

# Mitre Spring 78



**Mitre**

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THE GANG  
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*This issue is dedicated to Dr. Kathleen Harper*

# Mitre Spring 78

A literary magazine since 1893

Dear reader—  
From the editors,  
myself  
and the contributors—  
from all who put time and effort into this issue—  
*Enjoy!*

Thank you Kirk and Ian for your time and advice.

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Kirk Kelly *cover*



FOR KATHLEEN HARPER

When that Aprille came to Bishop's U,  
The month when halls their hope of hoods renew  
And all that students gleaned and teachers taught  
Once written down is instantly forgot,  
Across the brow and numb collective brain  
The awful news sank in that not again,  
No more—it was official, signed and sealed  
From far Victoria to local rut and field—  
Would Doctor Harper come! She had retired!  
No alarm had rung, she was not fired,  
The fifteen years of grind grads knew about,  
The hopeful years of frosh, were cancelled out;  
Committees wilted, crucial lectures shunned,  
Alike was egghead crushed, the ignorant stunned.  
What kink, what twist would future learning take,  
Grendel left unglossed, Grimm's Law at stake?  
Newcomers wonder at their hollow choice,  
Uperded scholars flounder; foes rejoice.  
What turmoil one small negative can make!  
What status quo can one small person shake!

But shades begone! Lugubrious rhymes disperse!  
Hypotheses and shambles the truth rehearse:  
One brief presence Ignorance reproved,  
True devotion Bishop's mountain moved.

As thanks must finally be left unsaid  
And just deserts have metaphor instead,  
Yet know, though verses strive in vain above,  
*The Mitre*, readers, students send their love.

-Ralph Gustafson

**Christopher Thomas**

---

(UNTITLED)

...cat got'cher tongue mister?

....uhhhhhhhhh/h

...kick'em in the gut.



## Christopher Shipton

---

'ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION' T.R.

When we lived here  
Rosebushes ate tennis balls and boney hands;  
Radio shows stayed home,  
Waited 'til we turned them on;  
Beautiful babes were daddy's toy  
And feet got wet in the rain.

Sand forts spat out firecrackers,  
and we admonished them  
With fat hands full of mortar,  
Slapping walls back together  
While kneeling in our puddle  
Beside drowning plastic soldiers.  
We let them drown,  
Sand forts and firecrackers,  
Evenings ending with mother.

We started wearing rubber boots,  
Hating rain;  
We loved dusting,  
Flying down dirt roads  
In a father's car,  
Making our own clouds;  
Scaring cows,  
Following the sun down,  
Kissing hard at twilight,  
Getting home by midnight:  
Thinking of love,  
The look of a pharmacist,  
The cost of condoms,  
And having our own home.

The next time the sun came up  
It created a tomorrow.  
And we were supposed to marry it:  
Save money, buy bread  
For starving souls,  
Swear at Hitler,  
Feed a famished junkie  
Who collapsed on the road,



They whispered in his ear:  
'That's the way it is, Jeb'  
'That's the way it is, Jeb'  
'That's the way it is, Jeb.'  
He didn't hear. He only saw  
That the Butterfly, who chases the crooked path  
Of its holy imagination,  
Feels particularly 'alonely',  
And quite often very lonely.

The dragon soundly sleeping  
As the winter went on creeping by:  
Jeborah woke, walked away  
From those buildings built with books  
And broken draught-glass windows;  
Where grass and bushes coughed up blood,  
And shrubs, shrunk by the atomic sun,  
Grew wet with the sweat of oxygen.  
He parted the morning mists  
As he seasoned his hungering fancy.

Jeborah walked endlessly, breathlessly,  
Desperately trying to destroy this myth:  
The social myth of 'create me.'  
He was no prodigal seeking his origin  
Of father, a brother, and fatted calf;  
Nor the lost child sick for own safety,  
Craving the sight of a welcoming light  
In the windows of gingerbread homes.  
He was alone. He was eruptive.  
He was feeling a little destructive.  
He was angry, amazed,  
At the thought that most would stay,  
Safe, in the triumph and treason of reason.

## Christopher Thomas

---

(UNTITLED)

on being fraught  
with the exactness of nothing  
we must tilt our heads,

some for pride  
some for philosophy  
and some, for that last elusive drop of ale.

## Marshall Button

---

### CAUGHT UP

Caught up a'top a rocky cliff,  
O'erlooking the ceaseless sea.  
Why bother to ask the question,  
'To be or not to be'—

—Caught up in this (still) hamlet?  
The waves digesting, churn.  
I no longer envy lovers,  
time-locked, fixt on an Urn.

Caught up within a Crucible;  
Why live if in remorse?  
To let, forget; and to receive,  
Sweet Nature's timeless force.

### TRUE LOVE

The tender bride turned to her loving groom:  
'Please let our love live past this brash bedroom;  
To kitchens, parlors, baths and even hallways!'  
Smiled he:  
'I'll love you *all* ways!'

## John Glassco

---

### ON TWO CANADIAN CATS

Layton's is dying, Pratt's is prize,  
Both are larger than life size  
In the best anthologies.  
Let's compare this pair of cats...  
One is real, one *ersatz*;  
Look at Layton's, look at Pratt's,  
In their retributive strife  
One with death and one with life:  
See how we were all misled!  
For when all is done and said,  
Layton's cat's living, Pratt's cat's dead.

(UNTITLED)

sometimes they all get  
    snowballing  
        down the same damn hill  
  
and somebody has to take things  
                    in hand  
and go break it up  
        with a spade  
  
now, who's to say  
    a good quick thaw  
    wouldn't work just as well?

US OR PAULINI'S SATYRICON

(On the occasion of the first Canada vs Russia show)

Hey down there  
guess what?  
I don't live  
in an igloo  
and Montreal  
isn't in Ontario.  
Hey guess what else?  
I don't have a pet beaver  
or even a beaver coat.  
Hey down there:  
there's more  
but let me remove  
my snowshoes,  
first of all  
we may not be  
prejudiced against  
blacks but... look,  
we've got our own  
little racisms.  
Le Bloke vs The Grenouille (rivet)  
and again at me,  
Halfway,  
A chilled frog.  
Pattes de grenouilles sur glace?  
Have you ever been to  
St. Jean de Rubberboot, in the Laurentians.  
Lots of them, up there, skiers.  
Also thousands of little  
tadpoles.  
Those French-Canadians!  
Fertile as hell.  
Too dumb to know  
any better.  
And all those little tadpoles  
cut their first teeth  
on NHL approved pucks,  
and learned to  
skate before they could  
walk,  
(Blades guaranteed by Jean Beliveau.)







SPRING RIVER BED

If you love me the way you loved me  
The last time I saw you  
I know a place  
By the spring river bed  
Where the moss  
And the corn snow  
Slowly grow  
Out of one another

And if you touch me the way you touched me  
The last time I saw you  
I know a place  
By the deep ocean bed  
Where the motion of tides  
Slowly glides  
And abides in a horseshoe of stone

I know a place  
On the deep  
Bed of space  
Where our bodies can move  
Quite removed  
From the pressures of time  
Where all gravity kneels  
The universe yields  
And your needs can be realized in mine

Spring '74

the yellow door

The crooked guitarist  
in a room of sharp contrasts  
plays the lines on his face,  
his eyes full of tortured vision.

He sings of crows and prays for rainbows,  
picking his way through mud and ribboned rock,  
Ignoring the girls sucking rags from cans  
and the manager seizing strangers  
who made a mistake.

The final message lies like a scalpel  
on the floor,

the sweat and antique sincerity  
rise and bow, his mouth stiff as a  
line among the butterfly  
patter of applause.

Bravo.





(UNTITLED)

do all your luscious pinups  
indicate thwarted desire  
or successful adventure  
in a place I've never travelled?

(UNTITLED)

Don't tell me how to swirl my cape;  
Don't tell me how to swing with the times.  
Tell me how to unravel my brain  
That you said would unwind with age.

Don't sandbag my rising ideas;  
Don't stuff my pores with leaden moralities.  
Tell me to skip over the growing  
And be there with no weighty past.

I know how to swirl my cape;  
I know how to swing with the times.  
Just tell me I've tasted the vintage wines  
and let me intoxicate myself.



## David O'Rourke

---

### LADY

They come in to see her, bringing English Department problems like empty guitar cases. The old couch is there, used to be yellow, elbowed into a kind of soggy sandwich. They crowd onto it, wiggle until they're all comfortable, then they start to bleed. First the English Department, then the unhappy marriages, the kids, the novels they were going to write, the potential they once had, down the drain, down the toilet, flushed out to sea.

When it comes to the part they all came for, they get uncomfortable and wonder why they have company. How can they come on to her with so many around? They talk about other things, cross their legs and lean back, hoping the others will go. They see her eyes, blue like the colour in a fire. And they search for lines Byron might have used.

There are patches of red that look like bloodstains on that yellow couch. From the sky, from the blue sky, pale rash on its face, it resembles a map. You dive a few hundred feet and you can make out a tiny traffic jam at the crucifix of two country roads. You take one last plunge and you can make out the people, the real selves coming out of Volkswagens to shout profanities at each other. You peel, roll into blue, tumble like a somersaulting sky-diver, and land in fire.

She suddenly realizes that they are all staring at her, waiting for an answer. She takes cotton-clouds from her ears and says, 'I'm sorry, I must have been listening to something else.'

Some are affronted and others are hurt. They chorus the question, putting their cigarettes into ashtrays: 'Now that you've heard our hard-luck stories, will you sleep with us?'

She feels her body floating again. They are in the bedroom, her bedroom, taking off their clothes, talking about James Joyce and how much they want to fuck her. They believe sex is poetry and are anxious to write poems on her tender breasts. They want to punctuate her body, they want to puncture her body with love sonnets they taught their classes today. They roll her over, make her into a compass on white paper.

The pillow is in an envelope that looks like a virgin's slip. Her face



Christopher Thomas

---

YOUR HUSBAND IS LIKE A FENCE

10 feet high  
25 strand barbed wire  
250,000 volts

pretty damned effective  
at keeping us apart.



John Dolan

---

THE LANGUAGE FAMILY

A loss of words; an indistinguishable thought,  
lost to the love of the sweet true tale.

THE evasion of words; prettily abandoned,  
abducted by their wooden rages...

THOSE mechanical words; mathematical and calculated,  
destroying the magic of compromise...

THESE understanding words; designed and poetic,  
writing a smile on the brow of the ripe  
yet aging man.

WORDS unraveling the affection;  
unveiling the interest;  
claiming responsibility for the listening... Father  
and the emotionally sincere... Son.



LULLABY 342

When all the world is hushed at night  
I think of winds and gulls in flight,  
of storms and rainbows, and pots of gold  
and all my wishes, young and old.  
These all pass through a mind so clear  
untinctured by the world so near,  
And so at night when all repose  
Fantasies bloom and magic grows.

INTERPOSE

flakes fall  
upon  
me  
who  
falls  
upon  
flakes  
  
weee!

John Olsthoorn

---

A THOUGHT ON SEPTEMBER—A DATE

And he lives on  
Through years of pain  
He does not complain  
He has no tongue to speak  
And no ears to hear  
The eyes cannot see  
A beggar, a bum  
A street monger  
Fighting for a penny  
Living off a halfpence  
Above a rat, below a man  
A degraded human, if dared.



POEM FOR TEX

always wanted to be a cowpoke  
eatin' dust  
riding the range  
whip thin  
iron hard  
loving and tough

Dear Tex

This poem is for you.

(UNTITLED)

walking after rain  
in gentle rain soaked forest  
musty smells wafting misty from the earth

gentle orange and crimson autumn  
it had the serene  
within its grasp

we were alone  
the forest and me

and you could have made it  
for all of us

the forest, serene in years  
and me  
we were walking  
lonely and damp

and only you, could have made it  
for all of us.

(UNTITLED)

I was just a young man  
driving a grey September-windswept  
highway

in passing I saw two old men  
the main men  
gray, hunched  
almost; it seemed—hobbled by their years  
just crossing a grey September-windswept  
highway

I saw their wrinkles  
I saw their warts  
I saw lost dreams in old faded eyes  
a snotty old hankie  
in a gnarled old hand

'Bought it back in '47 at Al's...  
uh, old Als' gone now.'

And I saw them off  
just me...  
just passing?  
or maybe just two old men  
fading  
about a million miles away.









