

avant garde fashion for the young individualist!
La gamine opening February 16

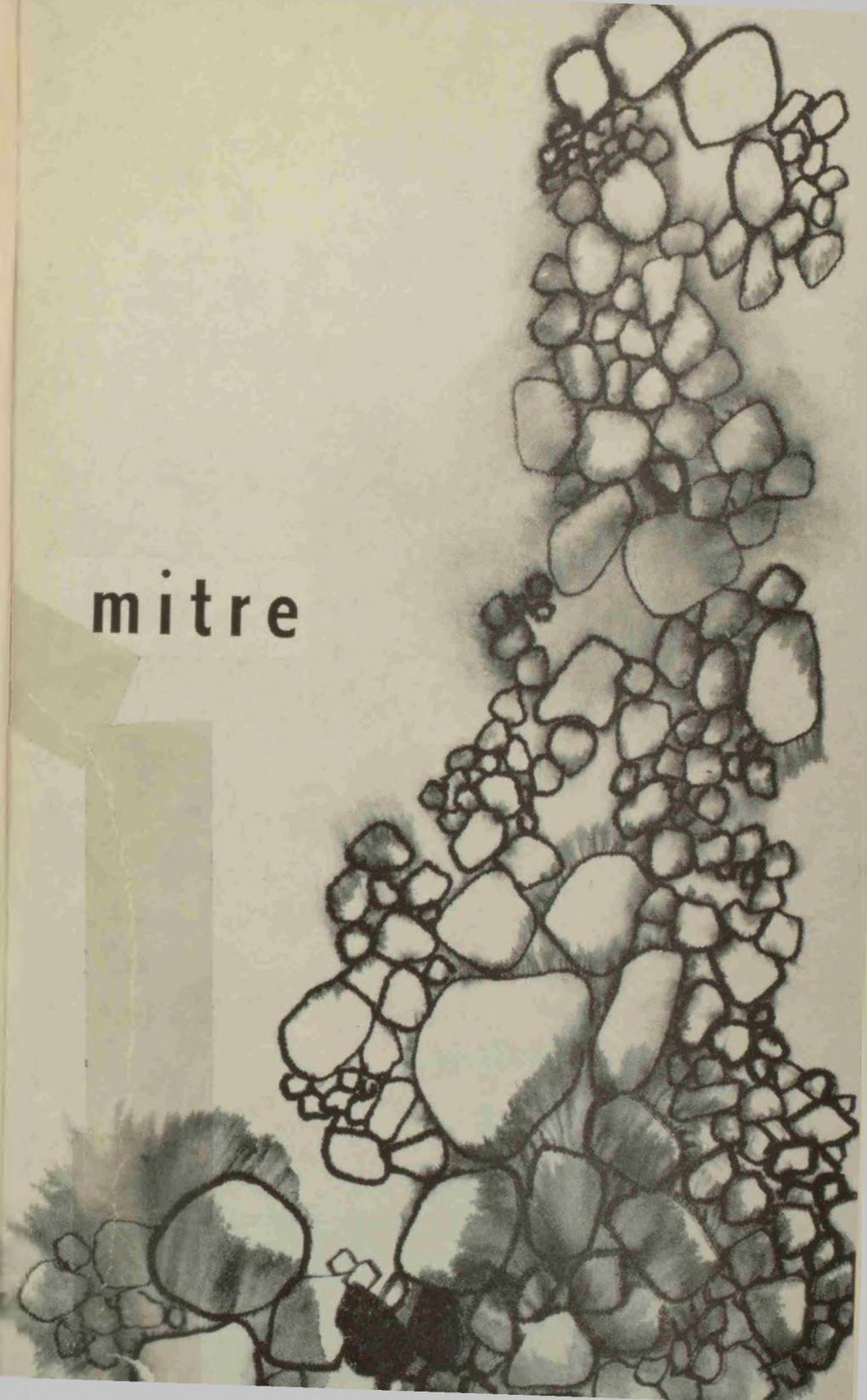
credico

vottler

The dress shown will be featured in "La gamine" boutique. 2p stairs from the downtown store 113 North Wellington Street. The shoes in shamon green with blue trim along with hand bag's jewelry and sporting items of many descriptions

MAGOG 299 Main St • SHERBROOKE 113 North Wellington St • PLACE BELVEDERE in the heart of Sherbrooke

mitre



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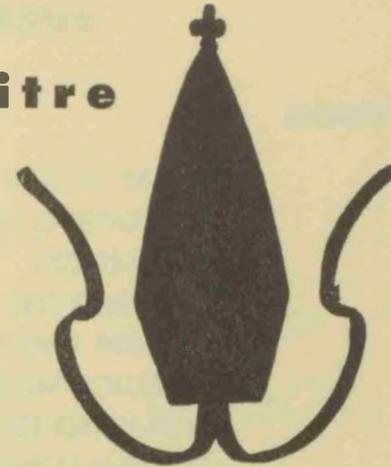


mitre

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66/67

the mitre



established 1893

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MITRE 2

66/67

For Ralph Gustafson

Poet-in-Residence

Bishop's University

introduction

This issue of the *Mitre* is dedicated to Ralph Gustafson, Poet-in-Residence, Bishop's University. Professor Gustafson was born in 1909 in Lime Ridge, Quebec, and was educated at Bishop's University and Oxford. He is the author of several books of poetry, the latest being *Sift in an Hourglass*, and a new one, *Ixion's Wheel*, to be published next year. He is also the editor of several anthologies of Canadian poetry.

The following questions were posed to Professor Gustafson in a recent interview with a few members of the editorial board of the *Mitre*.

Having worked in Britain and the United States do you feel that contemporary Canadian poetry is of a quality comparable to that of other countries, or does Canadian poetry suffer from a patronizing attitude on the part of Canadian critics?

Canadian poetry is "aware technically", "vital", and definitely on a par with the poetry of other countries. In the new poetry there exists an emotional overawareness and a sense of egocentricity. It is perhaps even more adventurous than foreign poetry, but has suffered a loss of musical rhythm. "It doesn't hear well."

Canadian poetry definitely does suffer from a patronizing attitude in that Canadian critics are largely poets themselves; consequently cliques tend to exist among the poets, and it is difficult for a poet outside these groups to obtain status.

Who are the significant younger poets writing in Canada today?

"John Newlove, Michael Ondaatje, George Bowering, Lionel Kearns, George Jonas, Tom Marshall." But again the rhythmic quality of some of this work is inadequate, and there is perhaps not sufficient tension in their poetry. In viewing *New Wave Canada* one feels there is not enough drama—a tension achieved through opposition of structural challenge.

Does Canadian poetry have the potential to produce a writer of the prestige of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, etc.?

"Yes." Canada has the potential and we are presently "clearing the ground" and approaching the point, but in the final analysis it is up to divine dispensation.

The big ones are the products of "a combination of circumstance, good luck, and God, or whatever, touching you on the shoulder; it takes a lot of living to produce a great poet". Social context is not an excuse for lack of achievement. Greatness demands a universal scope of mind and the power to shape experiences.

What are your feelings about the responsibility of an anthologist to select those writers who will represent Canadian literature outside Canada?

The anthologist has a great responsibility. He must be "catholic, eclectic; he presents Canadian work which will be read and judged abroad." The major influence of an anthologist is outside the native country. "Although I have not read the Centennial publication of Canadian verse, I fear that if poorly edited it could possibly set back Canadian poetry outside of Canada ten to twenty years".

Your latest Penguin anthology of Canadian poetry will soon be published. Do the younger writers you have chosen present a particular Canadian viewpoint or is the Canadian image they present eclectic and individualistic?

A poet writing in Canada should not consciously set out to be a Canadian poet, but a poet; a poet expresses the ethos of a nation. The Canadian identity is fascinating; Canadianism is a hinge between American and British poetry. Regionalism is not bad, and one can be universal through one's roots, as exemplified in Falkner, for instance.

What is the function of the Poet-in-Residence? Can this be a valid position if the poet must also act as a regular teaching member of the faculty?

"Yes the position is valid. It is good to be in titular contact with the students and creative minds of a University. With respect to my own poetry I find a lack of time."

Certainly for the students on campus it is an honour to have Ralph Gustafson as Poet-in-Residence, to whom we may bring our creative efforts.

editors

A. J. M. SMITH

POET IN RESIDENCE

Our Ralph? A poet is he? Walks he here
Among us studious ants in Academe?
—Head lifted, locks uncumbered, halo tipt
A trifle rakish, though invisible,
And goatsfoot sheathed in gleaming Cordovan?
Behold! Our Bishop's nourishes a bard
Again.

Where Drummond mimicked *joual*
And Scott, not yet canonical, drank deep
Of the Pierian spring, as did his son,
He sings.

Lived has he? Suffered has he? Toiled
To ply the homely slighted shepherd's trade?
—We can but guess.

Yet sure, his lyre's in tune
(His portable Corona, fact puts in)
And follows faithful whereso'ere he goes,
Be it Vienna, Knossos, Revelstoke,
Vadstena, or Milan's cathedral roof,
And pours song forth (though often gnarled with thought
And knotty syntax too) as crystalline
In Salzburg or Bayreuth as by the blue
Cold lakes that bathe the base of icy crags
And peaks Canadian that dare a man
To scale Parnassus.

How came he poet?
Who shall say? Yet read his verses as they're writ
—Not with Mind's calculating eye alone
But with the heart's, and then the secret's out,
The secret many a cryptic poem shouts
—An *ars poetica* in two small words:

my love!

ON THE APPOINTMENT OF RALPH
GUSTAFSON ESQ., AS POET IN RESIDENCE
AT BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY

The leaden Owl did erstwhile reign supreme
O'er all the darksome Groves of Academe;
But now, a marvel! a green laurel springs
And from its topmost bough a linnets sings.
Lo! as the black Professorate advance
In solemn Convocation, see, they dance!

A.J.M.S.

ON THE VERSES OF A.J.M. SMITH ESQ.,
CONGRATULATING THE AUTHOR ON HIS
APPOINTMENT AS POET IN RESIDENCE
AT BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY

The sombrous Craft, the toil, enough!
Leaf on leaf, th' umbrageous stuff.
Now through the Groves of Academe
Comes bright the first prospective gleam:
Not Honours, Residence, or worse,
But those inspiring rays, thy Verse.
Behold! the wondering Laureate views
Th' exemptive Radiance of thy Muse!

R. G.

FOUR POEMS FOR THE PRESENT

ON THE HERESY: AKHNATEN—
CAIRO MUSEUM*"The first individual in history" —*

BREASTED

*"That total lack of moral standards usually associated
with happy morons"*

PENDLEBURY

Aten, he worshipped;
 Akhnaten, he of the pendulous belly;
 One God, the sun, the golden orb.
 As he was, he had the artists carve him,
 Aquiline, handsome —
 With a stomach's pot.
 Almost the human, the humour,
 Breaks through.
 This stone —
 Here in the corner —
 Someone sketched him
 Offcuff
 While he chewed a leek.
 The artist laughs.
 A thousand pharaohs,
 Slim, trim-waisted
 March on Egypt's walls.
 Chephron carves his sphinx
 And seals his mummy in
 Geometry.
 Akhnaten smiles his smile.
 He moves magnificent from Thebes.

The lotus at Amarna's waters
 He picks for Nefertiti . . .

This is he who
 Marries his daughter, embraces his brother
 Wearies his God.

ALEXANDER IN EGYPT: LUXOR

Three gods
 Out of the many,
 Alexander chose in Egypt.
 Deep in the temple he carved the gods:
 Menn of the thrusting thigh,
 He who creates himself;
 Amen-ra, the sun,
 Great, glaring, noble,
 Lord of Lords,
 Whose grain the heavy Nile
 In sheaves, harvests;
 Ma'at, the goddess
 Truth, who in one pan of the balance
 Weighs against the heart of the dead.
 These three
 He chose,
 Remembering in the porches
 Aristotle who taught him
 What truth
 Pythias the golden-haired, his bride,
 Told him, loving,
 In the sun of Lesbos.

THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

They weren't far wrong :
the body kept
to keep the soul.
Light falls across the Nile.
I dip my hand
over the felluca's edge.
Golden, golden !
The sun falls
across the Nile.
A thousand kings sleep.
The sail stirs
and I turn.
You sit
looking where the pillars
of Karnak
lead to the River of the Dead.

AT SOUNION

Hands, sweet hands, in Egypt,
Ankh-esen-amun golden,
And she who smelled the lotus —
But never a perfume from her hair
Or the sweat in hair
(Dionysus
In all manifestation !)
Only the corridors of the dead.
Saqqara is a sand.
Wine-dark the Aegean.
Out of the slabby foam she
Stepped from,
Ochre the pillars
Above the sea,
Poseidon wrung the weed
From off his shoulder
And shifted his stance
To let his swag swing back.

*These poems will be appearing
in DIXON'S WHEEL, a new book
of poems to be published next
year.*

LOVE SONG OF THE SODOMITE

(for L.)

You lie here like a legal wife —
 snoring, pushing for your place,
 indignant at my efforts to reclaim
 just room enough to sleep.

You lie here like a regal wife —
 demanding of her mate
 the service due a queen — no more;
 your conscience clean, no moral qualms,
 you sleep — a drifting dream.

I wake and watch for the first edge of day
 to signal you to leave;
 but complaint is not malicious
 for, in love, I tolerate,
 and softly move an eight inch ear
 off from a wet black nose.

BIRCHES AND INDIAN SILVER

Outside the sun is fresh from hibernation
 and catches patches of a cheek or chin
 in a heat like a tepid bath in the morning.

A hint of spring — greeted with a passion
 greater than that of the farmer bitching
 of winter's appetite in the silo.

If the sky clouds up by five
 a birch tree might reflect a touch
 of Indian silver engraved on grey-black lacquer.

Some years ago a native craftsman
 in a land of sacred cows and cowdung
 hunched over a polished work in wood
 and shaved a groove for the metal.

Weeks of work that glossed the days into similitude
 to culminate in an economic haggle with a dealer
 who buys and ships to foreign lands
 where the inlaid curio sits

a little clouded by the dust
 shaken from the yellowed curtain
 by the sluggish cat who jumped
 to the window sill when the gas-meter man
 knocked at her door — the first to come for weeks.

But she does not carve silver ivory and bone
 in a musty hut with archaic tools
 prized for their ancestry;
 her days pass slower than they do
 for the Indian craftsman,
 are almost stopped compared to ours
 with the birch tree silver on lacquer sky.

gentle nuance,
 subtle implication:
artists' craft fashioning
 a character, words, lips,
permitting
 (graciously)
a gaze into profundity
that flees before the moment is grasped:
unattainable,
like . . .

PHAEDRA (iv)

a delicate bubble
floating across the table from me;
my arms
 palms
 and fingers splayed
encompass and hold;

I have to draw you closer—
but the pressure will make you flee
in a moment of rebellion;

I cannot remove my hands—
you stick to my palms— withdrawal
will shatter your spectrum;

my arms weaken and ache
from holding outstretched and unmoving:

only in anguish can I watch,
 across the table,
 waiting:

but we are waiting till all the wine
is drunk into its haze;
and hiding in shadows of atmospheres
we wait for the scenes to expire,
destroyed in a vulgar flash of normal light
washing subtle tones away with the stains on the floor.

now feel a chasm gulping breaths of perception
into that spot somewhere in your head that's a void
despite the castles and beaches and walls that we built
on the table reflecting our eyes in the wine
that forgave and forgave till we sank into debt
that can only be paid in regret.

there was not a place or a feeling we missed
at our table from ten until three,
but the hand that wrote dialogue,
formed shoulders of passion,
and shaded an eye to reflect indecision or force,
this hand only whispered and the strength of its power
was felt and then lost in the onslaught of images
formed through cohesion— your structure and mine.

a gaze into profundity
that flees before the moment is grasped:
 unattainable,
like . . . this evening of candles and wine.

the others at tables around us we've seen many times
and they move with us always a veil of indifference
liaison to more sober times; but we leap off again
and delusion completes: you are with me
till doubt and catharsis attacks with a crack to the skull
which had bloomed to fertility
but pregnancy also means birth (we hope
and shut out the concepts abortion and miscarriage
laughs and we turn away quickly from cavernous faces
of mothers who laboured and cried at the pain
perverted by death at the door of the womb.)

a trio of singers perform across from our temple
where we worship our god that we formed in our anguish;
their dress is bistro correct and indifferent to norm
that they shun but only in transit of song
when their voices and bodies tack currents of norms
that drift a ship to its destined port
when the psychotic skipper leaves the bridge
in the hands of his mate who corrects the aborted course
decreed by psychoses indifferent to responsibility.

not nervous, they play with their patrons who drink and talk
in tones that belie their overt play at comfort
in situations that disconcert the best;
he damns his posture refusing to make him at ease
in a slouch or erect, and she curses her girdle
that holds her in check from feeling her body
lust for the tickle of wool on her sensitive parts.

a moment of doubt from a shattered image of solitude
brought back by the question How many say to themselves
“We are different”? How many in here are crying
from frustration of losing those images
they can only watch melt into blurs not one to be grasped?

but the singers— they sing of a man with a dream
completed enough to be real; only his loves
are transmitted to clouds reworked and worked in his mind
till he knows they exist, or existed, or will;
his pain is too great when it shatters, his dream,
to let him rebuild with more caution:
the skipper (returning and finding a sea
of broken glasses with crimson crystals of ferment,
too enraged to admit that which he knew must not live
in the oceans he sailed had flashed by while he rested)
abandons and drowns— bleeding to death from the gashes
from glasses he broke in his fall,
and the black-haired singer makes eyes at me.

but we have stayed till all the wine
is drunk into its haze;
the singers have gone, and their man with his dream;
the waiters flirt with the girls checking their tabs
and their bottoms from pinches though few;
they clean their tables with normal talk—
the lights left atmosphered for us
the last remaining ghosts from stupors and dreams;
they wait no more— the flash— and the garish colours
effectively framed by the lights and the smoke
show their face and I nauseate
coming from our ecstasy of futile grasping
to this room where nothing is left to imagine:
it is stale and it smells of night’s business.

my hands are still glued to the bubble,
my arms unfeeling in numbness of patience;
drunken or sober I leave and dare not count
the bottles I drank while I tried reaching and gripping
to hold tight to an image, to make it exist with me now.

I not the artists have failed;
they only tease with their forms that I love
though they are transit; and with the
overdue click of the lock of the door of the bar
too close behind as I leave
the last livid smile of Phaedra is replaced by the speckles
from gravel in concrete
above which I float
trying not to succumb.

LEO KOSURKO

Soft, a melody beyond the muting wall
Crescendo easing through the cracking bricks
Where once a swinging door let in the light,
 According to the sun.

Now, Venus calling Aphrodite home through a myriad stars
Howls the clouds across a peel of moon
While 'neath triumphant footsteps marching rhythms slide
The rippled sands have stirred again beyond the wall.

TONY PERKINS

Sometimes
as she dances, she appears
to have hit upon a way,
a new way,
phrasing her every gesture
as an act
 of love.

DON COLLISON

PRIORITIES OUT OF CONTEXT
(100 miles N.E. of Baie Comeau)

Of blue
And of green
And in winter
Of white.

Then, twelve miles high, a touch of man,
Silver daggers.

Wind-strained jet-roll
Over glacial hills and trout lakes,
Gauze thin, this disembodied sound of war
Perplexes a moose at rocky river drink,
Stills the evergreen massage of wind.

Afterwards, between sun and soil,
The broken white ribbon, artificial cloud of excrement,
Ephemeral reminder
Of human forgetfulness.

And in the gentle arc of distance,
A deepening purple of night.

FLIGHT 831

Tensile, Flight/Vol 831 waited impatiently. Clearance granted, it lifted quickly, aesthetic sleekness little belying natural function, staining the air black with its backwash.

It moved alone, solitary shadow upon upturned eyes. Five minutes later, Flight 831 was dead in a farmer's field near Ste. Therese.

And then, behind the power, behind the sleek skin, we knew of a delicacy, of a balance, of a frightening humanization. Then we thought perhaps of him, or of you, or of a hundred private worlds.

The rainy evening was only somewhat oppressive, a gusting wind holding the seagulls aloft on its uneven breath. The taxi had hurried him through the gathering rush of Montreal, and he had looked about himself closely for people and their myriad urban manifestations. He had boarded the plane, noticed the stewardess, rubbed the scuff-mark off his favorite black shoes. Waiting for a newspaper whose news would be irrelevant, and a meal that would not be tasted, he peered unknowingly from behind the two-layered glass facade, the vehicle of his death meticulously checked, the timetable minutely planned. When Flight 831 gathered and rushed skyward, the design of colours and lines and darkening shapes, his home, receded and lost definition.

And it was the hour of the beginning of artificial illumination, when the human migration occurs under stuttering street lights, each car pushing its separate semi-circle of unconcern before it.

The instant it happened, he knew that he was going to die. His mind lurched—sucked down the whirlwind of memories like the paper in the corner of the school-yard when the first winds of winter twist summer dust into miniature cyclones.

He may have had time, time to think; to think of familiar faces, of people he had loved, of friends who had died or had gone their own way before he had known them, of people whom he had cried for, of soft light on remembered places, of dreams, of a thousand gestures, and of words, and of smiles, and of the legacy of emotions which are the products of the sum of life. He may have had time to remember pain in disappointment, frustration and loneliness, time to laugh at everything he had done, time to weep for everything he should have done in unfulfilled moments, time to see that there is no proportion, to learn that circumstance is all that really exists, time to invent four-letter synonyms to define fate, time to know that they would identify him by his teeth, for that would be all that remained, time to remember (but not to experience) all things.

For perhaps in this last breath of life, he saw the complexities, the relationships, the strands of the spider-web of life, and he saw it alone, though five minutes before he had not been prepared for it, and he died seeing it, and perhaps this moment had made it all worthwhile, and . . .

Held aloft on the uneven breath of the wind, the seagulls moved . . . unmoved.

And still, late at night, I will awake, and feeling the thinness of my skull, know that I too am dying. It is very lonely living with only uncertainties, memories, and warm tears.

BIRDS FOR JANET * THE HERON

The reach

fingers stretching
backbones

the dull
burst of fur
four feet above water

Reflections make them an hourglass

When Heron sits
the hairless ankle
rests on a starved knee

he fingers his food
off the leaf of banana

drinks from a stone container

bathes
in blue zebra milk

When he sleeps
the soul is jailed
in the tightened claw
torn

if he dies in the night

Heron is the true king

eagles only
muscular henchmen
with mad eyes
bedded in black fur

We found the path
of a suicidal heron,
tracks left empty
walking to the centre of the lake

Best herons are not beautiful
but handsome

FABULOUS SHADOW:

They fished me from this Quebec river
the face blurred glass, bones of wing
draping my body like nets
in a patterned butterfly,

and peeled green weed from scorched shoulders
and the dried wax from my thighs

'DESCRIPTION IS A BIRD'

In the afternoon while the sun twists down
they come piggle piggle piggle all around the air.
Under clouds of horses the sand swallows turn

quick and gentle as wind.
All virtuoso performances
that presume a magnificent audience.

The leader flings his neck back
and like a bad hound
turns thinner than whims.
Like God the other follows
anticipating each twist,
the betrayals of a feather.

For them no thumping wing beat of a crow
they bounce on a breath
scattering with the discipline of a watch.

ELIZABETH

*'Much suspected of me
nothing proved can be
Quoth Elizabeth, prisoner'.*

Catch, my Uncle Jack said
and oh I caught this huge apple
red as Mrs. Kelly's bum.
It's as red as Mrs. Kelly's bum, I said
and Daddy roared
and swung me on his stomach with a heave.
Then I hid the apple in my room
till it shrunk like a face
growing eyes and teeth ribs.

Then Daddy took me to the zoo
he knew the man there
they put a snake around my neck
and it crawled down the front of my dress.
I felt its flicking tongue
dripping onto me like a shower.
Daddy laughed and said Smart Snake
and Mrs. Kelly with us scowled.

In the pond where they kept the goldfish
Philip and I broke the ice with spades
and tried to spear the fishes;
we killed one and Philip ate it,
then he kissed me
with raw saltless fish in his mouth.

My sister Mary's got bad teeth
and said I was lucky, then she said
I had big teeth, but Philip said I was pretty.
He had big hands that smelled.

I would speak of Tom, soft laughing,
who danced in the mornings round the sundial
teaching me the steps from France, turning
with the rhythm of the sun on the warped branches,

who'd hold my breast and watch it move like a snail
leaving his quick urgent love in my palm.

And I kept his love in my palm till it blistered.

When they axed his shoulders and neck
the blood moved like a branch into the crowd.
And he staggered with his hanging shoulder
cursing the thrilled crowd, wheeling,
waltzing in the French style to his knees
holding his head with the ground,
the blood settling on his clothes like a blush;
this way
when they aimed the thud into his back.

And I find cool entertainment now
with white young Essex, and my nimble rhymes.

*These poems will be appearing in
THE DAINTY MONSTERS to be pub-
lished by Coach House Press,
(317b, Bathurst, Toronto, Ont.)*

ROSEMARY LeGALLAIS

I had almost forgotten how once
while you slept
you seemed my child
and I was happy to watch the way your eyes
moved

slowly
beneath their lids

and how your head lay heavy on my shoulder
and your strong

even
breaths
warmed my breasts.

And how I kissed you
gently
not meaning to disturb

your rest

but your desiring eyes caught mine in their gaze
and stole my child away.

WILL WEBSTER

(2 Poems)

she ran
like an unspoken verse
across my heart
she could
make a soft movement
with her mind
she hurts
with no pain
but red-hot tears
like leaves
sputtering their lives away
before returning whence they came.

IN A BROWN PAPER BAG

hear no evil
see no evil
smell no evil
talk no evil
don't touch ! . . .
it's evil
the great white sterilized pre-cooked fresh-frozen instant
all-inclusive tax-free package of prepared love
rises like a phallus
ready to screw the world.

GRAHAM POTTINGER

SOPHOCLEAN REFLECTIONS

III

THE WHITE CANE OF LOVE

Youth defiant in the blinding sun of authority,
Unrighteous Death met thee disregarding
Thy guidelines, the white caned devotion.
But unwritten laws watch
The fall of pride and innocence.

REINER BUSSE

(2 Poems)

Dry bullrushes, mossy rocks,
Frog's eggs float black dots
In stagnant water.

VINCENT

The deep yellow Ming glaze
of sun,
The lucent teabowl sky,
They seem supported
By the knarled ancient yew
Throwing out a branch.
A single bowed sower
Scatters his seed in brown loam.

DWIGHT DOUGLAS

The wax graves blaze bright
In the temple of the saprophyte.
The trident stick bleeds anew
And sends its rhythm to the swaying host.
The drum-built chant gathers back
And hurls a vaulted, speechless sigh.
The white priest cracks the withered skin
And drops its fragments to the gaping mouths,
Then pours the watered death-red blood
On lips dried white with anguished thirst.
The journey ends.

There is silence
And stillness

Out of a spinning cone
Out of pit-black deeps
Whirls the pain.
It is grief,
White-faced and drawn
Shaking
To the inward tumult
Of a burnt-white brain

Crimson lines stagger through the dark
Explode
in the eyes
The mind teems
Reels curved down
And suddenly
It stops

Calm waves lap the shore.
Above the cliffs
The windows peer out
at the softness
of a rising dawn

I remember now
It's not so long ago
I remember a pair of eyes
Bright brown and questioning
Laughing sometimes

Squinted through up-tilt glasses
into the distance
I remember a wide mouth
in a wide face
I remember . . .

The vessel is empty
They have put the candles out
Black gowns walk slowly back
It is spring outside
It is cold

But there is a hint
of warmth
in the air

The day opens up
and the murmuring people
walk into it
Pale drawn faces put away
The smile and thoughts of every day
The motion and passion of life
Overflow the brim

On the edge of spinning time
Spinning out a life
The slow people swirl their way
to a stinging finish
Small fragments
The debris of broken thoughts
Vague pieces
Falling/in a long ramble
On a vast heap/of busted rubble

Black pavement
The black shoes
Step back
From the blackness
Without thinking

"It looks like a nice day."

Spring clouds hide the sun

 "It's a bit cold though."

The wind will blow them away,

 "If the wind'd die . . ."

But for now

 The white snow patches

Like the receding hairs
 of a tired old man

Sit in their own sweat
 and wait on the wind.

By the houses

Green and maroon fingers

Groping out of the ground

Pause

Uncertain

The cool breeze scratching the earth

The cool breeze scratch

The cool breeze

 ripped short shoes
 a philosophy
 half-formed, half-used
 dying tradition
 poured
 in a white form
 still soft
 and trembling

 strong back
 straight
 in the face
 of a night-cold wind

Upheld
 a mind
half-shuttered, half-shaken
blown stiff
 in the whirlwind

Just for a moment

(It'll only be

a second or two)

Just for a moment

Come out

 and feel the night breeze

It's just for a moment

There is mystery under the pale moon

There is strange beauty

There is a deep loss

Which opens in the night
and bleeds

All right

close the door

It'll be day shortly

And in the daylight

Perhaps we'll smile

And talk about the night

ROBERT HACKETT

STEPHANEPHOROUS APRIL 1966

The sea of olives of Amphissa
Reigns beneath Marmaria
And you like a god
followed me here
 to nod
 & to peer
through mine own eyes
at the cliffs of Delphi.

Here at the navel of the earth
the rock stood sheer
and barren in death
of the sisters of the ravens of Thor
 Above the sun
 stark
 And in the valley
 The spring did run
 no more

And yet you left and joined me thus
And what did the oracle say
About you, about us?
 Nothing
The tripod is gone
And the vapours through the fissures come
 No more.

GO
RETURN NOT
DIE

BRENDA FLEET

TRUTH

More than our scenario
Of wasted gestures
The emptiness
Of coiled and falling phrases
You are much more wonderful
Bearer of truth
Now that you have come
Glorious mane
Gleaming flanks
Catching the sun's fire
To leap beyond our fences.

I am not far behind
Running in the grass you trample
Stumbling with all my strength
Towards you.

EFFET DE NUIT
AN "ADAPTATION" OF VERLAINE

The night. The rain.
The wan sky enraged by arrows
and by the tours of days.

the silhouette
of a Gothic village
muffled in the distant grey.
pondering Mozart in Salzburg.

The plain. A gibbet draped with hangings
shaken by the greedy beaks of crows.
And dancing in the air obsidian
the air of matchless jigs.

Some straggling pine brushes
and some holly
raising the horror of their foliage
to the right, to the left . . .
nature that is left unkempt,
the sooty mess at the base of a sketch.

And then, around three livid prisoners (barefooted)
groups of high partisans, waking,
and their iron laws
the iron of a harrow
shine isosceletic with the spears of the downpour.

CONES

when all is lost
crag crumble
down empty lanes
garbage and rocks:

hammer
pounds my watch tick
into submission
when morning falls on naked snails
hack at the pines
near Janiculum,

the catacombs,
and the Villa Borghese

immortal stand trunks

we are the cones
falling in autumn
thrown by others
at enemies

1.

Swimming out
 on a carpet of diamonds
 laid down by the sun
 silence
 except the
 wishing waves.

2.

There are waves on the water and
 there are waves under the water
 on the sand. The green waves
 CRASH !
 in a confusion of tiny-lets.

BUT UNDER THE WATER ON THE SAND

The waves are as
 regular
 as the permanent wave in Harlow's hair.
 Only the sinking print of a starfish
 relieves the symmetry.

TRANSCYCLE

Night
 the hushed amen of dying day
 hurdled the hedge
 embraced the doorstep
 shutter-licked its way into the hostile drawing room
 settled in hide-and-seek corners
 swore at the reading lamp
 sifted down-passage to the kitchen
 smothered the plate of cold duck on the table
 smothered the table
 tickled the maid's armpits
 kissed the dust on the sideboard
 catnapped in the sink.

It multiplied in instants —
 stopped to catch its breath —
 pursued its own offspring up terrible stairs
 to nightmare of moonbeams and suns.

Night
 the patron saint of fertility land
 flushed the house with its bridal-night cry
 wiped it dry with a strangled sigh
 escaped with the six o'clock train.

A SOMEWHAT DEMORALIZED TRINITY:
1967 VERSION

"I would not want the U.S. to be described by future generations as a society that stood amidst the filth, the oppression and the violence of its slums and shot rockets to the moon". — John Lindsay

Here we sit
a trio of demoralized monkeys
a blind man, a deaf, and a mute;
through the long hoary night
we sit in our liquid skins
waiting for that last hot stroke of midnight
waiting for god.

It is not easy
here in our naked inadequacies
faking inadequate dreams;
it is not easy
to repent of what Time has denied us,
the long-throated song of the madman
spurring us through the night;

it is not easy
to know that our trio of sins-committed
is irreconcilably one, that
god when he comes to us
bethlehem-white and believing in mountains
will expose our small packaged despairs;
it is not easy.

And so we wait
pain-pricked and placid
not communicating for that too would be pointless —

— for the thin
spinning
coin of communica-
tion has more than
two faces, we
know that;
and they are very
transparent
faces, all of them —
or so we are told —
and that we suppose
to know
too . . .

A tattered trio
jostling our dreams
in the juggled world of tomorrow
we wait in our equilateral flux
inspecting our forged credentials
seeking the cube root of our crimes.

And the sudden hard footstep beyond the door
blots the stain of our one fulfilled night
and reminds us that mourning has come.

MR. MAGENTA

Mr. Magenta
a half-man and
hated

takes an apple and
peeling it
backwards
finds it funny that
morning is
morning and
night is
not

that
wriggling
his worm-
eaten way
through
life he
knows nothing of
passions but
keeps a poison in
case of
fire or a
sudden frost
reads his papers

with somewhere
forgotten
Mrs. Magenta making tea

can't see

both of them

peering
pondering
puzzling over an
undone
crossword
dodges each evening
the over-
eager mud-
disturbing
motorists
and

bursts
with a
half-
pronounced burp

at the end of
each damp
dog-dirty
day.

Mr. Magenta
but 'Maggy'
they call him

doing his best
to exist
and
not
much else
worth noting.

not pleasant

whenever
they call him

JAMES GRAY

A REVIEW
for
THE MITRE

SIFT IN AN HOURGLASS, by Ralph Gustafson.
McClelland and Stewart, Toronto. Hardbound: \$4.50.
Paperback: \$2.50.

To do justice to the latest book by our Poet-in-Residence would require much more than a short review. *Sift in an Hourglass*, which takes its title from two lines of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins, is the most versatile and wide-ranging of Ralph Gustafson's collections of poetry to date. It contains pieces mildly satirical and others passionately lyrical; majestic poems and three-line epigrams; eulogies and elegies and thumb-nail sketches; reflections, descriptions, love poems, wistful poems, ecstatic poems, and sombre poems. The leap from delight to death, from the mellifluous to the macabre, is apparently an easy one for this erudite Romantic, who can transform his experiences of travel, art, sculpture, love and music into fascinating mosaics of word and phrase.

The fifty-seven poems in this collection are indeed fifty-seven varieties. But they are bonded by verbal and imaginative richness; by a tightness of texture, a graphic compression that superficially suggests a blend of Hopkins and Browning, yet, on closer inspection, proves unmistakably Gustafsonian; and by an eager lust for life in all its balancing opposites: natural and artistic, sensuous and intellectual, primitive and sophisticated, humorous and grim, vital and morbid. The verbal tapestries woven by this poet are so detailed that we are forced to look again and again for the communicating thread, but the search is invariably worthwhile.

Among the things we find is a veritable gallimaufry of literary influences. In addition to Hopkinsian inscapes and Browningsque snatches of monologue, we discover Pound-like images, hard as

diamonds, Eliotic labyrinths of allusion, Yeatsian reminiscence and whimsicality, and even shards of Shakespeare worked into the fabric. The poet's enviable knowledge of the work of his British, American and Canadian contemporaries also serves to enrich the eclecticism of his writing. There is, moreover, a part-studied, part-inherited Scandinavian strain, noticeable in his fondness for alliterative arrangements and crisp consonantal articulation.

Ralph Gustafson is the poet's poet, the musician's poet, the artist's poet, the geographer's poet and the anthologist's poet. His lines are so full of meaning that they occasionally bend under the weight and make heavy demands on our faculties of perception and interpretation. Their sheer vitality and their powerful concentration of thought and insight keep us constantly on the alert, enjoyably so.

To select one poem from this treasure-hoard in illustration of all the qualities mentioned is not an easy task. "Carta Canadensis" shows some of them, besides testifying to the poet's commitment to his own land where

Wharves
Wash on the waves of wheat
Husky with summer luck,
In autumn harvested on the plains.
Fish and wheat, the promise,
Christ and bread,
Brought to the tables of
An iron land.

Backward

*Up against the possible.
East the broken mountains
Of magnificence
Sheering the plainsoil northward
Out of sight, roses
Lean, provincial, burning
In their plot.*

In lighter vein, he pays tribute to his friend Frank Scott (a fellow-poet and fellow-alumnus of Bishop's University):

*Praise
he goes into,
padlocks
he gets well out of
and piety.
He chairs children
and keeps up wit.*

*.....
Words
he gets the wear out of,
lives by a poem,
huried with respectable honour
goes
Scott-free.*

Here Ralph Gustafson shows his special talent for piecing together the carefully selected characteristics of his subject, and significant bits of his history, into the design and epitome of a personality. The same process, of meticulous choice of detail and of painstaking synthesis, is seen in his tribute to Churchill:

*Britain has no finer hour and all
The future's in that growl and temper of
Our time: no isolated beating of
A heart, strictness, grief and triumph for
A several hour, but on that beach, that language.
The fourbuilt word of monumental time.*

Just as surely, but in a more personal, more heartfelt phrase, he salutes the memory of E. J. Pratt:

*By God,
I hear that genial laugh and broad
Beamed moon-faced lilt
Of the voice of you: lads, lads; the tilt
Of the head as you say it. No tide will take
You out. You're here with us . . .*

All who had the privilege of knowing Ned Pratt can witness to the aptness of this portrait.

Whether etching the personalities of the living or inscribing memorials to the dead, whether sharing with us the fruits of his intensely lived experiences or recording intimate fragments of his private thoughts and conversations, Ralph Gustafson impresses us with his rare sensitivity to both the great and the little things of life, and with his quick apprehension and ready sympathy. There is nothing brutal or dark or cynical about him. He is indeed a part of all that he has met, but the kindness and warmth of his temper exclude the frozen and the bitter from his world. The sift that remains in his hourglass has the softness of dusty gold.

—JAMES GRAY

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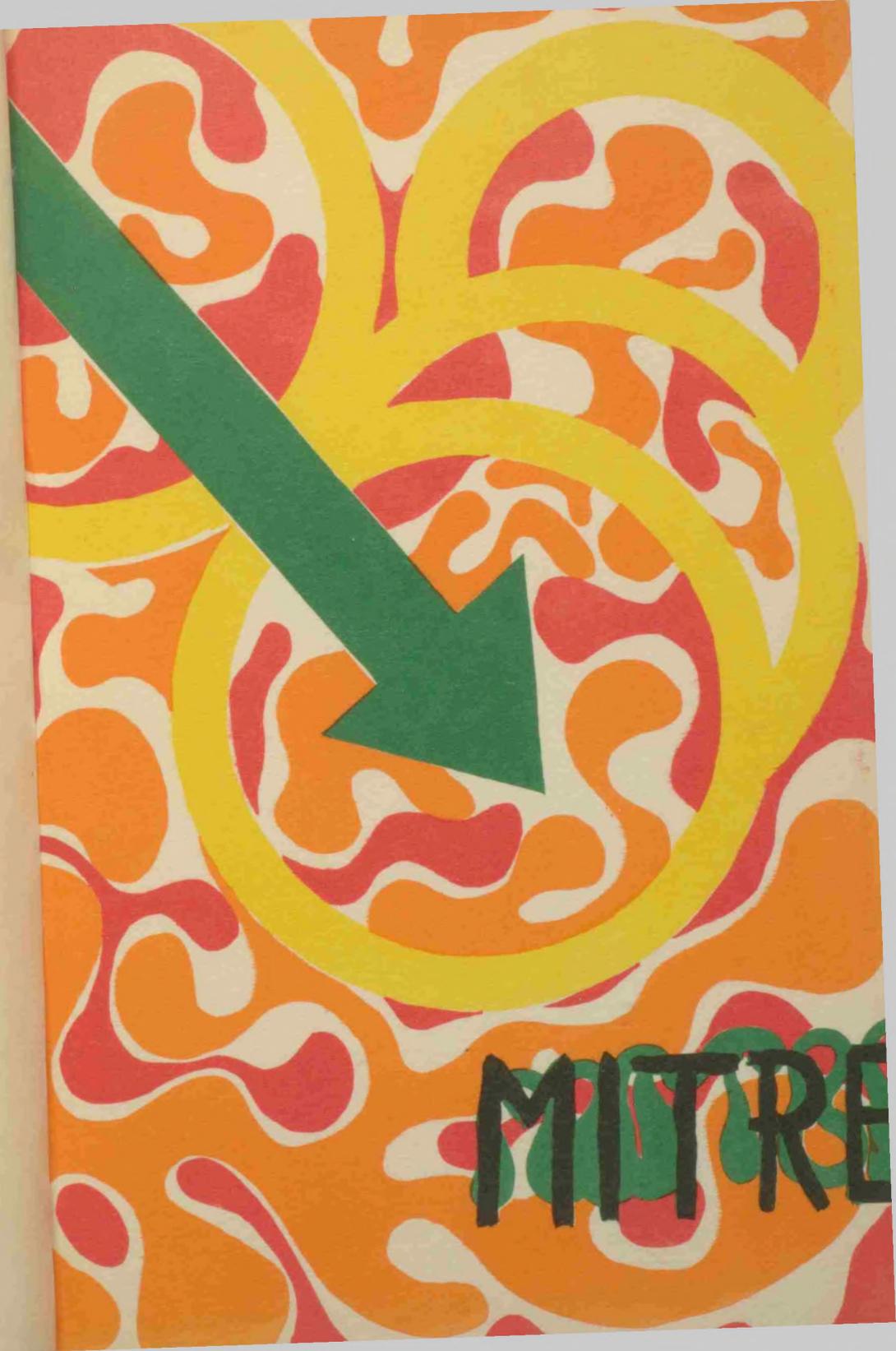
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