

# The Mitre '85

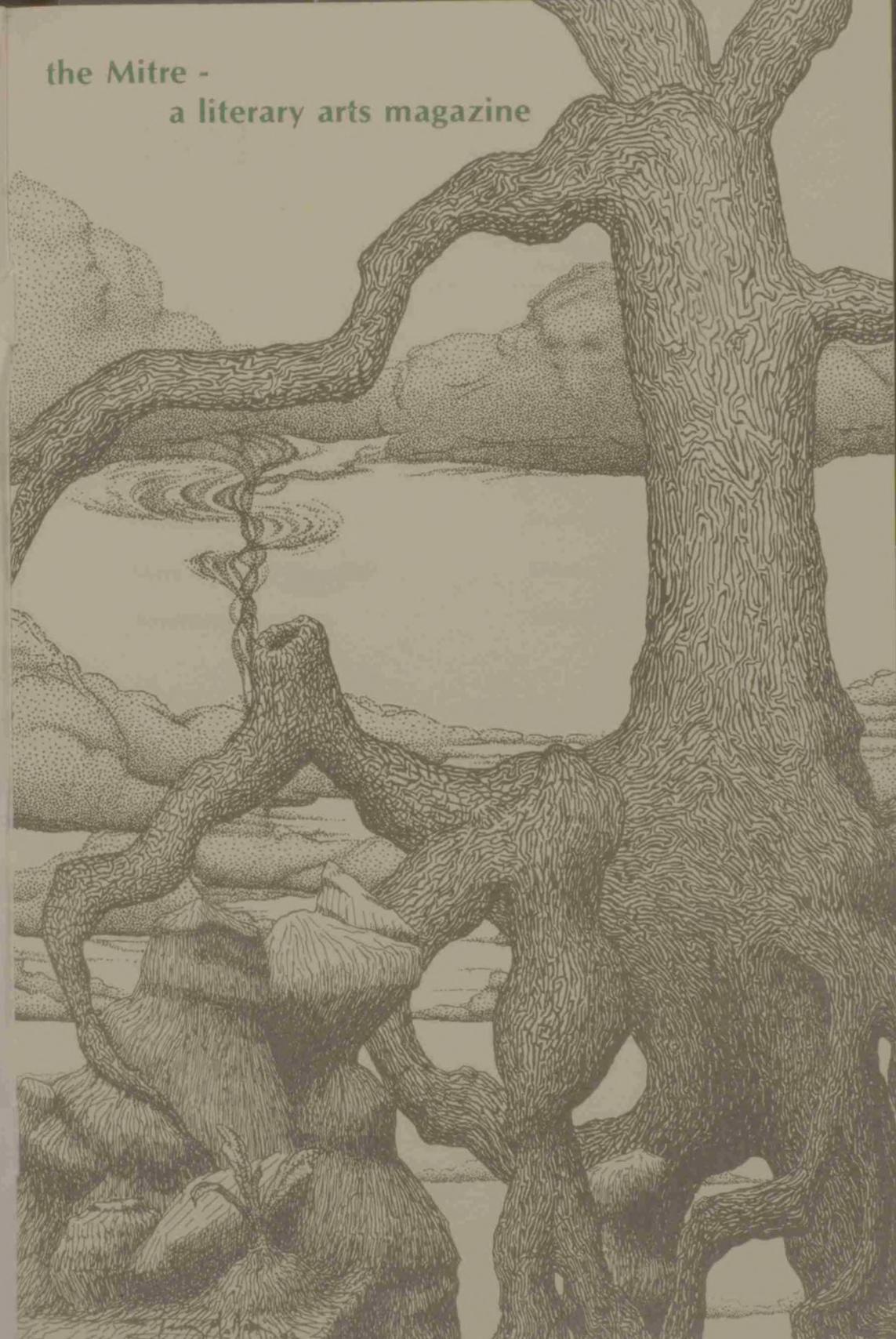


*J. M. J.*  
84-85

TOWNSHIPS

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the Mitre -  
a literary arts magazine



# Staff...

The MITRE is 92 years old this year, and although it has seen various facelifts and shifts in editorial policy, it remains an independent literary venture of which Bishop's University students and faculty may be proud of. It is with great pleasure, and honour, that the staff has put together the 1985 version of the MITRE

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## untitled poem

Is  
this  
the shape  
of things to come,

or am I so  
square, I am  
unable to com-  
prehend Per-  
sig’s values?

I can’t  
fix the damned  
bike, or the leaky  
faucet, but I  
can try.

Dorothy Carson-Hobbs

## untitled poem

spin the circle slowly roll the bones  
sepia toned bodies walking backwards on their heels

dog dance

bear dance

dance of the river child

sepia toned bodies walking backwards to the drum  
spin the circle slowly roll the bones  
midnight preparations for fratricidal rights

—Penny Henderson-Nutbrown

## Misplaced Cog in a Square Machine

I orbit you  
as the moon circles the Earth  
while you are trapped in  
a path  
I cannot affect.

Slowly, I come closer  
until...  
I am forced back  
once again

Debris floats between us  
memories of your attempts  
to cross the void.  
Their impact  
scars me

You, in your path  
I, in mine;  
I orbit you  
Getting no closer,  
going no further;  
No change occurs.

We are trapped by a force  
Science cannot explain

Charles Campbell

## The Smell of Warm Grass

I was in desperate need of a job. The field-marshal, otherwise known as Mom, had just sliced my allowance in half. She gave me some crap about inflation and the high cost of living and how I should learn the value of a dollar. So there I was, summer vacation just begun and no money. I hear grown-ups saying that the job market's tight, believe me it's a lot tighter when you're only fourteen. I was about to give up the search and try to kiss a few more pennies out of the field-marshal, when I saw an ad in the newspaper:

*Wanted teenage boy for very special job.  
Good pay and reasonable hours.  
Call Maggie Tobias at 875-4971*

When I called, there was no one at home except the housekeeper, who spoke only French. My own French doesn't go much past "parlez-vous", so I didn't really understand the job description. I managed to figure out that I should stop by the house that evening to meet "Madame" Tobias if I were really interested in the job.

The address was a way to hell and gone out on MacDonald Road. MacDonald Road is a dusty, winding stretch of continual bumps, lined on both sides by tangled fields and droopy farmhouses. There used to be real farms out there, but the Research Center had bought up most of the backland to grow experimental, pink alfalfa or something. Still, the MacDonald Road is a nice place if you're into trees and nature and stuff. I'm not.

The Tobias house looked pretty much like the other houses on the Road, except maybe the flowers in the front yard were a little healthier. I was met at the door by Attila the Housekeeper. She was one of those jumbo-sized, French Canadian memeres in rolled down stockings and canvas sneakers. Hard as yesterday's burnt toast and just as appetizing. She sniffed me over thoroughly and then led me down an alley-like hallway to the kitchen.

Maggie Tobias sat at the table, half hidden behind books and folders. She stood up when we came in. She was one of those mouse-colored women who usually turn out to be either teachers or social workers.

"Madame Tobias, le petit pour le job. Wrandy chose," the walking mountain said, shrugging in my direction.

"Randy Maxfield," I said. I was not a "chose".

"Hi, Randy, I'm Maggie Tobias." She smiled a lot and when she shook my hand her grip was like a guy's. "So you're interested in the job?"

"Yeh, like depending on what I gotta do and stuff." It's hard to be cool around women like her.

Just then, I thought that I heard someone behind me and I looked over my shoulder to see who it was. The kid leaning in the doorway was about my age; slightly built but strong with long black hair hanging to his shoulders. For a moment we looked each other right in the eye. He seemed expectant. Then his gaze shifted past me, he dropped to the floor and pressed his body tightly into a corner. This kid was weird.

"This is my son, Toby," Maggie Tobias said, still smiling. Then Maggie Tobias gave me the Reader's Digest version of her autobiography at top speed. She'd grown up here, but had lived out west for years in Red Deer? White Horse?, some place named after a colored animal anyway. After her husband had died, she had moved back to be nearer her family. Toby was something-or-other-tistic, and she gave me a definition of whatever was wrong with him in words that I'd never heard before. Toby lived in world of his own. Toby was a special child. Toby went to a special school. School was out. Toby was lonely. She had to work. Toby needed company, someone his own age.

"That would be your job," she said.

I was dizzy. "What would be?"

"Keeping Toby company while I'm at work, of course."

What! Keep him, that weird kid, company all summer. No way, José! Not me. Cripes, what would the guys say?

Maggie Tobias was off and running again. Of course, I wouldn't really be responsible for Toby. Mrs. Boulanger would always be there. All I'd have to do was keep him company; read to him, listen to music, whatever boys did. Nine to three, Monday to Thursday, two dollars an hour. Did I want the job? She seemed eager, even a little desperate.

Like I said I was desperate too. Besides, the money was good. It wasn't hard work and somebody else was there to handle the tough stuff. Toby didn't seem to do much anyway.

The first week was awful. Actually, it would have had to improve a whole lot to have been only awful. Jelly-Belly Boulanger was out to get me as of day one. The joint had no t.v. and the only records were either classical or the '60's folk stuff. The books were great though, by cripes: "Introduction to American Archaeology," "The Confederation Poets," "Special Children: An Integrative Approach," and the ever popular "Mother Goose". As for Toby, all he wanted to do was sit in a corner somewhere. Jumpin' frogs on Friday, what was a guy to do anyway!

Thursday afternoon was the worst of all. Was it hot! Up around the house there wasn't a breath of air. Of course, Boulanger would pick that day to bake bread, and in the wood cook-stove no less. The little yellow flowers on

Continued on next page

the kitchen wallpaper looked wilted. I sat on the front porch with Toby, who was being especially weird. He kept rocking back and forth like a mechanical bird or something. Back and forth, back and forth. The sun shone down like there was no tomorrow and mosquitoes swarmed around my face by the hundreds.

"Cut that out Toby, it's stupid."

He kept on rocking.

"Toby, I said stop it." Things were starting to get to me.

Toby rocked faster, more frantically.

"I'm gettin' mad, boy."

Rock, rock. Back and forth. Bang, bang, bang.

Toby began knocking his head against the wall of the house.

Rock, bang. Rock, bang.

"Toby. Toby, stop it." I was yelling and had jumped to my feet.

Bang, bang, bang.

I was really scared now. "Boy, when she gets home this afternoon, Maggie Tobias is going to get an ear full. I quit. I've had enough of this crazy job. Toby, stop it!"

Then I think that I flipped out a little. I grabbed Toby and pulled him bodily off the porch. It was the first time that I'd touched him.

"We're going for a walk!"

In the field away from the house it was cooler. My strangle hold on Toby's wrist relaxed and, much to my surprise, I found that I was holding his hand. A flock of birds flew by overhead and Toby watched them until they disappeared into the distance. He stared for a long time afterwards at the empty sky, and I wondered what he was thinking about. The smell of warm grass filled the air. Toby turned to me and for a moment we just stood there and looked at each other. Then he turned his gaze back to the sky. He was smiling.

When Maggie Tobias got home at three, I didn't tell her what she could do with her job the way that I'd said I would. She wished me a nice weekend and I mumbled something similar. Toby was sitting cross-legged on the porch, cradling a dirty, white cat. He didn't look up when I stepped out of the house. I felt all uncomfortable.

Walking along I couldn't figure out why I felt so badly. I mean, I'd done what I'd been paid to do, right? I hadn't quit. I hadn't left her in the lurch. Why did I have this two-ton rock in my gut, anyway?

I thought that I heard someone behind me and I looked over my shoulder to see who it was. It was Toby. He must have followed me. He looked at me expectantly. For a moment everything just hung there so still and quiet. I guessed that he wasn't satisfied with my good-bye, and come to think of it, neither was I. I reached out and took his hand. We walked back together.



"But Where Do the Children Play?"

Grant Siméon

## untitled poem

Mother of God,  
that's me!  
They try to  
tell me different,  
but I know  
what's going on.  
It's my son, you see,  
I've become a burden  
to him,  
so he and the wife  
(Virgin Mary my ass.  
I told him not to  
get mixed up with her!)  
have dumped me here  
so they don't have  
to listen to me  
But I've fixed them  
When they come  
to visit, — —  
I don't talk  
to them at all

Mary Welsh

## Ah Geneviève

Spring sprouts struggled through last fall's browned weeds  
As the sun melted into her wintered palms.  
It had been a long cold season.  
She smiled as the sun warmed her crevassed face

Marvin was too old to come out  
Hard winters of his youth had made stiff his bones  
He lay bundled in his bed  
Waiting for the day the neighbour lad  
Would come and take the plastic off the windows

She tottered back into the house  
an old childhood rhyme flowering in her mind  
She fixed him a cup of tea from the tin that held  
the real loose leaves  
took his favourite plate and heaped it with  
sweets their daughter had sent from the big town.

Their dimming eyes glittered  
while the wind played with the plastic  
They sat—nodding their heads

A few weeks later she observed buds on the trees  
and rediscovered the crocus patch  
the cookies had all been eaten but she made  
one last pot of tea from the special tin.

They sit, friends of time  
waiting for the blossoms on the apple tree.

—Andrea Schwenke

## untitled poem

My friend claims  
there are ghosts in her attic.  
She is afraid to climb the stairs.

There are ghosts in the basement.  
She is afraid to descend.

There are ghosts on the back porch  
in the dining room  
the bedroom  
bathroom.

I search  
perform an exorcism before her watchful eyes.  
Still

she wraps herself in blankets of terror  
closes her eyes against apparitions.

Her fear is more real  
than the ghosts could ever be.

*Wendi Hadd*



*"Smoke"*

*Grant Siméon*

## untitled poem

**hah**

The hair fell out in spirals from the middle  
The forehead conquered and claimed  
territory greedily.  
White hairs settled in his beard  
and sprung in curly masses out of his nose  
and ears  
But he just laughed at his body's peevish  
attempts at decay  
he laughed and laughed toning his belly muscles  
improving his respiratory system .  
he'd grown far too wise  
to be dismayed by nature's well worn tricks.  
It is my goal it is my wish  
to creak and bellow  
to be gnarled and yellow  
but that takes time  
a long long time  
especially for a spry young fellow  
so I'll not listen to your tales  
of calcifying brains and  
unfit marrow  
it is a mere nasty fiction  
in your head that impedes  
your thought and will to grow  
beyond the realm of youth  
and sorrow.  
Hah I say and hah again,  
it is a privilege and a pleasure  
and I will taunt this school of thought  
until the day I wish  
to sit and make the sounds  
old people make in armchairs to  
see how ridiculously they can be treated.

*Andrea Schwenke*



## First Corinthians 15:14

Mike doesn't believe in religion. He believes if people have faith in themselves they'll find there's no need for God to show them what's right and wrong.

Mike lives in a big old house with his girlfriend. He didn't tell me that, someone else did. She works somewhere. He doesn't. He comes to my house and I make him strong coffee. We talk while he drinks. We never talk about his girlfriend. Maybe she doesn't exist. When he's finished his coffee, we go to bed.

Mike plays guitar. He plays electric, wild and well. I go to see him play in bars. He forgets me for the music. I talk to people who can make me laugh. When I look up, he's watching me.

Mike used to be a drug addict. He stopped for awhile but now I think he's starting again. It worries me. I can't say anything though. If I do, he gets defensive, and nasty about my problems. I guess I shouldn't worry, we'll both survive.

Mike dropped out of college. He said it was because of the lies. The "system" is based on lies. Now he says he's going back. I don't know if the lies turned to truths. Or if at twenty-four, he's learned to ignore them because they can't be changed. We've both learned to turn a blind eye.

Mike goes on binges. He can drink sixteen hours straight. I find him at the end of it. I take him home and put him in my bed. He sleeps it off while I write papers on religious philosophy. When he wakes up, he proof reads them for me.

Mike isn't sure if some of the things he does are right. He doesn't want to hurt people. But we can't talk of things that may not exist. I catch him looking into himself with disbelief. Maybe I should take him to church.

Wendi Hadd



## Invisible String

Anne Bennett

To keep her from leaving  
he ties her with fishing line  
secretly

He tells her she's free to go  
She tries  
but the line digs into her flesh.  
Seeing nothing to bind her  
it must be feelings for him  
gnawing at her heart  
she stays, puzzled.

In the darkness she lies awake  
while he dreams of fishing  
and consuming his catch

Wendi Hadd



## untitled poem

This pen is green. That has nothing to do with the fact that the ink it contains is also green. It is a mere coincidence that the pen and the ink it contains are about the same colour. The point that I'm trying to make is that the exterior (and presumably, the interior,) of the pen with which I am writing is green. As a matter of fact, I'm no longer writing "the pen with which I am writing", but, rather, about it. Must I write something to write about that something? To write about the pen with which I am writing I must write "the pen with which I am writing." Maybe I should write "the pen with which this was written." However, "the pen with which this was written" was written with the pen with which this was written. It's a all very confusing. Not the pen, that is. The pen is quite clear—well, actually, its green. What I mean to say is that the pen itself does not confuse me at all. Writing about the pen is quite another thing, though I only get confused when I write about the pen. How can the pen be so simple while the writing which concerns the pen is so confusing? Maybe the pen isn't as simple as I thought. Maybe this is

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actually a very complex pen; an extremely intricate device which, though of human origin, is beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Could it really be that this little pen is beyond my understanding? A cosmic pen! A pen about which nothing can really be know... except that it is green... and that it contains green ink... and that it has gold writing on the side and a white top and a silver claps and.. Hey! I know quite a bit about this pen. Well, if I know so much then why did I get so confused when writing about the pen. Wow! Now I'm writing about writing about the pen! I must be a lot more advanced than I thought.

So, I'm writing with a green pen  
I just wrote "I just wrote I'm writing with a green pen." Writing about the pen with which one is writing is kind of like writing about what one had just written with the pen with which one had written it, except that when one is writing about the pen with which one is writing one is not sure when the writing will end.

Christopher Green

## Tell Me

The splintering  
of the looking-glass  
sets off a fearsome resonance.  
In that mirror I foresaw  
the happily-ever-after,  
in it we were  
reflected  
in a frozen moment  
of split-faced grin  
and hope for the future.

Now we are surrounded by the shards,  
whose jagged edges  
wound,  
and if we travel back  
through one fragment—  
attempting reclamation—  
who says  
our upside-wrong lives  
will correspond?

*Dorothy Carson-Hobbs*

## L'insupportable

Voilà le quelque chose,  
dont tu cherchais.  
le-voilà,  
ce qu faisait trembler les paralytiques  
ce qui faisait aboyer les muets  
cesse cesse  
de te replier, en deux  
en huit  
en neuf  
que veux-tu découvrir?  
un souffle étranglant?  
un tic à gratter?  
un vivant à arracher?  
le vide à ressentir  
Voilà le don,  
préservé en verre  
suspendu en goutte.  
Enfin, attendais-tu le tonnerre?

*Peneloppi Gramatikopoulos*

## A Great and Crucial Conflict

### A Few Days Before a Rendezvous

He pulls a napkin out from under a pile  
Scribbles. How Deep in Love am I

and strikes a match  
Setting fire to the napkin

Burns his thumb  
Rejoices in the pain  
in the love

At the threshold of his woodshed  
He buries his thumb in snow  
Snow kills the pain

### Evening

Thin yellow candles are lit  
she telephones  
She will be late

His voice hollows  
masking judgement

He blows out the candles for a while

### Arrival

Upon her arrival  
he is entranced  
by studied movement  
as she reaches into the closet  
drapes a blue coat on a hanger.  
He sees her in a dress for the first time

### Nothing Happens

She is never boring  
He never fucks her  
They shall not commit adultery

After a while  
She feels sick

He: "I am so tired"

She "What we say and do here  
lovers in Ovid's Afternoon Diversions lived too"

They move about like wires  
on the bed  
she between sitting and lying down  
keeping her heavenly legs out of reach

The ritual of  
firecracker, wire, ice

### Denouement

They leave dessert  
most of the wine

The air is warm  
electric, lethargic

A glass of wine is overturned

Neither knows about salt for a wine-stained rug

He. "You're the diplomat's wife-to-be"

She: "Am I going to have to know the right thing to do  
for every occasion?  
Will I become a kewpie doll?"

"Marry **me** instead," he whispers.

They return to the bed  
Light cigarettes



*Anne Bennett*

## untitled poem

I am held together with  
scotch tape

I make no sudden moves  
and it holds.  
I do not expose myself to extremes  
of sun and rain  
and it holds.  
I keep myself from others  
who pick at frayed ends  
and it holds.

Yet still I am afraid  
I hold my breath  
as the pieces break away.

*Wendi Hadd*

## untitled poem

Apsaroke warriors wore their hair long,  
flowing like black water down around their feet.  
It gave them comfort.  
They were considered the most handsome of all  
the North American Indians.  
"Born on a horse," said a general of the U.S. Cavalry.  
Sometimes I can see them in my head,  
Riding through deep prairie grass,  
encircled by the graying sky,  
long hair flying in the hard wind  
NaKoma where are you now?  
Where are all the beautiful Apsaroke warriors now?

*Penny Henderson Nutbrown*



*Peter Cummings*

## Nuance

The current flowed strong  
boiled the mud  
scattered the pebbles  
she stood suspended  
above the crevice  
fragile flowers limp  
dangling off her fingers  
A blank gaze

carpeted her face.  
Eyes sunk deep  
in the tremoring sockets  
plus beanbags  
that gave way  
forever  
falling back  
into another constellation  
where the fibers of her soul  
shuddered in harmony.  
Reality lacked consistency  
it was a gluey pulp  
of mellowed oranges and grey  
The traveller made his way  
stepping lightly on the springy stones  
dib dib doom  
shukka shukka  
ooooommm  
the silent lands of  
introspection  
were clustered with makeshift  
dwellings  
of silly putty  
Meanwhile the balloon man  
swayed in the incensed  
gusts of wind  
exhaled  
slowly and with great concentration

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The steam flowed swiftly  
meandering pensively  
through oak forests  
and shuttered thoughts  
from which the light  
pale  
flickered in restless continuity

There was nothing to keep her from  
falling  
to be splattered  
on its shallow banks  
but she teetered with lingering conviction  
that someday  
she would float as mist  
to the source  
and dine with the nymphs  
that played lightheartedly  
in the purities of the beginning  
and wisdoms of its end  
Unheeding  
the lifelong struggle  
of discovery, sorting and selecting.

Night had unfolded  
its cloak  
as she turned, imperceptibly,  
to go.

Go where whatfore  
She knew not  
she felt unsure  
calm  
any maybe, afraid

Andrea Schwenke



"Pause" Terry Moller

## Will you Please...

will you please...

...just leave!!

closing doors  
I listen, eager  
for one last sigh  
some kind of proof  
that we once loved  
other than this  
pain in parting

all night diner coffee poems  
cannot revive  
the truth of  
arms, and lips, and thighs —

good-bye

## for lon chaney

naked fear clasps its inconsiderate mitts everywhere  
on yr throat lon invisible man  
im not sure where ive been lon  
the desolate landscape of the ballpark  
has permanently altered my perception of the universe

i wish you were on tv tonight lon  
let genius be lizard like tonight lon  
it was sd that you were lizard like by smone  
& that you hated weakness & did yr own makeup  
those gruesome teeth you flashed in phantom

i wish you were on tv tonight lon  
yr genius wd inspire into a better songwriter

invisible man im not sure where ive been lon  
& i want the tv to make you alive

*David McGimpsey*

## untitled poem

He's busy filing his mind  
sorting, folding & editing  
(it's his answer to valium).

He has separate drawers  
for each category  
subdivided into  
thoughts, feelings & miscellaneous.

*Mary Welsh*



*Peter Cummings*

## Cycle-Ooops

Dishes tend to piles  
piles tend to heap  
precariously  
paper, clothes, books  
dust, junk  
and eventually, surrounded  
you part them hoping  
to create a path  
a way out  
a narrow lane between  
the tiny clearing in which you  
barely  
have room to squat and  
the door

As you plan your escape  
from the jungle of cozy  
comforting treacherous junk  
a strange suspicion forms  
and grows cunning and nagging  
in the hopeless caves and grottos  
of your mind, somewhere there  
in the undefined regions of  
scattered images and unprocessed thought  
you are slowly awakened to the fact  
that underneath  
those piles  
something, surely, is growing  
something awful that will knot your tummy  
something that will have to be disposed of...  
but, fortunately(?), you've got commitments  
so, for the time being

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you step nimbly  
between the mountainous heaps  
and flee through the door  
that barely opens  
and close the link  
to the subterranean  
maze of your mind

and with it the  
consciousness of the  
wicked festival that will  
level your beloved niche  
and spread...

But no matter  
it's a fine day  
already you grin  
as the cold clamps its  
icy ivory  
and pierces your flesh  
with joie d'être alive  
until the sun sets  
and you fit yourself back  
inside  
somehow

and find everything  
exactly as you left it  
sometime that night  
fast asleep  
the knowledge seeps  
out again  
your subconscious reigns  
you turn your head the other way  
tug your dusty blanket tighter.

Andrea Schwenke

TOWNSHIP

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1900

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY



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