MITRE

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
DR. GARRY RETZLEFF AND
DR. CECIL ABRAHAMS
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## SPRING '79

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARWEN</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RALPH GUSTAFSON</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>From Persian Poems:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>The Inside of History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Istakher, The Tomb of Cyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAQSH E RUSTAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Flowers at Persepolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Pella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
<td>On the Aegean Later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Isfahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRENDA HARTWELL</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>By self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIRK LAWRENCE</td>
<td>9, 19, 22, 31, 42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN MILLER</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>The Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN OLSTHOORN</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sweet Virginia Being A Song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dear Lear: Impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICHELLE PAULIN</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Masks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAMIEN PETTIGREW</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Tintin ou Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lowell, Was it You I Heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Translation of Baudelaire's Preface to Les Fleurs du Mal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLYN ROWELL</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Singing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RON SMITH</td>
<td>17-18</td>
<td>Fragment From The Night Side of Windows / The Parade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29-30</td>
<td>The Strength of Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KATHERINE STEWART</td>
<td>16, 20, 28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHANNE TARDIF</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cover, 12, 24, 25, 32, 40, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAVID VASS</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THOMAS VICTOR</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANONYMOUS</td>
<td>43, 44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you Ron, Carolyn and Kirk. Without your help the entire journal would have received a “o” for excessive absenteeism - eh Carolyn? Finally, I would like to thank Ralph Gustafson for his contribution to “The Mitre”. Each year Professor Gustafson’s contribution adds immeasurably to the quality and delight of the publication.

Thank you,

Paddy
All morning walking the streets of Rey,
Hoary capital of Persia put to the torch
By Genghis Khan, stopover for Alexander,
Where Harun al-Rashid set up shop,
Seeing the parade of females I kept repeating,
"Twelve Moslem women in white muslin gowns",
That line of Browning, the worst in the language.
Why I don't know except the dread
I'd top it, I suppose, they weren't the same those girls
Of Browning and the swish and swerve of the local gals
If offputting chador black, nose to heel.
There was nothing to come to Rey about, to Iran
For that matter: activists as normal
Blew up active roses and nightingales,
Alexander moved with Thais south
And burned a town, Harun the worthy yawned
While Scheherazade to save her pretty neck
Wove a thousand usual gilded lies.
CAROLYN ROWELL

DANCE

hear the sun
blonde and crackling among
dark hills
and through black
wet spruce.
the sun.
ster.
pulling the winds along
the ice and
red pine needles
forcing grass to rise
new green against stone walls.
in dark holes, mussel on paw
dry grasses and old fur.
in your small twitchy dreams of
twigs and seeds
hear the sun call to
dance you in woodchuck madness
scrawny and alive.

KIRK LAWRENCE

The tender form of her
buttocks
appealed to my
alter-ego
(brave hunter on safari)
I winked...
An internal sneer
surfaced
as a hungry grin,
lips of slavery,
a bleak confirmation of
her defeated struggle.
She winked...
I blinked
and was gone.
RALPH GUSTAFSON

FURTHER OF DUST

1.
ISTAKHER
The gates of!
The oldest city in the world.
A goattrack among the fallen marble.
Goatdroppings where the single
Column is sentinel to nothing.
The cliffs stand bare and dry,
Indifferent as the blowing poppy
Red among the fluted slabs.

2.
THE TOMB OF CYRUS
Seven tiers,
At Pasargad, the broken entrance,
The level plain of Morghab
Stretching miles away.
Empty the room
Of jewels, the air
Smart with the closure of sun and sage;
Up above, intrusive dust,
The vacant slabs,
I am Cyrus,
King of kings.

3.
NAQSH-E-RUSTAM
Rough as the rock was,
They smoothed it
For the king, Artaxerxes
Dying as all men are
But not yet dead — the cliffs cut,
Pilasters, resembled
Throne, obeisance, entrance
To that final coolness,
Death's. Done,
They climbed down, rid
Of the hammering sun,
The rush kitchen, tomb or
No tomb, better.
Carved, the tall cliffs
Stood.

Three entrances, four,
For Cyrus' sons.

Below,
The temple's vacant walls,
The sacred flame, Ahura-Mazda,
Master of kings,
A blackened wick.
Across the world,
The beholder come.
Some long lost tribe whose name we (at least I)
won't mention;

or

TINTIN AU TIBET

And in the not-so-natural parking lot lights,
There appeared two inhabited
Peruvian little-llama-shepherd chapeaux-s:
(they say little llamas are rare but so are
these marvelously whimsical chapeaux-s)
Giggling and dipping coquettes, I suppose.
The males of this species don't talk much
don't giggle at all but do wear
Matching leather apparel (so they
won't skid?)
And somewhere in between float
code words, of a sacrilegious nature:
Lots of sss's and
Kuh's, a denial of their worship:
ssss
kuh
ssss
The brightly festooned chapeaux-s
dipp bold red and white, flaps and all
And the blue denim springs down
from black leather.
Vive la révolution.
Vive le pays.
Viva Rimouski!
JOHN C. OLSTHOORN

SWEET VIRGINIA BEING A SONG

Seven dark shades of men
Silhouetted a black black sky.
Sweet Virginia reveals a perverse
nature of two young men.
Stuart boarded a taxi,
was it five or six in the morning?
And what about ol' Bert?
he's gone far away, too.
The two young men did meet
a few weeks ago
(or was it yesterday)
Some brewing company made money.
Ways and ways again
I'll meet you in Estevan
Seven dark shades of men
Silhouetted a smokey bar-light.
(Oh Sweet Virginia
how I do love you
Two friends will meet
again and again and again)
Two friends will meet.

CAROLYN ROWELL

THE SINGING

Swamp, full of voice.
voice, full
of night
thrilled and cool.
Nesting birds waken, sing
in moonbright trees.
Child in a small bed
shakes and weeps
white eyes watching the
dark as voice
crawls in his open
window and
junebugs bang
and whir against the screens.
Wait a second...cock your head. Hear them? The drums beating, trickling like dripping roof water? Hear them, cool and rippling? Smell the rich rotting mulch of November?

You do up your sweater as you turn your head and follow the sound, down the street, and past the grand pines. Look around the corner. There! Marching drummers. Two of them leading a long procession of soldiers...it goes on as far as your eye can see. Marching in the nippy ridge air, moving like a centipede through the streets. Fresh and rippling in the wind of sound.

* 

Marching, now, under the grey November sky, its transparent child purging, cleansing away the stench of summer.

Marching, now, up the little hill to where you stand, then around the corner and down the other side.

* 

Three straight silhouettes stand behind the old pines on the lawn of a big brick house. They also hear the military beat of the drums. And, in a rare moment when the drums are silent, they hear the muffled footsteps of the soldiers.

Their eyes are peeled in your direction, as first the drummers and then the flag bearers break the crest of the little hill where you stand, turn the corner and head back down again, followed by their incessant tail of woe.

* 

Three silhouettes behind the trees. Arms raised in fertile gesture against the darkening sky, their black outlines seem to suck life from the charged atmosphere. Their words are thin and cunning, but their overflowing thoughts trickle into a stream. And before long, a raging torrent of energy binds them with its spun silver harvest bonds.

*
Slowly, step by step, as the soldiers advance, a unit forms, like a river of ice, sharp, cold, godlike. It flows down the little hill and gathers in a pool, beyond your field of vision. As the last of the procession sails by, you join the wake of excited bicycling children, and race down the little hill to the pool.

As you coast, you see from across the street three straight silhouettes moving at first like branches in the wind. Strangely, a strong gust seemingly tears the branches from their sockets. And then you see them, like prowlers of the universe, grimacing with sharp white teeth. “There is a special magic that surrounds them,” you think, and your spine shivers under the big sweater. You turn your head and get swallowed up by the crowd.

It is Armistice Day, and the marching is for the dead. Some say the whole procession honours the victims of war, that war is the guardian of your freedom. Some say, “They gave their lives that others would be free.”

You shrug and think, “Who did they give them to?”

Now the wreaths and crosses are placed. Now the old people trickle away. Only you have seen the silhouettes move. Remember. It is dark now. You ride back up the hill, past the grand pines, from whence you came.
Dear Lear: Impressions

Dear Lear, my friend in myth.
Dip into the puddle of insanity.
Destined to happen, happenings
at fault of the structure
of the universe.

Walk forth out of the pages of the text.
Feel my Cordelia feelings for you.
Touch the tears on my cheeks,
the puddle of my eyes,
your buttons and your robes.

Walk forth out of the performed death.
The players of elevated stage
fail to feel the Cordelia feeling
of love and devotion:
Those abstract notions.

Dear Lear, my friend in text,
come out. If not, open your arms
to the bastard printed words,
tell them it is true,
you die for you.
Engrossed by this trance
weakened
by a poisonous drink
from
ripe
conflict
Relentlessly proceeded by
mist
wetly clinging
subtley drying
tightening
to the form
Not wine
too wet
Not love
too tight
Broken ship at sea
powerless to the wind
obliging to the stream
Oh sad traitor
doomed victim of the drink.

a laugh — it cuts
and like the mermaid in the story
sometimes i dance on knives
arwen
JOHN MILLER

THE WELL

Outside my window
just beyond the trees,
I built a well from
stone and one summer
there was loud bustling
in the dampness of my
well. Deep were the runs
of its bass and clear
was the flute-voice.
Recitations began between
water and well.
What music there was
ended when night’s
branches scratched along
the panes of my
house. But I’d heard
those notes, the complex
phrase, the beating
drum in a rotting well.
I capped my well to
rest assured and yet
my well’s deceitful
arc still follows the
clouds across the sky,
waiting with a crust
of dead leaves, waiting
until it knows its
nip is sure.

1/11/78

JOHN C. OLSTHOORN

Masks (Moderne Masques)
These days with the sun
the haze through the snow clouds
are cold and damp days.
wool sweaters, sweatshirts
and gloves on occasion.
The reflection on your face
It’s difficult to see your eyes:
glasses are odd pieces
of furniture for the face
and contacts change color.
But highways paved with garbage
and sidewalks cemented
with faces plastered with cosmetics,
braces and metal-flake cream:
I wonder, how can your face been seen?
I knew that graffiti covered walls
toilet seats and tenement halls,
I read it at the Y’s toilet stalls
but I didn’t know that graffiti
was written on your face.
So through your lipstick lips
you throw obnoxious words
to the cold-dead-sidewalk man
with wool sweaters, sweatshirts
and Salvation Army mitts on
class occasion
All of them have plunged through the gates of reality into the caped and winged world of superheroes. Into a new unpeopled space. Into a virgin land. Dee immediately grasps the significance of the new land, "like in a chess game," she explains. The idea fills her with excitement. "The whole thing's like a giant chess game..." She hops about the room examining territory, seeking out choice cuts. She formulates strategy in the dark corner of her eye. "After all," she continues, "this is the new world... and there are only three of us in it." Her face becomes flushed and animated. Her manner conniving. "These four walls hold the sum of our existences." She turns her head to sharp profile and smiles oddly. "In bright lamplight... where everyone can see."

Bud nervously catches her, pulling him into the game. "Let's explore..." he begins slowly. "Let's look around us, and bury ourselves in the grey folds of our dreams. Let's forget our bodies and leap into calm icy fantasies." His thought stream floods into a cold peaceful river.

But he is snapped back by Dee's voice. "There are four walls," she looks about her solemnly, "and you can't escape the light." Her words have the simple finality of gut wisdom, her eyes the glint of the blade.

***

Dee winks cat lashes at Cabin Boy - draws him like rough filings with the promise of a magnet. She touches and teases him incessantly, at once coy and innocent. Her eyes hypnotize. Her scent excites.

Cabin Boy surrenders easily to her whim. He abandons all defences. Lapped into the cobra world of the subterranean Queen.

"Ssssssssa!" Cabin Boy experiences the chilly thrill of her whirlwind. He is caught up in a passing eddy and carried off. The increased power gains momentum in a frenzy of activity. A celebration of life and freedom. Dee dancing, arms flapping...
wildly, sensuously, expressively. Cabin Boy joins her. They are thin humming spectres of terror and they strike a pain in Bud’s chest. His heart thrubs erratically.

Bud gazes at the luminous banshees, at their cloaks of hatred. “Please don’t!” he cries out of lost respect, out of dwindling twilit honour. Dee tosses her kelp-like mane defiantly. “It’s a new world!” she barks.

Bud hears shrill whistles, feels directionless drums rippling military riffs over his skeleton; scat piano like the stiffest breeze. The screams and heartless laughter, the clicking like busy knitting needles; scheduled spiders, multihandedly weaving shrouds for war dead.

***

Bud cannot elude his humanness, his eventual death, the clean sheets of his death-bed. He cannot unfasten himself from the fly-paper spiral of achievement, of acceptance, of love.

(the spiders bob and weave, the shuttle shoots back and forth before his wild eyes)

*

He lies haunted by his departed self-image, a faded spectre in the timeless zone, a skin shed at the door. He sees Dee and Cabin Boy, irreverent lovers, toothless and moss-covered. They approach him; ooze and slither toward him; their double-barrelled attention is aimed directly at him.

*

The bonds are broken, and the sound echoes and resounds in rainfilled canyons...

---

KIRK LAWRENCE

Stardust skyline

guarding
dead black waters.
The sterile centurion

encased in tight

hungry

metal

gasps

with internal writhing.
Dead water

primitive cold

echoing

black
to the victim of its
destruction.
BRENDA HARTWELL

BY SELF

A goddess bore three daughters
fair of hand and mind and face.
The last born became a muse
and the middle child, a grace.
The eldest thought to inspire
was to stoop to a disgrace.

Diamond proud, sea cold,
rimy fingers clutched an exotic seed.
She couldn’t plant the seed in another man’s earth.
She wouldn’t accept water from a celestial host.

And one man loved the dancer
and he wrote for her a tune.
A couple saw the singer
and they spoke for her the moon.
So a couple danced the air
while a threesome sang the moon.

The seed in her brittle January grip
moulds and spews mucous.
She stretches out a disease-gloved hand
only to watch you wither.
Witch, war-maiden, harpie, whore.
She was barren
by self, by choice,
therefore she would destroy.
It might be quite clever to prepare things —
to transfer the weapon from box to pocket —
so as to be ready to take advantage of the
spell of insanity when it does come.

H. Humbert, Lolita

The poet should concern himself with things
That prick to the point of madness. Magpie sings
And poet is bothered. Nothing lost on extended wings.
But madness? Desperate melody on overnight loan.
Its coda winds the clock. Remote poet, frail,
In your sleeping arms our love is sown
Inside the sleeve stripped up like gewgaw sails.
My sails plow thru night. Think of a dancer on stage
Whose curling twists in body mime will not fail
And where the backdrop's brushed with pigment shades.
The almond eyes are china jars, the movement
In step, simple and sure. Lights remain offstage
To flood the floor in single brilliance sent
For the mind's ease. Disease and mental sores
Can never be reassuring notions lent
Like the larboard stars. Let ideas be my whores.
They are as startling as spots of red dye
On a white shirt. Christopher's Cat Jeoffrey snores,
I lay awake. Reflections in the glass fly
Up but this amber cannot catch the light.
I lay awake for sounds and unacquainted cries
Since every hollow husk of darkness forms
Familiar night. Inside, my rural doctor tells
The pulse is quick, the spark to the brain, it swells.
Suffice. Magpie's chord overheard in the harness of storms.
FLOWERS AT PERSEPOLIS

We picked wild poppies, scarlet vivid as
Sleep knows of, slender pale green
The stem, a crowd of stamens, black,
Inside. Nearby, the purple thistle,
Protected; in front, hollyhocks, a row.
Magnolia was about to come out, as sweet
On the evening air as anything in sleep.
And pansies, the despised flower as simple
Here as any in Canada. Roses.
Roses everywhere; over and the white
Just coming, the red too in broken bud.
Flowers. One hesitates to make a list,
When was a list as passionate as a single bloom?
Yet there they stood where conquerors had
Their throne and Xerxes sat in ceremony,
Forty-six perfumed princes bearing gifts.
One makes lists, history to the side,
Of these flowers she loves.

PELLA

After the short rain clouds built up
Over Macedon, piled white
Dropped to the grazing landscape, the shepherd with
His shoulder-coat and sheep. The flock
Last seen was at Pasargad, a round of goats
Where Alexander came. There, the halls
Of Persepolis, here, the gates of Pella.
Nine posts remain, four
Mosaics, pebbles for a footfall.
The power and the glory! Admonitions!
Conquer the world to die at Babylon.
So, what’s against that?
The fierce white star to the side of the same moon
Swung— once white gold it had stood
Over roses and cedar at Persepolis—
Now at Lemnos where Hephaestus fell
Hurled by the quarreling Hera and Zeus—
Where Agamemnon burned a hill getting
The news to Argos of fallen Troy— the same
White moon swung its star. Along the deck
The smell of panthers, Dionysus' beast.
It burned over Lemnos, the fierce star.

She spoke of the sameness unaware
Of Agamemnon and his crafty fire
Or lynx or sulphurous forge— only the moment
Where love with briefest joy
Stays to be had.
Fatuousness, blunder, sin, avarice,  
Inhabit our souls and flog our corpse;  
We glut on our lovable remorse  
Like street trulls suckling their body lice.  
Our sins are bullish, our confessions base;  
We overpay for penitence  
Then pursue the aniconic sentence  
That states pernicious tears enrich our sins, our waste.  
It’s the Devil (prestidigitator dirtying a silken pillow)  
Who numbs and rocks our sibilant souls.  
The lapidary metal of our will he holds  
To sublimate it hellward by methods only he can know.  
It’s the Devil who twists and pulls the strings.  
We love sickening things — they make us think  
How close we are to Hell, how egregious bodies stink  
When, fearless, we bludgeon night for what she brings.  
Like a senescent whoremaster who’ll kiss and beat  
The dry tits of some nigging bitch,  
We need that surreptitious itch,  
We want to gash the gravid orange and its fleshy meat.  
An inky hoard of excrent helminths  
Is the demon image of our clotted brains,  
And when we breathe, Death, in our lungs, rains  
Down and washes us (Invisible river!) with mute complaints.  
If rape, poison, stilettos, arson,  
Have not yet stitched scandalous designs  
On the rough canvas of our nescient lives,  
It’s because our souls belong to satan’s parson.  
But there’s something worse than squatting grimalkins,  
Bald monkeys, scorpions, fetid serpents —  
The collection of beasts that only flatulence  
And coprology would endearingly gush and spin.
Onto paper for the obsessed few  
Who share the common need — this something  
Has no hoary shape although it’s trap can sing  
And yawn and swallow a world and its Wandering Jew.  
It’s BOREDOM! The eyes shine with tears that smother  
Whatever dreams cocaine will conjure up,  
and dear Reader, you know the color of its broken cup,  
— Hypocrite reader, — my shadow, — my brother!

---

ANONYMOUS

MISFIT

Another child produced of  
bourgeoisé stock,  
raised to be  
BEST.  
Ah, yet such a passion for  
cheap booze and dancing girls.

---

ANONYMOUS

In trouble again  
she boards the train  
Betrayed  
(she sings for her sanity)  
another chorus girl  
lost  
in his fantastic rhapsody.
throwing coins in the river is important to certain beneficial rites lost in the dawn of the new age, blessed and burning a great wake in the annals of history. Lennoxville might, to some, be significant.

Here is where the roses fade soon And indifference takes precedence of the Nightingale — sullen Isfahan, “Half the world” — if paid for. The soul of it Bits of mirrors, gilt. How good Far snows, a country without Eleven times beginnings! Seven bridges cross the Zayandeh, Each its imposition, The calling minarets reflected In their sapphire pools of trash. One glory — where Byron stood And feel in love with mosque Lutfullah’s Shy and faithful emerald dome.
Thank you JOHANNE TARDIF for the cover and all the graphics

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