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The Mitre

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Anna M. Scowen

A Nonscene Sense

by Daron Westman

PROLOGUE

(Enter Noman dressed as a charwoman)

NOMAN: The universe is a thought in the mind of God,
... and God has just been cancelled.

PARODOS

(Enter Chorus chanting)

CHORUS: Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Lemon meringue and purple coasters,
Elephant feet and baby toasters!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!

SCENE I, ACT I

(Water-Beetle and Philosopher descend from above on a giant lily pad, which lands at centre-stage)

WATER-BEETLE: If God is Almighty,
Can he turn himself into a true frog?

PHILOSOPHER: And the wise men said ...

STASIMON I

CHORUS: Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
The lamb of God is a log,
And God spelled backward is dog.
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!

SCENE I, ACT II

WATER-BEETLE: If God is Almighty,
Can he create an object so heavy
That he cannot lift it?

PHILOSOPHER: And the wise men said ...

STASIMON I

CHORUS: Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Yellow violets and frozen shrimp!
Animal crackers for a washed-up pimp!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!

SCENE I, ACT III

WATER-BEETLE: If God is Almighty,
Can he create a being
More powerful than himself?

PHILOSOPHER: And the wise men said ... (Exeunt)

KOMMOS

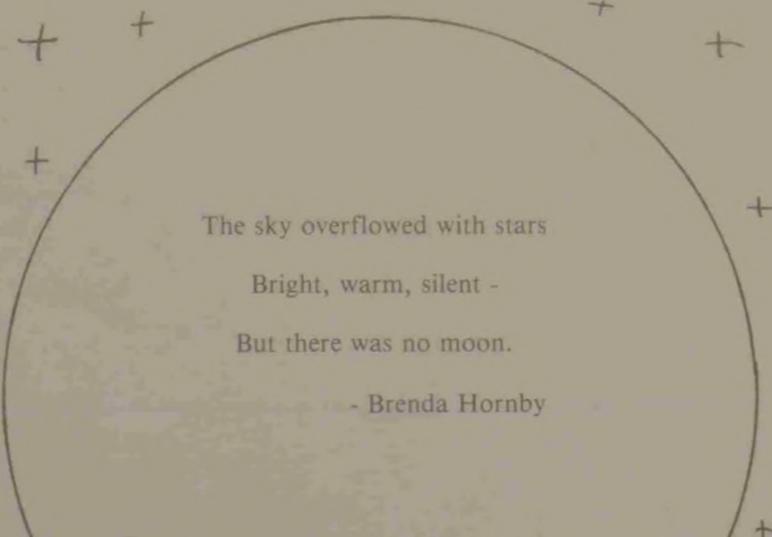
CHORUS: Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Cephas and the rest can lead a wife;
Can Almighty God take his own life?
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!

EPILOGUE

NOMAN: How many gods on the head of a pin?
How many pins in the universe? (Exit)

EXODOS

CHORUS: Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax!
Brekekekek Ko-ax Ko-ax! (Exeunt)



The sky overflowed with stars
Bright, warm, silent -
But there was no moon.

- Brenda Hornby

Know then
that in our mockery of love
last night
it was not I who held you
and you touched me but once --
only in passing

-Susan Milner

THE ENCOUNTER

In a glimpse of cool moonlight

I saw your half-shadowed face;

Reveal the hidden things,

the scheming devices of your mind.

In a glimpse of the hot moonlight

I watch you arise,

Take and spread the stars,

Disguise and disorder them;

Until they were no longer retrievable.

- Brenda Hornby

Walking the Fields

by Carolyn Rowell

It's late fall. Already there has been a killing frost and the roadside grasses and weeds are brown and brittle. Everything is brown; the narrow road along which the farm truck bounces and sways, the close-cropped horse pasture, naked trees and rail fences. They pass a windmill. The day is breezy but the mill is not moving, the metal rusty. Pieces of angle-iron hang crookedly from the mechanisms.

The farmer and the woman turn into an even narrower track that cuts the big corn fields into two sections. The little dog is digging his nails into her legs, trying to get a better view. On either side of the truck long furrows of mocha slide in a broad sweep, on one side to the hill - to the fallow pasture on the other. Six fields to test. They stop at the farthest one.

When she jumps down from the cab she winces. The sun is harsh, unrelieved by greenery - a cold light. The dog jumps out behind her, wagging and sneezing, pleased to run in the fields. She walks around the truck to where he is waiting with the metal-collecting rod and a paper bag. The man carefully explains to her what he is going to do. Analyzing the soil. Capturing little bits of it and sending it away. In the labs they find out what sort of fertilizer he will use in the spring. The spring when she will be writing exams and defending a thesis. A spring after a winter of books. Should have brought a book.

She follows him as he begins the rounds of the fields. He walks easily while her shoes slip on the loose dirt. The dog runs ahead, ears up, leaping over furrows. As they walk she becomes warm, takes off her hat, wishing she had his funny billed one to keep the slanting sun out of her eyes. Wore too many clothes as usual. She tries to talk intelligently to him about deep harrowing and crop rotation but her breath is short and seems to escape from her in awkward gasps. By the time they reach the wood at the end of the field she is feeling annoyed at the earth shifting beneath her feet. The small open stand of maples has a foot of dead leaves on the floor. She follows rustling and kicking, and squirrels scamper.

"I'm looking for a few dead trees to cut for the fireplace," he says. "I could come back after it snows and get "some" with the snowmobile. These are maples. Good hard wood."

"This is really pretty," she replies absently.

RANDOM

When the music becomes clear
on vodka and codeine
then you can forget your ugliness,
and watch the tall and lean women
cross their stockinged legs in boredom
in the smokey bars of your solitude;
and dream of a death-like beauty
that you will never possess.

So child, listen
and between the casual chords
of piano jazz, the rain falls
lonely wanderer on the cold pavement
of your tired mind,
random as a life
sprung from between the bloody legs
of a thrusting futility.

- Brian Fredette



RITE

White eyes. White
eyes with centers of
black, staring at the
back of the girl
in the thin dress.

She knows that he is there, that
his fur is blue and
his ears point. Cold
breath. Quiet haunches
behind her. Against
her stomach and thighs
her dress feels chill,
thin and
then
like breath she lifts her arms.
The dancer of a
thousand springs turns
softly
in her place to face
the autumn dog.

-Carolyn Rowell

RAMBLE, THIS TIME ON ITSELF

Not one but a ramble of flowers
Is necessary, a single bloom
Graces a shelf but when was Eden
not a garden and Adam digging?
The nerves want profusion, a license
Of you know what, of smell and blossom,
Worm and sunslap all over the place.
Not less than extravagance will do.
Perfection's parsimonious, only
the generous flaw will do - to perfect
The poet in us. Jewels in the mud.
We want Nine Symphonies
And Haydn's you don't know which from which.
Moiseiwitsch set the texts in their place,
SPREZZATURA was what he was after,
TEMPO RUBATO, lost notes under
The piano, but what a recital, wot
A recital! Bach played morning,
Noon and night on his organ. God,
I suppose, is in the profusion business,
What with His push-ups and prohibitions.
Words, words, Joyce was after;
Three floorsful, Picasso
Painted his fraudulent facts. Book
After book of mine, the profusion not
Prolific, just abundant.

- Ralph Gustafson

MONTREAL NIGHT JAZZ

Tired of taking my pleasure
in the sad soft bodies
of Boulevard hookers,
seeking perfectly
for the quintessential metaphor
of loss
and pain of loneliness;
I trace the random jazz
of neon light
rain splashed streets,
back through unprofound realities
of red and green blur,
unoutlined form images,
back to mediocrity;
thinking of nothing
thinking of sleep

- Brian Fredette

The Play

by Shaun G. Lynch

(The play is set in the newspaper office of a small university. Many of the scenes in this play actually happened, though the names of the actors have been changed to protect the guilty.)

ACT I

Roy: My uncle was a handsome chap with eczema. When he folded his arms, he looked like the pirate flag.

Jim: You can't argue with that.

Roy: No, he told me so himself.

(They continue to work at the layout table)

Jim: Yuri, are you still working?

Yuri: Yes, I just have to finish my introduction ... I cannot write this, the man is a fascist!

Jim: You must write it! It's your duty as a journalist ... And besides, it's one o'clock in the morning and I want to get the hell out of here ... Shaun, are you doing anything?

Shaun: (As he continues to type) I am typing a play about what is happening in this office at this very instant. You're all in it, and some day it will be made into a movie and I'll get an Academy Award for writing about you.

Jim: (To Roy, ignoring Shaun) ... There's no rhyme or reason to the way I do this. Use Sans BF ... 36 point ... You could try Tempo ...

Roy: Italic or without?

Jim: ... two columns ... 24 point and see what happens. There are some people who don't believe in guessing, but sometimes it works ...

Roy: How about Bolt Bold?

Jim: Oh Christ, don't use Bolt Bold!

Roy: Why not?

Jim: It's illegal ...

Roy: Illegal?

Jim: It's got to be the ugliest type in the book.

(The spirit of the Average Bishop's Student floats into the scene d.r., chugs a beer with one gulp, throws up all over a desk, and floats back out d.r.)

Yuri: What was that?

Ernest: Doesn't anyone study German things?

Yuri: Well, German people study German in Canada.

Ernest: But when you study German grammar and German food and German culture, and it's not until the last five minutes that you do anything about the relevance of German literature for Canada.

Yuri: Who cares?

Ernest: Technically, you're writing for Mr. and Mrs. Bishop's.

Yuri: But I'm sure nobody will read it anyway. They are all fascists so they do not understand.

(The spirit of Reality floats in from the ceiling, begins laughing uproariously, falls to the stage, and dies a painful death ... A stage hand walks on u.r. and drags the body of d.l.)

(Roy enters d.r.)

Roy: I've had it with this play! It started out with a decent premise concerning layout night for the newspaper, but now you've totally destroyed its meaning ...

Shaun: You can't stop it as long as I control the typewriter! As long as I'm typing, the play continues, and I just have to type in a bomb or a shooting or some other natural disaster and you're gone, and I no longer have to deal with you ...

Roy: Move over ...

Shaun: ... no way, I'm not letting you get near ...

Roy: Move over ...

Shaun: Only I know how this play should go on ...

Roy: Move over, or I'll push you out of the way ...

Shaun: If you do that, the play will end ... You can't get rid of me and still survive! ...

Roy: ... Can't I? ... Move over ...

Shaun: ... no ... you'll never take over ... I won't let you! ... it's my play! Mine, I tell you! ... You can't muzzle genius ... (Roy grabs the typewriter from Shaun)

Curtain

ACT IV - a short time later

(Shaun enters d.r., and hurries to the typewriter, where he begins typing. After a few moments, he stops, looks around the room, and realizing that there is no one present, he pulls the page out of the typewriter and exits d.l.)

FINAL CURTAIN

Cruel

how

poets

capture

-Kelly Mackenzie

from KNIGHTMARE SEQUENCE FOR A MINOR

You are
nude before me
in the garden, and I
want so very much to say "I
love you."

Choosing
to love you could
never be easy; not
at the extravagant prices
you charge.

Come, let us pretend to
have a good time.
and feign love when
really all we want is a
little
easily-bought
second-hand sex.

Let us leaven
even our
very smiles, and
escape all the
questing hands
under evasive tables

Your arms
embrace me as
you tell me that your love
for me will never die, and I
am cold.

- Daron Westman

NEW TALES

Fairy tales of our childhood
Unfold adventure, love and destiny;
All and forever after.
Fly away - You anger me now.
Spare my children this fantasy land,
Tell a story of life,
Of love, yes for it is real;
But add the unsweetened version
of heartbreak and unhappy endings,
Of gilded castles destroyed
never to arise again.
Of dancing ladies in the sun
Who become dizzy and fall.
All travellers that fail to
reach their destined lands,
Yet have strength to continue.
Tell these to my children,
And wish them well.

- Brenda Hornby

Letters Mingle Souls

by Susan Milner

Today, a letter from Clayte. Sheila was sure of it, but she walked slowly, just in case the postman was late. Unreasonable, he's never quite this late. Still, he might have been bitten by a mastiff, or whatever it was postmen got bitten by. As she approached the gloomy house where she had a room, her step lightened. The postman had not been bitten; her letter was there, pushing up the lid of the mailbox.

Sheila knew Clayte lived somewhere in the territories north of the respectable provinces. Now she refused to look at the postmark on the envelope she carried. It might be legible, and then Clayte's exciting life would be pinned down beside a dreary name. No return address, of course. Funny how he wanted only to write letters, not receive them. How like a man, she thought fondly as she climbed the dark stairs, wants to talk and not listen. She turned the key in the lock. The landlady did not approve of that lock, but a single girl alone in a big city couldn't be too careful.

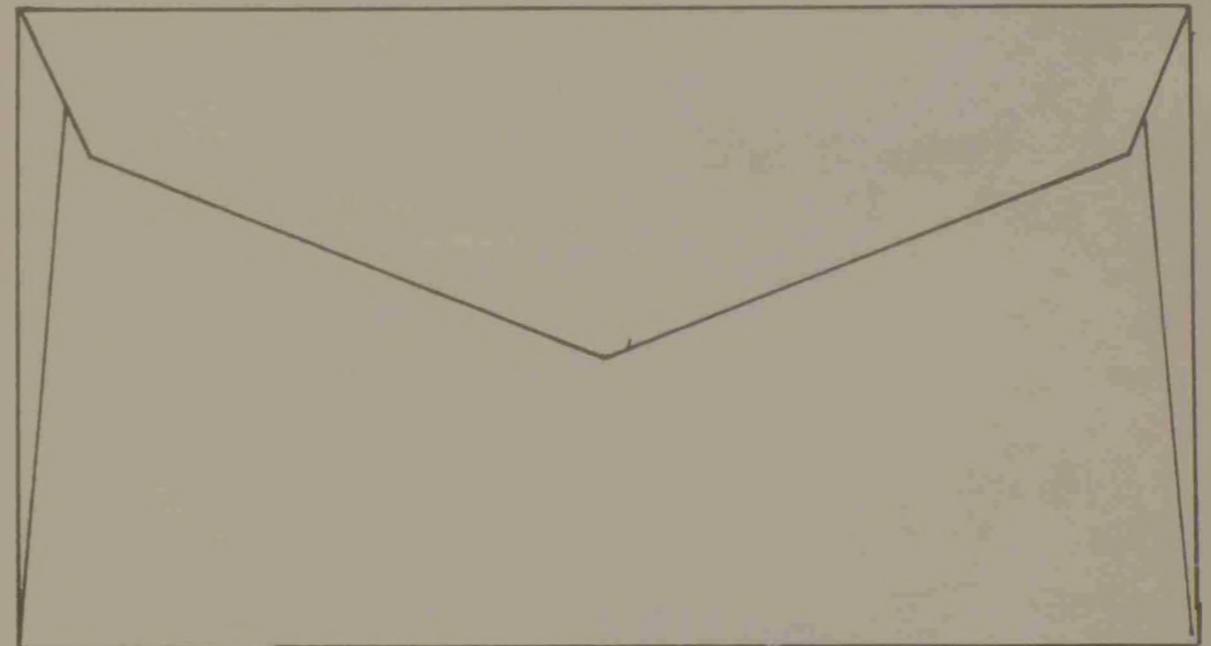
Clayte no doubt had stories of his son's exploits, terrors in the northern wild that his wife had overcome recently, bears, wildcats, goodness knows what. He could be relied upon to be interesting, unlike the landlady or the people at the office.

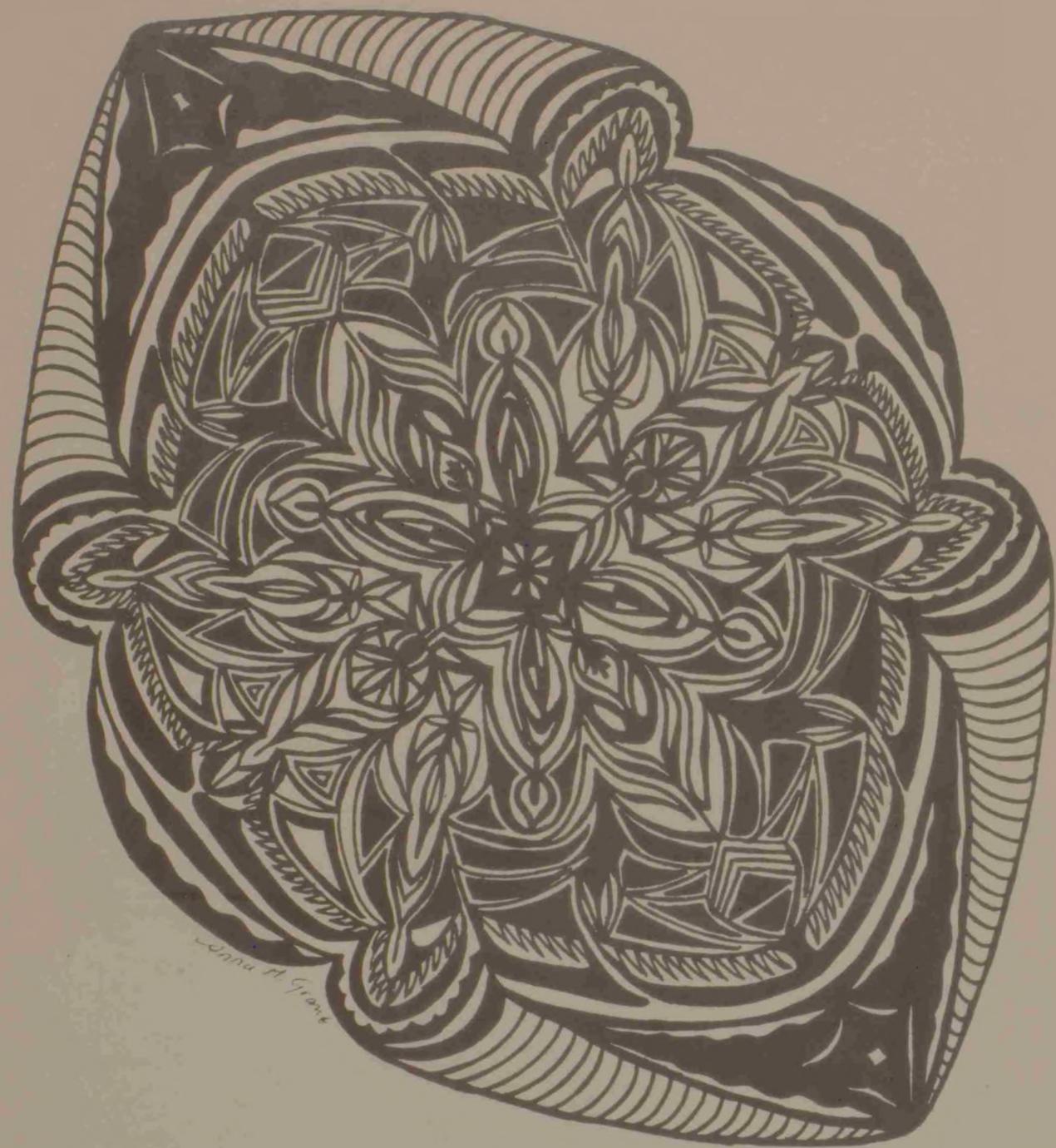
After she had read the letter through twice, Sheila carefully burned the envelope in the electric heater and filed the slightly grimy pages in the shoebox marked "Clayte". Tomorrow there would probably be a letter from Deborah, a swinging singles currently living in the eastern States. A racy letter, though not as heart-warming as Clayte's stories of his family. And the next day, perhaps a breathless note dashed off from somewhere in deepest Africa, from the wandering Nathan.

The regularity of her correspondence pleased Sheila. Granted, of course, that the post office did its job right, she should get a letter every day now for awhile.

Pulled back from her musing on the worlds of her letter-writers by the smell of burning macaroni and cheese, she hurried to her hotplate. After supper there wasn't much to do ... ah, as if remembering, she savoured the thought of what did come after supper tonight. She would sit down at the other side of the table with her letter paper and a green pen. Nathan liked green. Then she would write out her address on the front of an envelope, scrawled, because he was always in a rush. After a thoughtful pause, she would arrange the pad and begin.

"Dear Sheila, as usual am in a FRIGHTFUL scramble. Off to shoot wild boars at dusk. Yesterday I met such an old man, full of the most fascinating stories ..." Then she would lay down the pen and think awhile before continuing.





Winnifred Crane

The Mitre

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY

author		
The New mitre	1981	
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