

# The Mitre

Spring 1986

TOWNSHIP

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*The Mitre*  
Spring 1986

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## Steven Heighton

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### LANDLORD

While the tenant was away I slipped  
upstairs, into his room,  
investing it completely,  
re-arranging tables, chairs  
and pocketing  
his keys and rings  
for back-rent.

I read his mail at my leisure.  
Ransacking the room for hidden things  
I found  
in a cupboard rattling  
with naked hangers  
his journal —  
fairly dull, but yielding  
several humid confessions.

There was little food on hand.  
I made a simple meal  
of rice and tinned fish, wine,  
a single orange for dessert but —  
no fruit was ever so succulent  
as in that primed  
violated silence,  
like flesh  
keenly unwilling beneath a pirate —



And while you listen here  
do not suggest  
the loons grieving dusk  
in the island's lee  
are grieving, they are not  
means to your ends  
or your meanings.  
The loon is no shadow  
despite its cry,  
no symbol of spirit

The loon is more true  
than the name it inherits

## Danielle Efrain

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### HAPPINESS

I sought for it in the faces of others  
and I realized their search paralleled mine  
I travelled the world  
thinking to find it where I was not  
Yet it remained elusive,  
always one step ahead of me  
— or so I thought.  
At times I believed I had found it  
but it absconded without a trace  
Perplexed at its whimsical appearances  
I thought to look within me  
and alas, I discovered its crypt.  
But the delusion of its evasiveness  
was much greater than its discovery  
and my sanity allowed me but a mere glimpse  
before I, once again,  
reveled in the tragedy of its elusiveness.

## THE RUNNER

Nine full moons of constant preparation  
Seemingly inadequate for what awaits ahead  
The day of the race is a memorable one  
beginning with a bloody thrust  
and a painful cry of reluctant release  
No-one knows how long the race will last  
It is a test of ultimate endurance  
which no-man wins  
The course is difficult and hazardous  
for it is held in a jungle  
of inevitable destruction  
The branches of the trees sting the body  
as the runner dashes past them  
The ground is rocky  
piercing the naive feet  
of the superficially clothed runner  
leaving a trail of crimson liquid  
The cuts are deep and painful  
as they carve the evidence of all that passes  
At every corner,  
behind every seemingly natural phenomenon,  
beneath the unstable earth  
there are inescapable obstacles  
with the power to eliminate  
a runner from the race  
At last the glimmer of the end is seen

the runner has reached  
the limit of his endurance  
A quick reflection  
of the painfully tedious marathon  
brings tears to the eyes  
now drowned in loneliness  
The end is so near,  
it is frightening  
for no-one knows what exists beyond the race  
As each runner reaches the finishing line  
thinking they have won  
They realize the futility of the race  
And as one-by-one crosses the inevitable line  
their foolish hopes and dreams are shattered  
for they discover oblivion.

## Mary Welsh

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### HIS CALL

She's waiting  
for his call  
again,  
this time  
he's only  
2 days late.

The ticking of  
the clock weighs  
on her nerves.  
She winds it up,  
it gives her  
something to do,  
some control.

Each sound,  
each time  
the phone rings,  
her heart stops.

She fears to  
go out,  
lest she miss  
his call,  
yet she does  
because  
she fears  
to be seen  
waiting for  
his call.

## Suzanne Desloges

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### MA TRISTESSE

Ce soir,  
Ma tristesse est comparable  
À l'ensemble des feuilles tombées  
Je suis arbre  
Depouillé de ses capacités

Ce soir,  
Ma tristesse est comparable  
À un piano  
Mis au rancart  
Pour son antiquité

Ce soir,  
Ma tristesse est comparable  
À une plante, qu'on arrache à la vie  
Devenue une fleur séchée  
On oublie son identité

Ce soir,  
Ma tristesse est comparable  
À l'oiseau de la liberté  
Qui pendant une bagarre  
S'est trouvé blessé

Il est là, inactif  
Cherchant le souffle de vie  
Le miracle à la survie



## CE CIMETIÈRE D'ANTAN

Ce cimetière d'antan  
Où toute jeune  
Je venais avec mon père  
Nourrir mon âme  
De mysticisme  
Que dégageait la terre en fécondation  
Je me rappelle,  
Fixant la plaie ouverte, de celle-ci  
Que les adultes lui déposaient son enfant  
Fruit d'un monde trompé durement  
Avec chagrin et gémissement  
Et,  
Qu'au fil des ans  
La terre cicatrisait  
Sa plaie,  
Couvant son enfant  
Secretement  
A un repos éternel.

## Steven Harris

### A GAME OF GOLF

So little Caramosque swings at the golf ball with a seven iron, convinced he's going to hit it to kingdom come, and ends up whiffing completely. He stumbles backwards, set off balance by his swing. Grumbling he takes another shot. He's so sure that he's going to land it twenty yards away that he ends up performing what we in the underworld would call "the perfect swing". And what do you know? Little Caramosque smacks that little sucker so close to the pin that we're sure if we jump hard enough, in it'll go.

Afterwards he told his mother: I almost got a hole-in-one, almost. And who are we to argue, we say: Yes, came inches from being a hole-in-one.

Then little Caramosque goes off and tells his friends: I almost got a hole-in-one today. And they all come over to make sure it's so. We say, well what could we say but: Yes, almost.

Next weekend, I tell little Caramosque, I will take you golfing again. To him, it's a big trip. It takes a good forty minutes by car, and the only set of golf clubs he can get his hands on is one that someone found at the dump one day. Those are the clubs he uses and I said to him: Little Caramosque, until you get better, you'd better keep that set you got right there. Eventually next weekend rolls around and I march right in to little Caramosque's house and say: I'm ready to go golfing, are you?

There he is, I see him, set down right in the middle of the floor. Little Caramosque, I say, let's go.

He looks up at me and says he ain't going. I ask why but he won't say nothing but "I ain't going".

Well what can I do? My plans for the day included little Caramosque but he won't come along; I'd have to go alone. But on the way I decide to see if Crazy Sid is in, maybe me and him could go. It worked out that he was, and even though he was the one who came with me last weekend, along with little Caramosque, he don't mind going again.

That day the clouds hung so low it looked like if you took a hard nine iron shot you could put it right through one of them. Seemed kind of like golfing indoors. Well Crazy Sid put a couple in the bushes and we spent about an hour collecting balls back there that people had just forgotten about. We must have got about twenty of them. Crazy Sid and I split them up — ten each — and went back to the club house.

When we went in to the pro shop, on the desk was a sign: We buy used golf balls. I showed it to Crazy Sid and he said maybe we should ask for how much.

The guy gave us \$5.00 each, fifty cents a ball. What did we need with twenty balls, Sid says, we can always get more next time we come. So Crazy Sid and me leave the place \$10.00 richer. On the way home we saw a garage sale where this old lady had cleared out this barn behind her house, her attic, and her basement. I looked around and saw an old set of golf clubs, eight pieces, all for five bucks. I thought little Caramosque might like them and my five bucks, well, I got it from golf, might as well keep it in golf. I bought the clubs and threw them in back of the truck. After I dropped off Crazy Sid I headed over to little Caramosque's house.

He wasn't home but his mother said she'd give them to him. She invited me in for a cup of coffee and asked me all kinds of questions about the big brother program and how it was I got Caramosque. We talked a while and then I left.

Little Caramosque called me a little while ago and said he liked the clubs very much. He said he polished them about 100 times and washed the bag 100 more. I said maybe next weekend we could go golfing and little Caramosque said his mother said that now it was O K.

I put on my old deerhide jacket and went down to the 7-11 on the corner for some milk for my dinner. My hair was still in a pony tail from golfing and some kids went hooping and hollering around em. I thought I could have smacked them, but they didn't know any better.

Anyway I figure I'll pick up little Caramosque about 9:30 and we'll head over to the course. Maybe the clouds will be low again and me and him can shoot one right up to heaven.



Dan Hawaleshka

## Penny Nutbrown

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### ONE

One is less than two  
but more than none  
and I am one.

### POEM FOR DANIEL.

On the porch, in the rain  
we read Winnie the Pooh  
and I imagined you  
as Christopher Robin  
alone in the garden  
so far from the house  
way back at Pooh Corner  
so far from the house  
and with night coming on

## David Jackson

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### CYCLOSTYLED

Dat, dicat, dedicat;  
And then absconding with mite and chalice,  
She closes the book on the Bishop.  
A new leaf, a new ledger,  
New sermons, new judgements,  
New messages and meanings.  
But it chastens her to reflect upon just  
How repetitious decisions and experiences are:  
Cycle after cycle,  
Cycle within cycle,  
Cycles inextricably convoluted.  
Alas, the prologue of the new ledger  
Reads strangely like the epilogue of the last:  
Absque ulla nota.

## Esiri Dafiewhare

if you cannot be the snail  
crawling in cries through life  
then be the mushroom  
poisonous in the east but meat  
in the west

or  
rather be the unicorn  
legendary in his phallic horn  
elusive in his sweetness

but do not be all at once

for in the murky vegetation of mushrooms  
inside of which stands an elegant unicorn  
might be creeping a crippled snail  
speeding away from the axe of the millipede  
ambushing a million goblins of self-doubts

because beneath the radiant wash of the moon  
lies a virgin raped severely in a swoon  
beneath me  
I lie in a coma of plural possibilities

waiting

## Rebecca Harries

### THE BARTER

My child was laughing  
when the beasts of autumn,  
strange striding-foot creatures  
of looking eyes of glass  
and pale bodies that offend  
my pious red heart came  
and knocked on our little  
blonde door. Their arms  
replete with wares undreamt by me.

An eight-eyed cup winked  
opal at me from its silly  
gilt. The slender pines twitched  
with the foreign scent of crimson  
incense, sweet as my child  
stretching out his little  
green-clothed arms in want of  
gifts, rare as heaven,  
dear as broken bread.

The embracing vines of our  
yellow-blossomed home, spoke  
to me in warning  
tones of dire means and ends.

The beasts are soft. I  
cannot meet their butter  
eyes, their pudgy noses and  
stodgy toes harrow  
me but they show  
me tiny metal men that dance or die  
no wider than my child's eye  
and golden toads that streak the sky  
whenever they see a humble fly.

And they show me quetzals in a globe of glass  
and fires that burn and scorch the grass  
and I cannot catch breath and ask  
Why they take  
my ruddy child between their  
pudgy hands and stare  
with solemn eyes,

Then the beasts brought forth  
a crown of spider diamond  
web with magic on the edge  
and glory on the rise.  
It held my life within its shining cage.

I have no coin  
I could not pay.  
The beasts are traders.  
The beasts with tear-filled eyes  
and for the crown  
they took my child,  
my laughing child.

## Steven Heighton

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### THE CONDEMNED

Four guards woke him in the dim silence before dawn. And stood by his cot, waiting.

"Please hurry," one of them said. "We are late."

The man nodded, blinking sleep from his eyes, forcing himself to sit up.

"Five minutes," said another guard, and the four turned and left the room. briskly, their boots clapping sharp on the hard floor. They would be waiting outside.

Alone, the man changed quickly into the set of clothes draped over a chair by the bed. They were simple, khaki-coloured, trousers and a shirt, a thin black belt. From under the chair he took a pair of boots, black and knee-high, then sat on the cot to pull them on.

The boots were tight, and he struggled with them, shuddering with the effort and the cold of the room. Then rose and moved with clipped stride to a cubicle in the corner, urinated, emerged, and walked along the cement wall to a small oval sink. There was a mirror above, tiny but polished, and he shaved before it, then wet and combed his hair.

When he had finished he paused, staring with absorption into his heavy eyes, following the deep folds that sagged beneath them. Recognizing the bone shadowed darkly under his pale skin.

After a moment, he bent and rinsed his face and hands in the sink.

When he had towelled himself dry he checked his watch: it was twenty-five past six. The guards were shuffling outside in the hall, muttering restlessly, impatient. After a last brief look in the mirror, he walked across the room, opened the door, and stepped outside.

The guards stood back as he emerged, handling their automatic weapons uncomfortably, pointing them away from him, down at the floor. Except one of them, a tall, red-faced man with thick glasses, who carried only a pistol.

"Please, this way," the tall one said. And started up a narrow corridor, long, low-ceilinged, damp and grey.

The man followed, his three heavily-armed guards marching beside him with a quick and even stride. He fell in time with them, the sound of their steps together in the low hall dull and hollow as a muffled drum.

The five turned a sharp corner and continued along another windowless corridor. The walls leaning close around them seemed to swallow sound, yet the air became warmer, fresher; a door appeared at the far end. Ahead, the tall guard glanced down at his watch, muttered something and accelerated slightly — but it was hardly necessary, they were almost to the door. Then they were stopping before it and the tall guard leaned against its iron bulk and forced it slowly outward.

A widening bar of brilliant light shot into the dim hall, and with it came a deep resonant hum, a layered murmuring as of thousands whispering together. Air poured into the corridor, warm and fragrant, carrying the smells of early morning. As a clock somewhere nearby struck the half-hour, the guards led the man out onto a wide stone platform.

In the open the light was blinding; the sun had just risen over the city, swollen and distorted with refraction — a crimson oval flooding the platform and the great square below it with harsh, uniform light. It revealed an enormous crowd filling the square, swaying and cheering with abandon. The sound was a solid roar that grew deafening as the man moved towards the edge of the platform, guards still around him.

Then they fell back and he stood alone.

For a moment the roar continued, then it changed and took on a rhythm; something was being shouted again and again, it was his name, they were chanting it. And gesturing, waving frantically. Pointing at him

Saluting him.

He raised his hands for silence and stepped to the microphone. From the square below a hundred thousand upturned faces watched, obedient.

**They are mine,** he whispered, so that no one — not even his guards — could hear.

**They will do as I ask —**

## Kevin Halligan

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WHEN THE MANIFESTATIONS GOT HEATED

*Take action you young you able arise,  
People must be made to realize.*

Charged thus, we entered 'A Surging Tide',  
Sheltered a few from the worst of each side,

Secreted nine on the walled pebble roof,  
Branded all our crowd who held aloof,

Forged passes, twice chartered a boat,  
Missioned hard for the old man fasting.

Later it was ourselves we kept afloat.







