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IN THE BEGINNING . . .

1893-94 was the year of the first gasoline engine, the introduction of ice hockey and the graduated income tax to the U.S., the publication of **The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde**, and the death of Tchaikovsky.

It was also the first year of publication of **The Mitre**.

Students during the previous fifty years of Bishop's had not, of course, gone unread. Years before Confederation, a paper called **The Frying Pan** had appeared with the "avowed purpose of agitating certain reforms in the domestic economy of the college", as **Mitre** founder B. Watson put it in the inaugural issue, but "having gained this end it was finally discontinued".

"Our next literary effort was of a very different nature. In the year 1866 there appeared the first number of **The Student's Monthly**, a magazine which was in every way a credit to its institutors, containing an excellent stock of original articles on Literary, Educational, Poetical and Classical subjects, as well as a most interesting record of college events. This magazine, owing to scanty support caused by the small number of both students and graduates at that period and probably too by the want of proper financial management, came to an untimely end. From that time to the present Bishop's College has had no public voice".

The first **Mitre** was more like a cross between the present **Campus** and an alumnae newsletter than like today's **Mitre**. Along with such articles as Part I of "Notes on Tennyson as a Cambridge Man", "Centenary of the Diocese of Quebec", and "Lady Medical Students: The Position with Regard to the General Hospital Discussed", one finds reports of cricket matches, chatty notes from the faculties of Arts, Medicine and Divinity, detailed breakdowns of scores in Bishop's College School games, notices of coming events, formal poems, and ghastly jokes.

Some of the atmosphere of 19th century Bishop's emanates from the following selections from **The Mitre Vol. I No. I . . .**

SONNET

by Arthur Henry Moore

"Love took up the Harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might".

The Harp of Life lay silent and unused ;
The dust of years had gathered on its strings ;
Those heart-notes sweet in which high passion sings
Put forth not yet, with Time they still are fused.

A cherub boy in passing stood and mused
To see it silent thus, his longing brings
A stern resolve, as through his soul there rings
A soulful strain. His tender heart is bruised ;

He lifts the dust-stained Harp from off the ground
And sweeps a blow across the chords with might.
Straightway pours forth a full, rich joyous sound
The hearers spirit bounds, his heart grows light.

The best in man, the soul sent from above,
Vibrates for aye in harmony with love.

SOME THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

by F. W. Frith

A GREAT deal is written about Education : much has already been written about it. Indeed the invention of new systems of education, as of ideal forms of government, has always been as great a source of delight to philosophers as the construction of card houses to children. The most obvious value of a subject so largely exploited is that you can always write about it when everything else fails.

The fact is that, while our systems of education are never exactly what we want, we seem to be always on the verge of some discovery that will harmonize everything, and give order where there is a certain degree of chaos. They have all the charm of the North Pole or the philosopher's stone. This seems all the more strange after the lapse of so many centuries. In perusing a few pages of Plato or Quintilian one is startled to realize suddenly that these men wrote about two thousand years ago, and that the difficulties were of much the same sort then as now. They are now even greater ; because in Plato's time there was no question of the classics to bother them, and men were not called upon to compare the advantage of writing Egyptian verses with an intimate knowledge of a cat's liver. It is true that Cato Major learned Greek in his old age, but for a Roman to learn Greek was very much what it is for an Englishman to learn French ; and as he did it only for his private gratification, it hardly enters into the question of education, for education necessarily implies pain. But it is clear enough that Plato left something for Herbert Spencer to say, as it is plain that Herbert Spencer has not had the last word. There is the initial question as to what we mean by the word

education itself. Many people supposing it to mean, philologically, a *drawing out*, shaped their methods according to this view, and personating mental stomach-pumps, made themselves the engines of a huge Socratic system. After it was discovered that education meant to *pasture*, the reverse process was adopted, and the receptive faculties of youth called into play. A more recent idea is based on the natural tendency of children to be observant and ask questions, it being hoped to so gently guide the tendency, that all knowledge would be naturally absorbed. But while the plan may be adapted to finding out the ways of beetles and railway trains, it is found to be less successful as applied to Greek verbs and the Binomial Theorem. The average mind has to be goaded on to knowledge, as Xerxes' soldiers were to glory, metaphorically if not practically, *a tergo*. The probability is that so far as *method* goes there is little need or room for improvement. Every now and then some one adopts a plan more peculiarly suited to himself, and meets with success : he is at once hailed as the founder of a system and largely imitated. But if the personal co-efficient is eliminated, we should doubtless find that the methods of all great teachers may be reduced to two or three simple rules and that they are as old as the time when Tubal Cain taught men to work in metals . . .

AN EVENING PRAYER

by Marcus H. Carroll

Cynthia, quae terrae gremium convexaque coeli
Collustras, risu luminibusque tuens
Omnia, da somnos secura in mente serenos.
Da quoque deliciis somnia pura meis.

DOSE FROM THE DOCTOR

Prof. Pick-me-up : What is the difference between a vendor of moist inspiration and a whipped cub?

Chorus : "Give it up . . ."

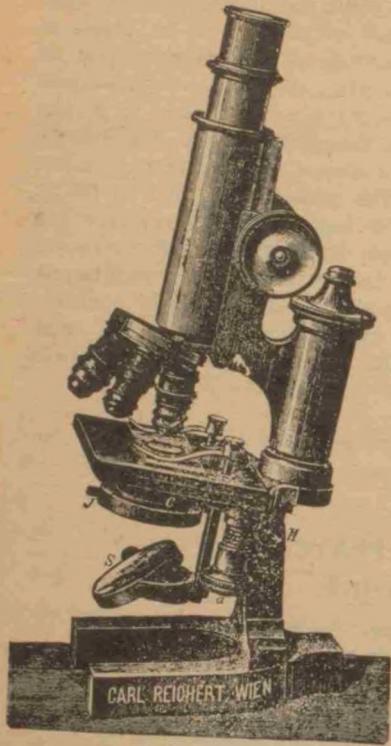
Professor : One is (ha ha) a (ha ha) bar tender and the other is a (ha ha ha) tender b(e)ar (ha ha ha ha).

(Grand Stampede).

IN THE GLOAMING

Mr. B. : Have you ever contributed to the press?

Miss S. : Yes, often : I've turned out the lights.



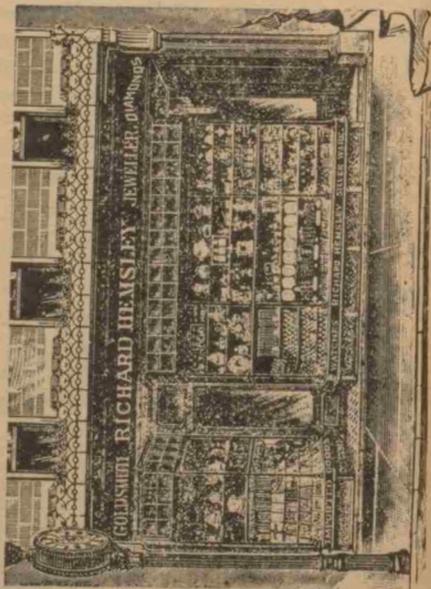
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MONTREAL.

After 25 years, the **Mitre** was fulfilling much the same purposes as at the beginning. We still find the faculty notes, the alumnae news, the detailed athletics reports (bemoaning the decline of rugby), one or two formal poems, and even worse jokes than before — as well as a “Co-Ed’s Corner”, and a section called “Wedding Bells”.

Moreover, there was now an excellent section called “Exchanges” which quoted from and commented on the publications of other Canadian universities and some high schools. In spite of today’s inundation from the mass media, Joe College has not had nearly so good an opportunity to find out what was of concern on other campuses since this type of reporting went out of style.

It was 1918/19, however, and the shadow of war clouded much of the magazine. Almost half was devoted to editorials on the problems of war and peace, “In Memoriam” notices, announcements of decorations and friendly reports of former undergraduate and graduate students now in the army.

Nonetheless, the most interesting item in **The Mitre** that year was a retrospect from Vol. XXVI No. 1 of what Bishop’s had been like almost fifty years before . . .

BISHOP'S COLLEGE IN THE SEVENTIES

THESE recollections date from Michaelmas Term, 1873. Dr. Nicolls, the Principal, was then in England on a year's leave of absence. The rector of the School, Rev. C. Badgeley, was acting Principal. Dr. Roe had just entered upon his duties as Harrold Professor of Divinity. Dr. Scarth was Professor of Ecclesiastical History, the Rev. R. C. Tambs Professor of Mathematics, and Mr. J. C. Emberson classical tutor. There was a Professor of Languages, M. Dion, a Frenchman, who was looked upon as rather a freak, and had a pretty miserable time of it both in the College and the School.

In those days there was no steam heating, no sewerage, no electric lights. The building was kept warm (or cold) by large wood stoves in each hall, which were supposed to heat the four rooms opening off it. It was merely a supposition, for in cold weather the water in the bedrooms always froze. Some of the seniors' rooms had a small stove between two rooms, the door of the stove being in one and the stove pipe end in the other. If a man stoked up to moderately warm his room, he roasted out the man next door, and this was a cause of a good deal of strife. All water for washing and drinking purposes was brought from the college pumps which stood in the yard. This water, although beautifully clear, was later found to be so full of typhoid germs that it was the cause of very serious epidemics. Each student had his own lamp and bought his supply of coal oil, unless he could manage to borrow a lampful at a time from other students and forget to repay it. The cordwood, placed in bins for the hall stoves, made handy weapons for offence or defence, and anyone making a midnight visit to another's room with ulterior motives had always to reckon on the possibility of this being used. Meals were served in the dining hall, the student's sitting at one long table, presided over by one of the professors, and the school-boys occupying the remainder of the room.

Breakfast was at eight daily, chapel at half-past eight, and lectures were from nine till one p.m., with occasional classes in the afternoon. Monday was a free day, as a number of the students went off on Saturday afternoons to act as lay-readers, and the clerical professors were also often absent on Sunday duty.

Caps and gowns were worn at all lectures, and were supposed to be worn always outside the college grounds, but this rule had fallen a good deal into abeyance until Dr. Lobleby became Principal. Soon after his arrival there was a party given in the village, at which he was present. On leaving he was the only one in cap and gown. He looked at the students and asked, "Gentlemen, where are your academicals?" On receiving the reply that they were "home", he invited them to report to him in the morning, and gated them for three days.

There were a number of families who kept open house for the students and the masters of the School. The Wards, the Macallums, the Mackenzies, the Morris, the John and Joe Shutters, the Arthur Simpsons, and later the Molsons, the Hamiltons and others. Little dances and other parties were frequent and quite informal. Cake and coffee for refreshments, and the men never found it necessary to smoke a cigarette between dances to help them endure the exertion.

Probably the girls of that time are looked upon by their children and grandchildren as "mid-Victorian", but they were a very jolly lot, and with regard to looks compared well with those of the present day, although it is doubtful whether one of them possessed a "vanity box", neither did they think

it was necessary to be continually powdering their noses. The chocolate habit was not yet in vogue, so one was not expected to purchase favors with presents of this sort. This, indeed, was fortunate, as the students of that time were blessed with very little money, and often had difficulty in meeting their college expenses. The Bursar, dear old Edward Chapman, (Tommy as was called) was continually being "touched" for loans, to be charged to the S.P.G. grants. Many of these had eventually to be paid out of the Bursar's own pocket.

There was a good deal of boating on the Massawippi. The boat-house was close by the present C.P.R. bridge and there were five rowboats and a four-oared racing skiff. At the beginning of the year a captain was elected for each boat, and he chose his own crew. The names of the boats changed with the captains, as they were generally called after some lady friend. Picnics to Jack Brook were a favorite pastime. Two or three boat loads of students and girls would row up in the afternoon, camp at the brook for tea and return home by moonlight.

The crew of the four oar in 1873 consisted of (Precentor) Tucker, J. R. Montizambert, T. A. Young, with James Simpson as coxswain. When the Pasumpsic Railway was built, the course of the river was changed just below Capelton, in order to avoid constructing two bridges. The current was turned into a narrow gut, and was so swift that no boat could get up it. In the spring of 1874, however, the crew of the four-oar determined to make the attempt. When about half way up the coxswain saw a large cake of ice bearing down upon them. To have turned the bow in the slightest would have caused the boat to swing broadside on to the current and wrecked it. Fortunately the ice missed striking by a few inches and floated under the oars. The head of the cutting was gained after a hard struggle, and smooth water reached once more; passed that, the river was navigable to the rapids just below the lake. After a few years the force of the water gradually widened this cutting and even small boats could row up it.

The Fives Court was built through the exertions of Professor Emberson in 1873, and the game soon became very popular with the students. A few years ago the writer returned to Lennoxville after a long absence, and found this court was the only building in the whole college and school that had not been changed.

The first game of tennis in Lennoxville was played on the grounds of Mr. Joseph Shuter, just opposite the church. The bats were very small and light and the balls of uncovered rubber. The players knocked the balls up in the air, to be knocked back again in the same way. It was not very exciting, but with heavier bats and harder balls the game soon developed, and there were many good players.

Dr. Roe, soon after his arrival, started missions at Sand Hill and Ascot Corners, and Mr. Emberson built the church at Milby about the same time. These stations were served by the divinity students, with occasional visits from the clergy. Whenever socials were held at these places parties would drive out from Lennoxville in hay carts or wood sleighs drawn by four horses. Occasional upsets sometimes not unavoidable, added to the interest of the excursion.

The school was destroyed by fire in January, 1874. It was an extremely cold day, and with the exception of a hand pump there was no fire-fighting appliances nearer than Sherbrooke, and these arrived too late to be of any assistance. A line of buckets was formed from the St. Francis to the school.

but it is not difficult to imagine how much water was left in a bucket after being passed from hand to hand all that distance.

Shortly after this, the greater part of the town of Lennoxville was burnt down. The fire started at, or near, Buck's store and swept both sides of the street. The students worked hard all day, and there were several narrow escapes from serious injury. One lady lamented that she had left her new bonnet in her burning house, and a student dashed in and rescued it at the risk of his life.

On Epiphany, 1875, the College also was destroyed. The fire broke out at night and the whole building was gutted. As it was the Christmas vacation most of the students were away and so saved their effects, but one or two men had remained in the College and lost everything but the clothes they had escaped in. Thus, within two years, school, town and college, were all burnt. During the rebuilding the students were boarded out at various houses, this of course caused a good deal of inconvenience and interfered considerably with the work of the term.

Two railways ran into Lennoxville in the early seventies. The Grand Trunk from Portland to Montreal. This had a broad gauge, which was afterwards changed in one day to the standard gauge, and the Passumpsic, which ran from Boston to Sherbrooke; trains on this line ran on Boston time, while those on the Grand Trunk used Montreal time. What a time there used to be with "time" in those days before standard time was introduced! Every city of any size had its own time. Quebec was about twelve minutes ahead of Montreal, and Montreal ahead of Toronto. Boston was ahead of New York, and so on. Local time differed from railway time, and travellers were shifting their watches backwards and forwards, and always making mistakes about incoming and outgoing trains.

Two other railways were under construction. The Quebec Central, which ran from Sherbrooke into the wilderness somewhere up the St. Francis, and the Lake Megantic Railroad (now part of the C.P.R.) which had its terminus at Megantic. The officials of this road were very obliging. During the sugaring season they would stop the train at some camp, and all hands would sample the kettles. As all the locomotives burnt wood, it was sometimes necessary, when delayed by snowstorms, to take the fences along the right away to replenish the fires. There were no smoking compartments on any of the lines, and smokers went into the baggage car to woo the weed. They sat about on trunks and boxes and sometimes would discover they were sitting on a shell containing a corpse.

Fred Scott entered the University in 1878, and was fond of spouting his early poetic efforts to a select few of his friends. The writer, although a good deal his senior, was constantly called upon to listen to these, and not being poetical himself, on several occasions threatened to murder him in the college woods if he did not shut up. How much poorer would the world have been if this threat had been carried out!

Two of the Lennoxville belles of the seventies became the wives of Arch bishop's—Miss Fuller, who married the Rev. George Thorneloe, and Miss Ward, who married Mr. C. Worrell, then a master in the School, and who is now Archbishop of Nova Scotia.

Doubtless the College has improved in many ways during the last forty years, but with all the old drawbacks and inconveniences, a sturdy lot of men were trained for clerical and other walks of life, and there is no reason to be ashamed of their records.

Another 25 years later, it was wartime again, and *Mitre* editors were busy exhorting all students to do their part "in the campaign to stamp out the Axis".

Much effort, however, was also being put into making the magazine not only useful and informative but also entertaining, as the next two pages from Vol. L No. II demonstrate . . .

BISHOP'S AND THE WAR

by W. R. Wright

It is hard to see at first sight the connection between Christmas examinations at Bishop's and our war effort, but any student here will tell you that there is one. It is all to do with the Government's decision to make all students who fail university examinations liable for military service. Things were certainly tense around here when the exams were on early in January and far tenser when the results finally came out a few days later. As a result some students have already left us. We were sorry to see them go, and we wish them luck. The Government's decision is a fair one. Not only do they protect themselves, but the universities as well. This measure prevents many from taking advantage of the concessions made to students by the Government with regard to military training. This is total war, and the universities have their part to play both now and after it is over. The man in the street does not always realize this.

* * *

Mr. Yarrill, our French lecturer, has left us to join the Naval Intelligence. His keen knowledge of languages well fits him for his new work. His case is just one example of the contribution of the universities to war effort.

CANADIAN AID TO RUSSIA FUND

Bishop's helped to put this worthy cause across. Among other things the Women's Council sponsored an Aid to Russia Fund dance which netted around \$25.00 for the fund. Those in charge are to be congratulated . . .

A RECRUIT

I'm one of those fellows who made the world safe for Democracy. What a crazy thing that was. I fought and I fought but I had to go anyway. I was called in class A. The next time time I want to be in class B—be here when they go and be here when they come back.

I remember when I registered. I went up to the desk and the man in charge was my milkman. "What's your name?" I said, "You know my name". "What's your name?" he barked. So I told him, "August Childs". He said, "Are you alien?" "No, I feel fine". He asked me where I was born and I said "Pittsburgh". He asked me how old I was so I told him 23 on the first of September. He said, "The first of September you'll be in France, and that will be the end of August".

The day I went to camp I guess they didn't think I could live long. The first fellow I saw wrote on my card "Flying Corps". I went a little farther and some fellow said "Look what the wind blew in". I said, "Wind nothing, the draft's doing it".

On the second morning they put these clothes on me. What an outfit: As soon as you are in it you think you can fight anybody. They have two sizes:—too small and too large. The pants are so tight I can't sit down. The shoes are so big I turn around three times and they don't move, and what a raincoat

they gave, it strained the rain. I passed an officer all dressed up with a funny belt and all that stuff. He said, calling after me, "Didn't you notice my uniform when you passed?" I said "Yes, but what are you kicking about, look what they gave me".

Oh, it was nice: Five below zero one morning they called me out for underwear inspection. You talk about scenery—red flannels, B-V-D's of all kinds. The union suit I had on would fit Tony Galento. The Lieutenant lined us up and told me to stand up. I said "I'm up, sir, it's the underwear that makes you think I'm sitting down". He got so mad he put me out digging a ditch—a little later he passed and said, "Don't throw the dirt up here", I said "Where am I going to put it?" He said, "Dig another hole and put it in there".

Three days later we sailed for France. Marching down the pier I had more luck. I had a sergeant that stuttered and it took him so long to say "Halt" that twenty-seven of us marched overboard. They pulled us out and lined us up on the pier, and the captain came by and said "Fall in". I said, "But I've been in sir".

I was on the boat 12 days—seasick 12 days. Nothing going down, everything coming up. I leaned over the railing all the time. In the middle of one of my best leans the captain rushed up and said, "What company are you in". I said "I'm all by myself". He asked me if the brigadier was up yet. I said "If I swallowed it, it's up".

Talk about dumb people. I said to one of the fellows, "I guess we dropped the anchor", and he replied, "I knew we'd lose it, it's been hanging out since we left New York".

Well, we landed in France. We were immediately sent to the trenches. After three nights the cannons started to roar and the shells started to pass. I was shaking with patriotism. I tried to hide behind the tree but there weren't enough trees for the officers. The captain came around and said "Five o'clock we go over the top". I said, "Captain, I would like to have a furlough". He said "Haven't you any red blood in you?" I said "Yes, but I don't want to see it".

Five o'clock we went over the top — 10,000 Germans came out. the way they looked at me you'd think it was I who started the war. Our captain yelled, "Fire at will", but I didn't know their names. I guess the fellow in back of me thought I was *will*, he fired his gun and shot me in the excitement—(bad place to get shot). On my way to the hospital I asked the fellow where they were taking me—he said, "You're going to the morgue". I said, "There's some mistake, I'm not dead". He said, "Lie down, do you want to make a fool out of the doctor?" Finally a pretty nurse said "Move over"—oh, what am I saying. That was another story.

AND NOW . . .

the mitre



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A VALENTINE

she approached me and we were not
a lack of communication is
and not only a part of a sociology thing

now even her Approach is not
and mine never was
and a union is now undesired

undesired is people who are not
Why, if not relationships.
Where, if not always.

the poem is about things which are not
which should be
and under a microscope, it's about me

HAPPINESS I

Once I had a glimpse of Happiness
Our arms and legs entwined
If she were to own my mind
Better worlds are built on less.

CHANGE

Small things become Things to me
Because of so many small hurts that
Make pain

I have cried in my room
And wondered why I'm wrong
For me

Wrong for me is wrong for you
And I didn't go to the party
Friday

In the midst (or was it the end?)
You were there and then we
Were so

Only for you to be with me
Only for those single hours
Was It.

Even if One does not happen
It did, I will not forget you
For this

That now Things are again small things
And I am not wrong for me
Thank you

A THOUGHT

Once when I was lying beside her, half asleep,
The sun streaming through the window, I thought,
How wonderful it would be to be in love.

FROM AN INTERLUDE

If you
would only let me touch you
for the brief moment of the moon,
or let me cry with you
the tears of our silent river,
then perhaps
we could both be still.

As it is,
we can only smile at each other
in the fleeting
moments of our
electric hallways,
neither of us
wanting to interfere
in the imperfect flow
of meal lines and sunsets.

Maybe tomorrow
I can find the time
to whisper in your ear.
That is, if
you're not busy
re-arranging the signs
that point your circular path.
While I
re-arrange my mind.

TO NANCY : IN MEMORIAM

I wish to see her once more
to smile and make her welcome
and ask her why she was so kind.

Some say she was shy others afraid
I was unaware, though her brother ;
Being young, it appeared all the same.

But knowing I shan't see her again
I can remember and speak of her kindly
and spread her ashes nicely from my hands.

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or will your tears
unmoved
for the life that led you out past your depth
as the tide

 compelled towards the moon.

Did you wear your face like wax,
did you taste the bitterness
or feel the times you held your tongue
when he was lame.

What now —

 you want to smear your face
and naked, join him in the ground
For the bond has been broken,
The flame snuffed out —
The earth his mistress now,
your spirit left undone.

SANITORIUM

Silenced in obscene pain
They lie, the cancerous and sick.
Down the corridors and halls
You feel their breathing.

White rooms, each corner
Grown familiar, each gray mark
Fondled by closing eyes.
White cells, suspension without reason.

Solid buildings, well hidden,
And solid trees. Inside, an arm stirs
With an intense defiance,
But green leaves outlast the gesture.

Flowers in gardens, showing their sexes,
The scent comes like a blow.
The sick stare at their windows,
Clouds stare back without shame.

Pale wind at windows, drifting
Into rooms of torment ; pale sun
That blossoms on their walls,
Terminates the argument.

TO MOTHER, ON A WINTER DAY

Snow falling at your window
Restores your delicacy. Light
Glowes on your throat ; you are
A visionary in a placid dream.

Now you fold your arms, contented.
Is it a conclusion that you feel ?
How easily events slide into place !
How skilled your use of instruments !

For once, discard your tinsel trappings.
The snow covers nothing.
I know the power coiled in your arms ;
The struggle's between us still.

Mutely, you fasten your eyes upon me :
My soul is locked.
Why do you lust for your share ?
You imagine the snow has cleansed me !

(brenda fleet)

The Editor of *Quarry*, Mr. Barbour, has written ;
He said DEAR CONTRIBUTOR at the top of the slip of paper,
WE ARE UNABLE TO USE YOUR CONTRIBUTION
—and at the bottom, has produced small legible notes :

“One of your poems is quite good, it moves well.
However you are not attentive to rhythm,
As a result, the others move too slowly.

“A better performance will result
From the following alterations :

“Remove all articles.
Your ‘ands’ are unnecessary.
Furthermore, cut at your poems,
They move too slowly.

“Remain in the active voice,
Especially with verbs, for concision.
N.B. Use concrete nouns for precision.

“We like some of what you say,
Read Ezra Pound, he may be helpful.

“And try us again in October
When we get a new Editor.”

(brenda fleet)

TO A. J. M.

Beautiful at last,
Estranged from your great confidence,
You seemed to have stared down
The despicable fact of being human.

Eyes bright with exhaustion—
How tall, how noble ! as you crouched,
Weary and disarranged, in your chair :
Your masks lay broken at your feet.

In a moment as sheer as tension
When wild notes thrill in the air,
There, at last a little desperate,
Your soul was delicate, and your white hands shone.

EPITAPH

I

Our scaling skin
Weighing each grain,
Of sand,
As we waited on the bank :
Enduring mosquitoes, ants, and mostly time.
A furtive glance at a guarded watch, while on watch, as
we watched
Clutching our reassuring rifles.
Potential death under chemical tension —
Four seconds to thirty lethal directions.
God, how we thought and fought off sleep, then
the most beguiling of mistresses,
With its momentary oblivion,
Which then lead to the more permanent kind.
We weren't bored, simply weary, and tense, holding our
guns in silent hands.



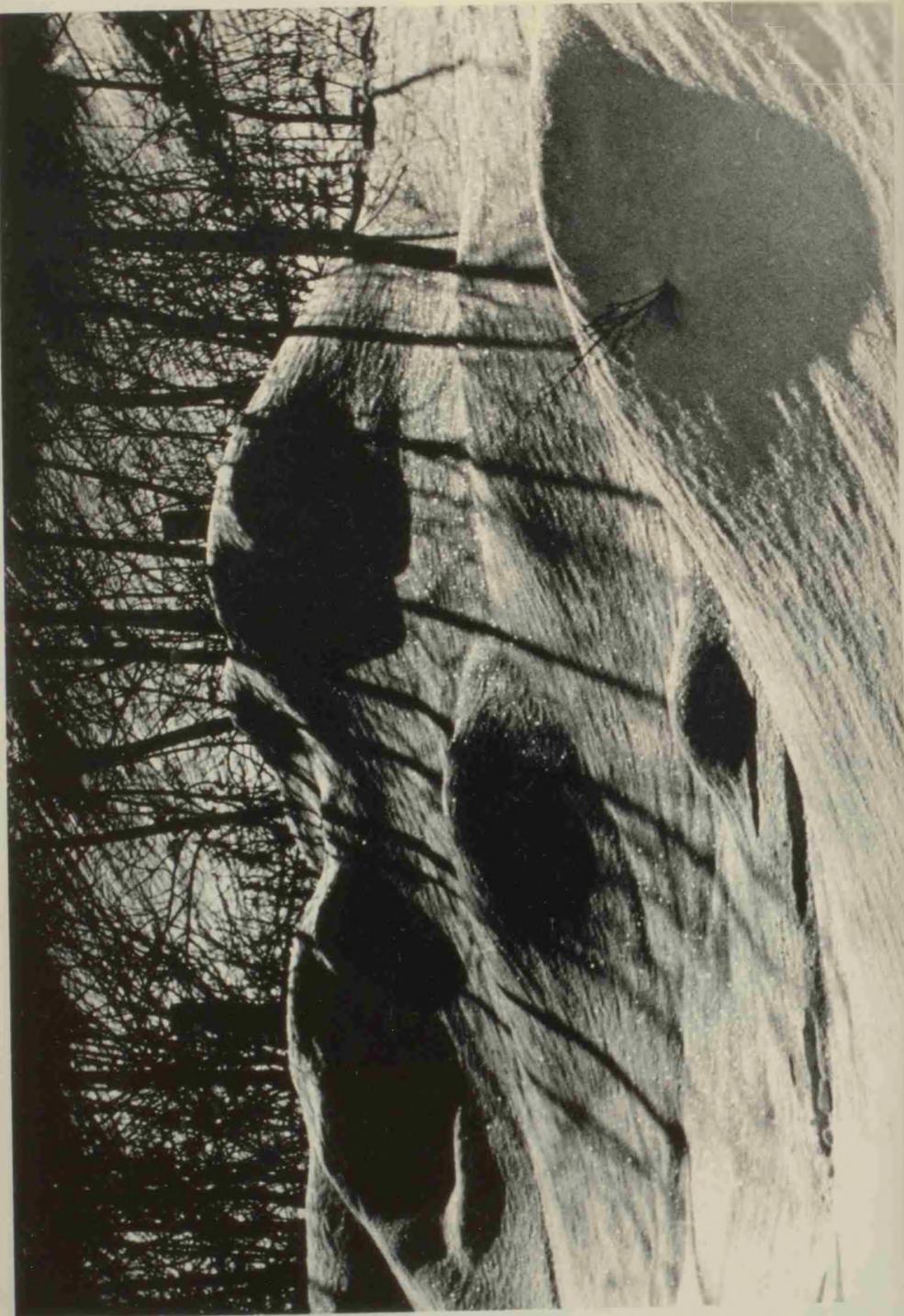


photo series by zbyszek meissner

II

A gun has a spirit of its own, you know.
Something like sex.
A gun needs to be fired at life,
A sort of mechanical prejudice against the living.
Like a mouth requires food,
Or an ear, sound.
A weapon always seems impatient to scatter its seed —
Not as a decoration or a toy.
For there is no art in war,
No beauty in a bullet-punctured lung.
A bolt sliding back has no melody, its sudden jolt,
no percussion.
That abrupt combination of elements throws only a chunk of
greedy metal into temporary orbit,
To fulfil itself in flesh,
Conquering the life which molded it.
Perhaps in revenge for disturbing its long rest.

III

We build needs into machines.
A switch needs switching.
A button needs pushing.
A rocket needs firing.
A bomb needs exploding.
And flesh has only two states, alive and the other.

IV

Who will read the headstone of humanity ?

If I let you see
how highly
I regard you,
you would keep chasing
and my feelings would run

A SHORT STORY

“still, write it down
it might be read
nothing’s better left unsaid
only sometimes”

Keith Reid
In Held Twas in I

How sad the air tonight
the could be’s
 exposed for what they aren’t
and what is,
 naked as the brightness of the bulb.
How sad the air tonight

It rained again last night.
This morning the sky is grey and
streets are glazed with ice.

The sun has not been sighted for weeks.
Word is out that it has permanently
deserted this part of the world.

No one here has ever really felt
its warmth anyway.

The salted slush has frozen
over, forming tiny hills and valleys.
Every step has become a trial.
Ankle injuries have increased impressively.

Overhead the air hangs
like cold afternoon breath. The
birds will not sing. All the
woodland creatures have taken
to their burrows. The wind
has not the strength to blow
the clouds away. Even the
shop-window lights are dim.

Things are not much better
down at the school. Everyone
wanders about, aimlessly
attempting to justify their
existence. The cafeteria is
filled with people wondering
why, and wherefore ?

Lecture attendance is down.
Coffee consumption is up.

A motorcyclist is riding across
the grass in the quadrangle,
gouging great ridges upon its
surface, and spraying flecks
of mud over disinterested
onlookers, while a companion
splashes slogans on a wall.

No one reads them.

Yesterday the students were smiling,
today tears run hot gullies in the snow.

There are no more reflections
in the mirrors. The light is
very poor. People are seeing
with their hands, reaching out
and touching one another. The
play has disintegrated. No one
is acting any longer. A strange
silence descends upon the community.

The chapel organist has
stopped making music.

The clocks have frozen at 2.
Figures gather in warm clusters,
to whisper and touch with each
other, slightly fearful of actions
they can no longer control.

And still the sun will not shine.

The library has finally been closed,
and lectures cancelled indefinitely. All
the buildings have been destroyed. Only
the foundations remain.

The printed word seems

to be dying out.

It appears impossible

to retain

a thought

long enough

to

put

it

on

paper.

(john griffin)

~~Then~~

~~where will it~~

~~the age is~~

(john griffin)

~~no~~



(john griffin)

Then the sun shone and the
ice melted.

Then the tears dried, and the
clocks ticked. The library doors
were opened, and the lecture halls
aired and dusted. Students
returned to their studies and
ambitions. The organist resumed
his music, and the actors
their play.

Snow fell, and winter set in.

(john griffin)

We have stepped inside our mirrors
We must now retrace our steps
The reflections have returned
the images doubled
the bubble broken
Do not the words on this page
Attest to that ?

“And if, in the bearing and telling of my soul
anything is revealed,
though the words I use are pretentious
and make you cringe with embarrassment,”

Keith Reid
In Held Twas in I

PAGES OF ME

I remember sharing a red-glowing cigarette with you in the dark.

I remember trying to get so close to you as to bury my head in your shoulder and dig into the inside of you.

I remember trying to write my first poem.

I remember having my phone ring at two o'clock in the morning and knowing it was you and not being able to bring myself to answer it.

I remember losing my sanity at the sound of your voice.

I remember watching my short fat legs grow into taller fat legs.

I remember wanting to tell you that I loved you and your not letting me.

I remember being rather drunk and throwing up at that first party at your college when I so desperately wanted to appear grown-up and sophisticated.

I remember being one of the short, dumpy, mousy girls with shiny silver braces on my crooked teeth.

I remember getting off the plane in Rochester, scared of seeing you again and scared that our summer love had chilled.

I remember being inexpressibly happy at seeing you in your familiar beige jeans, rolled faded blue shirt, dirty burgundy frat sweatshirt, grubby untied sneakers and two-day-old beard — you hadn't changed.

I remember trying to streak my hair blond gradually so my father wouldn't notice.

I remember driving a hundred and forty miles an hour down the Super 87 Highway with the wind tugging at my hair, bruising my face, and pulling my neck back, with you gripping the wheel and laughing up at me.

I remember finally getting contact lenses only to have you tell me you preferred me in my glasses.

I remember trying to tell you I loved you and your not letting me.

I remember our first awkward official date.

I remember a breakfast of maple-walnut ice cream.

I remember falling asleep on the couch with you at your place, waking up in time to discover it was morning and the television was still on.

I remember the cows one night on the beach.

I remember the night we met — me a fair damsel in distress standing on the street corner, you my knight in a shining new corvette.

(lesley hogan)

I remember our last picnic of beer and pistachio-nut ice cream on the mountain in the damp, cold weather of the bare autumn.

I remember my mother soaking in a hot bath tub while I talked of you for hours.

I remember not listening to her.

I remember trying to find myself and only getting more lost and confused in you.

I remember the skunk on the beach another night in the moonless darkness.

I remember being more nervous of your reaction to my quitting McGill than I was of my Dad's.

I remember smashing all the windows in my attic room, watching the blood flow through my fingers, and laughing and crying.

I remember meeting her.

I remember the faceless others who were not you.

I remember the night you at last told me you loved me, only to spring up, hitting me across the face, screaming that you hated me.

I remember realizing that we were destroying each other.

I remember the harsh, too-bright sun of Florida, and thinking of you while kicking through the small, lapping waves.

I remember the weird foreign psychologist.

I remember promising my parents not to see you.

I remember sneaking off to your spring prom with my saved allowance, and feeling there was a strange presence in your room.

(lesley hogan)

I remember wet tears on my eyelashes and the stickiness of my running mascara.

I remember trying to make a new start at a new university only to receive a letter from you after you'd promised not to write me ; you wanted me to have your address in case I . . .

I remember being weak.

I remember more late-night phone calls and a steadily mounting phone bill.

I remember plans falling through once more.

I remember holding your hand while I was walking along, kissing your lips when saying good night to him.

I remember the last Christmas card you sent me, wishing me only the best in love, happiness and success, and in that order . . . without you ?

I remember bodies with your face.

I remember lonely darkness.

I remember jumping out of bed one night and calling you only to discover that your phone had been disconnected.

I remember thinking that the paper flowers in my window were like the unreal, paper people here.

I remember wanting you, only you.

I remember jumping up last night and putting your letters in my pillowcase and crying.

I remember the awful burden of you.

I remember the terrible pain of losing you.

I remember, I remember, God how I remember, loving you.

Now I feel only the emptiness that is left.

He masks his emotions ;
My emotions mask me.

* * *

When I was with you
I thought of only the bad times,
But now I no longer have you
I remember only the good.
I wish it was the other way,
And yet I don't.

TO BRIAN

You lie on top of me ;
I have never felt so alone.

During the movie you laughed
down at me,
saying — see, he sleeps with his back to her too.
It's comfortable,
I always sleep that way.
Four times last night I woke up
uncontented
alone
wanting to bury myself into the physical presence
of you,
You slept on, unaware.

The mornings are the best.
We talk, laugh, wrestle, play records
lying side by side in your big bed
and I am happy.

You are always the first to get up
start breakfast
I am shy
The pancakes stick in my throat.
I remember your intensity
the strangeness of your voice in the dark.
You came against my legs
I felt the wetness
the heaviness of your body on mine
I couldn't bear you to move
to leave me to myself
with your back to me.

(lesley hogan)

Take the train.
Wipe the peanut butter off your mouth.
Why ? Do you really care what I do ?
or is it only for your appearance.

Dylan sings on
I don't hear the words
just the mood
it fits.

I drag on my cigarette
you hate me to smoke
I light a fag the minute you leave.

You'll never read this.
You bastard.
Take my body, reject my soul
take only what you want
do you even want
 my
body ?
or am I just a faceless body in your bed,
in your darkness ?

noni howard

HAPPINESS

happiness is
finding you alone,
so we can
weave each other's dreams
in gentle fingers
for an hour
until the world outside
calls us
to our own
realities.

You there, Robin !

Yes, you . . .

ruffled, huddled,
pressed against seldom warm
bricks.

Blood freezes too, Robin.

Remember the geese
Paddling pink morning water
Back into cracking reeds ?

Remember how they kicked wildly
At the edge of the water
Struggling to get just

that much air
beneath their great wings ?

They didn't look back, Robin.

The soggy nests of wood and stems
Once-pleasing bits of coloured glass
These watched.

The lame bird ignores
Its sprawling wing.
Thin webs rustle the last
Splinters of the egg-shell.
Quick darting eyes, shyness forgotten
Set in a gaze
Strain with the neck toward the high silhouette
See the ancient formation pass
To the right
Of the sun.

It beat out its life, Robin,
for something
found deeper than
feather roots
or marrow.

What made you think
You had a choice, Robin ?

Did some god
Forget
To inject the two grams of
Inevitability
Into your tiny feather head ?

(*rosemary le gallais*)

GIFTS

When I was born
My father gave my mother
Sprigs of mint
With wild roses
Because
 there were no shrubs of rosemary in that spring
 And she still named me for Ophelia's lines.

When my father died
My mother placed
A branch of balsam
To lie between the wood and earth
Because
 the wind had sifted leaves with summer savory
 And she could find no violets in that fall.



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OFFICE OF
THE VICE-PRINCIPAL
A. W. PRESTON

Bishop's University

Lennoxville, Que.

February 21, 1969

I am flattered to have been asked to write a few words for the issue of the Mitre that celebrates its 75th anniversary.

During the past forty-one years I have had the privilege of being a reader and am happy to think that such distinguished graduates as Frank Scott and George Whalley, to mention only two, were at one time contributors.

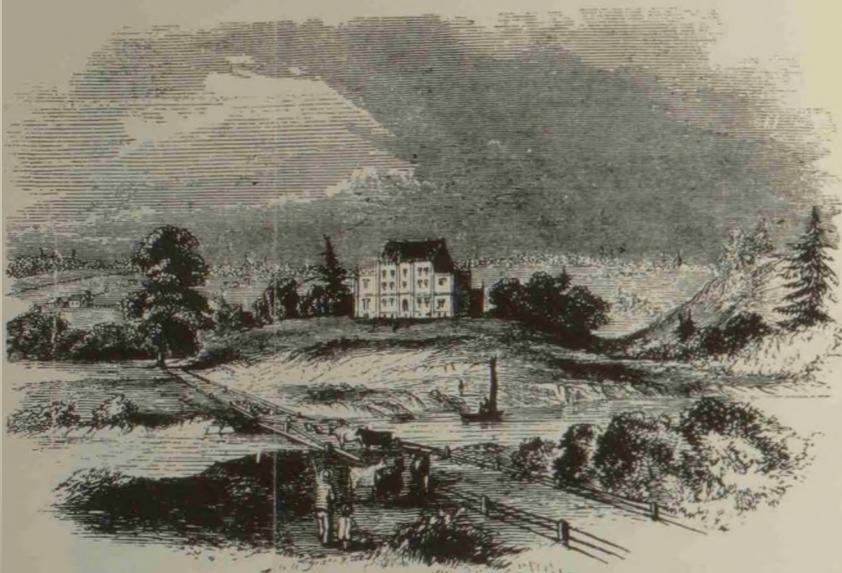
Long ago in July 1928, when I was discussing the possibility of coming to Bishop's with the late Dr. McGreer at the old Colonial Institute in London, he showed me a copy of the current issue. Its excellence of format and its interesting material was certainly a factor in persuading me to become a humble lecturer in Classics at Bishop's.

The important area of intellectual and literary interests that lies outside the classroom has always been so well reflected in the pages of the Mitre. May we then all venture to hope that this tradition of excellence will continue to pervade and inspire the next 75 years of the Mitre's existence.

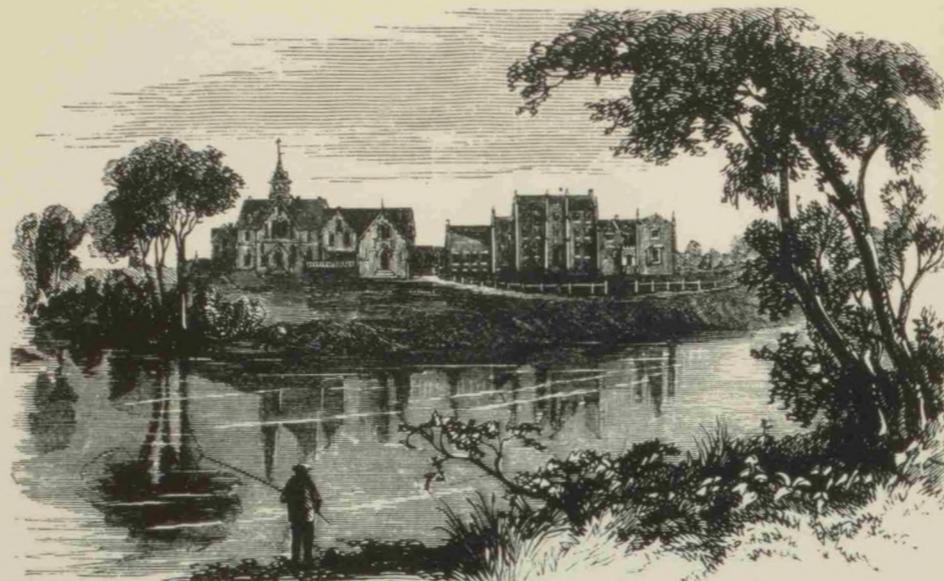
With sincere congratulations on the past and every good hope for the future.

Anthony W. Preston
Anthony W. Preston

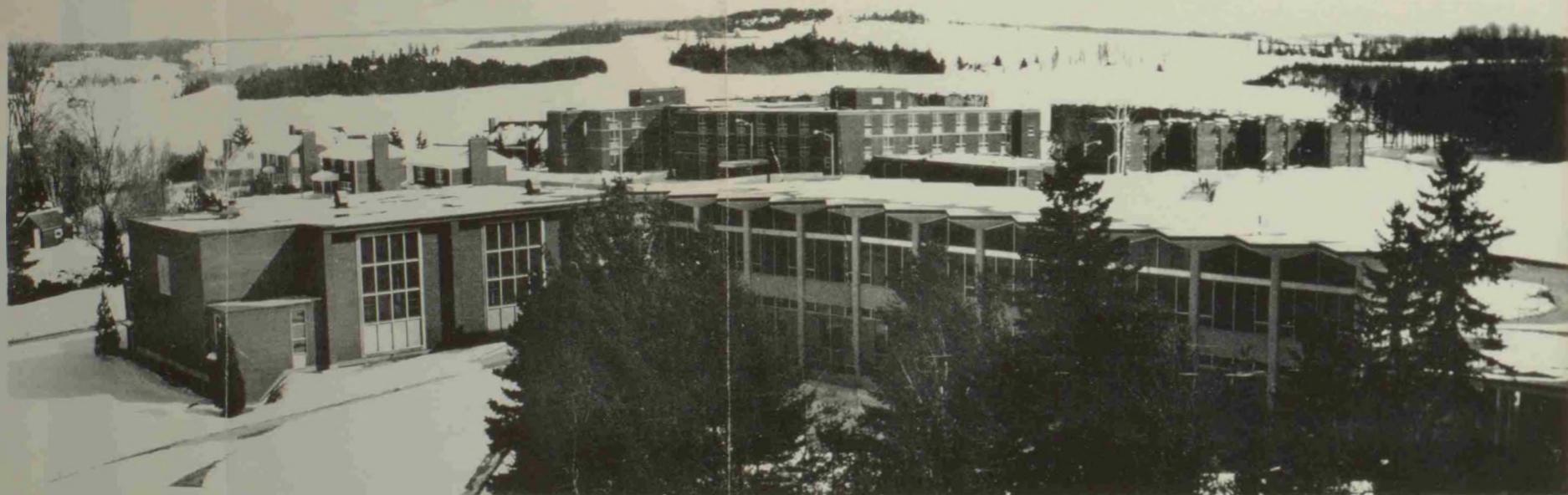




BISHOP'S COLLEGE, 1846.



BISHOP'S COLLEGE, 1865.



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john luxton

What scares

me

about all that i am learning is . . .

that i

not be

might more

never be

than a half-

skilled practioner

of an art

whose perfection i am beginning to see

too too clearly.

You thought you were so witty when you said
that it is more difficult to receive a compliment
gracefully than to bestow it :
how hollow,
considering what little opportunity you have afforded
others to hazard either experience.

* * *

Sometimes I wonder if my greatest problem was being told
by one of my first teachers that I had a problem—
and believing him.

* * *

In any friendship that has overt sexual overtones
there are two principal dangers: one is talking about it;
and the other is not talking about it.

* * *

You are gladdened by the bountiful harvests from the
soil of your own mind. May each fruit remind you of
what thanks you owe Providence for sending the rain—
of other men's ideas.

like a bottle-note
set free
by a sharp rock,
our poem
has cracked
and drifted an ocean
apart.

and like the message
that could have been
we must wait,
on bitter salt tears,
for rescue on
different shores.

PASSING THOUGHTS, I SUPPOSE

I

Sometimes . . .
when I stood in the hall
watching friends play ball . . .
I knew their games
their calling names
which were funny . . .
And I would crease my brow
for sincerity
and ask questions
like why . . .
I stood in the hall
while friends played ball
and I couldn't . . .
And somehow it all seemed put on
I suppose

II

Certainly I heard the organ
and felt the great wrath (sort of lippily)
but all I could see
was him playing sand-box games
with children and lepers
and to think that he was god at
the same time was just too much
to believe
except that I did
I suppose

III

It could be said
reaching to touch
isn't really much
it's easier to kill with a gun
and run
than to stay and play . . .
and touch
not much
just a little
but then, we aren't like that
I suppose.

THAT KIND OF GIRL

That kind of girl.
'Jump', you said.
'How high', she asked
On the way up.

SUNDAY

When he awoke it was Sunday.
The small room was warm.
There was a blizzard outside and he thought of a woman.
A Sunday morning woman.
Large, warmer than the bed, moist, hips,
That's what his well-rested limbs and slight hangover wanted.
A Sunday morning woman.
Silent warmth in the bed for his
Sunday morning erection.
Some came to mind.
They all missed the ideal slightly.
Breasts had to be huge, hips bigger
Hair was to be long
Down to the ass.
A monster Sunday morning woman
So big that he had to abandon the bed
And cover the living room floor with mattresses
And be careful not to get squashed
When she rolled.

As the blizzard died
So did Sunday morning woman.
Pipe, high boots, camera, and long coat
He lost his role as sleeper and became
The artist.
Sunday afternoon girl floated in.
They would walk on the mountain,
Take pictures of old Beaver Lake,
Drop down to the Bistro for a beer,
And see friends at the Museum for coffee.
Sunday afternoon girl weighed ninety-five pounds.
Delicate skin barely covered the bones in her neck.
She had to be careful in the wind.
Long and thin she was Sunday night woman
Against the pillow,
As the blizzard started again.

Cats are pretty ugly.
You know — the way they live.
“Isn't it lovely ?”
said the old grandmother
about my Siamese.
“No. It shits on my bed.”
“Isn't that awful ?”
she tried.
“No it's a gas sucking it up.”
“Aren't you a strange child ?”
she almost whispered.
“No I'm a soldier.”
“Isn't that fascinating ?”
she hoped.
“Yes I punish dogs who won't kill cats.”

REVELSTOKE

I felt,
His pulse in switch-yard pounding.
I saw,
His brain drowned in Regent water.
I heard,
His voice as a telegraph echo.
I tasted,
His lips flavoured with juke-box coffee.
I smelt,
His body stink of Yankee soap.

A debtor,
Borrowing his life from nature's majesty.
A beggar,
Scraping alms from prodigal sons.
A whore,
Prostituting his Canadian sweat.

MOUNTAIN SUB MOTHER

Where the grey runs brother
And summits stand mother
To a mounted duplicate,
Eels of steel woo a mate
Of Canadian beauty.

Where the spruce become hands
To lead two greasy bands
To an infinitude :
A soft tolerant mood
Of maternal duty.

CONCERTO

I

Discords
don't
dissolve —
they, rather,
resolve.

Cornet and clarinet
when they clash
need not recede —
they may *concede*,
and one may use
a bit more brass ;
the other, a little less of lip.

And thus are we the twin top strings
on some antique guitar with twelve.
And though we share the same sweet note,
you sing an octave high'r than I.
And though your purpose seems the same,
of different substance is your form.

Time must pass. And of this time,
our time to play in concert's small —
there's little chance to keep in tune.
For when apart we can't maintain
an interaction ; rather we
expand, contract, grow tense, unwind,
feel sharp or flat — we change within
the limits of our different form
to suit our separate circumstance.

From time to time, as it must pass,
there's only time to play the short
beginning of an overture.
We may not sense in those few notes
how time has changed our pitch or mood,
what must be done to play as one,
or how communication's lapse
may be reborn. Thus we may clash,
and sound be sour.

Remember then
the harmony we felt before
when joined in mutual sympathy,
so tuned to play a symphony
in key. Thus let us find accord —
blame not ourselves for small discord —
but curse a temperamental sky.

II

Like Rumpelstiltskin
I stamp.

A closeted competitor,
Parasitic,
Two vermin :
One feeding ;
One sucking,
Laboriously building
An ectoplasmic wall
Behind her,
Between us,
With her excrement,
Her left hand —
The clean one —
In mine,
Warming

Comforting

Lying.

Doesn't it tremble ?

It has such power !
Isn't it frightened ?
It has such complexity !
Doesn't it explore ?
It has such sensitivity !
Doesn't it care ?

Gone

The idealism

Of carrying shad roe to a starving cannibal.

We are united

In holy superficiality.

Luck

— My luck, it seems —

Or some stray god

Has blessed this match.

You haven't.

My fingers are but glued to your rotting mask.

How long will Chance have to be my teacher ?

It seems I'm still in the vestibule

Of the outpatient's clinic.

Drum up a medicine man :

Have him pour opium into the writhing bowels.

The virtuous Siamese half is dead.

Wean the bloodsucking lips of the living ;

Tear them from the Life Force they have found.

You don't want them.

Let them breathe impartial oxygen.

My hands are trapped in the mosquito netting of your veil

Seven times you marched around my fortress,

While I, with undiscovered death-wish,

Helped you blow my trumpet.

Vulnerable now, I dangle from your careful-woven mesh

And love you through the haze,

Adjusting,

Believing for a moment that this guise of gauze is you,

That I am folded in,

Not shrouded out.

To hell with confessions

And other types of monologue.

I'll come back when my shell has rehardened,

When I can stamp stronger,

When it begins to matter.

To you.

III

Why is the Spring our own
in a birdcall
in a butterfly flutter
in sunlight on our back ?

Why is the World our own
in icy bubbles
in hot breath
in a shared cloud of smoke ?

And why is our life not ours
until we remember one minute
with sixty seconds — at least — accounted for
by observation of emerald hair flecks
or whispered moan in screaming embrace ?

Now
much older, much younger,
much closer,
much stronger,
we tremble yet
wide-eyed
on pivotal finger-tip touch.

Incredible harmony,
not unity ;
sensed,
not spoken ;
mindbody world of us,
a bright ripple in our mutual pond of them.

Come :
warmth is its own end.

TALE

Once upon a time, about the third of February, or the twenty-seventh of September, or the thirteenth of July, Little Red decided on a stroll over to Grannie's.

"What a beautiful day for a stroll over to Grannie's," she enthusiastically exclaimed. So, donning a purple sweater and Levi's, she set out for the East side, where Grannie's was.

On her way, Little Red spotted a suspicious-looking character taking periodical glances at her. She paused, and quickly the wolf stepped up.

"W-e-l-l-l, hello there, who are you ?" he breathed.

"I'm Little Red . . . What do you want ?"

"How about coming over to my place and we'll do something, and . . ."

"Stow it, Bub, I'm strolling over to Grannie's, and I know where you can go." And she walked off down the street.

The wolf mused. "Hmmm, I know where I can go. Over to Grannie's. Heh, heh, heh." So he stepped into his GTO and wide-tracked halfway to Grannie's before realizing he was clueless as to where Grannie's place was.

Little Red continued her stroll and came upon three little pigs sitting in front of their homes.

"Hey, aren't you Little Red ?" shouted one of the pigs.

"Yes, I'm Little Red," said Little Red. "How did you know me ?"

"My uncle is a business associate of your grandmother's," replied the pig. "By the way, my name's Howard, Howard Pigg. The wood house next door is Louie's, and the straw house at the end belongs to Dertie Pigg. Where are you off to, Little Red ?"

"I'm off to Grannie's".

"Hey, there was someone passing through here half an hour ago wanting to know where Grannie's was. Some aggressive nut in a GTO."

"The wolf !" gasped Little Red. "Oh my goodness, Grannie may be in for a bit of a shock." She explained her meeting with the wolf.

"Well, let's go," said Howard. "Louie and Dertie, you too!"

So they all climbed into Howard's Mini Cooper "S" and sped off towards Grannie's.

The wolf had just arrived at Grannie's and was about to enter when along came Little Red and the Piggs.

"Eager, aren't you?" said the wolf.

"Clear out, Bub," shouted Dertie.

"Who are you?" demanded the wolf.

"I'm Dertie Pigg."

"I can see that, but . . . ouch! Ouch! Ow!"

Being clobbered by three umbrellas, the wolf had no choice but to clear out. Swearing revenge, he jumped into his GTO and roared away, leaving a trail of dust behind him.

Just then Grannie opened the door and exclaimed, "Why, Little Red, what a pleasant surprise! And Howard, Louie, and Dertie Pigg." She never did learn what almost happened to her.

The wolf was still thinking of methods of revenge when he approached a small stand boasting a large sign: LIMONADE.

"A front if I ever saw one," thought the wolf. Then he had a brainstorm. Pulling up at the stand, he saw seven short waiters.

"Lemonade, five cents. Seven short waiters, no waiting," said the seven short waiting waiters.

"Aw, I don't want no lemonade," grumbled the wolf. "I have more important things for you to do." He explained his predicament.

"Actually we do a bit of business on the side," said one of the dwarfs. "An 'accident' now and then. Knock off someone occasionally. Nothing too spectacular, you know. Sure, we'll do what you want. Let me introduce us. "I'm Humpty; here's Dumpty, Hicky the drunk, Dicky, Doc, Dopey, and Fred."

"Fred?" remarked the wolf.

"Yeah, Fred. Actually, he's the black sheep of the group. Just doesn't seem to fit in."

"I see what you mean."

Humpty, Dumpty, Hicky, and Dicky set out towards the Piggs' houses late that evening. Hicky, the perpetual drunk, was sloshed even more than usual. By the time they arrived at the Pigg homes, he could hardly stand up.

"Humpty, you place the charges," Dicky said. "Hicky, you keep out of the way."

"Ah'll go where'er ah want," guzzled Hicky, "and no one's gonna stop me . . ."

The earth trembled as Hicky let out a mammoth belch. The gust not only downed two of the three houses but also blew Humpty, Dumpty, and Dicky to China where they were seized by Red Guards.

"Wa-a-l-l-l, blow me down," bubbled Hicky, as he fell flat on his face.

Meanwhile, Little Red had decided to stay at Grannie's for the night. Suddenly, at about 9:45, or 8:23, or 10:08, in burst the wolf, followed by Dopey and Doc.

"C'mon, you're going with us," snarled the wolf.

"Eeek! Gasp!" gasped Little Red. "Oh, help, help!"

"There's nobody around to help you," laughed Doc. "And you, Grannie, you keep quiet about this or we'll revoke your liquor license."

"Oh, no, don't do that," sobbed Grannie.

"Then shut up," said the wolf, politely.

Off into the darkness sped the wolf, Dopey, and Doc, with Little Red their captive.

Upon reaching the wolf's apartment, Dopey hinted, "I guess you won't be needing us any more."

"That's right," said the wolf. "You can go now."

Just as Dopey and Doc were about to leave, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Dopey.

In came a stranger, followed by the three Piggs and Batman.

BAM PLONK SMASH ZOWIE POW ZONG

As the dust settled, Howard yelled, "Where is everybody?"

"Uh, Dopey and Doc are on the sidewalk five stories down," replied Louie. "Take a look."

"Ech," said Dertie. "Yeah, they're on the sidewalk all right, and on the street, and on the . . ."

"Where's the wolf?" the stranger asked.

"After him," the three Piggs shouted, and left, followed by Batman.

Now the stranger and Little Red were alone in the room.

"Who are you?" asked Little Red.

"I'm Prince Charming," said Prince Charming, "and I've come to free you".

"But I thought you were married, to Cinderella or someone like that."

"I was, but not now. We got a divorce."

"But... but..."

"Aw, we didn't get along too well. She spent all her time scrubbing floors and washing windows, and she was always so tired. And she had the queerest habits, like sitting in the fireplace. I just wouldn't stand for that, especially when a fire was burning, so we got a divorce."

"Oh," said Little Red.

The three Piggs came back in. "We didn't get him," Louie said. "But don't worry. He tried to make out with a witch who turned him into a frog."

"By the way," said Little Red, "how come you weren't blown away by the belch?"

"We were in Howard's house. The brick one. The only one which didn't get blown down."

"Oh," said Little Red. "It's too bad they blew down."

"Don't sweat about it," said Dertie. "Both were condemned by the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation anyway."

With practically everything now under control, Hicky was still unaccounted for. He was found, still flat on his face. He surrendered, told all, and was sentenced to three weeks in jail without beer.

When Fred, who had stayed behind to mind the "LIMONADE" stand, was told of the happenings of the night before, he couldn't bear it any longer.

"I'm going home to Mother," he proclaimed.

Louie and Dertie built new, brick houses and took over the "LEMONADE" stand. Little Red eloped with Prince Charming and everyone lived happily ever after.

Except the wolf.

"Ribet."

WITHIN — WITHOUT

The greyer greyness at the end of a grey day
Pervades the room.

The blood-red wax dies in stifled redness
The tap of a foot to music from the tape
Relieves the aloneness — he changes beat.

Outside the pressure is great
As life hangs on a three-hour rite.

Is it sane, on a day like this,
Grey and greyer with grey moist air
Cold on the face, to recall earlier days of
A rosary of memory.

My life hangs, I can't go forward
And certainly not back —
Where to, the paper means to ask.

As the guitar climbs in gold brass sunset lake air rungs...
I forget. Isn't it better?

TRAIN

snow,
drifting like tortured gauze
across the window
mingling with cigarette smoke
until the window disappears.

and silence.
not only a silence of words
but a silence of thought.
having agreed to meet we parted
before we met
to avoid the newness of creation.

and fear.
the anticipation of meeting old sights
and finding them unchanged
so that change must come,
like love, from within.

but mostly sadness
for the loss of all the happiness
that had been, and would be no more
a silent farewell
which forbade recognition.

a train
jerking with purpose and strength
across a distance
which never again
could be covered.

TANTALUS II

With smoky cobwebs draped over
Your shoulders
Stretched in black velvet
And your hair melting like ice
And staining
The chair with yellow memories
And your fingers tracing scarlet phrases
On my arm
Swaying silently in flesh
Your thighs like a question mark
And a promise
Locked forever in an instant
My own face swelling in your eyes
Under blackened lashes
Making welts of sorrow on my mind
And your silent scarlet wound
Like the end of a record
Promising more the second time around
Sad-eyed lady I await patiently
On my mountain
For the day of my final judgment
When your valley will be raised
My mountain lowered
Sad-eyed lady I am waiting.

TANTALUS V

Once I sang you songs
To the harmony of falling snow
And walked with you
Along the riverbank.

 You laughed then
 And you called me
 Your merry minstrel.

Once I talked with you
In the solidness of night-time
And felt with you
What it means

 You smiled then
 And you called me
 Your happy fool.

Once I lay with you
Covered by a quilt of thought
And tried with you
To find myself.

 You cried then
 And you called me
 Your endless madman.

Once never once lasts forever.

TANTALUS VII

How long can a laugh last
Before it becomes
Fixed
And sad
And tired of laughing ?

How far can a thought run
Before it meets
A bright
And pointed
Fence of age-old iron ?

How much can a mind take
Before it crumples
Crying
And screaming
For the holiness of silence ?

(bruce retallack)

TO A FRIEND, PERHAPS

Remember, Lysis ?

those white days
when the air was as still
as Praxiteles' statues — poised
Imperturbably white !

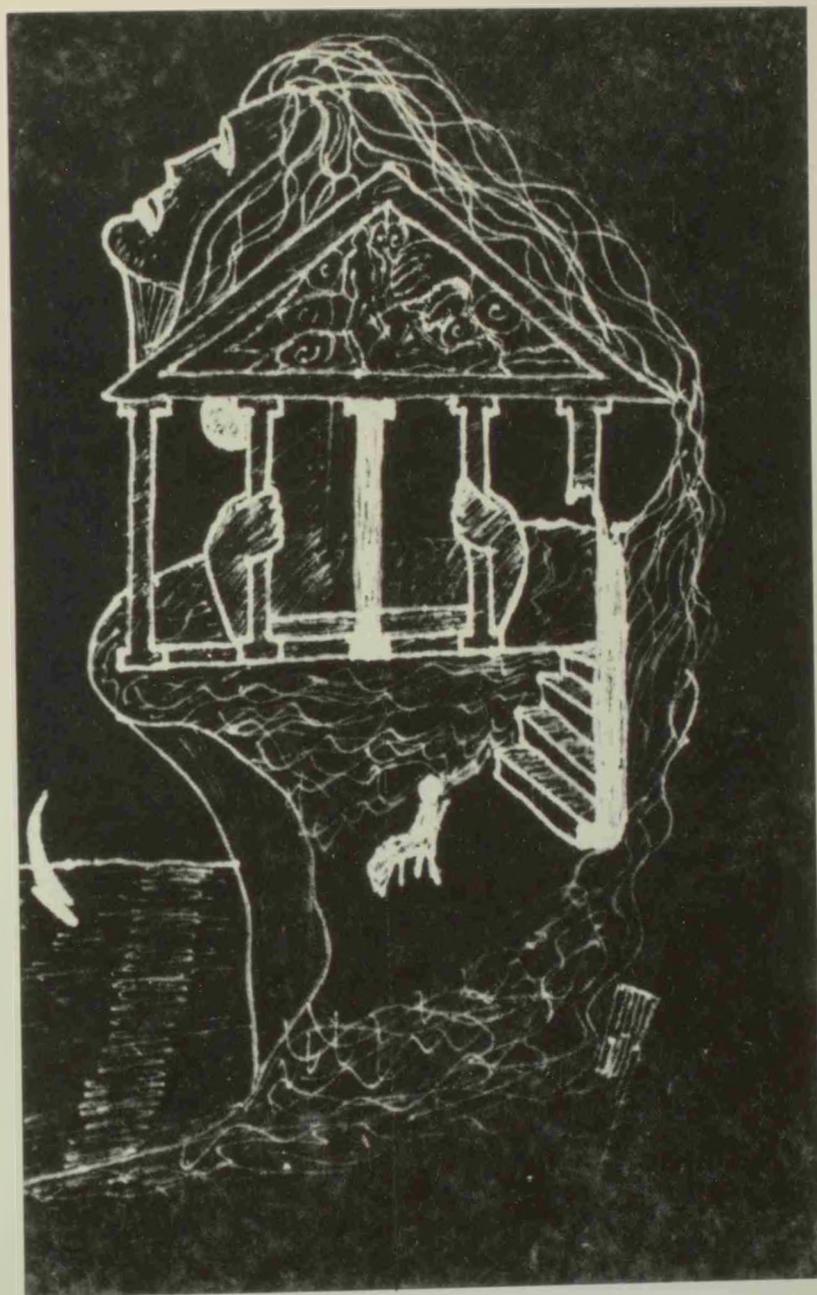
and the sea
blue as only the sea can be
— deeper than the finest tiles
from Samathrace —

and we lingered overlong
in the coolness of the porticos
in the shadows of the pillars
in the recesses of the baths

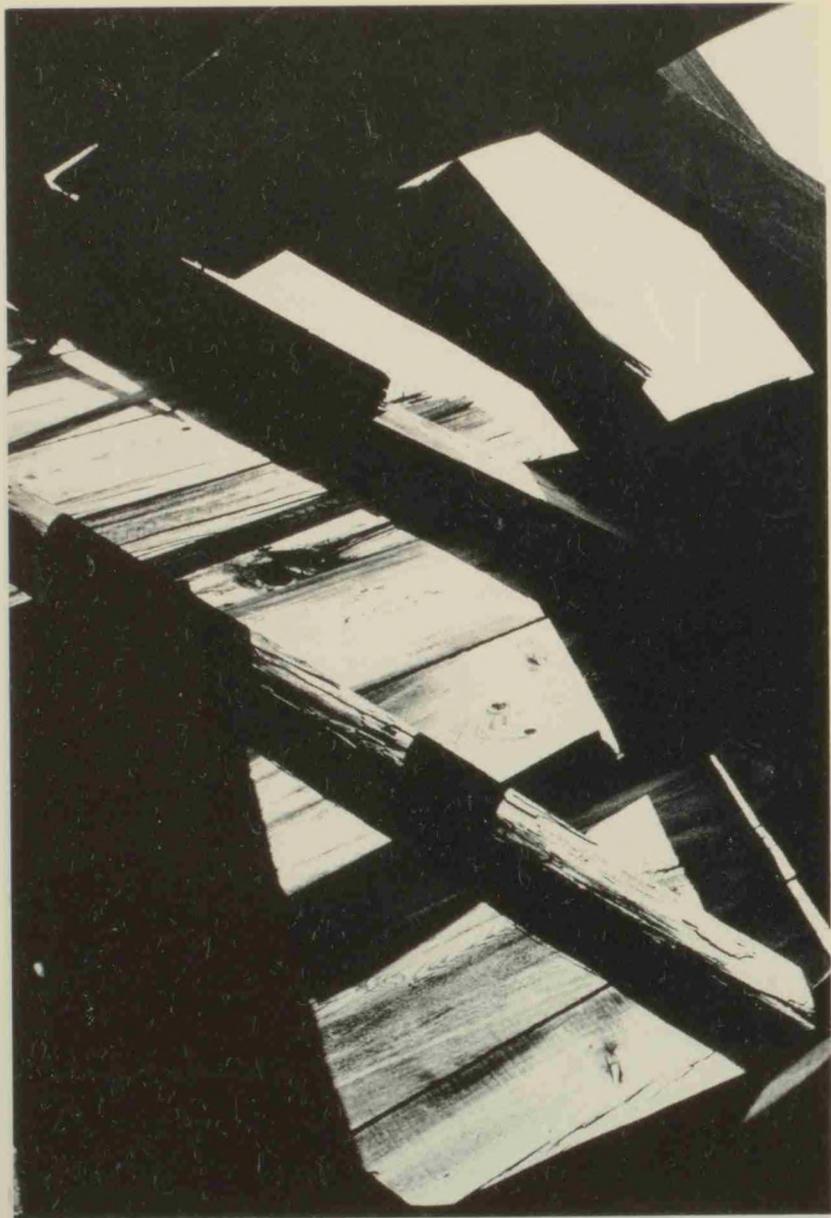
we always wrestled more gently
than rules require
and perhaps our secret places
saw more than games

but
that was a long time ago
wasn't it ?

Lysis ?

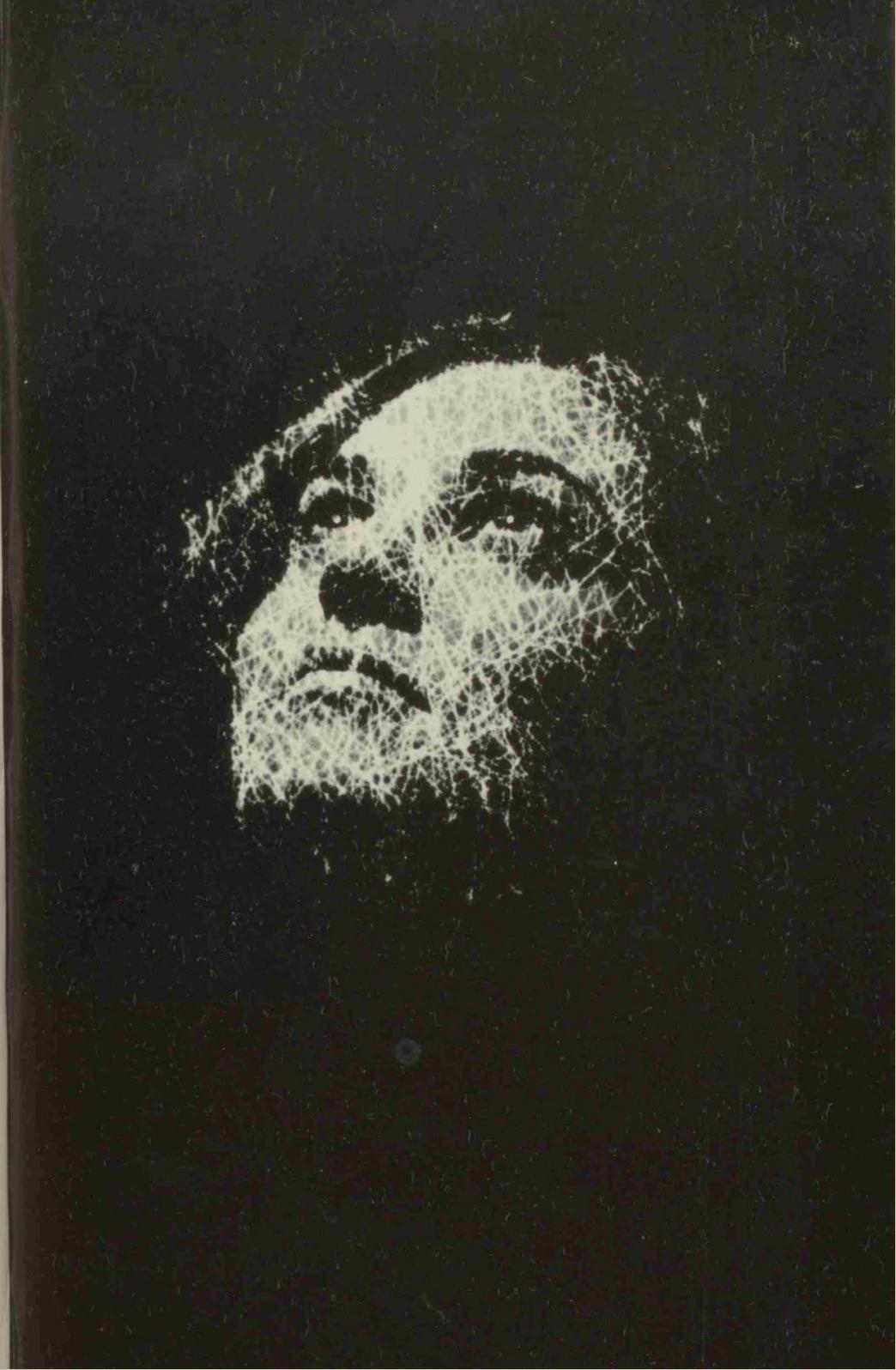


bruce retallack



g. william lydiatt

patrick guest →





v. van gogh

THE WOMB OF TIME

whisper along my
longing lips
cradle my
loving mind
tangle yourself
in the strands of my hair
caress it about
my breasts
rocking in hot seas
two hearts thundering
nearly One
your silken phallus
erupts in a
symphony of
passion
our child
sings
deep in the
womb of
time

written on a Van Gogh sketch —
a girl by her baby's cradle

POURQUOI SUIS-JE SI TRISTE ?

Pourquoi suis-je si triste
quand le vent siffle si bas,
car les neiges n'y sont plus
n'est-ce pas la brise du printemps ?

L'herbe reprend haleine
et les oiseaux, leurs chansons.
Ce n'est qu'au fond de mon coeur
que l'hiver ne veut pas s'en aller.

Il ne peut pas s'en aller,
la gelée se prolonge.
Lorsque tu restes absent,
je n'entends pas les chants du printemps.

Et si tu restes toujours
tout seule au lac Magog,
je serai en Bretagne
toujours triste quand siffle le vent.

fist
my perfect lover
at least you don't run around
with other hands

POEM FOR A LITTLE BOY

- in the flash
— beside the argument
you spun a moment
out of eyes
— both dragon and defender
I waited until you came back
and you didn't
need
more than a moment
to say
(my name)
while I have yours
— in red jelly
and red wine
— in sunlight
and night light
— by the river
in blue pyjamas
with your honey pot
by your head.

oh baby, baby ;
you're my little nocturnal head warmer
that works better than my red & white striped nightcap
on the nights when i'd usually have to pretend afterwards
that i'd slept right !

my syrupy sweetness & light ;
you're my mental manifestation of the intimacy i feel
with the fluff on my black suit or
with the food stain on my best tie that
i like better than the pattern !

my warmest sweet tart ;
you're the epitome of the source of my ultimate delight
affecting
me like the euphoria that takes hold of me when
i can't tie anymore knots in a shoe-lace and
i know i got my money's worth !

(s. shorter)

HOME-COOKING

jeremy's pudding as a result
instilled nefarious instincts
on the part of his aforementioned just deserts.
it all really began when his
brest god-nanny performed or i should say
reverted to lude arpeggios on his favourite muffintin.
but the matter was dissolved
and jeremy commenced the desecration of his family bush
keeping the pudding well in hand
before it all went bad and spoiled
his brand-new snuff-box which had the secret compartment
for his favourite recipes.

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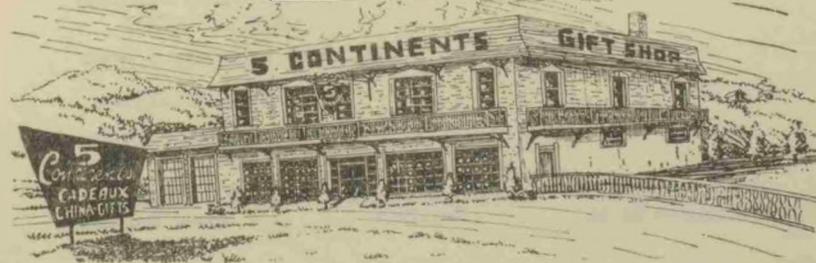
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& Ma Kenna*
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A SONNET FOR ENDING IT

Now he and I must go our separate ways —
At least, a time apart that could revive
The joy we found in planning out our days,
And sharing little things. It *was* alive
Before — I knew it from the smile that broke
Across his face (and mine !) when we would find
Each other just by chance. A quiet smoke,
A quiet talk, and words that caught my mind
And spun it into love — and then I knew
I'd found another self. "Inseparable."
But now, no longer is that true. For he
Has changed . . . as much as I. We've wandered through
The fields of love — too fast. We filled time full
Of wasted words, and boredom set us free.

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leaning backwards against some woman's slab
that impersonally records
the length of time her mind was caught
in her physical shape,
I like to think of
of the empty stillnesses
I've found
on either side
of the line of death

AFTER A CONVERSATION ABOUT VALUES

If all you question or discuss becomes a mire
in which your conversation makes its muck
of cynicism's bitter spice — if all
your hopes are those "ideals" which I've seen stuck
between an existential slough of self
and a whining fear that you can't understand
why people want to love their lives — if all
you see in life is dirt and pain and muck
that dirties up your sordid little mind
already grimed with hate — I'm sorry that
I will not stay and share your conversation.
The sickness in your mind disgusts me ; germs
of your despairs are crawling over me . . .
If all you have to offer me is this, —
disgust for what I treasure most in life —
we part.

"You, keep an open mind —"
you've told me — "keep an open mind !" I retch
to think of opening my mind to you.

ON NOTICING THE LACK OF A CHURCH KEY

In circumstances pleasant, we did sit
To talk about the world. And part of it
Dwelted longer on Philosophies we once
Had taken for our use, like noble Ponce
Who searched for youth among the everglade
And found it 'fore he died (of th' ancient cause
Of usual death, advancing age). We wade
Like he through Great Ideas and Profound ;
Not seeing where they lead us we are bound
To follow those bright gleams among the dark
Of wordly roles where we must find our part.
With growing fervour and conviction deep,
Beyond the guarded walls we each did peep,
To see within the pales of Self, that guard
Our inner feelings on the roles, so hard
To find, and hard to train ourselves to fill.
Our throats grew dry. "Young miss, I think we will
Avail ourselves of that bernalted brew
In amber crystal bottles. I'll get two."
And up he ran to fetch that nectar, tart
And foaming, cool and warming, anxious heart
The while a-wondering where the key was laid
That would remove the metal cap inlaid
With royal crests of Dow and Molson House.
And, seeing how the struggle did ensue
To open up that fount of locked dew,
That source of humanism's praise, that church
Of Dionysian thirst, and he besmirched
From efforts in the task, thought I, to be
A friend indeed, would send to him this key,
For future use, to serve its function clear
In opening straight-a-way those bottles dear.
Serve well, small gift ! May hospitality
And talk ne'er lack for such a tool as thee !

THE PARTY LAUGH

Around me voices skipped and bounced,
Dancing over my ears
While slowly, so silently
I had withdrawn,
That no one could know, no one could see ;
I might have been speaking,
The sounds seemed so close.

Automatically, a certain part awoke,
Reaction required : far off there was a joke.

Molded in haste,
Fragile vessel of crystal brittle,
My laugh was quickly launched on fatal voyage,
Whirled within the restless, fluid air,
Its thin glass hull did shatter and explode.

Shimmering splinters in pouring cascade,
Sparkling sounds with chilling voice sprinkles
With shattered songs of tinny ringing,
Piercing my ear with bursting pain.

Voices continued,
Around me, rambling.

Oddly, I felt the muscles tense,
How many ears had my shipwreck reached ?
Swirling before, the sea of air
Grew calm in mercy,
Evidence
Sinking into liquid depth.

The last, one shining fragment
Was all that floated still,
I noticed it
Alone
Carelessly, curiously, slip away.

AUGUST 20, 1968

1

The fields are cool
and the shadows on the fields
yield to the wind and sun.
Then, it was early August,
Prague, a hundred miles
over these green fields,
over Franconia,
and the grass free to the winds
and the winds to the sky . . .

2

The promises at Cierna,
the promises at Bratislava,
who would keep them,
the walls frightened,
the rooms of little men,
the rooms of Moscow,
Brezhnev stuttering
with anger,
white with anger,
holding up the flowers
at the station at Bratislava,
yielding on all important points,
the white dagger of Czechoslovakia,
the green fields of Czechoslovakia,
pointing to the heart of Russia,
the closed rooms,
shadows in the Kremlin ;
the green fields,
the shadows of the sun
in the frightened rooms ;
who would keep those promises,
the stones frightened,
the walls frightened,
the walls of Berlin ?

3

There were sounds in the night,
the shadows of night,
the treads on the road,
the wheel-treads in the streets.
In Ruzyne Street
a cat tipped over the pail of garbage.
A tank knocked down a lamppost.

4

Spring has come to an end,
as it will do,
in late August.
There is no denying that summer ends
when the grain is taken in,
and the fields are rough,
and there is no longer sun
and shadows in the waving grain.

5

There is always love,
small talk at the bars,
arguments, amiable enough
though serious,
at the factory, in the schools,
conventions, not entirely serious,
and casting one's vote —
to get rid of the talk.
There is reason,
and reasonable acceptance.
Spring need not end in January.
Much can be done.

6

Then there is force,
there is steel
and orders
given to young men
not knowing much about it
but obeying orders,
going to a new country,
to new streets,
comforted by steel
and looking forward to girls
and talk and beer at the tables,
well-meaning enough,
doing what they are told
but enjoying it.

7

There is always the possibility
of crushing an idea.

8

The young woman from Mrakov
with her toy rifle
guarding the German frontier
can be dealt with.
It was always the custom for Mrakov
symbolically to guard the region,
but she can be dealt with,
and the minds of a people,
with their ideas,
the young and the old,
the lovers,
the fringe
listening to The Fluff,
the rock group booked
into the Vysokoskolsk Klub
for a three-week stand.

9

The streets were taken in a night.
Despite the fact that it was unexpected
it was incredibly efficient.
The mild and ideologically quiet Dubcek
was in manacles by morning.

10

What is needed for an idea
is a little planning,
a few flowers.

11

It was a period of euphoria.
A miniskirted girl pushed a baby carriage,
someone sat on a statue,
a student read,
some poet wrote a poem
about fields, green fields,
Ruzena Polakova, a red-haired model
in hostess pyjamas,
draped herself against an ancient
garden wall,
journalists turned out the news,
professors asked about things.
It was all a cliché.

12

Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny
consulted the generals.

13

In the West
there was consternation
but the situation was delicate,
there could be excuses for oppression,
someone might get angry,
all that was needed for more tanks
was an expression of sympathy.
There might be a setback.
Johnson listened to Dobrynin
impassively.

14

Smrkovsky, chairman of the National Assembly,
told the nation
although "we knew we would have
to pay a price for it,
we did not know the price would be
so terrible."

15

In some way it would be possible
to continue the "spirit of January",
though at a reduced speed,
the leaders told the people.

16

There is no known weapon to counter tanks.
This is a restrictive fact
known to those who own tanks.

17

In downtown Prague
they put garbage on the hot engines.

18

Bratislava
free radio
station :

"Our contempt is stronger."

Svoboda :

"There is no way back
from freedom and democracy."

Jan Hus :

"Love the Truth. Let others
have their truth,
and the truth will prevail."

Hitler :

"The more they curb themselves,
the more dangerous they become."

19

Spit, Czechs !
Slovaks !
Clear your throat, grandmother !
Fill your streets !
Switch around the street signs !
Take house numbers from the doors !
Smother them in fraternal attentions !
Welcome the treads !
Return that love !
Professor, tear up paper !
You, mother, say that you do not understand Russian !
You, students, spike the turret guns with broomsticks !
As you did.

20

The square of Vaclav is washed,
the statue is washed of paint :
Russians, go home.
Nothing is heard in the great square.
No sound of provocation.
The streets of a people,
of a million people,
are a map.
No sound of consolation.
No word of grievance.

21

In late autumn,
on the shores of the Massawippi,
it comes home
to my mind,
the denial, even the intimacy of
love, how,
when Prague
is silent.

LES VILLES ONT BRISE...

Les villes ont brisé
Les ailes des colombes
Dont les yeux d'or
Enduits
De suie
Cherchent le soleil
Dans les rues.

DANS UN RESTAURANT...

Dans un restaurant,
Devant un café froid,
Sourire aux lèvres,
Mégot fumant,
Le regard d'un fumeur
Frôle inutilement
Le râble de plâtre
Des filles aux indifférences gypseuses,
Car,
Tel une allumette
Frottée contre un pavé humide,
Son oeil ne parvient pas à faire jaillir
La flamme
Qu'il porte en lui.

REMEMBRANCE

Je me souviens
D'un temps
Où cela m'émouvait
De voir le Soleil
Aider la Rivière
A trouver au printemps
Sa nudité
Dans la lumière.

FILLES EN JEANS...

Filles en jeans,
Miroirs et réactions
Des forces de mon ère,
Vos chairs sournoises et violentes,
Vos seins obstinés et vengeurs
N'atteindront jamais la finesse
De la main provocante
Jamais lasse et jamais satisfaite,
Mais triomphante
Dans la défaite conquérante
Du gant noir retiré
En une résistance soumise.

(dr. j. p. plante)

ANGOISSE

Quand
Je te vois,
C'est pour me souvenir
Que je te verrai moins,
Tant la mort danse en moi . . .

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