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NEW MITRE 1973

Bishop's University
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CANADA IN A WORD

*Broadcast February 23, 1972, from Sydney over the
Australian Broadcasting Commission network*

I have called this exploration "Canada in a Word". An impossible title, of course. How can one put a country into a word? How can one aspect of Canada be put into a word? A half hour is a reasonable time to allow any Canadian to talk. Most of Canada's politicians wouldn't get very far in that time. A good thing, too. But poets can put an immense amount of things in half an hour. That's their profession. Or should be. No poet can be long-winded and good at the same time. And so in thirty minutes I should be able to find an important word not too inadequate to deal with the Canadian scene.

But using "Canada in a Word" as a title, I did not have only the time element in mind. That is dominating, of course — and it certainly emphasizes one terrific difference between Australia and Canada. When I left my home in North Hatley, Quebec, on January 10th, the temperature on my verandah was twenty degrees below zero. Here in Australia, I am in summer. I must say I like your difference — though I am gradually realizing your weather can be as crazy as our climate. When I was in Melbourne a few weeks ago, it was in the nineties. I went up to Alice Springs to keep cool. I was told in Canada before I left that anyone who went up to Ayers Rock in your mid-summer was crazy in the head. My wife and I found it tranquil and breezy — delightful. We had run into Carlotta the hurricane while in Fiji; we had capsized in an outrigger canoe into water filled with coral in Tahiti. We have since learned that you can experience these things on the Great Barrier Reef. As fast as we could fly we got us up to the tranquility of the Outback. What a magnificence you Australians have up there in the middle of your continent! Majesty and silence. After the tour buses out of Melbourne each with a non-stop-talking driver and the piped-out pop-music which battered my head all the way north to see a duck-billed platypus and all the way down to the coast to see penguins walk out of the ocean — battered and bruised, you will imagine my tranquil delight at flying out to your infinities of spinifex and confronting goannas in the scrub.

None of these things do we have in Canada. We do have spacious majesty, however. Those of you who have travelled to our Rocky Mountains will know about this. And not only the Rocky Mountains. My province of Quebec will supply silence and grandeur. North of the St. Lawrence River lie part of the Laurentian Shield — that great swath of mighty rock that girdles the continent. And yet I doubt if that solitary ancientness can match the sense of spacious silence and age that the land around Ayers Rock and the Olgas provides.

You see, I am getting to important comparisons about the two of us — at once, the similarity and the difference. The sources are geographic. But your geography as surely leads to the inner climate of the man as ours leads to our personalities. I won't go too far into this sort of cause and effect as it persists in Australia. It would be arrant presumption for me to hold forth on the subject after less than a month among you. But that is long enough to be forcibly struck by the fact that humanly we are much alike; geography, distance, loneliness, vastness, physical challenge, extremes of weather, lack of population — all these things I am inclined to believe have moulded the Australian in the spiritual shape Canadians take. We too can't trust geography and are hard and ingenious and self-reliant in a way that is similar. We too are conservative in the sense that we must structure life and not only sit in the sun. Knowing loneliness, we too are hospitable . . . Though I rather think you have the advantage of us there. No people could be more hospitable than you are. Here you are letting me, unknown and untried, talk like an oracle. In the town where I live it takes about 20 years to get on an accepted footing with the native butcher and the local plumber.

I'll just pursue this similarity one step further. Both Australia and Canada, at the present time, are bursting at the seams with poets. That sounds like an attempt to be funny and I suppose the statement is funny. But it is not unimportant. We both are lucky. Name me a country without poetry and you'll name me a forgotten country. Name me a country without a precise literature and you'll name me a country soft in the head. A country without the literature and creative word is a country that can't communicate, a country without respect, and a country that is exploited. Is it not so? What is the Gross National Product of Finland? You don't know? I'll tell you: Sibelius.

And so, with that bit of logic, I come to Canada. If the identity of a country can be found, it can be found best in its poetry. Not best in its wheat, its oil, and its bottling works. Its poetry. I am always quoting Sir Philip Sidney (a nice name to go with where I am speaking from). Sir Philip Sidney says: 'Of all liars poets are the least liars'. You can't lie in a poem — not consciously, you can't. It results in a bad piece of art. No one will accept it. I won't go into the aesthetics of that. But please believe that a non-truth results in a bad line of poetry.

We are much agitated at the present time in Canada by our lack of a definition of our self-identity. Some Canadian critics groan and say: For the Lord's sake, let us just be ourselves. Why seek a label? They are misguided in this of course. You can't intelligently be yourself until you know who you are. And certainly that is of supreme importance when you have over 200 million other people threatening to swamp you. I refer, of course, to the proximity of Canada and the United States of America. We are different from the States. That does not make us better, good Lord! How sick I am of anti-Americans who find themselves virtuous because they aren't Americans. Knock somebody else and you are forthwith pious, eh? Deluded halos! We have far too many Canadians of that ilk — who claim themselves Canadians because they yell anti-Yankee slogans.

But we do have valid identity — specifics which when added up make a Canadian a Canadian. I don't only mean that we talk funny or talk French. I mean that the difference lies in the inhabitant of Canada's

psyche. I won't go into the Quebec problem. That is posed by those shifting factors of politics and economics. The truth of French Canadian poetry is no more threatened by those factors than English Canadian poetry is. What poets express — namely, how we are not lying — is ultimately beyond any parish. The Canadian poet who is a poet stands beyond his parish. Recognizably. The turn of thought is Canadian, the aspiration is, the dealings with others is.

I once did an anthology of Canadian poetry in English. In fact, I have now made four, without counting some revisions. Each time, I read our poetic product through from its beginning before Confederation right up to the poem written yesterday still in manuscript. Believing what I have been talking about: that poets are the least liars; that poetry by nature is a process of precise communication; that its raw material, language, is honed by the good poet to its utmost precision and economy; believing that the poet is extraordinarily sensitive or he wouldn't be writing poetry at all; believing all this, I believed that as I read through Canadian literature from beginning to end, certain specifics would constantly be thrown up that would provide a precise definition of Canadian identity.

They were. Such a list accumulated. It is to be found on page 27 in the Preface to my *Penguin Book of Canadian Verse*. It is put down in note-form. The appearance on the page fooled one of our most eminent television commentators. He thought my list of notes was a poem and asked if he could quote from it for a book on Canada he was doing for distribution at Japan's world fair. I let him go ahead. I understand that he is laughing at the fact that I did not demand any fee.

What does Canadian poetry reveal as the specifics of Canada? Here is the list:

- The sea: primal, challenging, present.
- Diving: literal diving, diving back to; a diving back to our beginnings, a sense of ancientness, the primitive.
- Green: an engagement with green as amazing as that with diving: green blood, green air, green out of the white of winter.
- Hills: despite the prairies, granite, and the antagonist, the Laurentian Shield.
- A hatred of cruelty: of cruelty to cruelty.
- Women make men: This specific, elsewhere, is taken to be true as well as comic. Canadians always take it as being comic.
- The eye: symbol and *active* agent; Canadian poets do not only look, they see.
- Concern with fish symbolic: not religious.
- War is not a natural condition.
- A laughter toward tourists.
- Little longing for diviner regions.

Contrary to what must be an expectation, I found only one Mountie in Canadian poetry; and one snowshoe in what is a satire. But I am lately proven wrong, somewhat. I recently read a Canadian poem with a pair of snowshoes in it. Mention of this poorly emphasized aspect is made to propagandize the fact that we do not wear snowshoes all the time; never to bed.

So there they are — the specifics which still are as indelible in Canadian poetry as they are in the poetry I read when I made my anthologies. What do they all add up to? The distinguishing and inevitable word is Northness. Northness is our identity. Examine those specifics and they don't belong to Southness. The birth of Venus out of the foamy spill of Uranus, the amatory Zeus, are possible only in a warm climate. We don't ride donkeys

while the woman behind transports afoot the cordwood for winter. The average Canadian male does not own a donkey. We have to leave the skylarks and nightingales in England.

Pursue this northness, this vastness and lopsided year with sudden green out of winter and all the rest of it, and you have our poetry. In our poetry, you have us. Let's pursue the declaration. Earle Birney, also a peregrinator through Australasia, is as validly and unself-consciously Canadian as any poet we have. He grew up in the Rocky Mountains. In his poem "Bushed" he talks about a Canadian and his relationship with his environment:

He invented a rainbow but lightning struck it
shattered it into the lake-lap of a mountain
so big his mind slowed when he looked at it

Yet he built a shack on the shore
learned to roast porcupine belly and
wore the quills on his hatband . . .

He does not lick the vast grandeur though, Birney tells us. He took to waiting. That did not prove any good. Finally he knew

though the mountain slept the winds
were shaping its peak to an arrowhead
poised

But by now he could only
bar himself in and wait
for the great flint to come singing into his heart

Some of that might possibly have been conceived in the Alps of Southern New Zealand. I have lately stood on a glacier on Mount Cook and felt that potential flint in my heart. I don't know about the non-religious intercommunication expressed — whether it is both New Zealand and Canadian. But certainly Birney's adjectives are only Canadian. New Zealand gives up at Doubtful Sound and the pastoral/urban resolution of Lake Manapouri. The journey into the Canadian north is only too certain; nor does distance resolve itself any too easily. The mountainous emotions don't change for a thousand miles north from the Columbia Icefield into the Yukon. The Australian equivalent would be to set out from the Olgas in the middle of the continent. Where to? Like the Australian, the Canadian can't feel himself too much of a big deal.

All this the Canadian reconciles with the prairies.

Consider this land
That never reaches consummation
with a humdrum horizon blonde
and easy to the impossible wish,
Of horizontals fluid to . . .

My poem asks, Where? So might your Australian poem. We are much alike. Where do we run fences?

And the Canadian reconciles both these attitudes with this quiet, pastoral landscape of Lampman's out of Ontario; Ontario in "Snow":

The meadows and far-sheeted streams
Lie still without a sound;
Like some soft minister of dreams
The snow-fall hoods me round;
In wood and water, earth and air,
A silence everywhere.

Save when at lonely intervals
Some farmer's sleigh, urged on,
With rustling runners and sharp bells,
Swings by me and is gone;
Or from the empty waste I hear
A sound remote and clear;

The barking of a dog, or call
To cattle, sharply pealed,
Borne echoing from some wayside stall
Or barnyard far afield;
Then all is silent, and the snow
Falls, settling soft and slow.

The evening deepens, and the gray
Folds closer earth and sky;
The world seems shrouded far away;
Its noises sleep, and I,
As secret as yon buried stream,
Plod dumbly on, and dream.

You will notice that the farmer's sleigh is "urged on", and the Canadian better "urge on" when his winter threatens to choke off his breath! But despite the Canadian's winter and its symbol of death,

over the north
Going to what no man can hold hard in mind,
The dredge of that gravity, being without experience . . .

despite our cold Yukon, notice, too, that despite all our groans and driftings, we really love our winter and its solitude. Lampman in the 1890s was loving it. Like Robert Frost having to make up his mind in a New England winter, the Canadian in the Eastern Townships where I live only thirty miles from the Vermont border, he too has to make terrible decisions. But not all the time. Sometimes our winters are as cozy as a Quebec stove.

Those last two lines above of Lampman's "Snow" — are we plodding, rather dumb and vegetative? We are, we are, and deliberately. But we do get out of it, and, like you Australians, are vitalized by our climate and battered down. It makes us tough, but also understanding. Edmund Wilson in his book on Canada asks:

How can one get a hold on such a country? Can one
think of such spaces in terms of any human meaning?

The question can as easily be asked of Australia.

An English poet once came to Canada and caught the true identity. His name was Patrick Anderson. His poem was written in the 1940s and is at points obviously invalid now. Nevertheless it is a remarkable summation of the questions to be asked of Canada; indeed, the questions Canadians ask themselves. The quoted lines are a cold colloquy from his poem called *Poem on Canada*:

What are you . . . ? they ask, in wonder . . .
What are you . . . ? they ask again, their mouths full of gum . . .

And she replies: I am the wind that wants a flag . . .
Yes, I am one and none, pin and pine, snow and slow,
America's attic, an empty room,
a something possible, a chance, a dance
that is not danced. A cold kingdom.

Anderson goes on wonderfully and presents much that has to be overcome. Yet, in good Canadian fashion, the cold colloquy is qualified. See, the poet says, see

the salmon pointing home
from the vast sea, the petalled plethora
and unplumbed darkness of the sea . . . :
gliding along their silvery intuitions
like current on its cables, volt upon volt,
to flash at last, sparking the mountain falls
of Restigouche — spawning a silver million.

“Silvery intuitions”, indeed. What! with all that vastness, those over-stuffed silos, those pragmatic, threatening pipelines. Plaguey things like those flies in your city of Melbourne. I am told that you will solve the flies by sterilizing the males. Come to our Yukon in September. Cold fact. Yet there is, too, silvery intuition.

I myself have put the whole of Canada in a poem; the whole thing, climate external and internal, in twenty-five lines. It took me forty years. By way of preface, perhaps you need to know that the sections of Canada are provinces; this is needful to know in order to appreciate that I am thus enabled to say that we are provincial; since we are bilingual it is necessary for me to work in the word “dentelle”; a look at the map of Quebec will explain that; that formidable barrier of granite flung across our continent and called “The Shield” prevents too much love; at the same time it makes inevitable, exposure, which, in turn, makes silly our prudery. Eastern Canada with its lakes and great river has always been possible, but notice how the poem says that rosy British Columbia is plotting, no matter how provincial.

Only an unconscious Canadian could put all that into a quarter of a hundred lines. We are an economical people. The poem is called

CARTA CANADENSIS

The land starts *dentelle*, indented,
With tidemark of hills, broadens
Into dark green canting (notice the negative pun)
Over rock eternal with loneliness,
Northwestward tilting from granite
The ochre lakes. This
Is the great Shield clamped
On the place of love. Only
At the tide and inland littoral (here, I, too, get fishy)
Is there literal love. Wharves
Wash on the waves of wheat (money is the great conjunctive)
Husky with summer luck,
In autumn harvested on the plains.
Fish and wheat, the promise,
Christ and bread, (a religious fish in Canada is unusual)
Brought to the tables of
An iron land.
Backward
Up against the possible (British Columbians call other
East, the broken mountains Canadians: “You in the East.”)
Of magnificence
Sheering the plainsoil northward
Out of sight, roses
Lean, provincial, burning
In their plot.

Canada is meeting its own challenge. We are far from the day of Voltaire to whom New France was a mere few acres of snow and evidence enough to write to the French king’s chief minister that he very much preferred peace to Canada. How we have progressed! Only the other day the late De Gaulle was yelling from the balcony of the Windsor Hotel in Montreal: “Vive le Québec libre!”

I venture to think that both Voltaire and De Gaulle were mistaken in the temper of Canada. So, I think, is Brebner when he writes in his history that “The most striking thing about Canada is that it is not a part of the United States”. A statement that is too smart — unless Brebner was thinking (which he was not) about our ability to be ourselves.

At the very beginning of our good Canadian poetry, the poets were defining the spiritual climate of Canada. The major voices of the group which we call the Confederation Poets, even then in the 19th century, were precisely expressing the scope and vastness and mystery of Canada.

The note sounded again and again is that persisting note of loneliness and vastness. A note that in its own modulation is heard in Australia. Though the sense of space and silence and the sense of the question unanswered are similar, here, in Canada, the emotional tension, the suspension, are Canadian.

ROBERTS:

Once and again the loon cried from the lake.
Though no breath stirs
The ghostly tamaracks and the brooding firs,
Something as light as air leans on my door.
—*In the Night Watches*

LAMPMAN:

Yet some wild thing is in mine ear;
I hold my breath and hark;
Out of the depth I seem to hear
A crying in the dark.
—*Midnight*

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT:

No wave fell mourning in the sea
Where age on age beauty had died;
For that frail colour withering away
No sea-bird cried.
—*At Delos*

CARMAN:

The heart of the forest grieves
In the drift against my door;
A voice is under the eaves,
A footfall on the floor.
—*A Northern Vigil*

Even in the Aegean, Duncan Campbell Scott expresses this.

Those are the Confederation poets, so-called. Bring this theme into contemporary Canadian poetry:

F. R. SCOTT:

a quiet calling
of no mind
out of long aeons
when dust was blind
and ice hid sound

only a moving
with no note
granite lips
a stone throat

—*Old Song*

A. J. M. SMITH:

A wild duck calls
to her mate
and the ragged
and passionate tones
stagger and fall,
on these stones—
are lost
in the lapping of water
on smooth, flat stones.

—*The Lonely Land*

D. G. JONES:

... a world of silence but for the sound
of water tapping on the stones,
a drag of wind in the pine.

—*Northern Water Thrush*

JOHN NEWLOVE:

I know where the lean and half
starved gods are hiding,
I have slept in their mountains.

I have slept among them,
in their mountains turning
nightmarishly between the rocks
and the reaching plants,

—*Good Company, Fine Houses*

What is this thing? that far music — as if of the Arctic lights that flash
and fall and are gone — and leave a beauty and a death? A quality of
distance? that mysterious note of elegy and oldness and grandeur,
primitive and instructed, primordial and present...?

It is a loneliness, certainly — the loneness of physical space, the
knowledge of a briefness and eternalness. It is not terror. One of our
listening critics, Northrop Frye, says that terror is the keynote of Canadian
poetry. He is wrong. Terror is an emotion felt only after the answer to
the Question is known — like Hell to the Mediaeval sinner.

This Canadian quality I search derives from the *lack* of an answer.
It is the Question itself: of prairies rolling parallels to the Arctic night;
of the Laurentian Shield in its loneliness; of the Rocky Mountains in a
magnificence that is unattainable.

It is the quality of Sibelius' music.
Our identity is the summation of these qualities.
Our identity is Northness.

Gil Ross



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warm dust coats
the toy men and
bloodless women on
the shelf . . .
what punishment will
I incur if
I dare to blow it off
and expose the
cold clay underneath?

Leah Bradshaw

ON WRITING A POEM.

What use to write a poem these days
with smiles all round
to shelter
and endless friends in endless laughs in
endless sunny weather

laugh and laugh and talk and talk
until I can't remember
the fertile drip of a lonely tear in the
bleakness of December.

Eva Baldwin

daffodils dear
Mr. Wordsworth
my daffodils are
on the dining room table;
do you think they'll do?
I know
my poem won't have
the breeze and the ocean —
will the air conditioner
be all right?
I know tapwater isn't salty,

I wish
I could see your daffodils
Mr. Wordsworth,
because mine
keep wilting.

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FESTIVAL '73

Festival '73 was the fourth annual festival of Canadian Cultural Arts held at Bishop's University on January 11, 12, 13, 14. The Festival was organized by a group of students at Bishop's University and Champlain Regional College, under the auspices of the principal's Committee on Life in the University and the Cultural Affairs Subcommittee of the Students' Executive Council (Champlain College).

This year the "Celebration of the Arts" honoured all areas of the Canadian Arts and included such guests as Ralph Gustafson, George Johnston, Tom Marshall, Richard Needham, Desmond Pacey, Andreas Schroeder, and Ophra Benazon. Events began Thursday with an 'Intro-Fest' which involved the students reading their poetry and providing musical entertainment. Weekend Festivities included a ballet produced by LES GRANDS BALLETS CANADIENS; discussions; poetry readings; meetings with invited guests; and a folk concert with Murray McLauchlan. Sunday concluded the celebrating with films, and drama with Mia Anderson and Ron Hastings.

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sugar bowls —
funny how
they always appear
comical and stout.
have you ever seen
a graceful sugar bowl?
maybe because sugar makes
one think of
of gaining weight

weird exaggerated
figures (like
the primitive earth goddess),

they grace most tables
with plump disdain
ignoring the obvious
handicap their appearances
present;
bearing their bodies
with chubby pride —
always
the centre of things.

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ON COPING WITH A CROWD.

There are too many of us in here
wouldn't you agree?
with only you and me.
Too many ideas to sort and polish
for presentation.
We invite one more
to come and join our tête-à-tête
which you must admit
does clear the lamentation
of confusion.

Eva Baldwin

my heart spirals upward
trees nod
and smile back
I breathe in the clouds
and blow them out again
laughing at them
tumbling into the sun.

Robert Winters

QUARGLE

"Who will buy a cancelled stamp?"
The ugly chancellor stamped his seal in rage.
Snorted the seal, "Neverthence!"
And twaddled out in disgust.

"Who will trade it for a hostage?"
And promptly mailed him.
But castrated he returned,
Labelled: insufficient hostage.



COWBOYS DON'T CRY

the time for growing up
seems to pass around us so quickly
— four seasons gone
with a touch of the wind.

tears change minds
time after time
and it seems we'll never learn
about being older.

i was older once.
and when sleep arrived each night
it seemed much worse
to have missed the little things
in growing up.

when i was younger
tears never came
through all the little pains.
now i'm young again and it's hard to remember
a place where little boys keep playing in the rain

and cowboys don't cry.



FOUR AUTUMN HAIKU

writing poems
 touching your appled breasts
 brown soft and wrinkled
 *
 the bright red flower
 opens wider on the page
 tear by quicker tear
 *
 far across the lake
 a lone duck calls for a friend
 the water is full of stars
 *
 papers on the street
 pushed roughly by the wind
 a sound of passing

a whisp of white
 hangs paused
 like a water drop prepared to fall
 in the pale
 evening sky

it floats
 the first rough stroke of the painters brush

John Scott

THE RECTORY GHOST

Boisterous foamy clouds tumble
 Northward, rolling over
 A wedge of wings
 Southbound; and tinted
 Fall trees wave their leaves
 Goodbye as the wind
 Blows him kisses in puffs
 Through a window-crack.
 Nature's farewells he'd return
 But he's not leaving —
 Just wondering at
 Season's patchwork and
 Knowing he'll be there
 Every time
 Boisterous foamy clouds tumble
 Northward.

Richard Price

POEM

seeding the field
 the wind around her wrist
 she pulls the clouds behind

JANUARY 1970

It seems Persephone has grown to like dark Hades
And will not visit our fair earth again.
So what's our prospect?
Slowly the black-white winter world will fill with snow-cold snow.
The fence posts, almost covered now, will disappear
And, as quickly, the telephone poles will go.

Man will trot from house to buried house
On snow-packed paths.
Then one by one each by each
We'll go below
To where the king and queen of darkness are at feast.

Richard Price

BASHO AT PLAY

the river moving
talking, telling perfect tales
no one is there



DEATH OF A GREY SQUIRREL
ON ARGYLE STREET, SHERBROOKE

On the rain-streaked tar
A lump of heavy fur,
A blob of blood
Scarlet, shapeless
Surrounding his head,
The beautiful, surprised squirrel

Me, returning with groceries,
My wife, holding our dog,
Looking out the wet window
Eyes watery

"Just run over"

I picked him up
By the long pride,
The magic tail,
Important as the painter's brush,
The dancer's leg, the poet's pen

Blood drooled
From his nose
His eyes stared

I gently tossed him
To the ground under
A tree, learning gravity
Is greater for the dead,
But he landed
On his back
His scrotum and penis
Holding up the sky

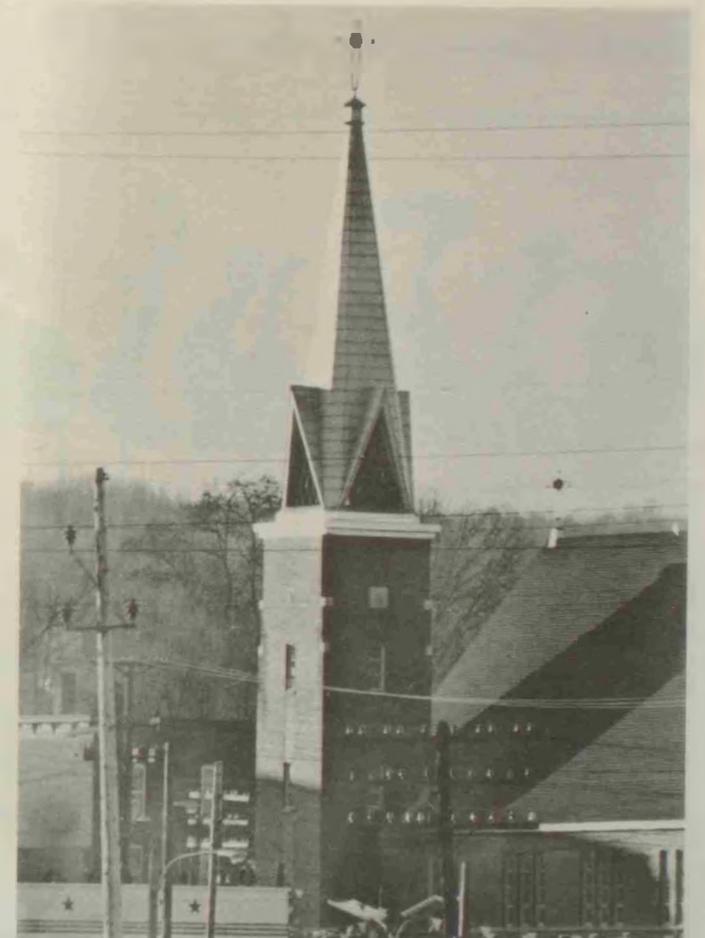
So I turned him over;
Eyes, genitals, tail
Buried in the earth
He had so often
Watched from his wire

Walking away
Past the pool
Of bright red blood
Being rained upon
I damned the driver:
Even if
He had been careful
Why was he *there* — *then*?

My stomach and head
Felt tight, quiet:
Not for my terrier
Who wants to play
In the street, my wife
Who walks across the street,
Or myself who drives
Up and down the street

But for the grey squirrel
Who will never live again

J. M.



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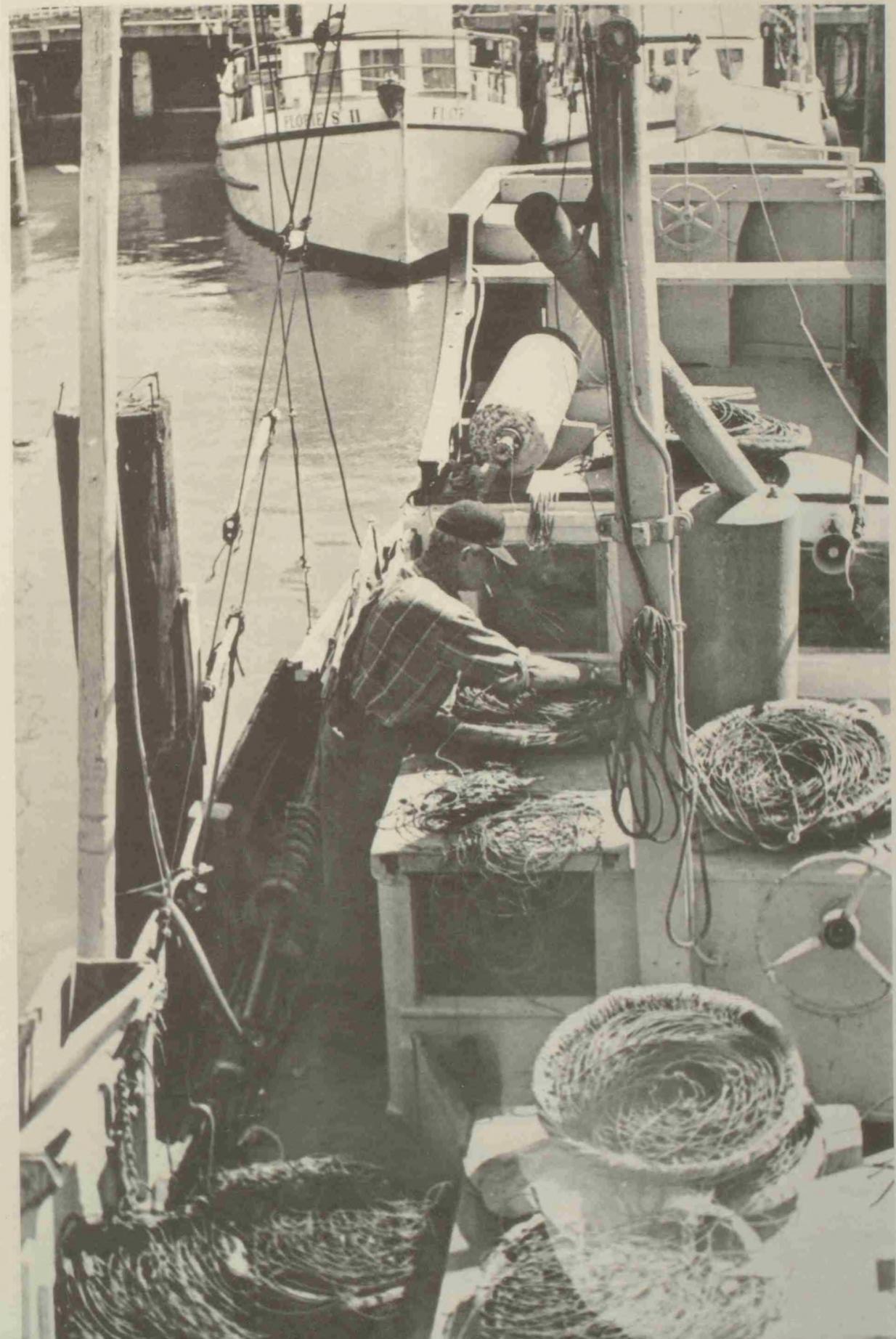
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TECHNOLOGY

Speeding desperately through the streets,
The silver car melted in the air's friction,
Slipping along,
Then only a silver line,
With writhing fingers,
And a heart, squirming,
Gushing silver blood.

Mary Lee Monger



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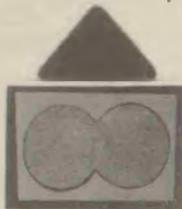
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Eva Baldwin

the rain whispers
all around
filling all the cracks of loneliness
with sound.

Steven Clarke

THE LAST I SAW OF HER . . .

the last i saw of her
she was hiding in the mystery
they call her mind.

no one could touch her there
no one could feel
or see the fires that burned inside.

she was as soft as velvet
and warm at ten when we awoke
but all those times have changed
she smiles, i feel the pain
and all these dreams of yesterday are fading

what can one man say to change a mind
— two days on Yonge street
or an hour in a rainy afternoon
are the same in the long run.

the last i saw of her was yesterday
a postcard from Greece with someone new
and all the while
i realized
she no longer hides in the mystery
they call her mind.

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i've written this
with neil young
in my ears and the sound
like a soft glow

in a haze
in a crazy dream

you came to me
like a silly little girl
dressed in blue
half expecting
a winterland story
of a love long ago

the dream
seemed like times we'd never know

when rolling in the snow
and hot chocolate
would be for presidents

and guns only for show

you came to me
in a misty memory
with neil young
on low

winter is such a long time to go

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Crushed men pinch flat on the floor,
Flattened in the night,
The litter men peel them from the carpet,
Hanging them up to dry,
They're cured and smoked
And fattened in the dense air,
Filling out thin faces,
Stuffing them for showcases;
Wealthy auction droves bid up the ugly ones,
Hoping for a new conversation piece,
"Oh, yes, I picked up such a putrid specimen,
He does smell if I don't spray him every day,
I do wonder where they find the dreadful creatures,
I'd certainly hate to meet one in a dark alley,
I just wouldn't know what to do,
I hear they're so ornery and untamed;
I'm certainly glad someone thought of a use for them."
The party women had rarely seen drones before,
They used to actually live with them.

Leah Bradshaw

SATURDAY NIGHT.

Girls lined up like forced flowers
to attract some misled bee
to lend music
to computer words for
everyone to see.

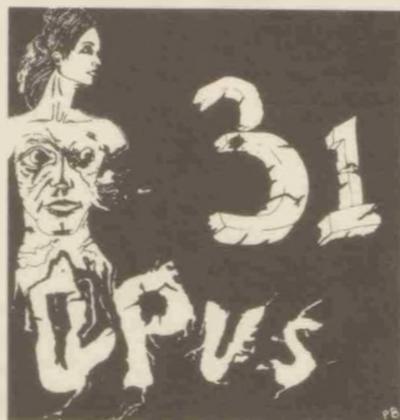
and boys making bubbly love
to quart on quart of sour beer
cutting sounds from Saturday lips;
easy to answer,
easier to hear.

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MY LADY

The pale boy alone
Dances up, one foot down
The other raised
Dances up to you
With a net of hot stars
With a smile
Dances round you
Dances away...
The moon wrapped in the branches
Of a dying tree

Deborah Louison

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OLD WOMAN

A third generation
soars from your knee
to bigger things

each
a little bit of you

observe through the eyes of a child

sit back
relax
listen through little ears
(for you have been deafened by too many wars)

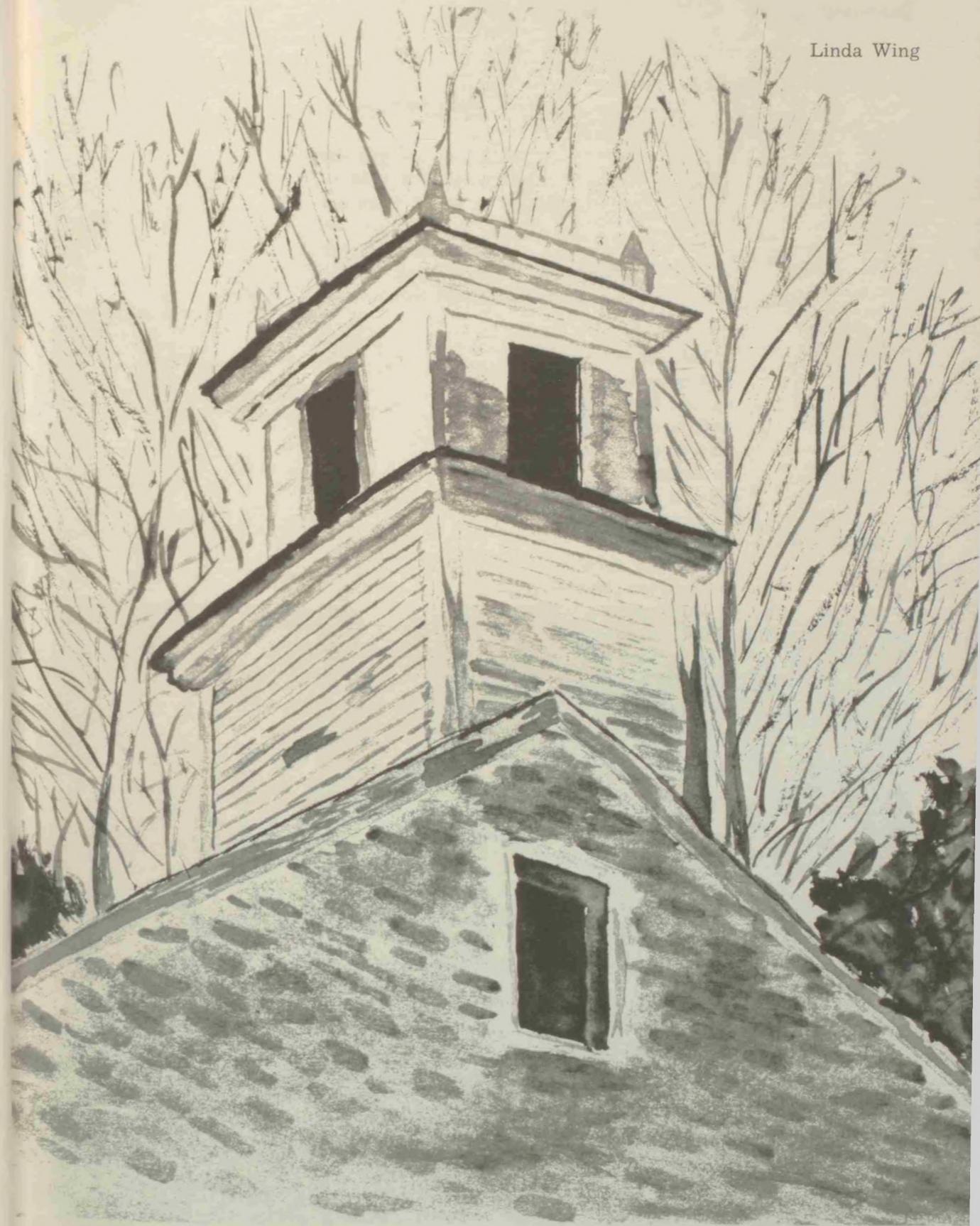
stick to your conservative vote
for the world is too deep to fathom
(and you have been blinded by too many wars)

Today
you can have tea in the garden
just pray that it doesn't rain

VISITE D'UNE VOISINE

Tu sais, Manon, quand tu m'as dit,
Arrêtée là, devant chez moi,
La journée de cette grosse pluie,
"Ecoute!
le merle chante toujours ainsi
avant la pluie; avant la pluie."

Mais Ô, Manon, qu'il faisait beau
Le jour où l'on t'a enterree,
Et le merle chantait sur ton tombeau
Et ses notes tombaient sur l'air chaud
Comme de la rosée, Manon;
Comme de la rosée.



I feel like the world
has been lost
since I last dreamed
wandering, like a child
in a crowd with no hand
to hang on to
or any familiar face
to smile at
that it was lost
for a long time
enough for panic to come
I sought it in my dreams
but I was only cold
not in the hot of reality
and when I knew
and I found the way
it was grown with weeds
and the stones had moss
but the world and I were no longer lost.

AUTUMN LINES

the dry red leaf falls
 easy as a dying boy
the earth rocks on impact
*
the gardener turns
 his cheek chilled to the clouds
he rests his rake and yawns

Georgia Clarke



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Scowling traders mused unwittingly,
Cursing and ambling together,
Blind to the stares of the passing crowd,
Singing in the cold night.

Warming their innards with biting whiskey,
They slugged and spat and pounded their feet,
Crystal breaths almost freezing solid,
Falling, tinkling to the ground.

Magic signs and words hit out at the town,
Tough arms hard inside fur,
The men waited for the buyer,
Walking slowly in his cheap suit.

He approached them, flashing a practised smile,
Timidly held out his hand,
Expecting a bear trap to lurch onto his wrist,
And wanting to return to his office.

The thick furs were piled proudly,
The finest pelts resting majestically,
Frozen into stiffened mats,
They clung to each other,

Cringing with their last touch of the wild,
The men, laughing and pouring down liquor,
Dealing happens, with the usual deep grumbles,
And the thin man pats a fur with small hands.

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SNOW GEESE

A string of white beads
slowly unfolds
undulates, crying,
curls upon itself again
spirals
spreads once more
against a cold, blue sky.
The strong flight begins
towards more favourable
nesting grounds.

Other cries:
strange goose-like calls.
Shots:
fluttering feather bundles
fall,
flop on the ground,
gauche,
ugly now near death.
And then
the neck is wrung.

FOR KAHLIL GIBRAN

and a little boy said, Speak to us
of equality
brother
and Almustafa did

he spoke from his heart
and he spoke from his grave
he knew all the right things
and said them all in just the right
way

the crowd was impressed
someone said, This guy is good
photographers took photographs
others sat and swooned

they swooned like fans at a Russ
Meyer movie
or at a Super Bowl
on fourth and one
they swooned like people who
don't know no better
or like people
just havin fun

then they went home
to the ghetto
and their crying children

your drawings are good
Kahlil
good for 1923
and your philosophy is sound
Kahlil
if you're into sound philosophy

you're wise and strong
and i like your mustache
but you've said nothing new
although you have said it with
class.

SUNDAY SERVICES

It is movie time
in Easter city
Christians rise higher
than ever
to mass
together and kneel,
Worship like men of old
to war and

clever imagery.
Priest and Padre,
Mothers and Sons
flower smiling
incense at the
opportunity.

A clever remark from
Sunday cynic No. 1
brings a naughty boy nod
from embarrassed
Mary Motherhood.



WESTMOUNT SQUARE

1.
for an innocent bystander
watching your fall
the seconds
must have elapsed quickly

just a vague shape

an old tarpaulin
freed by the wind to see
more of downtown montreal

2.
a crowd gathered

a policeman arrived
and did his best
in french and english
to maintain control

the lights changed
and a single motorist
lost sight of the spectacle
in her rear-view mirror

3.
the scene
reminded me of a friend
who had tried suicide
16 aspirins
plastic bag and wilkinson sword
all being half-ass attempts
a failure at both life and death
this fellow
was strictly little league

your death was special

a bit of barnum and bailey
well worth that moment of hesitation

strangers would become friends
recounting your fall
and friends would turn into lovers
publishing your past
and the masks you had worn

4.
the city employees
in their green suits
complained bitterly about jean drapeau
today's youth and job security
while
hosing down the sidewalk
before westmount square

their performance
was bold
lusty and revealing
but lost in the aftermath
of the setting sun

TO SUMMERS PAST

. . . summer came
with all the grace
of a woman in love.

she sat
short stretches
in the crook of my mind
and i found i knew her.

she was the rain
and the beaten down warmth
of a lazy afternoon.
she was the wind
soft in my ear
and rearranging my hair
with a whisper of her fingers.

she was warm days by the river
and hard days at work
away from work
and she filled the night.

stars and things were left to her
so in oils she dabbled
early
and late.

then suddenly she was gone.
days at a time
— no lazy stretching
no afternoons to wrap around.

she came back.
to leave a trace of gold
and red where she became the autumn.

. . . summer came
with all the grace
of a woman in love . . .

HAIKU

In this empty web
Left by a will to be free
A pair of small wings.

Gil Ross



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old woman sit and chat
 then scat
 and let the children play —
 move over dirty lover
 and send the dead
 another day
 woe to that which one
 can't forget

— and tries.
 time, the silent space
 between our eyes
 cries for the endless
 spiritless sky

ask but never answer
 why —

'cos that old lady
 she'll be back again
 and her dirty love
 will have marked her
 face again
 with age.

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GRANDMOTHER: on your 90th birthday

You have stood in many crowds
watching many parades
You have laughed aloud at Bozo the clown

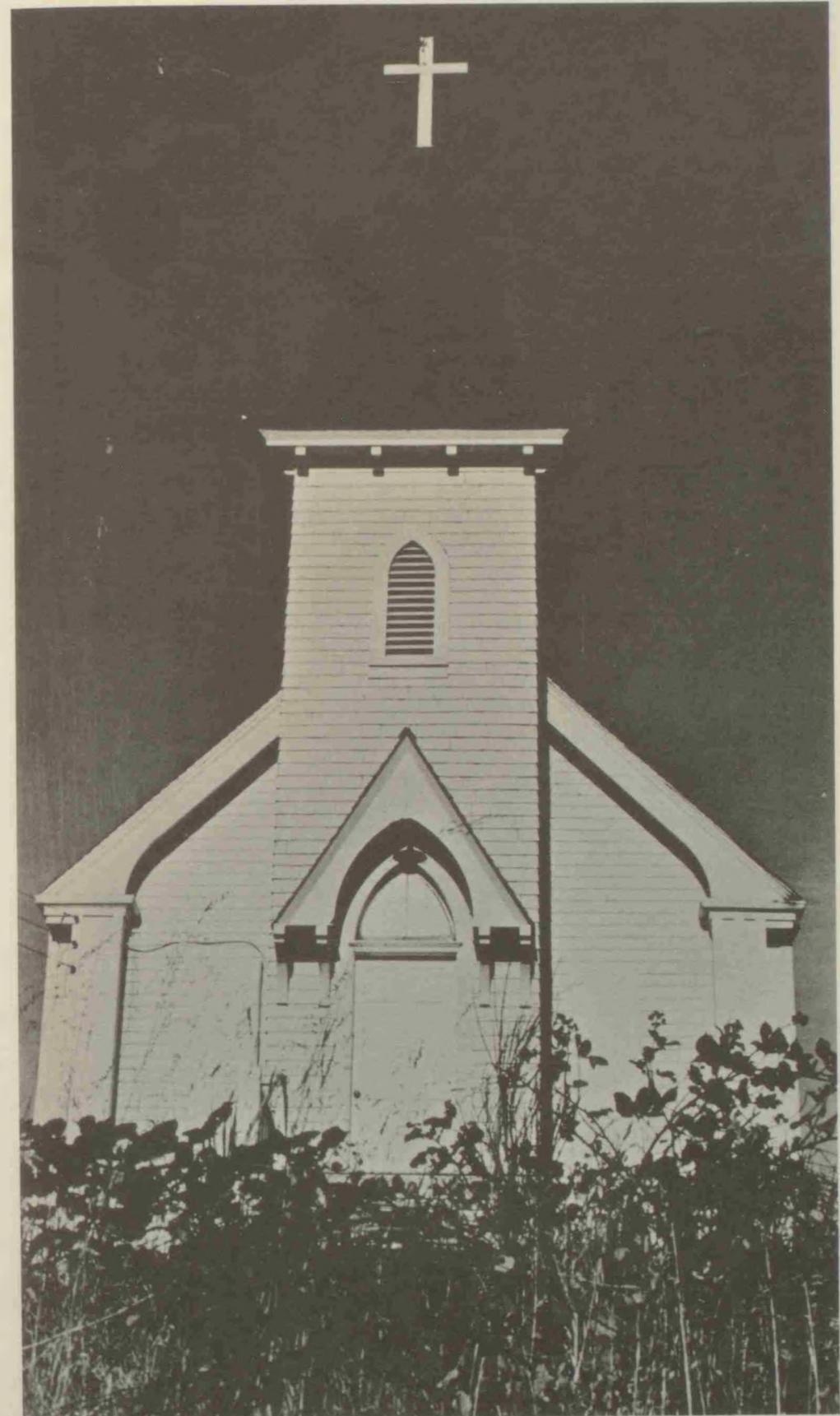
Different faces mill past
as if in a dream
Most of them have come, but none have gone

You have made so many wishes
smiled so many tears
jumped rope from country roads up to the moon

you have blown out many candles
on so many birthday cakes
that one breath could never blow them all out now.

COUNTRY CHURCH.

A building stands in a small time.
Blanched like fresh-picked vegetables
from an earthy wholesome ground;
indeed, a brave strike against
the impure weeds that grow
no matter how unwelcome
to choke a careful sound.
It tries to look tall
among those weeds
but flounders in a joke
like some obscure monolith
to a god, unsearched, unfound.



MY GRANDFATHER

Six years ago when he died
(Stubbornly, just as spring
Was about to stretch)
I hardly more than noticed
The sea-fogged graveyard
Near the last tooth of rock
Where we had to walk through alders,
Thistles, and brown raspberry bushes
To see him returned

Nor did I feel conscience pangs
Or religious zeal
About his unchurched soul:
That had been earlier
When I was fifteen, he was alive,
And the whole issue was
Like a scene from *Winesburg, Ohio*
Only, I cannot decide now
Who was the *grotesque*:
I said come to church, he said no
Kindly

Today I thank him for his tolerance
And I understand
My father's silence better

The dead man down there
Told me stories about the sea
But I have forgotten



Mary
Lee
Monger

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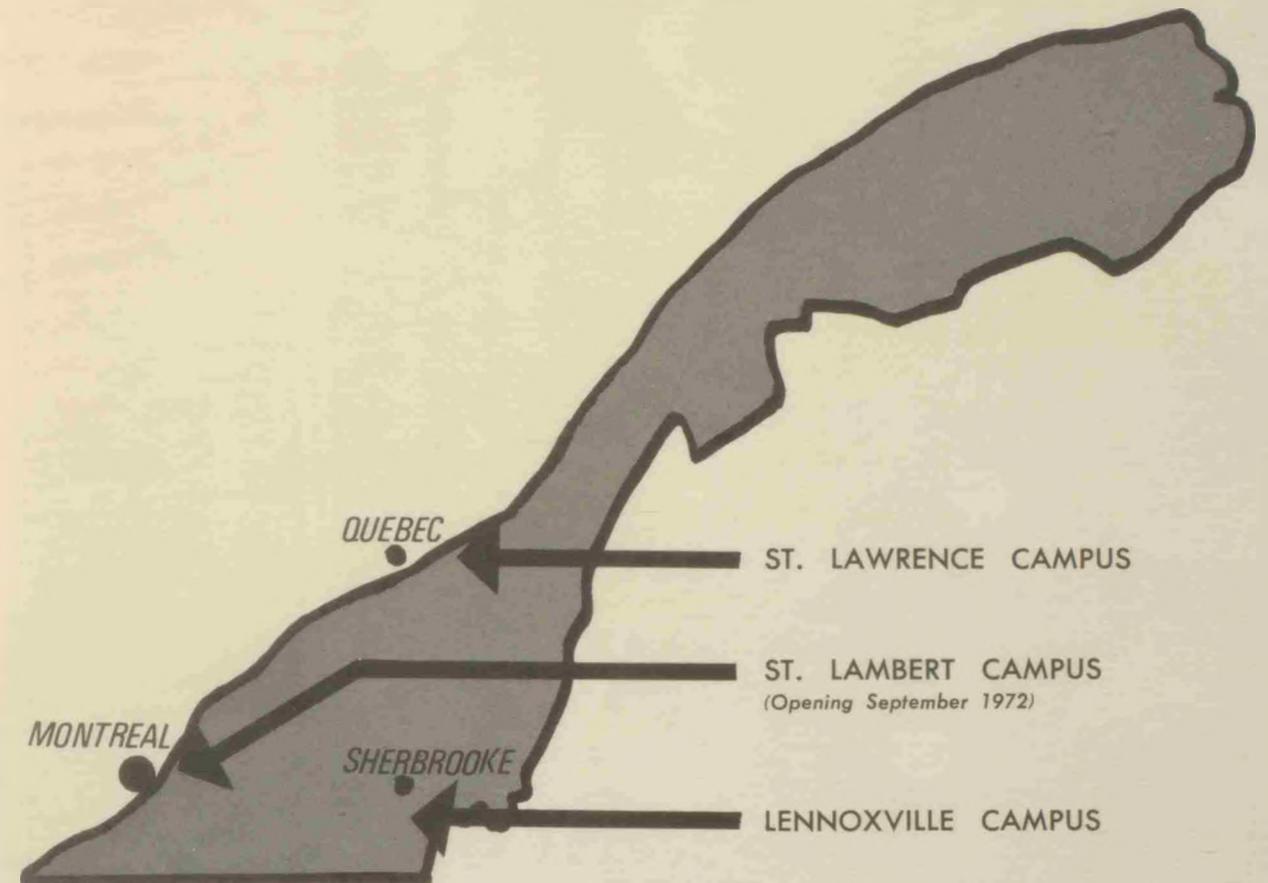
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