song of our people like it been taught to him most a hundred years ago. Charlie and Rufus don't know what to do as they stand by the back of the corral and they finally just sneak away. The priests twist the beads around their necks and the fire flash on their silver crosses and long black robes. After a while they go away making lots of the sign of the cross. The fire burn down and all I can hear is the voice of Old Joe Buffalo crying out his sorrow in the fall night.

"I glad you stay, Silas," he say to me when he finally stop. "I going to do something tonight and I don't like to be alone at it."

He bring from the house a Roger's Golden Syrup can and we go back to the fire. There is just a few ashes glow a bit like eyes in the dark. Old Joe fills the can up with ashes — if the coals hurt his

hands he don't never show it — and then we walk the long miles up the highway to the catholic church cemetery and Old Joe is bury that can of ashes there in the graveyard. Then we go back and he makes tea for us. He don't ask me to but I sleep at his house that night.

All that winter I spend a lot of time at Old Joe's. He learns me how to make war paint and how to set snares and he tells me the legends of our people that almost been forgot by everybody.

"Violets is soft like women's faces," he say, "put violets on a grave and you make the spirit happy."

And he tell me about caraway. I even find that one in a book one time and I print it out at the start of my story so everybody is know Old Joe is tell me the truth.

In the spring he spend a lot of time track Russell Bevans. He get to know where he go every day and what he do. When Bevans is work in his fields Old Joe and sometimes me too, is never far away, but Russell Bevans he never know that. I wonder what it is Old Joe going to do.

In the middle of the summer I come down to Old Joe's place early one morning. Sneak up real quiet like he's taught me to do — Joe is even make for me my own moccasins — and peek through the window. There is Old Joe at the table, naked from the waist up, look in his little square mirror propped on the table and put war paint on his skinny old chest. Then on his face with red, yellow and blue colour is make himself fierce and scary.

Then he put on his mackinaw and go off across the fields to where his land join up with Russell Bevan's land. Russell have a private road run along there and he been hauling hay along there with a hay-rack and his tractor the last couple of days. I follow way behind so he don't know that I there.

Old Joe gets down in the ditch in the water and waits for the tractor to come along. When it get to maybe fifty feet from where he is, Old Joe takes off his mackinaw and rise up out of the ditch like a spirit himself.

Russell Bevans have to either hit Old Joe or turn the wheel. What Old Joe count on I guess is that Russell just be scared and turn the tractor cause I bet he sure like to run over an Indian. He turns the wheel and the tractor tip right over. He make a half try to jump clear but he is too big for that. The tractor is on top of him in the slough water before he know it. He yell some and try to get loose

but he is pinned by his chest, hurt a lot and can hardly keep his head above the green water.

“Go get help, you crazy old bastard,” he yells at Joe. But Joe is stand look down at him and maybe smile a little. I crawl silent until I right across the road. I lay in the water with the bull rushes and peek across.

“You tell me the truth about my girl,” Old Joe says after a while.

“I don’t know nothing,” says Russell Bevans, the green water right up to his mouth. “Help me!”

“First you tell the truth. I don’t go for help until.”

Russell Bevans, he swear and yell. Then he beg Old Joe some to help him. Russell have lots of pain and after a while he make a funny noise and pass out. His head goes under water, but Old Joe wade right in and lift up his head so he don’t drown. Then from the pocket of his jeans he take out some caraway flowers and place on each of Russell Bevans’ eyes. He cradle his head like a baby until he wake up. Two or three times this happen until Russell Bevans is finally tell Old Joe, yes I hurt your daughter. I sorry I done it. If you get me help I’ll even tell the R.C.M.P. that I done it.

Old Joe Buffalo is smile just a touch and the next time Russell Bevans is pass out Joe don’t grab his head. He scatters the last of the caraway flowers on the water above his face and I hear the bubbles come up through the water around them.

Joe goes get his mackinaw and walk real slow away.

“You can walk with me, Silas,” he say to me.

“How you know I there,” I say. “I walk real quiet.”

“You walk like two moose chased by wolf. I hear you ever since you crossed the highway.”

LOVE-PROPS

Just minutes,
he passed the curve of her vision
off the earth,
round as the moon
she now angled
over his image in memory;

enough time
to pick his features
like a thief
hoard them inside
for nights
when she counted hours
stacking the walls of her mind
like glasses, too silently
toasting their own emptiness.

Afterwards,
this was love, surely love!

She curved her body to his
one pulse between them,
breathing words into his mouth
for air; with help
his eyes clicked her face
out from the darkness
like stage -lights,
forcing this night
to accept her boundaries;

in her excitement
she forgot the moon,
letting it go blank
in the sky

as that space beside her
next morning.

IT ISN'T ENOUGH

It isn't enough
to hide from the moon
as winter
floats its white days
from you, gently
as magnolia blossoms;

you are left behind,
relieved . . . so relieved . . .
it isn't enough.
There is always someone
with blue eyes
moving toward you,

a moment in summer
when the air
stuffs your mouth,
when
a mirror waits for your breath
reminding you
with a reflection

he is there, offering
what your life cannot
his eyes
pulling you down
gently . . . so gently . . .

Your head bumps the bottom
of something.

A sudden jolt.
Winter returns.

Rosalind MacPhee

THE FAULT

Night air quiet,
the summer's day still warm:
the moon rises:
the forest is emptying its silent figures.
We will travel miles from any road
answering the signals of
our hearts: we call
to each other
across mountains along rivers
declaring that together
we must go ahead and
measure
the distance to the moon
the extreme points of our desire.
We grow skeptical
of our orange
leather
faces:
our signals grow
weaker like calling out the names
of city streets, waiting
for history, waiting to be history
carrying as our possessions the bare essentials
the music of betrayal
exact maps.

THE GREAT PROKOVANA

In temples there are priestlies who
incense for lovely goddess do.
The mondomor is sweet banana
for vertutati Prokovana.

O great, almighty Kishtabana!

And there upon the altar they
the tender leaf of absence lay;
the Secret Rake of heaven's manna
for vertutati Prokovana.

Nilish, nilish, ni'totoyana!

Oh lish, oh lish, the place is warm
that sings the sand before the storm,
through rake of seafflake Kishtabana
for vertutati Prokovana.

O ling. O lang. O long Banana!

Footnotes On:
The Scholar and His Wife

The scholar says:

“Being married
to a wife
who can't think
beyond the boundaries
of the married life,
whose only creative
endeavour
is to do
what her mother did,
is nothing but
taking my humble
jar of knowledge
and screwing
on the lid.”

The wife says:

“Ibid.”

The scholar says:

“Marriage
constipates the mind
it seems
by evaporating
all one's dreams
and condensing them
into dull and idle wit,
until the mind
is completely
full of shit.”

The wife says:

“Op. Cit.”

Anne Pitkin / *Three Poems*

FAILED APHORISM FOR A SMALL SON

for Paul

It was out of control
cold, brilliant with anger.

Today you fling out through the kitchen door
toting a machine gun made of tinker toys.
This time you mean it. You get past
the mail box, the vacant lot next door —
you hesitate on the corner . . .

New Year's Eve we left together
over the tight snow, holding hands and dragging
the sled across a fierce new planet. Lost
in a white storm frozen at its peak,
we climbed carefully along the edge
of the neighborhood. At the top I told you

Look back there and see how pretty, how it falls
away, the broken crystal glinting
in the folds of a tablecloth, and sparks blooming
from a thousand chimneys, festivals
of last words. We jumped on the sled. We got past
the crowds of shadows whistling in our ears.
I held you with arms brittle
as an eggshell while we tumbled, whooping,
front, sideways, and backward, our dark
elements wind and thin ice.

I know this much about love.

You'll come back in a minute,
still snuffling, to point the gun
exactly between my eyes. You'll watch, baffled
as it crumbles, piece by piece, until you're roaring
with chagrin, you, trying not to laugh, you,
tightening your grip on what's left, some odd
sculpture we can't put a name to, never
would have made on purpose.

GLASS HOUSE

You sleep. I watch the altered sky.
Those branches have been pruned
where once meteors like fireflies
tumbled without breaking, limb to limb
through darkness that was kind

as strangers. We are maimed by need
relentlessly fulfilled. You reach for me,
wake up, and pull away. Stars fall slowly
down the window, exquisite as snow
against a warm coat. What has been

nourished and contained now paces,
hungry, sleepless in the separate rhythms
of our breath. All day long I've watched
white summer moths like wind rattled
blossoms close and open in the evergreens

then drift upward, unchanged, never
stripped, or hardened into fruit.
Love holds us here, love, that rock
we throw repeatedly to break the silence,
hope that scatters stars like startled

minnows out of old formations. We wake up
each morning, short of dawn, to cadences
of footsteps that recede, to rain
that crumbles down around this house
where we are never quiet, seldom kind.

WAITING FOR A DIAGNOSIS:
AGAINST STATEMENTS OF FAITH

for Emily

The son, the pilot
flies home from the war
but doesn't make it through
a mail run. How suddenly
the leap becomes a disconnection.

In the pewter sky birds black
as pepper head south in small, distant
swarms, for nothing more
or less than the beating of a heart
against its cage. And you

my friend, small daughter, how long
will you keep my hand warm
around yours? On and on you chatter
in the teeth of evenings that already
have begun to bite down hard. You're too young

too callous to imagine
how next summer's largest day must be
less spacious than this minute.
No meteoric passage of the sun
across an endless sky can dazzle us
like these November trees consumed
in ravages of light. No need
for you to know my fear of leaves
ripped off the calendar, of buds
like raised fists opened
empty on a strange season. Now

just now, we'll listen to the rain's assault
on foliage thick enough today
for shelter, watch those five geese
close a missing man formation overhead.
The sun we haven't seen all afternoon
boils over the horizon
takes the hills down, as a sudden flame
of starlings sweeps beyond the last
roof on this street. This joy

this anarchy is ours, these erratic
rhythms, leaves jumping up from time to time
yellow as forsythia, the unexpected
friendliness of strangers.

Helen Potrebenko

HAVE A NICE DAY

Mornings always came too soon. The night before Edward had awakened screaming again. Muriel had thought he was over that stage but no, there he was — a huge lump of a seven year old — whimpering, covered with sweat.

Did you have a bad dream?

I don't know, Mommy. Whimpering. Like a huge baby. Stiff with hate, Muriel carried him to her own bed, and he was comforted.

His mother's bed would surely turn him into a pervert, a homosexual, dope freak, rapist, murderer . . . or worse. What was worse? Perhaps just to be a failure — like his mother. And he would be a failure whether or not he slept in his mother's bed. At least he slept without terror in her bed. While his mother lay awake, contemplating failure.

Was Edward one of the symptoms of her failure? Her family thought so, and had banished her. Sometimes Muriel agreed with them but more often, she counted the child as the only success in her failure-dotted life. What about your career? her mother had cried. What career? Once you became a legal secretary, you could become nothing more than a legal secretary. You could only advance if your boss advanced. And not even then, for usually the boss only hired more workers, paid them less, and didn't therefore need any one very able worker. So Muriel, with or without Edward, would have worked her way down the rungs of the ladder of importance in legal offices.

Edward slept without further nightmares, and continued sleeping after the alarm went off. Muriel shook him, but he only mumbled and went back to sleep. Muriel thought if she showered and brushed her teeth, it would help her have a bit of patience. It didn't. She sat the boy up forcibly and sent him to wash.

He dawdled in the bathroom, dawdled dressing, so that Muriel was dressed and had his porridge ready long before he was ready to eat it. And even then, instead of eating the already cold porridge, he began telling her some involved story about the previous day's events.

... An' Roger see, he says, you know, that Peter can ride his bike and Peter, you shouda seen, he says ...

Dumb kid, Muriel thought. Were all seven year olds so dumb? This kid can't even talk. When did he turn into a moron?

Eat your breakfast, Muriel told him.

... An' then Mavis, she ran to the school, an' ...

Eat your breakfast, Edward.

... an' Peter, he went the other way, like this, see, an' ...

Shut up and eat your breakfast!

The happy light died in the boy's face. Mommy, he whined, the porridge is cold.

A red rage passed over the world, and for a terrifying moment Muriel thought she would rush over to the boy and hit him and hit him until the world was normal again. But she just turned and went to the bathroom.

No tranquilizers left, nor any amphetamines. Even worse, no Brewer's Yeast. The uppers and downers she could live without — they were just something her doctor gave her so she wouldn't visit him so often. But the Brewer's Yeast was something else. Payday was two days away. She had only enough money for her bus fare and Edward's pocket money, and not a penny more. She should have borrowed from Paul, but hadn't wanted to do that so early in the relationship.

So there was just the birth control pill to swallow. She paused as she did every morning, possessed by omens of disaster. Could one tiny pill be so disastrous? It was such a tiny pill. But one tiny pill every morning could amount to quite a potent poison.

The doctor poohed her fears and assured her that most women took the pill for years with no ill effects whatsoever. It was true indeed — most women did. Some women, however, didn't — Muriel was one of these. Unless she accompanied the pill with large doses of Vitamin B in the form of Brewer's Yeast, her nightmares made Edward's look pleasant by comparison. The world became cold and forbidding; and people ugly and threatening. Even Edward, her beloved child, whom she had never hit — not once in all these long years — became an unbearable menace.

What was worse then? Taking the pill, or not taking the pill? It was simple enough to conclude she could not afford another child. The alternative method of birth control was the one she had used for five years after Edward's birth. Abstinence.

Now there was Paul. Paul was such a nice guy. Edward wor-

shipped the very ground he walked on. Paul brought dinners (once), played ball in the park with Edward (once), took him fishing (once). Paul brought flowers (once) and ended the aching emptiness of sexual abstinence (quite a satisfying number of times). Paul had another wife and children somewhere else. But he was such a nice guy. Was it fair to deprive Edward of the only adult male contact he'd ever known? Was it fair to banish such a nice guy simply because there was no safe method of birth control?

Why aren't I some kind of pervert? Muriel moaned to herself. Perverts are so much more easily fulfilled in this society. But no, I have to be a normal woman, with normal needs, in a society where only perverts are fulfilled.

There had been a time when both she and Edward, having gone for years without speaking to a man, were equally nervous of them. Men were an alien "other," at whom Edward stared on buses and in parks with open-mouthed fascination tinged with fear.

Muriel and Rhoda endlessly discussed the subject of the lack of a male image for their children. Muriel once said bitterly they should take the children down to Hastings and Columbia every day for a week. They can see all the vomiting, violent, broken, motherfuckers and that's probably as realistic a male image as any other these days. Now there was Paul for Edward, and Rhoda brought a succession of men home. And grew pinched and bitter and drunk as the years and the men went by.

When Muriel had swallowed the pill and emerged from the bathroom, she found Edward jacketed and clutching the lunch she had prepared the night before.

Hurry, Mommy, you'll be late.

She had explained to him several hundred times that if she was often late, she would lose her job and then they would have to live on welfare, in a basement like Rhoda and Roger. Disturbingly enough, Edward remembered all the basements of his early years — rooms from which they both emerged into the sunshine, blinking like moles. Now he wouldn't go inside at Roger's house. He would sit on the doorstep and then there would be an hour or so when he and Roger could play before going to school together.

It was such a convenience having Rhoda living so near. The trouble was that with Rhoda drinking so much, Muriel worried about the effects on Roger and therefore, on Edward. But there was no latch-key program near enough so for this school year at least, Edward played with Roger before and after school. He was quite

happy with the arrangement and Rhoda said it kept Roger out of her hair.

Rhoda's was east of the apartment and the bus stop was west, but Muriel walked Edward over every morning and then ran back to catch her bus. Overprotective, the doctor said she was, but there were so many dangers to a seven year old. Usually it was a nice time of morning, just before the traffic rush, with Edward skipping and happy. But this morning he was subdued as he always was when she was irritable. The fact that he had to be so sensitive to Muriel's moods, irritated her even more. Why had she allowed herself to run out of Brewer's Yeast?

Why don't I have a daddy? Edward asked suddenly.

Same reason Roger doesn't. Do most kids at your school have daddies?

Some of them. Why don't I?

Because I don't have a husband, I suppose.

Could Paul be your husband?

He has a wife.

Where?

Somewhere in the interior. He goes to visit his kids a lot.

Did you ever have a husband?

No.

Why not?

Nobody asked me. Remember I told you all about the farm where I was brought up? Well, when I got older, there used to be these dances. Country dances usually were held in the school in the evenings. Everybody went to them, not just young people. Mothers, fathers, children, grannies, everybody. When I got to be a teenager, I used to go to them sometimes, only I never got to dance. In those days, us young ladies were supposed to sit on the benches along the sides of the dance floor and wait for some young man to come over and ask us to dance. No young man ever came over to ask me. I used to practice dancing at home so I'd know how, just in case somebody asked me. But nobody ever did. So there I'd be, waiting and waiting for someone to ask me, and the little old ladies would look at me in surprise, as if they didn't know nobody asked me, and say: but why aren't you dancing? And I would turn all red and say something like, my feet hurt. They knew it was because nobody asked me that I wasn't dancing, but just the same they would look surprised all over and exclaim: *but why aren't you dancing?*

That wasn't fair, was it?

No, but lots of things aren't fair. Well, here we are. Have a nice day.

Muriel hugged the boy, then ran back to the bus stop. Two buses went by before one stopped for the crowd now gathered there. They all crowded onto the bus, standing, crushed against each other. Did Mayor Phillips ever try riding the bus every day during the rush hour? Of course not. It was mostly women who were jammed in during those worst hours. Men made enough money to own cars or ride in taxis. Women rode buses, crowded in, clinging to the stanchions, feet already aching.

Why did Edward suddenly ask about a daddy? All these years he had accepted his fatherless state. Why now? Roger was older and Edward mostly did what Roger did, and Roger never bugged Rhoda about a daddy. At least Edward had never asked, had not yet asked . . . Surely he knew that somewhere he did indeed have a biological father. She had explained to him all about how babies were made and Roger also knew all about it.

Once years ago when Edward was just a toddler, they were at Trout Lake and there, to Muriel's surprise, they met the elusive daddy, strolling along. Young and handsome. Dashing, was the right description.

You look dashing, Muriel had said, not smiling.

You're looking good yourself, he had replied, smiling. But not looking at the toddler by her side.

Still chasing around? Muriel had asked and he stopped smiling.

Still bitter, I see, he remarked. You'll corrode.

Not so badly. I have compensations. She looked down at Edward as she spoke, but Edward's daddy went away without so much as a glance at the boy. Muriel knew that if there had been no child by her side, he would have been charming and seductive and perhaps she would have followed him home again.

Muriel and Edward didn't go to Trout Lake park again. Even though the number of places one could go with a child were so limited. Children, the future of the society, had no place in the society. Children weren't supposed to be seen in supermarkets, laundromats, restaurants, stores, movies, or any other place that people gathered. Children were to be imprisoned in their homes — no matter how inadequate those homes. And increasingly, as the society grew wealthier, the homes of the children deteriorated. Children lived in basements, wore rags, ate macaroni and cheese.

Leftovers was all the wealthy society had to offer children. Just as

Edward was a leftover from a short affair his father had once had. One of the hundreds of affairs he'd had. He — Edward's daddy — never once connected fucking with children. Fucking was fun. Children were a nuisance — a pest, like mosquitoes, to be sprayed out of existence with DDT if possible; otherwise just ignored. Muriel had never told him that the short and sordid affair (for her — for him, it was just casual fun) had resulted in a child. She had considered it. But how did one say something like that? There was no modern language for the situation. Like man, you've knocked me up! No, they didn't use that expression any more. Our union has been blessed with a progeny? Even more absurd and old-fashioned. One night she phoned to tell him, but he was almost never home. She dialled and dialled with a kind of insane determination, and when she finally got him at home one day, she only said distantly she had the wrong number and hung up.

Edward was a diaphragm baby. Roger was an IUD baby. So long ago . . . Geraldine had abortions. Geraldine was so young, so beautiful. Verily she was beautiful, and verily she was young, and verily she had now been dead a long time . . . Before Edward was born, Geraldine was dead, and even before Edward was conceived. Geraldine's last abortion resulted in infection and sterility and she claimed to be happy about that. Geraldine was beautiful and fun-loving. She worried about gaining weight and her doctor gave her uppers to lose weight. She worried about insomnia and her doctor gave her downers to sleep. Then Geraldine worried about acquiring a dependence on drugs so she took all her drugs at once. She had been dead a long time now. Rhoda took pills all at once too several times, but she wasn't beautiful and fun-loving and didn't die so easily.

Muriel's day at work was like most days at work. Busy. Interesting. She liked working because she got to meet people and talk to people in the course of every day living. Once she had gone on unemployment insurance because Edward as a small boy complained bitterly that he was the first child to arrive at the day care centre and the last to leave. But then they couldn't afford a proper apartment and Muriel longed for adult companionship. She liked working, most days. But this day she worried all day about all sorts of things and the day dragged on and on. Finally she was on another crowded bus, clinging to a stanchion. The evening rush hour was different than the morning one in that the crush of people stunk — nervous sweat from the day's stress.

Muriel leaned against the stanchion, daydreaming about Paul and wishing she hadn't run out of Brewer's Yeast. How many dozens or hundreds of women were even now suffering the nameless, endless sense of doom the pill produced?

A seat emptied after Broadway, and Muriel grabbed it. Next to her was an old lady with a cane, who got off at the next stop. She was shaking all over and got off the bus with great difficulty.

And why aren't you dancing? Muriel muttered after her, and slid over to sit by the window. A large woman clutching a shopping bag sat down next to her.

And then . . . A head was rolling down Victoria. Farther up the street was a large stain of blood, but the head itself was not bleeding, just rolling gently along. It had grey hair but Muriel couldn't tell if it was male or female.

For a split second, her breathing stopped and her mouth opened to scream — then just as suddenly she realized it was a hallucination. Shaking, she looked away and then back again, and there was no head, no blood, just people walking along the sidewalk.

Oh god, oh god, she muttered to herself. She was going crazy and for a moment wasn't sure if it was from the pill or not. It had never happened before so it was most likely the pill. What then? Should she give up Paul or the pill? Why had she run out of Brewer's Yeast?

Next month she would do better, she thought. But the laundromat had gone up to 50¢ a machine. Pork had nearly doubled in price in only a few months. Edward needed some new winter clothes.

Oh god, oh god, she muttered, clenching her fists.

Are you all right? the large woman next to her asked.

Oh yeah, Muriel said, forcing a smile. Just, you know, money and problems like that.

The woman nodded and began talking about the price of bread. She was a tired-looking woman in a worn coat, carrying a tattered shopping bag.

When Muriel got to Rhoda's, she found both the boys outside.

Auntie Rhoda is in a bad mood, Edward told her, and she said to tell you she didn't want to talk.

Okay. Want to come over to our house, Roger?

Naw, I'm gonna make supper.

Roger liked cooking and probably appreciated Rhoda getting

drunk and incapable. (Singing "another man done gone," the way she always did when she was drunk).

How come I can't walk home myself? Edward asked.

I like walking with you. When I'm by myself I'm always running. With you, I walk and appreciate things I wouldn't notice otherwise.

Do I drive you crazy, Mom?

Huh? Am I going crazy?

Auntie Rhoda says Roger drives her crazy.

Oh, she just says that. It isn't Roger.

What then?

Life. I don't know. Hamburger or chicken for supper?

Is Uncle Paul coming?

I don't think so. Not until the weekend. After payday. We'll buy something super to eat, and we'll buy some flowers, eh? And maybe even a new t-shirt for you. And we'll clean the house and get shined up all spiffy . . .

Hamburger.

Meat loaf, curried, how?

Just hamburgers.

Rice, potatoes, or on a bun?

Potatoes.

No choice of vegetables. All we got left is parsnips.

At the apartment, Muriel started mixing together bread crumbs, onions, for the hamburger. Edward put on a Beatles record, then came to help with the hamburger patties. He liked squishing around in the meat and making odd-shaped patties.

Do you and Uncle Paul go dancing sometimes?

No, why? Oh yeah, I told you that story this morning . . . No, he doesn't like dancing, he said.

Will you teach me?

Nobody does that old style dancing any more. Now each person dances by themselves and they just do whatever makes them feel good. Like you do. I can't do that kind of dancing. Maybe you should teach me.

Edward started dancing around the kitchen.

Is this good, Mom?

Great. You move loose and easy. And you're growing up so handsome, the girls will all simply swoon . . . Wash your hands.

But the boy continued dancing — lithe and graceful. Like . . . Muriel immediately banished the thought. He rarely looked like his father unlike Roger who Rhoda once told her was the spittin' image.

There wasn't any Brewer's Yeast but there was some Scotch, always kept around in case Paul dropped by. Muriel poured herself a small drink and watched Edward dancing around the room. He had forgotten her presence now, nor needed her approval, he just danced lithe and easy and absorbed. Then Muriel noticed his hands were still covered with hamburger.

For a moment the red rage possessed her again. She turned to see that the supper was cooking all right, then poured another small drink.

She thought about Rhoda singing another man done gone, she thought about Edward's biological father who didn't care he had a son, she thought about the basements she and Edward had lived in. In two days it would be payday, she could buy some vitamins and everything would be all right again.

Or would it? She was about to commit another terrible crime in regard to Paul — the worst sin a woman can commit. Love. Women can kill and steal with little punishment but for the sin of loving a man, they are punished by deprivation, ridicule, imprisonment, forcible taking of disabling drugs. If that didn't work, they were sentenced to death and like Geraldine, drank their allotted cup of hemlock.

What would happen to Edward if she was incapable of coping any more? She thought of them each being dragged through a series of separate institutions. Edward would grow subdued and bewildered while a series of learned men studied him to discover why he was no longer dancing.

Nahid Rachlin

MOTHER AND CHILD

Khanom Joon visited her daughter, Maryam, about once a month. She lived with another one of her daughters and came always accompanied by one or two and sometimes all seven of that daughter's children. She was with all the children that day. They walked through narrow streets with high brick and straw walls and ancient plane and cypress trees. They walked very slowly — Khanom Joon had to sit down frequently on doorsteps to rest and catch her breath. She breathed then in quick spasms, giving out hissing sounds. The children climbed trees, chased each other and jumped over the gutters of water while she rested.

When they arrived Maryam had just finished rinsing clothes in the pool of water in the courtyard and was hanging them on a rope. Although she was very fat and her front teeth were yellow and protruding, once she had been beautiful. Her eyes were large and shadowed by thick dark lashes. She had massive black hair and a beauty spot on the right corner of her upper lip.

"Finally you come for a visit," she said. She was the only one of Khanom Joon's daughters who did not have children and therefore felt the least favoured by her. Khanom Joon's visits only reminded Maryam how rarely she came and how soon she left.

Maryam unrolled a rug in a corner and, taking Khanom Joon's hand, she led her to it. Khanom Joon sat cross-legged against the wall, letting her *chador* fall over her shoulders. "I don't have the breath to come all the way here any more," she said, closing her eyes and pursing her lips so that her face, full of deep and interweaving wrinkles, looked like an overly ripened fruit.

The children were running up and down the steps of the verandah, climbing the plum tree, or sitting on the fence of the flat roof. Their voices alerted the other inhabitants of the house to the presence of visitors. Fatemeh, the sister of Maryam's late husband, came out of her room, walking with a stick. Because of a condition in her spine her back had become progressively more and more bent and now was almost at right angles with her feet. Her white hair which had turned orange with henna dangled before her like a

flame. "You brighten our eyes with your presence," she said and sat on the rug.

They began to talk about Mehri, one of Khanom Joon's grown up grandchildren whose two daughters had been engaged for a year but were unable to get married because their parents could not afford their dowry. Khanom Joon sighed at Mehri's bad fate — her husband did not earn enough money and her son had gotten hit by a truck and died a year before and since then she had sudden fits and convulsions. Come to think of it, Khanom Joon said, all her grandchildren from that daughter had bad luck — one of them had lost all her hair for no apparent reason and no suitor would marry her and another one, a boy of eighteen, had gone astray, staying away at night, who knows where. This reminded Fatemeh of her own plight, her only daughter Aghdas. . . .

Aghdas opened the door of her room and came out into the yard. She lived in a corner room, overlooking two busy streets, where she would sit for long hours and watch the passers-by. Perhaps if she had not looked at so many men on the street, her mother had said once, she would not have become what she had. Aghdas was wearing a thin *chador* with a bright flower design which did not properly cover her hair or her dark, skinny arms. Her face was thin and dark and pock marked, brushed over by rouge.

She greeted Khanom Joon formally, not looking at her, and went towards the outside door.

"Running around all the time," her mother said bitterly. "What for? Does a man have his cock hardened and ready for you?"

"You shut up or else . . ." Aghdas walked away swiftly. If it were not for Khanom Joon she might have paused to slap her mother or push her over, whispering, "Cripple."

Maryam had finished hanging the clothes and sat down too.

"You come here less and less often," she said to Khanom Joon, tears gathering in her eyes. "I live all alone. She has her husband and children and you go and live with her."

"What do you mean? I love you more than all my other children. I have suffered for you the most." Khanom Joon took out her false teeth as she always did in troubled moments, making her mouth sink all the way in her face.

* * *

The house in which Maryam lived, in an old section of Teheran, was large, square, and made of rust coloured brick. It had many

verandahs and vari-shaped windows, covered by intricately designed wrought iron. The columns on the verandahs and fireplaces in the rooms were friezed with roses, fruit and lion heads. The courtyard was large and full of flower beds and trees. Now the walls had faded to yellow, the doors and even the trunks of some trees were full of holes — eaten by termites — the lion heads were chipped, losing part of a mane or a nose, and some of the flower beds were empty, leaving gaps on the surface of the cobble-stoned ground.

It had been a grand house once, lit at night by pressure lamps hung everywhere — on the trees, hallways, doors — and by the fires under huge pots cooking food. A lot of food was needed to feed the large household, the poor neighbours who drifted in, and beggars coming to the door. The women in the household — Maryam, her sisters-in-law and her husband's aunts and nieces — would spend the day preparing for dinner, washing and chopping up vegetables, sifting flour, cleaning up rice and lentils and cutting meat from sometimes whole cadavers of lamb.

Men would eat in one room and the women in another. First the women would spread a large, rectangular cloth in each room and bring in trays of hot food and fruit, neatly arranged on large platters. Men and women would sit cross-legged around the cloths in their separate rooms and eat loudly, talking and laughing.

After supper the women would take away the dishes and pile them up in the kitchen to be washed the next day. Then, abruptly, everyone would get into their beds and go to sleep except for Maryam who stayed awake, watching the shiny gold-rimmed vases, the pendulum of the clock, and the light coming in through slatted blinds. Why had it been her fate to bear no children, she wondered? On one of these nights she had tiptoed past the other women sleeping in her room, entered her husband's room, and climbed beside him. She had brushed her hand against his hair and face, over his bare chest but he had kept snoring and had not awakened.

Her husband was old, bald, fat, and gentle but he always slept separate from Maryam. He was fifty-five years old, Maryam sixteen, and after two years of marriage he died in his sleep.

"He was always gentle and quiet," Maryam cried. "He never bothered anyone even in his death."

Then one of her sisters-in-law died and some of the other members of the household became scattered . . . There was an auction, porters coming in, carrying away velvetine furniture, blue china and vases, and silk cloths and mattresses.

After a while Maryam married for the second time. This time she married a young man who wore suits and a white folded handkerchief in his front pocket. Whereas her first husband had been a baker, the second one was educated and worked in an office. He had a ruddy face with thick lips and tiny eyes and winked at Maryam before leaving for work.

Maryam began to notice things missing around the house and sometimes she could not find the money she had put on the mantle or in her purse. And one afternoon, peeping into the room, where her husband was visiting with a young boy, she found them in an embrace, naked . . .

Khanom Joon had suffered for Maryam through her divorce from that man and through the period when she would sit in the dim basement and refuse to talk to anyone or at the edge of the water tank, staring at its black ripples.

All that had happened a long time ago and now Maryam could smile at the mention of his name. "He married me to take away the few *toomans* I had," she would say.

* * *

At lunch time Mohammed, Khanom Joon's oldest son, joined them. He was a clerk in the city hall and would walk over to his sister's house every day, saying, "I'd rather take a break from them," them, meaning his two wives. He was a dark handsome man but his left eye was almost blind and that made him stare when he spoke. As a young boy he had, when hunting pigeons, let go of the bow at the wrong time and hit himself in the eye. He had married his second wife to have a child and he kept the first one for companionship. Although the younger wife was the one who had given him a child it was the older one who still had charge of things. She bathed the child and sewed her clothes. She cooked and gardened and at night it was she who spread their beddings, making sure there was a certain space between each.

The seven children had stopped running around and were sitting down to eat the noodle and lentil soup that Maryam was famous for. With relish, Maryam filled their bowls, urging them to eat as much as possible since she had made so much.

"Poor Maryam! She always loved children and God made her childless," Mohammed said. "His will is beyond our understanding."

Simin, the most affectionate child of the seven dawdled towards

Maryam and sat beside her, embracing her with her single arm. She was eleven years old but she was only about three feet tall, had an enlarged head and one arm. Her mother had taken thalidomide while pregnant and even though the doctor had said that was the cause of the child's deformity everyone wondered if she was not some kind of punishment — it would be too much for a mother to have seven healthy children.

“Don't worry, you'll have a child,” she said to Maryam in her high, tinny voice. “I dreamt about it last night.”

Everyone laughed.

“I'm fifty years old and have no husband,” Maryam said, embracing her also and swaying her back and forth. “She has always been my favourite niece.”

“She thinks she has trouble,” Khanom Joon said to Fatemeh. “It's not easy to raise seven children.” Turning her eyes slightly towards Simin, she whispered, “And she . . . it's heart breaking. Luckily she is very smart and she's learned to take care of herself.”

Fatemeh shook her head. “She's a lovely child.”

“And don't you think I didn't have my problems when my husband passed away and I had to find a home for every one of my six children.” Again she lowered her voice. “And my two sons were not always tame.”

Fatemeh did not reply. She was having a spasm in the muscles of her back.

After lunch they all took naps and then had tea. Mohammed said he would not return to work that afternoon but would take a stroll through the bazaars. Fatemeh retired into her room to do her work, sewing buttons on army jackets for a local factory.

Khanom Joon and the children began to leave too. Maryam stood by the door and watched them walk away on the long, narrow street. She watched until they disappeared. By then the sun had jumped high up on the walls and trees. Soon it would be time for evening prayers and then all the neighbours would shut their doors and she would be alone in her room.

After her prayers she opened the koran and read it late into the night. She read some parts several times, aloud.

When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star.
He said: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: I
love not things that set.

And when he saw the moon uprising, he exclaimed: This is my Lord. But when it set, he said: Unless my Lord guide me I surely shall become one of the folk who are astray.

And when he saw the sun uprising, he cried: This is my Lord! This is greater! And when it set he exclaimed: Oh my people! Lo! I am free from all that ye associate with him.

Lo! I have turned my face toward Him who created the heavens and the earth, as one by nature upright, and I am not of the idolaters.

She felt lifted as if rising up. Her cheeks grew cool, the ferment in her heart quieter.

* * *

Then Khanom Joon stopped coming altogether. Her breathing had become worse and she could no longer stand up or walk without feeling dizzy. She sat on a rocking chair in the courtyard of her other daughter's house, a blanket spread over her legs and watched the children's activities. Sometimes she would be angry at what they did and scold them or try to settle a fight between them. Sometimes they would gather around her and ask her to tell them a story.

"Khusraw Shah was so pleased when a fisherman presented him with a huge, beautiful fish that he ordered his treasurer to give the man . . ." she would begin but her breathing would become hard and she would feel her hands shaking.

Maryam and her other children came frequently and visited her. Gradually their presence blended into one and their voices into voices from the past. A calf bellowing as it was being milked, hammers banging against metal in a bazaar, her mother calling to her, "Be careful. Don't lean so far." She was a little girl leaning over the parapet on the flat roof of their house, watching kites circling in the sky along with hawks and blackbirds. Behind them she could see a wide expanse of the town — the shiny domes of mosques, the red cloths hanging on the top of public baths, trees and faraway smoke of a factory . . .

Then she could no longer sit on a chair and had to be moved inside to a bed. There she would look at trees swaying against the clouds. The clouds would become animal shapes and she would fight them with her hands or they would become flowers and she would hold and smell them.

She was unable to feed or wash herself. Her daughters took turns coming over and taking care of her.

In a family conference it was decided it was best to transfer her to Maryam's house since Maryam lived alone and had more time than the rest of them.

* * *

During the day when Maryam was busy with housework, Fate-meh would sit by Khanoom Joon and sew buttons. At noon Mohammed would come in to feed Khanom Joon. When he told her about his wives and their quarrels she did not seem to listen. Instead, gazing at the portraits on the wall of Ali with a halo around his head, she would smile or whisper something, "We're not fighting mother," or, "He's hiding up the tree."

Maryam fed her at night slowly, taking pains that the food would not dribble down her chin, imagining her growing, her limbs and face becoming fuller.

Then she changed her clothes and the bedspread and, drawing the curtains, she read to her from the koran.

And the pangs of childbirth drove her into the trunk of the palm tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!

Then one cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee.

And shake the trunk of the palm tree towards thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee.

At these words Khanom Joon's face would become alert, and, fixing her eyes on Maryam, she would listen with the curiosity of a child.

NOW THE KING IS BURIED

You can hide the corpse but I hear the bones
Talking behind your back.
I can see the ghost that haunts your hair
The hollow places behind your eyes
The maze that runs beneath
The tight skin of your face.

I've seen your black book
I've seen the needles and the sharp scissors.
Seen the boxes in the hallway
And the stars you painted on the ceiling.

Now the King is buried
Cats purr where his ears used to be.
His feet pointing west are wrapped in yellow cloth —
He thinks he's cool but he looks dead to me.
And you — grave warden in costume and feathers
Hold the plastic wreath and the little red key.

ORIGINS

Take me to that grinning labyrinth
Where your myth hold foundations fast —
To your source where roots grow invisible
Where an ever full well hoards your past.
Take me to *the place of favorite games*.
Soothe me with histories of secret longings, tender lusts
Take me to where each of us returns hoping to break the spell
(But none do — not even you — held in the past as in a velvet claw.)

Your sister that haunted huntress hands me lies
And truths too bitter to believe
And memories too sweet to forget
And I love her as I catch the broken reflection of your face
The blue eyes flickering/ Lizard's tongue spits
Pain. Anger. Laughter. Desire.
(You — *blind* in pleasure.)

Your *look* — so many uncertainties — so much distrust
So much longing, so much wanted, so great a need for sweetness.

You moved towards me easily I kneeled took you into my face after
You traced the lips that held you and later
The ease with which you found my careening center with your
tongue —

Believe me when I say that I chased you not with hidden anger but
rather
From the fear of so great a pleasure
So vast a giving —

MYTHOLOGY

*You see I could eat myself for the poem
But then the poem would eat me*

I pull away before you can grow in me
Where you have left tattoos my arms are bloody
The mica walls within me are sliced too fine
Did I pull away in time?
I feel I fear the black root you wished into me.

Your sleep is a heavy stone sinking in silt
And mine a race a chase to the next peace

Little eaglet your perch spotted with moss
Your little beak childish before the strike
Your witch's look a torture chamber
A chamber of mirrors
And lovely —

Jeffrey Schaire

Three Selections from "The Songs of Purchase"

ONE

the blue sweater
so thick I was a bear
secretes pale pearls of camphor
between its folds:
her big flaccid arms
wound memory into the closet
where you are a snail
wrinkling the pale
tablecloths: pressed as new

TWO

dreams
still
lift the lid
of her old box of buttons
like an earthen vessel
of deeds:
both that which is sealed
& that which is open — finding
the silver dollar
still new & shiny
& Grandpa's teeth:
yellow ivory with a jacket
of gold

ELEVEN

what imagines me?

—
—

the molluscs —
half-stone
whorling
empty as
the nautilid
she gave you
split & revealed
rooms spiralled backward
to embrace:
shoeboxes
with their moonshells
& venuses: tan &
rose vulvas
as garden decorations
you would edge
her grave
with these homes

—
—
—
—

Pharoah
the place of miniatures
I made
from stone

REUNION

Tonight is made of shadows
ripped from their objects,
and the hands rise out
of their rivers
to move like beacons
searching for something to hold.

The hands rush to our shoes
empty all the sand;
they rush to our hair,
comb out all the thistles;
they dig holes in the ground
toss in sand and thistles.
They are planting them, burying them.

Now the hands rise again
gripping unlit torches
groping for the lost fire
that reddened their veins.

And finally they descend
to huddle
like animals in the rain.
Now the hands reach out
to rub their palms together.
They are striking up a new flame.

DAWN POEM

Dawn nudges.
Alone I sit, puckered
and singular as a candle stub,
shifting black landscapes on white space.

From some unforeseeable canyon
the muse must come —
the muse with the aurora borealis voice
who will midwife the light.

But dawn nudges.
The streetlights blanch at the threat.
The buildings stammer their pale details.
Night scratches its belly
and lumbers off to curl in the alley.

I had wanted birds to fly from my pen.
I had wanted leaves to sprout from my fingers
and a brook to part round my tongue.

But dawn nudges.
And I never exposed that one particular sun
as it embarked to name the hills.

WINTER PLANTING SONG

the tree which grew
in the orchard has become
a moon pale as the ghost
of a season

I push myself against
the white window of the moon
and look in

I am seeding the earth
dropping grain into holes
that echo like forgotten wells

I lie beside you
in the frozen night
the river is dead
iced to its floor
and dead poplars
scrape against clouds fleeing east

IN THE GUATEL

In the telephone building
a man was telling me the secrets
of government in the country.

He spoke of assassinations,
the obliteration of names,
the crushing of losers
like grain between the grinding stones.

I asked who lost.
He looked outside at the street
where gunmen with dark boots
and machine guns were
contemplating the horns of
the crescent moon
and the stars were softly eroding
the white sides of a cathedral.

He wrote a name on a newspaper
and held it up just long enough
for me to read it.
Then he crossed it out again
and again, until the paper
was as dark as the sky outside the doors.

Lorna Uher

DEPENDENCE

The maple, dry and leafless,
Leans toward the creek.
Its roots dig only toes
Into the wrinkled bank.
One day it will topple,
Clap the water,
And dragged by a wet cord
Rot downstream on a hoof-marked shore
Where the sun will lick the color
From the rich, scaling bark.

When you feel me leaning
Push me upright,
And walk away.

This poem is reprinted from the previous issue, where the author's name was inadvertently misspelt.

K. White

POEM

not like a woman; not ashamed
of being male;
not for loves or futures not
planned for the grand continuity;
nor for any bland acquiescent fulfillment
of acknowledged roles and "sorts":
not to give birth, but to hold
a child within my body:
not to birth, but to hold;
that excellent parasitism;
and my mother belly
pores open to recite body;
open; the song dance thing
belly centered to grow
(as small balls of perfect round
air must grow
on the wings of long drowned birds);
I have no one to ask the methods
for determining new sacraments; it is
like swallowing a bird if I wish to swallow
my hand
and consider this right; necessary;
catching it to grow; or,
hoping to justify by mimicking an older order,
not the pouch I can imagine devised to receive
my own semen; nor the complex mechanics
of an accurate, functional sexual organ pair;
neither serves the need;
for the body as house

SHADES

I lie awake
nights in your arms
the ghosts so thick
under your fingers
I am clothed
in other women's bodies
oh yes this is
what it was like
 for them
 one time
 a last time lying
 helpless eyes locked
 emptied into yours
how many will
you will to thus
remember me

RELEASE

solitary months after before
her mirror she watches intrigued
she is devolving slowly the
flesh has peeled bones break
through the skin where he kissed
her shoulder the visible joint
stiffens the cartilage whitening
thickening and now plates of bone
creep down slicing through her
breasts joining locking with the
protruding fingers of ribs he used
to stroke the shredded skin behind
them sinking into masses of
congealing organs disappearing too
as the bones expand laterally
the neck folding in upon itself the
skull sucking ears lips eyes out
of their sockets and more
bone sealing over the orifices
a mollusc visible to herself no
longer touchable nor again to
touch immovable impenetrable and
unperturbed

A. Delaney Walker

REVIEW

Poet Cop by Hans Jewinski, Simon and Schuster of Canada Ltd., 1976.

Poems Written in the Dark, with a Story by David Castleman, 1975.

In Praise of Old Women by Marya Fiamengo, Valley Editions, Ottawa, 1976.

Harbour Light by David Conn, Fiddlehead Poetry Book, 1976.

Ghost Call by David Cloutier, Copper Beech Press, distributed by Book People, Berkeley, Calif.

Discord threw the golden apple with the inscription, "for the fairest." Of the above books, each wins an award, but only one wins the apple: *Poet Cop* for best PR job, *Poems Written in the Dark, with a story* for the best short story, *In Praise of Old Women* for the best layout (excluding the cover), *Harbour Light* for the best workman's guide to harbours, and, "for the fairest" book of poetry, *Ghost Call*.

Cloutier has the essential ingredient that makes poetry poetry and not just self-indulgent drivel that Jewinski borders on too often, that Castleman trips over with his intellectual vocabulary, that Fiamengo covers with lace curtains and that Conn records, never transcending the exterior.

Ghost Call has myth:

They bit their tongues
in order to forget
they smudged ashen crosses
on their foreheads to forget
what's the real what
of two paths that meet

Poet Cop, printed in a paperback edition of 30,000 copies is an unbalanced book. It wobbles between cruel, cold poems and self-indulgent introspection:

she has theories
of self, of individual.
she has theories of love
but she won't mute
her music even if i do
have to go to work
early in the morning.

Packed between this drivel and some excellent short poems, such as "tracks" and "blue jean baby queen" are black and white photographs. Every other page. Between 62 poems and at least 30 photographs, there are approximately 15 good poems. When Jewinski stops being the self-conscious cop with a pen, his light sarcasm breathes in "high rise farmers" and "julliete and her friends visit cherry beach." *Poet Cop* attempts to bring a screen-sized image of the streets to readers but captures only one centimeter of the picture. Most of *Poet Cop* doesn't merit serious consideration in the world of poetry, only the PR job does: 30,000 paperback copies of a first book, with thirty some black and white photographs, and in Canada?

Poems Written in the Dark, with a story copyrighted by David Castleman and promoted and published by unknowns and unnamed, is a vast improvement over *Poet Cop*. Although this book wins the best short story award, Castleman's poetry often overcomes the intellectual distance he speaks from. It is in his short story, "Beast of Burden" that his fault in poetry is totally in control and entrancing.

"Beast of Burden" is a mythical fantasy tale, resplendent with a lush, strange village that flourishes in an extinct volcano. The adventures of the two characters in the story are told well. Castleman's excellent images and vocabulary allow no stumbling in prose:

Each night we slept in a nook behind a bush, for so the dwarfed and horny trees appeared. I was often afraid for the first time I'd attempt sleepwalking, but I did not, and eventually we were at the summit, weary and famished. The mountain appeared some variety of crater, perhaps an obsolete volcano . . . Within lay an eden . . . One side was intense woodland, composed predominately of pine and bamboo, . . . the other side was verdant farm, clean and jungly with crops and flowers, and, near the center of the riverline, eighty or ninety huts.

In Praise of Old Women by Marya Fiamengo mentions murders,

deaths, Jews, Russia, the Middle East and a host of other politically relevant events. But the soul that veils the poetry is too soft, too wispy and thin. Never does the poetry strike a strong chord. It is cobwebbed romanticism straining for reality. *In Praise of Old Women* lacks gripping images that remain in the memory after one has finished the small book:

Nothing charms me more
than hearing German spoken
at West Bay.
Of course, it is West German,
post-fascist and politically redeemed
by Nato and Marshall aid.

The one poem that has a glimmer of inner light is the title poem, and then, that glimmer flickers only in a few lines. From the first verse:

Yes, Tadeusz Rozewich, I too
prefer old women.
They bend over graves
with flowers,
they wash the limbs of the dead,
they count the beads of their rosaries,
they commit no murders
they give advice
or tell fortunes,
they endure.

“they endure” has been passionately proclaimed in poetry, novels, movies and every other art form. Fiamengo writes ‘they endure’ tritely.

Harbour Light by David Conn is Vancouver’s wharfsmen’s guide to introductory poetry 101. Conn, like Fiamengo and Castleman, has difficulty in creating images from his vast intellectual verbiage. Never do the poems reach further than the photographer’s eye as in “Summer Harbour”:

The workers saunter amid raucous
machine noises, yellow hardhats
bobbing down the wharf. Today they
are strong, cheerful with contentment
of men engaged in common enterprise.

Jewinski, Castleman, Fiamengo and Conn have problems with language. Jewinski's problem is simplicity bordering on stupidity. The others are too involved with words, not images and experiences. With a simplicity of language and precision of experience, David Cloutier writes in "Wolf":

King Iron atop the rocks overlooking

The lake

King Gray with his furs of fog

There's an eye

That struggles

with the air's

Thousand lights

Comparing *Ghost Call* to the other books of poetry is like comparing a spring cherry blossom tree with punctured plastic balloons.

Poetry is the welding of language with deep, personal experience. When the experience is so deep and the language so excellent, the resultant poetry transcends the individual poet. Only Cloutier achieves this goal. Jewinski is the McKuen of the streets who may never improve. Castleman trips over his intellect in poetry, but surpasses himself in prose. Fiamengo is thin and unsurprising in her images. Conn is fixated on being a worker who writes.

David Cloutier wins the golden apple "for the fairest" book of poetry. The others should follow Castleman's lead and write prose. Only Cloutier in *Ghost Call* knows his own soul:

I fall down

my throat

to speak you

You of this place

Cloutier speaks and *Ghost Call* radiates beauty.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Kobo Abé was born in Tokyo in 1924 but grew up in Mukden, Manchuria, where his father, a doctor, was on the staff of the medical school. As a young man Kobo Abé was interested in mathematics and insect collecting as well as the works of Poe, Dostoevski, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Jaspers, Kafka. He received a medical degree from Tokyo University in 1948, but he has never practiced medicine. In that same year he published his first book, *The Road Sign at the End of the Street*. In 1951 he was awarded the most important Japanese literary prize, the Akutagawa, for his novel *The Crime of Mr. S. Karuma*. In 1960 his novel *The Woman in the Dunes* won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature and was made into the highly successful prize-winning film *Woman of the Dunes*. Other books include *The Face of Another* (1966); *The Ruined Map* (1969). Kobo Abé is a candidate for the Nobel Prize.

Hans (or Jean) Arp was born in 1887 in Strasbourg. Though primarily a sculptor, he wrote poems both in German and French throughout his working life. He was one of the initiators of the DADA movement. He lived mainly in Switzerland, where he died in 1966. His German poems have been collected in two volumes with a third still to come.

Roo Borson, a graduate student in the Creative Writing Department at UBC, was born in Berkeley, California in 1952 and has lived in Vancouver for the past two years. "Migrations" was the winning entry for the Macmillan Poetry Prize (UBC) 1976.

E. J. Carson is a student at the University of Toronto and is the editor of *Rune*, a periodical based at St. Michael's College.

Nicholas Catanoy was born in Romania in 1925. He is a freelance radiologist, as well as a poet, editor, translator, reviewer and interviewer. He is currently producing documentaries on Asia and Africa for television. Two of his books, *Orphée et la Machine* (interviews with 25 French writers) and *The Fiddlehead Republic* (fiction) are to be published this year.

Peter M Cummings has taught English literature at Cornell, Washington and Lee, University of Copenhagen and, presently, at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York. He has published work on Spenser, Northrop Frye, contemporary film, and philosophical aspects of long-distance bicycle touring and racing.

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco was born in Arezzo, Italy. His poems are forthcoming in *Dalhousie Review*, *Kayak*, *This Magazine*, *Canadian Forum*

and *Northern Journey*. He is the recipient of two Canada Council Awards and is included in Al Purdy's anthology "Storm Warning 2". Borealis Press will be publishing his first collection, "The Circular Dark."

Donna Dunlop lives in Toronto.

Mark Finkenbine was born in 1951 in Steubenville, Ohio. He presently lives in Bellingham, Washington, and is attending the University of British Columbia as a graduate student in the Department of Creative Writing. The story that appears in this issue won the UBC Macmillan Short Story Prize for 1976.

Irena Friedman was born in the Urals in 1944 and lived in several countries before settling in Canada in 1959. She went on to obtain an M.A. (English) from McGill and M.F.A. (Creative Writing) from the UBC, and is presently living in Toronto, looking forward to the publication of a story collection and thinking of a novel. Her work has appeared in a variety of Canadian, American and English publications (e.g. *Saturday Night*, *Tamarack Review*, *Transatlantic Review*, *Mundus Artium*) and over the CBC.

Mark Frutkin presently lives in Ottawa. His writing has appeared in recent issues of *Waves*, *Northern Journey* and *Descant*.

Yvan Goll was born in 1891 at St Dié in the Vosges. He wrote both in German and French and (during his exile in the U.S.A.) in English too. In Switzerland, during the First World War, he founded the Rhein Verlag. He lived in France, Switzerland and Germany between the wars, fleeing to America in 1939. In New York he edited the magazine *Hémisphères*. He returned to Paris in 1947 and died of leukemia in 1950. A collection of his poems, *Dichtungen*, was edited by his widow, Claire Goll, in 1960, but much of his work is to be found only in scattered volumes.

Kristjana Gunnars was born in Iceland in 1948. She studied in Oregon and Manitoba before commencing graduate studies in literature in Saskatchewan, where she now resides. She immigrated to Canada in 1969 and has since lived and worked in Squamish, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg and Regina, aside from one year's high school teaching in Iceland.

Michael Hamburger's most recent book of poems, *Ownerless Earth*, appeared in 1973. Another will be published in 1977 by Carcanet Press, who in 1975 published his collection of essays, *Art as Second Nature*. These new translations are from the bilingual anthology *German Poetry 1910-1975* to be published later this year by Urizen Books, New York, and Carcanet Press, Manchester.

Georg Heym was born in 1887 at Hirschberg, Silesia. He was prolific as a poet, short story writer and dramatist during his very short working life. Much of his work appeared in the periodical *Die Aktion*. He was drowned in 1912 in Berlin, while trying to save the life of a friend on thin ice. His collected works appeared in three volumes between 1960 and 1964.

Andrew Horvat was born in Hungary in 1946 and came to Canada with his parents as a refugee in 1956. He graduated from the University of British Columbia with an M.A. in Asian Studies. He now works as a foreign correspondent representing the German news magazine *Der Spiegel* in Japan, Korea and Taiwan. He is presently engaged in writing a novel and in translating a collection of Kobo Abé's essays.

Shizuo Ito (1906-1953) was greatly inspired by the German Romantic poet Hölderlin during his college days. After graduating in Japanese Literature at Kyoto University, he taught at a junior high school in Osaka. He died from tuberculosis at the age of forty-seven.

William Patrick Kinsella is a freelance writer and journalist from Edmonton, Alberta, who now lives in Victoria, B.C. His work has appeared in recent or forthcoming issues of *The Family Herald*, *Karake*, *Writer's Corner*, *Waves*, *Canadian Fiction Magazine* and others. He was the winner of the Edmonton Journal Literary Award, sponsored by the *Edmontonian Magazine*, in 1966.

Linda Lerner lives in Brooklyn. Her poetry has appeared in *College English*, *Epoch*, *SC Review*, *Florida Quarterly*, *North Coast Poetry Review* and others. A chapbook of her poems, tentatively called *Snow White, Years Later* is to be published soon.

Rosalind Macphee is currently completing two manuscripts with the assistance of a Canada Council grant. The poem which appears in this issue is from one of them and others have been published in *The Malahat Review*, *Ariel*, *Oasis*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Mundus Artium* and *The Canadian Forum*.

nozomi (Nozomi Riddington) was born in Japan and is now a graduate student in the Department of Asian Studies, University of British Columbia. Her own poems in English have appeared in the *Colorado Quarterly*, *Poetry Nippon* and elsewhere. These are her first translations to be published.

Morris Panych is a student of Creative Writing and Theatre at the University of British Columbia. He was born in Calgary, Alberta in 1952, and lived in Edmonton for several years before moving to the West Coast. He has worked as a freelance actor for the CBC and has been involved with amateur and professional stage since the age of

fifteen. He has been drama editor of *Revue* (Vancouver) and in 1975 was awarded the Helen Badenoch Scholarship for Creative Writing.

Anne Pitkin was educated at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she received a B.A. and an M.A. in English. Her poems have appeared in a number of periodicals throughout the United States and Canada. In 1957 she won first place in the poetry division of the Pacific Northwest Writers' Conference contest.

Helen Potrebenko gained a B.A. from Simon Fraser University then for several years drove a cab in Vancouver. She now works in an office and is active in SORWUC, the Service, Office, and Retail Workers Union of Canada, a union established for organizing women's occupations. She has contributed to numerous periodicals. In 1975 her novel *Taxi!* was published by New Star Books.

Nahid Rachlin was born in Iran and lived there until he went to study psychology in the United States. He is currently attending Stanford University on a Wallace Stegner Fellowship for Creative Writing. His work has been published in three different issues of *Shenandoah* and in an anthology, *Elements of Fiction, Introduction to the Short Story* (edited by Jack Carpenter).

Rikki (Erica Ducornet) was born in the United States and moved to Canada in 1968. She has published a number of books of poetry and fiction, most recently *From the Star Chamber* (fiddlehead poetry books) and *Wild Geraniums* (Actual Size Press). She is also well known for her book and magazine illustrations. Some of her drawings appeared in *Prism* 13:2. She has participated in group shows in Canada and the U.S.A. and recently had a one-person show at the Galerie Scollard in Toronto.

Jeffrey Schaire took a B.A. (Hon.) in Literature and Creative Writing from SUNY and is presently enrolled in the graduate program in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. He was born in Queens, New York, the son of a Polish immigrant; his parents still live in Queens. Jeff has been actively involved in editing and designed several small magazines and has published in a number of them, including *Antiphony*, *Clarendon*, *Silence 1:55*; his work was also included in *The Hudson River Anthology*. The poetry that appears in this issue is selected from his 35-part long poem entitled "The Songs of Purchase."

Gail Trebbe won the John Masefield Award in 1975 from the Poetry Society of America and has just completed a book of poetry. She lives in New York.

Robert Tyhurst was born in Halifax, N.S. in 1951. His writing has appeared in a number of periodicals, including *The Malahat Review*.

He lives in Vancouver and is doing graduate studies in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia.

Lorna Uher (reprinted from 14:3) is an English teacher and guidance counsellor in Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Her work has been included in recent issues of *Next Year Country*, *Grain*, *Skylark* and *boundary 2*.

A. Delaney Walker is a native of Chicago, Illinois. She took her B.A. in Rhetoric at the University of Illinois and her M.F.A. in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. Her poetry, stories and essays have been published in *The Chicago Tribune*, *Runes*, *Weeds*, *Left Coast Review*, *Grain* and others. She presently lives and works in San Francisco.

K. White is a graduate student in the Creative Writing program at San Francisco State University. He has been previously published in *The Parlor City Review*.

Janine Zwicky was born in the mid-50's and currently lives and works out of Calgary.

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