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UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

# FOLIO

VOLUME 8

NUMBER 1

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Published by authorization of the University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario. Folio is printed by the Middlesex Printing Company, 425 Adelaide Street, London, Ontario. The articles in this magazine express the opinions of the writers only. All rights to articles appearing in this magazine are reserved

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*'Tis to create, and in creating live  
A being more intense that we endow  
With form our fancy . . . .*

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE  
CANTO III

# LIKE DUST ON THE RIVER

One-Horse Tragedy in Five Acts

Alastair Macdonald

## I

**M**R. FORBES was satisfied to crucify himself on the lower beams of paradise. He was leaning on the cosmetics counter of his drug store, a fixed smile holding his false teeth steady. Mrs. Towers had just dropped in to pick up her prescription for bleeding gums. He shook his head slightly and took off his rimless glasses to polish them. He certainly did admire Mrs. Towers. She was quite a lady. Her way was the straight and narrow and her steps were firm. Forbes was no dreamer but almost any time he could create in his mind the same picture or vision. It was almost a vision it was so bright. Mrs. Towers would be there in her well laundered Meeting dress, walking, stiff and military, up a broad ray of light into a sun-burst (that held the heavenly host and choir) to take her place among the hierarchy. Oh, she was a deserving woman, Mrs. Towers. She was generous too—in her vigilant watch over the ways of others who were less schooled than she in the demands of the righteous life. Her quick, black stare could set quite pious people to worrying about where they had strayed. They usually found something too. Forbes knew that he didn't have Mrs. Towers capability for such a mission in life. With no trouble at all he could think of five or ten times in the last year when his thoughts had wandered far from any semblance of rigid self-control. The powers of darkness are close at hand, as Mrs. Towers often said herself. It filled him with nervous humility.

The new drug store on Hill Road made business slow. Dick ran Forbes' little drug store by himself on Thursdays from three to six. It was no strain. Forbes had to get away for the Thursday Meeting. He never looked forward to going, but he went. He never thought of not going.

"I'll be back at six, Dick," he said and went to get his coat. It was still cold even if some of the young people were going in sweaters.

"Bye," he said.

He glanced around as he walked out of the store and then, after a few steps, stopped and looked down to the small park again. Josi and Bill were sitting together on one of the cement benches beside the small sludgy lake at the bottom of Mainstreet. A frown flickered under the bridge of his spectacles. Sometimes he was a bit worried about Dick's friendship with Bill. Dick was a good boy. He wouldn't like to have to ask him to go. Forbes started walking. He wished he hadn't seen Josi and Bill sitting together beside the lake. At the last Meeting he had felt a thin drift of danger in the wind.

He walked hurriedly, almost trotting, although he wasn't late. Two blocks down Hill Road he turned into a side street. The houses began to look crabbed and somehow sullen in contrast to the tiny glimmer of green that the trees were

putting out. He turned up a walk. The flagstones leading to the grey painted steps were tilted and damp. Mrs. Weaver opened the door before he could pull the bell.

“Well well, Mr. Forbes. Coming to our little party?”

Her decayed joviality made him droop. The Meetings always sucked away his vitality, leaving him clammy and apprehensive. Had he missed a Meeting in five years? Would they never accept him in their group? The hint of distance in her greeting made the old questions stir in his mind, disturbing him before he even got into the house.

The Meetings had been started long before Forbes came to the town. They were to have fostered the appreciation of poetry among the families of West Simsby, but now the favourites, whoever they had been, lay, one and all, fusting away under the chipped grace of china figures or the cramped deformity of antique clocks. The stony zeal of the Members had been too hot for the green vine of culture. They had not been saddened when it withered. Condemnation of a vaguely defined group, the “new crowd”, was a wider and more accommodating mode of release for their pinched energies, so it was clutched greedily into their common embrace. They talked in low, quivering voices of the debauched orgies that took place on ‘the hill’, and called the new residential district a hotbed of lust, knowing that they could use the words without guilt. The words gave them pleasure.

Forbes was just taking off his coat when the Reverend Bobbin walked in without knocking. He planted himself like a water-bloated Napoleon while Mrs. Weaver slipped the heavy coat off his narrow shoulders.

“Eh, well Mr. Forbes, you left in a great hurry on Sunday?”

Bobbin had the habit of looking down at his shoes, sucking in breath, and expelling it in a quick accusation. He knew how effective this was on Forbes.

“We’ve an arrangement with the new drug store, Mr. Bobbin. They’re open on Sunday morning till 11.30, and then I have to—”

“Yes, Ah—ha ha. I know. Business,” he cut Forbes off, tilted forward and shuffled quickly into the living room to face the ladies. He was a dropsical little man. Set above the strangled colour of his cheeks and pursed mouth, his eyelids, heavy and moist, quite outdid the eyes.

“Eh, well Mrs. Weaver,” he said with a quick crook of the head and a yellow smile, “so good of you. Eh, I’m sure you have arranged for a pleasant gathering.”

“Oh yes, I do hope so, Reverend,” she said, pausing to giggle in the middle.

Bobbin walked to the coffee table and put a small cookie on his tongue to show the ladies that they might proceed. During his entrance they had fallen into respectful silence. All of them, except Mrs. Towers, whom he resented for just this reason, feared him unwholesomely. Mr. Burk, one of the new crowd, loathed Bobbin and took great pleasure in describing just how Bobbin's smirking vindictiveness exuded some foul bile or acid into his system, keeping his body soft and white like putty with rancid oil in it. More probably a dreary, unnatural childhood and his unfortunate physical heritage had soured his outlook on life and compressed his soul to its cunning bitterness. Undoubtedly the completeness of his failure at other parishes had enhanced those characteristics of warped restraint that were regarded in him so highly by the ladies of West Simmsby.

Mr. Forbes, who had been listening in the hall, heard the nervous clatter well up again and, hoping that it was a good psychological moment, sidled unobtrusively into the room. Mrs. Towers, having had her eye on him the whole time, nailed him to the door with a hard look, then glanced away, dismissing him. He dropped his lower lip in a fleeting smile. Several of the ladies nodded at him and he repeated the grimace, fingering his ear lobe. Old Mrs. Bright, whose goiter bulged, ghastly, at the base of her neck, signalled him over. Her ancient, mossy hand shook with anticipation at the opportunity of getting off some piece of stale gossip that the ladies were too busy to hear.

She quavered on and on. Forbes did his best to hear what Miss Kern was saying. She was a stringy creature with a big pale nose and wispy hair who considered herself, in some few private ways at least, more deserving than the other ladies. She nodded, opening her eyes wide and compressing her lips—outraged. Apparently it was vintage gossip because three ladies were leaning forward, teacups in hand, listening in silence. Forbes turned his ear to catch the drift, allowing his eyes to examine a stain on the ceiling.

“Straight to Carson's Wood,” she repeated, a tinge of hysteria adding resonance to her voice.

“Well!”

“Carson's Wood.”

“And not the first time mind you. It was skiing this winter,” Miss Kern said, gathering two more pairs of eyes. “With that Josi Burk!” she concluded quickly, sensing that she couldn't hold the tension any longer.

“That's a one. That Josi Burk,” Mrs. Levin mumbled, rattling her cup.

“I saw them,” Mrs. Dolan shrilled, arriving with a plate of sandwiches as an excuse. “On the bus to the City. And they ate at that restaurant across from the Bus Station. That Murrays—under the hotel.

Miss Kern's lip began to tremble when she heard this morsel and several of the ladies simultaneously burst into full cry.

Mr. Forbes felt a coldness at the back of his throat. He didn't know if he should tell about seeing Josi and Bill together. It might not be important. But if one of the Members had seen him looking at the young couple? Might they think him disloyal in not telling of it? Or if he did tell—would he be intruding himself? Their aloofness made him insecure and hesitant. And really, just what had Josi and Bill done? He felt rapids ahead but he couldn't make up his mind where to dip his paddle. On which side?

The scandal was buzzing like a hive of bees getting ready to line out. Forbes was facing a minor crisis. Just that day he had half accepted a party invitation from Joe Jennings, one of the new crowd. Did the parties smack of Sodom and Gomorrah as Bobbin said? Forbes didn't know. He wished he hadn't even thought of going. He carefully fixed his attention on the stain that peered down from the ceiling like a flat, brown spider.

The hubub had quieted down and the inquisition was moving forward, inevitably, each step calculated and appreciated. All the ladies—except Mrs. Towers—were either leaning or moving toward the vortex of this vitalizing gossip.

“But Josi's such a quiet girl,” Mrs. Aubry said. “She never makes as much noise as the others girls after school down to Sandy's Grill.”

Miss Kern saw that Bobbin was going to take the remark as a hint of insurrection. She decided to gain Mrs. Aubry's friendship.

“Quiet waters run deep,” she said, covering the woman's remark.

Mrs. Aubry, realizing her blunder, dissolved.

“We ah have a grave responsibility to the ah younger set of this community,” Bobbin said, tightening around the subject like winter ice. “We must make sure that they are not exposed to any ah sordid examples of behaviour.”

“I think you have stated our case clearly, Reverend,” Miss Kern said. “Don't you think so Mrs. Towers?”

“I'm sure I've known the pains of motherhood, Miss Kern—and the pleasures,” Mrs. Towers spat back, levelling all her dark intensity against the one woman. “But I'll see my Bill brought up right even if I am a widow. I'll see to my Bill, Miss Kern. And those that haven't had any life of their own don't need to come scratching around mine.”

“Now Mrs. Towers,—I'm sure you don't mean that,” Bobbin said, gloating. The long planned for situation had arrived. “I'm sure you don't mean that.”

“Why I was never so—,” Miss Kern said, just recovering from Mrs. Towers' below the belt counter-attack.

“Now ladies—ladies! Please.”

The pale eyelids, after a long pause, revolved away from Mrs. Towers, who was gathering herself like a snake on a ledge, and came to rest on the long nose and quivering lip of Miss Kern. His own lips parted in a yellow, commiserating smile.

“Yes, we must see about Josi and ah Bill. We must do so with all ah alacrity.” The quick breath and question—“Don’t you think so, Mr. Forbes?”

“Oh yes, Mr. Bobbin. I do. Yes indeed.” He was unable to look at Mrs. Towers.

## II

The sun was still gentle, rousing the earth with the careful insistence of a new lover. Only a tiny glow of first colour tingled in awakened life toward the spring warmth.

Bill lay, propped on one arm, watching Josi as she stroked the sharp point of a minute tongue of green that was curling up from a dried cow-flap. He knew she was teasing him with the peculiar, childish action.

“You’ll kill it,” he said, rolling over to watch.

“No I won’t. Probably make it grow faster.”

“Why don’t you stick your finger right into that damn thing?”

“Oh—! It’s dried up anyway.” She slid over and curled up beside him. “The grass is dry.”

They looked over the little valley. Below them, cup-shaped willows hung their long veins down to the moist ground. Up to their left the valley was darkened by small cedars growing on the rich earth where the hills rolled together. The road, curving around the stony hill across from them, was deserted.

“You’ll have to be cutting your front lawn soon,” she said, lying back.

“Yeah.” He looked at her breasts.

“Then it’ll look bristly like your hair cut.”

He poked a piece of grass through his front teeth, pretending to ignore her.

The wind was soft over the hills. He looked around at her. Bill wasn’t able to ignore her for very long. She was giving him the sleepy smile. The

winter-tan on her cheeks would soon golden, and a streak of hair, over her temple where she parted it, would turn as bright as a teal's feather. It was heavy and soft, curling beside her neck. He decided against touching it.

“Josi.”

“Yes, Bill?”

“Your hair's like seaweed.” He gave a snort of pretended triumph and looked away with a show of having closed the whole matter of hair to his satisfaction.

With a flowing movement she leaned forward, kissed him lightly and, before he could catch her, started down the hill with an exaggerated swing of her hips. He trotted down to catch up with her.

“I've got to get home, Bill. Dad's on a new painting so I'll have to spend half an hour dragging him away to dinner.”

“Come out after supper? It'll be a warm night.”

“Sure, Bill. Exams are coming you know.”

“Exams!”

“Matrics,”

“Hell. — Josi?”

“Mmm?”

“I can stop in at Forbeses' drug sstore on the way back.—Old Forbes won't be there and —”

“Oh.”

Her eyes were long and grey, shy with heavy lashes.

### III

After taking his shuddering departure from the Meeting, Forbes had blindly followed the jerky rhythm of his pace. He was dazed—like a bat in a bell at noon. Gradually, perhaps because a tincture of spring filtered into his being, dissolving the tight fist of apprehension in the stomach, he became aware of his surroundings and slowed himself down to a more manageable gait. He was surprised, finding that he had come right through the new residential district and up to the top of the bare hill that overlooked Carson's Wood. As his

eyes moved down the little valley from the dark knot of wiry cedars toward the willows, it struck him that perhaps spring was really coming. He was panting slightly, unusually elated, when his eyes picked out Josi and Bill coming down the sloping field across the valley. His breath held at the top. He saw the girl's full skirt. He watched them look into each others' faces. And the hill, green.

Motionless, the wind flicking his black coat, he stood high on the hill and watched them. His mind was quiescent, neutral; no thought or feeling rippled the cool suspension of his being. Then, like a bait-fisherman who has seen the flash of a minnow and stealthily reached into a dark pool, he dipped into the depths of his awareness for the glimmer of a thought. As it rose into his consciousness he relaxed, puzzled at the tense expectancy with which he had awaited it.

He was glad to see them together, Josi and Bill. He was glad.

Realizing that he had been watching them for some time, he turned, feeling slightly embarrassed, and started toward town. Passing through the new part of town he waved to some of his customers. A few of their purchases were really — well —. But then progress must bring change. Progress. Youth will be served. For many of them, just starting out as they were, one more mouth to feed would undoubtedly be a considerable strain—and a drag. He nodded in affirmation at his thought.

After talking to Dick and bustling around the store for about ten minutes, he settled down in the dark little booth at the back to mix some prescriptions. Under the desk lamp, his hands worked busily. He glanced into the shop from time to time. He must phone up Jennings, he thought, and accept the invitation for sure. Apologise for his evasiveness before too. He wondered what the party would be like — wild?

The clank of the door interrupted his line of thought, and looking up he saw Bill come in and walk over to the counter to ask for something. He had the money in his hand. Dick paused, then nodded and moved a few steps to open a drawer. When he came back Bill said something to him and glanced down the dim store toward the little booth. Dick glanced up, shook his head and slid the purchase across the counter. Bill took it and put it in his pocket.

Mr. Forbes quickly looked down at his hands. They had stopped moving under the lamp. Everything else was in shadow. His left hand, thin and untanned, was curled loosely around the mortar. Shaking slightly, his other hand was poised over the mortar. He watched dully as the pestle slipped from his fingers with a little click into the dry powder. He spat into it.

He was still slumped over, his glasses askew, when the town hall rang six. He was still looking at what he had done. He scarcely raised his head to nod when Dick left the store.

#### IV

Bill walked in the front door. He was surprised to hear his mother preparing supper. Looking into the kitchen, he saw her moving and stirring things with her usual precision. She was wearing her old, black Meeting dress and looking grimmer than usual. He wondered why she was wearing the dress. She almost always changed into something else before working.

“Home already, Mom?”

“The Meeting was over early. We’ll eat now.”

“Oh — swell.”

During supper she was silent. He guessed at part of what was troubling her so he ate steadily, not wanting to start anything. It might lead into a small dose of righteousness, and that to a wrangle. He would be too impatient to listen. He was too keenly aware of other sounds. The Spring.

He finished his coffee quickly. She didn’t speak when he left the table, but when he reached the top of the stairs he heard her say his name. One harsh syllable.

“Bill.”

She had come into the hall.

“Yes Mom?”

“You’re not going out with that Burk girl.”

Her eyes bored up the dim stairway at him.

“Yes, that’s right, Mom. Josi Burk.” After a slight pause he walked into his room.

Mrs. Towers stood looking up the empty stairs. Her hair, only slightly greying, was knotted tightly in a bun. Her hands hung at her side, boney, time-stiffed and unkept. They might work for what they loved, but they were not hands that could touch in love. She was a bleak woman whose aspect made one think of something cold and hard, a moulded blackness beneath her pale skin, showing through only where the wrinkles folded against it wetly like creased tissue paper on a sweating window pane where the night is outside.

She was in the kitchen again when he came downstairs. Without hesitating, he went out the front door, slamming it behind him and immediately wishing he hadn’t. He felt that he was being cruel to his mother but he was afraid

of smothering. Since childhood he had known Dick—quiet, unhappy and restrained. He had seen it happen, but where and when he could only guess. The old part of town. It always depressed him. So he hunched his shoulders and started to whistle.

The mood lingered like the shadow of a cloak as he walked into the new residential district. He saw Josi move away from the window of her father's house and a moment later come out the front door. She came across the lawn, her skirt swinging as if it enjoyed the way she walked.

“Hi, Bill. You're early.”

“How's Dad?”

Oh, you know — the new magnum opus.”

She took his hand.

“What's the matter, Bill?”

“Oh Mom's worked up about something.”

“About me?”

“I guess.”

They walked for a while without speaking. The sidewalk stopped at a culvert and they moved onto the road, listening to the last of winter dribbling away underneath. He took his hand away to light a cigarette.

“Want one?”

“No thanks. It's a lovely night isn't it?”

“Yeah.” He looked around. “Yes, it really is.”

“Mmm. Stars'll be brighter after a while. It's only beginning now.” She leaned against him. “I could walk for miles and miles.”

“That far?”

“Further. Oh, miles.”

He looked sideways at her, close in the thickening dusk. Her profile and the line of her eyebrows. Lips and nose. Delicate. He wondered, his thoughts slowly tumbling, confused like dream-leaves, if her senses were more acute than other people's. She seemed so vulnerable and aware. Perhaps it was this that made people think her wild. Sometimes he could sense her feelings, and

their changes. They were so swift. Unpredictable. He caught the phrase—delightfully unpredictable—it was gone. And her fear, hidden, unreasoning, like a fawn in its nest, far in the forest, listening to stealthy sounds that only it can hear. He put his arm around her, feeling the motion of her hip under his hand. Her hair was heavy and soft against her neck. He could smell it when he bent close to her—sweet and warm. And all the confused thoughts were gone. He only knew, deep and cool, how much he wanted her, to make love, and to be with her.

“Pretty soon we’ll be hearing the frogs.”

Her smile was quick in the dark. “Another season—Bill, what are we going to do?”

“What d’you mean?” He sensed her fear again.

“I’m afraid of them. Bill, can they do something to harm us?”

“No. Of course not.”

“They’re so spiteful. They hate us being together at all. And Mr. Bobbin—he makes me crawl inside. When any of them looks at me, I feel as if I’ve lost something—”

“I know, Josi, I know! There’s something awful—as if their life’s been stolen. Maybe a long time ago people had to steal everything that’s deep in life from each other—just to go on living. And since then, from parent to child, always stealing, parent from child. It’s gone, all outside, so they hate it and try to burst it because that’s all they’ve got left to do, to believe in. Because there’s nothing left inside—like shells.

“Bill! Stop! You’re frightening me.”

He was startled to find himself hunched over and whispering the words.

“Aah! They can’t hurt us Josi. We’re young, for Christ’s sake. They’re old and jealous and they’ve got to stick together or they’ll all collapse.”

“Thanks.”

“I was down in the City, Wednesday. Went to the Lands and Forests Department. I was going to tell you. I know a guy there. He’s pretty high up and he says he can get me a job. We’d be up North for a while. After that—maybe anywhere in Canada. There’s lots of opportunity for advancement. I thought you’d like it, Josi.”

“Oh Bill I’d love it. It’s just—Oh.”

She put her arms around his neck, pressing herself up against him. He

could feel her relief and pleasure, and the elusive wildness stirring in her.

“Where’ll we go, Bill?”

“When? Now? It’s dark.”

“It was your idea, Bill.”

“It’ll be dry up at the cedars, and the moon’ll be out soon.”

He could feel her gaze on him in the dark, and then her warmth as she pressed against him again. A wispy cloud uncovered the crescent moon and the tops of all the hills, rolling toward its light, were silvered.

“Bill—let’s walk slowly now.”

Her voice came to him, low and glowing, part of his breathless sense of spring.

## V

It was late when Mr. Forbes put out his desk lamp. His face felt dried up and stiff. He passed his hand over it, baring his teeth in a tired grimace. The store was dimly lit and empty. He got to his feet with slow effort and collecting his coat, scarf and toe rubbers, walked out into the deserted street. Warm, end of the dance music was ebbing down from the hill. He heard, but the soft tones didn’t penetrate to his consciousness. The spring night didn’t touch him. He left the new part of town, thinking only how easy it had now become to do something like refusing Jennings’s invitation—and he would most certainly refuse it. He walked into the old section of town and, walking, felt confidence tightening across his chest. A figure was moving ahead of him down the gloomy sphere of the street. The footsteps fell with an uncompromising snip-snap. He noticed, with a thin admiration, that he had to lengthen his stride considerably to overtake the bony form that moved into the night with such purpose.

“Good evening, Miss Kern.” He was in all ways equal.

“Oh. Mr. Forbes. Taking your constitutional?”

“No Miss Kern, my—ah mission is rather more serious.”

He let her feel his authority.

“Are you—is it to do with—”

“Yes,” he said. “I feel that a strong hand is necessary in this ah distressing situation. The matter must be attended to with alacrity. We must thing for those who have not yet learned the right ways, Miss Kern. And we

must act with foresight and determination. One of our group has shown herself ah—incapable of her duty. We have no choice but to see that the decent, the right thing is done. Don't you think so, Miss Kern?"

His words spilled out easily, rounded and rubbed smooth like lakeshore pebbles. He had arrived. He was a Member.

"Don't you, Miss Kern?" he repeated.

She was not so surprised as to be unaware of a new influence.

"Yes, Mr. Forbes. I do. One must admire your stand and I must say you have my heartfelt support. I was just going to see the Reverend Bobbin myself."

He didn't hear the dry tissues of her chest cavity.

"Ah! I see we have the same destination. May I have the pleasure of accompanying you, Miss Kern?"

He spoke in the idiom of those who present a formidable front to triviality, and who stoop, digging and pinching at what is sweet and gone. He thought of the young miscreants and of the plan for their correction that would evolve from this Meeting with Bobbin. And he now knew that he could face this sneak preview of Armageddon without fear of being a coward. Unless—but he held back the sudden swoop of pressure that the half-glimmer of a thought had almost admitted. He pushed it back, knowing that he must take care of his security, and watch himself—and others.

The sickle moon was sliding to its zenith in the moist warmth of the night. Spring, a touch of green, soft in the trees, yellow blades of grass beside damp kitchen steps, was already in the old part of town.

---

## *Nocturne*

MARTHA ALLEN

Listen,  
There are crickets singing  
Against the hot night.

Hear them,  
And walk in the dark  
Over flagstones that glisten like coin,  
Between rows of pale, smouldering flowers  
Till you come to a silent shore.

# *The Little Friendly Things*

STEPHEN S. KOLADICH

I like the rambling rows  
Of maples and elms and lazy shadows  
On glowing streets:  
All heavy and still,  
Quiet and  
Still  
In the heat of a mid-summer noon;  
And the sleepy, dusty court-house  
Square  
With splashing fountain, copper-green,  
And pigeons  
Bobbing for a drink  
While lonely, wandering, hungry  
Dogs  
Beg silently for smiles;  
Yellow dandelions on bright green lawns and  
The whir  
Of a lawnmower bringing the fresh,  
Clean smell of new-cut grass;  
Ivy  
On old bricks and the rough feel of  
Oak bark;  
Weeping willows  
And water-melons and  
Crepe-papery dances  
And picnics by the river  
In the summer  
Dusk;  
And the library steps  
In the evening  
With fireflies in the wet, cool grass  
And the old school chimes  
Sounding the slow hours through the friendly  
Dark.

## *He is Forlorn*

O. GEORGE HANCOCKS

How do taunts  
dart  
from red-barbed lips  
that often part, sprung on  
the lover's  
kiss?

Dead leaves are not so harshly  
crushed  
beneath the brittle  
heel.

Dry, dry, your eyes are dry,  
dry  
as the dead-leaf dust:  
dry  
as the pounded residue,  
the puff of pavements passed.

## *Embroidered on a Winding Sheet*

ALASTAIR MACDONALD

The dark, long-bellied clouds—  
Consider the cubic quantity of air below their fins  
—Have withered trees for watermoss below.  
Today, oceans of sky!  
Curving, paused, a last crow in the altitude,  
Still with the clouds above.  
Could the buds beat Death to Winter  
*And shall bloom*

In its white cowled arms.

At night the stars are frosty  
In the dark face of its hood.  
And all that still capacity of air,  
Trip-hammer cold's trap,  
Spacious for a time-thief, waits—  
For their chisel, ice.

In all this tall potential, Autumn day!  
If a blue-flower, an earth-star, *did*—?

This is a tiring thing  
And must be some disaster in the air: or snow.

# SINKING SHIP

Mary Draper

**T**wo lines of faded brown houses with a bit of cracked paving wandering between them stretched uncertainly toward the ocean. I smiled to myself when they first came into view—the town still looked as though some child had been playing blocks and hadn't got the rows quite straight. The houses looked not unlike blocks, too—all perfectly square, solid-coloured with a few stray marking on them. More like worn dice perhaps, though less even. The mud-brown colour of the wood, the broken railings, and the shabby cream trim were as I had remembered them. They seemed a little older, a little more patched than they had once been, but it was the same town.

The general store had a new name on it, the town hall had been painted—there were changes, and none of the people that I met as I walked down the hill toward the beach were familiar to me. The post office, that would be the same, and perhaps I would meet someone I knew there. It was like all small-town post offices where people meet more to exchange news with each other than in any real expectation of a letter. There was no crowd when I reached it—it was too late in the day for that—and I did not recognize the women who stood talking on the steps. But, as I turned in disappointment, I caught the sound of a name that I knew . . .

“That awful old man was drunk again last night”

“Jim Gibbs, y'mean?”

“That's the one. He broke the window in Robbin's store this time. Somebody ought to do somethin—he's a disgrace to the town.”

“Yeah, him an' his dirty clothes and the way the kids make fun of him,—it's a tramp that he is.”

“Sleepin' on the beach with that boat—I'm afraid to send my kids down alone when he's there. No tellin' what he might do when he's really been at it.”

“Him an' that boat. He's good for nothin' now. Too old to work and he never even fishes any more. Just spends all his time monkeyin' around the boat—when he isn't drinking.”

“An' those stories he tells, frightens the kids half to death.” The conversation continued but I couldn't stay to catch any more without being conspicuous. I turned toward the beach again.

The shore was deserted except for a few seagulls soaring overhead. I watched idly while one dived low over the water, hovered a moment, and then plunged. It reappeared in an instant with a fish in its mouth. I had watched it often before, and it started me on a chain of memories.

The sand under my bare feet cooled, and I glanced toward the sun. I would wait and see one of those sunsets again. I had first discovered beauty while watching the sun go down among the clouds over the ocean. It was a long time but I wanted to recapture it.

So Jim Gibbs had become the town bum. The old sailor who was 'good for nothin' and drank. The dirty old man who told stories to the kids and frightened them; who wasted his time puttering around an old boat. I wondered if he ever told them . . . if any of their parents remembered.

As I looked across the calm water, where a strip of silver stretched from sky to shore, the sky seemed to darken and I could almost feel the wind come up, as it had that other night . . .

It had been no ordinary storm, not the kind we were all used to, but a strange, restless stirring that had finally grown to a crescendo. A weird day, not violent and not dead calm. It had rained and the sky and sand were both muddy yellow. The sea was choppy with a brisk wind, but not heavy enough to keep the boats in. They had gone out for the nets that night as always. Not until nearly morning had all hell broken loose.

I had learned about fear that night, and helplessness. We had all been wakened by the noise of wind and water, and then one flash of lightning had been pink. "A flare, someone's in trouble!" We were soon on the beach with the rest. The villagers, the fishermen—even they were afraid of a sea like this. It rained a little, but mostly it blew. The wind hardly allowed us to stay on our feet. And we were all helpless.

It was too dark to see the boat, and no one would venture out into that black unknown. Each fisherman fought the fear that was in him, but none moved. A frantic woman cried "Someone's got to go!"

"We'd never get near them tonight."

At the moment I realized the meaning of those words, I discovered fear. And I refused to accept it. "You can't let them die!"

"No, little Laurie, we can't. Not without trying anyway." Big Jim Gibbs turned to the men and said quietly, "I'll go."

They all said he was crazy, but he went. His little boat looked like a matchstick adrift on the tempest. It bobbed, disappeared, and came into view again. The next time it disappeared, we didn't see it come up. It was too far out in the darkness. We could't even watch—only hope.

They said he'd never come in again, that he was a reckless fool. Perhaps he was, but he was a brave one. When they saw it coming toward them, still bobbing in the waves, they wouldn't believe it. And they couldn't face it. One by one they crept away, until only the women were left to look after the

sailors. We made coffee and soup and fed and warmed the sea-drenched men. There were three of them, dark and wet and haggard. They were grateful; so grateful that they wept when they tried to speak to him. And Big Jim gulped down a cup of coffee, pulled his little boat up to safety, and went home.

It had just occurred to me that no one had ever really thanked him, when my thoughts were broken by an approaching sound. I glanced quickly up the beach and saw a slightly-limping figure coming toward me. I knew Big Jim by the walk, although I wouldn't have recognized him otherwise. He had grown old.

“Hello Jim. Do you remember me?” As I spoke, I saw that the tanned face with the sea in its eyes had not really changed.

“Wait a minute now, lemme see . . . Laurie! Sure I do. You're little Laurie—Dave Rodman's girl.”

“Yes. Do you remember that night, Jim?”

“The night we brought him in out of the sea? Yes, I do Miss Laurie. Y'know, my boat has leaked a bit ever since.”

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## *Autumn Madness*

COLLEEN BIRMINGHAM

Orange autumn leaves in whirling rustle,  
Winding around and over nothing,  
Wind-borne, on a strange exodus.  
Occupying space without room,  
Making the most of a windy fate  
By competing on the turns.

Vividly coloured leaves in constant jostle,  
Skidding along ignoring everything.  
Hell-bent in flight without modus,  
Eager to live in the face of doom.  
A freedom they found too late  
To escape the pile that burns.  
Symbolic of my autumn madness.

# THE TALISMAN

E. Fraser Boa

*"Atque in perpetuum, frater,  
Ave atque vale."—Catullus.*

Where's that damn brooch? . . . where are you? . . . ah, still here, you curse . . . not broken . . . I must be hurt bad . . . can't stand up . . . huh, hand's bloody . . . and my hair . . . the windshield . . . wish they'd turn off those flashlights . . . damn curious people . . . why don't they get in their cars and go? . . . haven't they seen accidents before? . . . damn head hurts . . . glad they called the ambulance . . . must be nine o'clock . . . ship'll be sailing . . . "

"Damn brooch, still here . . . he said you wouldn't leave me. I should have let your damn riddle run things. But no, I hand to be the big shot. I thought my adventures would solve you, but they didn't. He said I must give you to someone. Who will I curse? That boy? He'll think you're a pretty sea shell but he'll learn to hate you, just as I have."

"Hey boy!"

"Must be afraid of blood . . . ah, my head . . . Cris . . . wonder where she is? . . . hope I don't see her . . . won't have to tell her she was just another tool . . . my head . . . gonna pass out . . . have to tell someone . . . "

"Son, do you like sea shells? Here, take this one and pin it on your coat. I want you to wear it always, for it is a talisman. See, here's a riddle carved on the inside. Someday, if you find the answer, the shell will break and fall off. Many sailors have worn this old brooch but you see it is still unbroken . . . It's impossible . . . When you grow older if you cannot solve the riddle then pass the brooch on to someone else . . . Yes, it's pretty . . . like a fairytale, eh? . . . Sure, show it to your mother."

"Well that's done . . . damn head . . . where's the ambulance . . . can't keep my eyes open . . . where's the ambulance . . . won't they go faster . . . for God's sake speed up . . . "

\* \* \* \* \*

"Faster Cris, faster! What time is it?"

"Twenty to nine."

"Shore leave's up at a quarter to and the ship leaves at nine sharp. They don't wait for anybody. If you're not there it's just too bad. Pass him on the curb. Damn the traffic. Any other night the road would be vacant. The rest of the guys will all be back. Don't cut out. It's too dangerous. What time is it?"

"I just told you. Sit back and quit worrying."

"Where are the cigarettes? I'm sorry, Cris, but I can't afford to miss her. I have to get there. It's my own damn fault."

I was watching her eyes as they darted over the road ahead and I tried to be calm and logical, the way that she thought I was, but it was impossible. I had walked too many miles looking for this job and now to lose it was impossible. Impossible. Damn the word. Oh, damn the word! Plague of my life. Impossible . . .

The old sailor said "impossible" when he held me on his knee and told me that damn riddle. I'll never forget first seeing it carved on the back of the shell. "A GOOD WOMAN HAS THE ENDLESS PASSION OF THE EVER ROLLING OCEAN." He said the riddle had been passed through centuries of mariners and had never been solved. Then he gave me the brooch, telling me of all its supernatural powers. He kept calling it a talisman, but it was only a sea shell with a clasp. I wore it. The charm crept over me and I wondered, and as the passion grew and matured the ocean became the end, not the means to the solution of the puzzle. I searched and searched for some way that I could feed on the wide bulging breast of the sea. It seemed impossible, but I gambled and now I was on my way to the ship. It was impossible that I should miss it. Damn the word . . . Oh Cris, she's impossible too.

She must be impossible or else fate does exist and things are predetermined. What else could combine two strangers on a crowded beach when the whole tourist population were spread out awkwardly on their blankets, half-nude, half-blind, and half-cooked, trying desperately to be the colour of the land's original inhabitants? I, too, was stretched among this half-baked throng of sun bathers sleepily searching for some reason why white people want to be the colour of Indians, though it costs them hours of suffering from scorched skin. I was using as my typical specimen a very fair gentleman whose blond hair and freckled face seemed in horrible contrast to the dark sand he lay upon.

"Probably the proud Vikings were his ancestors," I thought. "I wonder if Eric the Red wanted a sun tan?"

A nameless little brat ran past my blanket and veering to avoid my outstretched form threw sand from his flying hoofs like pellets into my pensive eyes. Usually I am a man with much affection for children, but this was not a child. This was a flying demon who had just attempted to blind me. My drowsy limbs exploded into life and in the chase that followed many other innocent victims received that same fate which earlier had befallen me, the only difference being that I now wore the flying hoofs. Around, between, and over the sprawled figures we made our course.

"'O my America!' Dear Donne," I shouted.

I was gaining fast, for with my long legs I could leap over the human islands that he had to circumnavigate. I knew I could catch him. I had to. No such buccaneer could be allowed to infest a public beach on a beautiful Sunday in July. Now the prey was in reach. The adrenals were pumping fast. Now I had him. I squinted my eyes and crouched for the mad leap, when suddenly he

hunted tripped and fell into outstretched female arms and with a wailing voice cried,

“Get him, sis!”

Well that was it! What could I do! The victim on whom all my rage was centred now lay fondly cuddled against a beautiful woman's breast, glaring at me through the protective limbs with his big innocent eyes, like a prisoner behind bars. He was just as safe.

“Is chasing four year olds around a beach and scaring them half to death your idea of fun?” the prison asked.

“What a prison!” I thought. “Wouldn't mind spending some time there.”

“No I don't usually indulge,” I replied, “and I didn't know that he was with you or I certainly would have attempted a more amenable approach.”

She looked down at the blanket a little embarrassed, which is the downfall of all women. Just when they should hold up their heads and look you square in the eyes, they look down and blush. This young thing was no exception, and when she looked up our eyes caught in a glance of feigned anger. Then she smiled. I smiled. Like a couple of kids we started to laugh.

Cris (that was what they called the prison) offered to drive me to the ship but we played on the beach too long and I suddenly discovered that it was . . .

“THE BRAKES, CRIS!!! THE BRA . . KE . . Im . . poss . . ible . . im . .

\* \* \* \*

“Mom, what is a . . a . . talisman? . . . Why are they covering the nice man up?”

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## *Poem*

F. L. ENGLISH

Came a star-shower of Christs saving various worlds.  
Some fizzled where there was no need of them,  
And others sparked the tinders  
Setting souls in conflagration  
Burning out dry-rot;  
And where the cinders disappeared  
The ghosts turned into heavens or hells  
Singing and wailing: “Te Deum.”

## *When She Cried*

O. GEORGE HANCOCKS

Tears are gone,  
their flow has stopped;  
salt dries white on  
dying cheeks.  
Love burns bright  
as fire is white;  
white is love  
on reddened lips.  
Come to me  
with tears or love:  
Come to me  
on dust that blows:  
Cling to me  
as old worlds die:  
Love me, love  
as salt is white—  
white is love  
in tearful bite.  
Taste me love,  
O taste my tears,  
taste my love  
as I do yours.  
Feel its salt,  
its sting and bite,  
sink in me as love  
is white;  
White is love  
and pure are we;  
Love me, love  
eternally.

## *Sunday Morning*

MARTHA ALLEN

Three sisters  
Sit upright in the fourth pew from the front;  
Three hats of Italian velours,  
Three coats of Persian lamb,  
And lavender hair between,  
Most closely curled.

It is a comfort to know  
That there are ninety-and-nine more of them  
In the shelter of the fold.

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## *Afternoon*

MARTHA ALLEN

The Sun seized wind  
In his royal gold hands,  
And flung it for a flying veil  
Over distant lands.

A slow dove  
Slipped from the veil of sky;  
Two foolish, fluttered wings  
Lonelier than I.

Will there be weeping  
In the courts of the King  
For the feather-silent falling  
Of a dove's wing?

# BROKEN FIGURE

Maida Skene

A MAN, slightly bent, sloshed through narrow, rain-flooded streets. His hands plunged deeply into the pockets of an old-fashioned mackintosh. A tam protected his head. A woollen scarf bloused fully from under his chin. His walk indicated vigor but not purpose, and his torso leaned heavily to the right as if he carried his sixty years in a suitcase in his right hand.

Stephan Bach gazed ruefully at his feet. He had forgotten his rubbers.

"Heavens' tears," he murmured. It was not the rain which pelted his body, or furiously attacked his rubberless feet, that bothered this man, but the thoughts which stormed his mind. Thoughts which in the past two years mercilessly crept into his mind as the dampness was creeping, this night, into his clothing.

He raised his head and took cognizance of his surroundings. Quaint, esoteric shops shyly peeked from the ground floors of former fashionable mansions. The upper floors were dimly lit. Still rented by the room, thought the man, as he visualized an artist or musician struggling with the agonies of self-expression.

The lights from the shops gently illumed his face. His complexion was ruddy. The cheek bones pronounced, the skin deeply grooved near the mouth, the eyes and on the forehead. It was a face at once masculine and aesthetic; a face that a woman felt the desire to trace and mend every time-worn crease with her fingers.

Stephan could not explain his walk. He had fought the impulse unsuccessfully, and after a long bus ride found himself in a section of the city he had not frequented for many years. He walked close to the buildings. He decided he would go as far as the old Roberts Gallery, and he chided himself at his age for being so foolish.

The display window of the gallery was bright, and as he approached, his face paled and a violent pain penetrated his body. He clutched the protruding window pane and stared through the glass. In the window was a woman's torso, twelve inches high, carved in sensuous white wood. The figure was completed just above the knees and rested in a slightly seated position on its thighs. The neck was jagged. A tiny well-formed head, with a face so exquisitely sensitive as to seem sadly alive, was placed beside the figure.

Stephan Bach closed his eyes. In an instant, for him, the rain ceased, and he was standing bare-headed in brilliant sunshine, before this same gallery thirty years ago. It had then been in business only five years. A girl, her lips parted in a dreamy smile, was looking at the two paintings displayed.

"Are you amused?" he asked.

She turned her face towards him. Stephan started. He had never seen a woman so beautiful, so ethereal.

"I was thinking about the woman in those two paintings. To be able to pose for a genius. . ." Her soft voice trailed off, and her eyes crinkled at the corners, as if only they knew her amusing secret.

Stephan laughed. An unusual ambition!

The girl awkwardly turned toward him and again Stephan was startled. Her movement was like a sour chord in a Beethoven symphony. To his trained eye, her beauty was lopsided . . . but only for an instant. The girl pivoted on one foot, guided by a wooden leg and heavy stick, such as Queen Mary, across the ocean, owned.

"Do you think I would pose for anyone?" Her question was not a sneer. Her youthful intensity was touching. Stephan was no longer amused.

"Would you pose for him?" he asked quietly, nodding towards the paintings in the window.

"Only for him," she replied.

"Come," said Stephan, and he took her arm, "I'm he."

Stephan shivered. The raw, chilly air penetrated his being, but the physical discomfort could be borne more easily than his thoughts of his happiness with Carey.

His paintings of her were hailed as the expression of a genius. For him, her inspiration was endless.

Carey kept his studio tidy, and did the shopping. His favorite painting was the one which showed Carey hobbling to the store. What the world didn't see was the one of her returning with her arm full of bundles, followed by the small fry carrying loads of their own. That was his own. Everyone in the neighborhood loved Carey and none more than he.

Stephan remembered it was just after Mr. Roberts had come to look at Figure Two. Carey and he had not yet named the delicately carved wood sculpture resting on its lower thighs, but referred to it as TWO; Carey's perfection being eminently first. Roberts was ecstatic about its life, its simplicity of form. It was not for sale, but a gift to Carey, and Roberts pleaded with them to change their minds.

After Roberts left, Carey was still as death.

"I've lead a useful life here, Stephen," It was a form of question.

Stephan was about to tell her in emphatic terms just what these three years *had* meant, when Carey licked her dry lips and began again.

"Stephan, I have to have my leg amputated. "Her voice broke just a little as she made a valiant effort to control herself. "I couldn't have you wait on me, so I shan't be back."

Stephan heard the voice, saw the terror-stricken face. The internal chasm of grief violently filled with an inexplicable hate. He grabbed the Figure and smashed it to the floor. A strangled "No" left his throat as he threw himself at Carey's foot, and clung as if his life depended upon it.

An hour passed and Stephan was quiet. Carey stood up and picked up the torso, and then the head which had broken off.

"Not Figure Two," she murmured, "but broken figure, too." Vaguely Stephan heard the sound of a motor outside.

"I have to go, Stephan. Don't worry about me, I shall be well cared for." She opened the door.

"When my time has run out I'll give this to Mr. Roberts to display in his window. I shall need you then, Stephan." Her voice asked forgiveness for this abrupt, cruel departure. She was gone.

Stephan, his feet soaked, his body chilled to the bone, clutched the windowpane. The voice "I shall need you then, Stephan" seemed close at hand.

Stephan stiffly walked to the alcove of the gallery and tried the handle of the door. It was open. He stepped inside and gently pressed it shut.

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## *The Morning Processional*

HUGH D. McKELLAR

The organ peals; the congregation rise;  
The hymn begins: in stately double file  
The surpliced choir descend the deep-piled aisle  
Chanting in praise of Him Who made the skies,  
The sea, the earth, and all that in them lies:  
"Ye gates, lift up your heads!" O gates, rejoice  
That she who enters now, with golden voice  
Should thus exhort you! Dare you not arise?  
The psalm of David on her glowing tone  
Soars upward to the realm above the spheres—  
God's choicest gift returning to His throne  
In praise of Him Who gave it! Countless tiers  
Of angels keep hushed awe, that He should loan  
A richer voice than theirs to mortal ears.

## *Peter Grimes*

GLEN PETTINGER

Martello Tower stands alone;  
The sea leaps around it  
Like a wolf at a bone.

Man had his day  
And went his way.

He crawled, a jelly-like life, on to the shore;  
Woman, wretched and wet, had crawled up before  
Shuddering cold at the thought of the Fate  
Borne by breakers seething with hate.

The Tower trembles more with each day's tide;  
The wild sea smashes, crashes, each steep side;  
It licks its lips and comes to grips  
In leaping, splashing roars.

The waves wash, the wind whips;  
The crumbling gray rock stumbles  
Shale by shale, into the sea.

## *Metamorphosis*

RONALD H. STACEY

Horizon disappears,  
Depth by depth,  
Dimensions of dark atoms,  
Sparse, translucent, floating,  
Burst out around us silently,  
Shade us with the universe, till all is one.  
Then still motion starts:  
Duststorm, then like  
Rushing cosmic dust;  
Passionate as human grief  
Atoms fissionate,  
Clash into new existence,  
To a fused consummation, dense, opaque.  
Then, ordered stillness—  
And brilliant darkness  
Separates us out again,  
Leaves in deep somnolence  
An airy ocean world, and us.

# *The Grave of Memory*

O. GEORGE HANCOCKS

Have you ever seen those  
solemn

    gray  
heaps of stone

Silent - - -  
    mute

As if the souls  
within them  
had deserted in  
a calm  
despair?

Crumbling  
they lie in  
mellow pastures:

The furrows  
curve around  
their base  
and flow in undulating  
ripples round the field  
and back again.

Cracked,  
    seamed  
like any half-forgotten grave:  
skeletons with their souls laid bare.

Browncut land,  
the corn stooked up,  
corn-stook  
marshals  
row on row  
line the field  
where corn-winds blow.

Jagged - - -  
    watching.

Blowdust sifting  
settles slowly,  
covers  
leaving not a trace.

## *Fractures and Futurities*

ALASTAIR MACDONALD

Each moment on our popcorn rosary of days  
Caught out of act by time,  
Mumbling the cup of other years till half-past four,  
Waiting for that tangled and abrasive thing  
Life, still to come, the world.  
Peeled sticks, it is imagined, buoyant, new,  
Until they pop, with hall-marks, into air.  
— A bright song!

We doubt that time adheres.  
An old ebb tide,  
It leaves its barnacles and weed  
Among an infant's day.  
And still the marrowbone may knit  
When each and every calibrated year is cleaver closed  
And all the coloured blocks of preparation  
Now, at last, a springboard for the final plunge to  
"This is it!"

Who waits to learn the features of the wind?  
Or ever saw a march waves chalked out  
— In coloured measurement?

## *Poem*

DIANE McLAREN

October is the month of orange things  
Of orange corn fires after the grain is cut  
Of orange harvest moons.  
It is the time of tawny leaves  
Of Indian summer beauty and  
Of longing for the copper coloured Pyramid  
Of the west.  
October is the month of grace and  
Nature's benison is orange.

# THE WOMEN

W. F. C. Thompson

**A** TWIST, a turn in the clutching void—he struggled for freedom, but his mind was rank and his thoughts like spiders sped across his consciousness. The dampness of the sheets outlined a writhing form; the leadness of the pillow refused a weary head.

Through the surge of bitterness, the stabs of self-pity, the picture of Carlotta blurred and focused somewhere behind his throbbing eyes. Carlotta, the centre of the happy circle of the last few months; Carlotta whom he had made the kernel holding the meaning of life to which he clung, desperate for salvation; Carlotta, of the warm glowing eyes, of the rich vibrant black hair—so beautiful her face, masked in mockery. Groaning and wretched he flung himself away, but the phantom, unobliterated, remained in his mind.

In flight he plunged away into his childhood to the days made halcyon by imagination. They were the days of heaven when his child's eye unable to define the panorama of the world was only infrequently focused in swift, shocking closeup. An impression of beauty was received on the retina and accepted uncritically. To lie on the cliffs again; to glory in the unlifted balm of the salty sea; to fill his lungs with the peculiar tang and watch the lacy ripples die silent in the shingle; to walk again the cavernous singing woods as a child—not regardless as then, but to grasp the beauty with greedy hands.

Those unknown days of childhood had passed silently away leaving an unrecognized inheritance of appreciation—the appreciation that enabled him to love Carlotta and her glowing lamp-black hair and her pearl-milky skin—she, the compensation for the miracle of his careless childhood which he had had, but never known. The means of return lay with her, of return to the life beautied as his years increased by its irrevocability and its memory. In Carlotta alone had he nearly approached what he should have savoured and stored for later years—her black flowing hair was the ripple of the clouded lake, her breath the surge of the sea in the silver sun.

His mother's hair had been white. In a few short weeks the vivid chestnut of her hair had faded, her cheeks had withered like a stored up apple, the life had vanished from her eyes, only a bleak terror gleamed there. They took her away silent but with gestures and expression protesting, dragged from behind the darkened door where she had hidden in last hope. Her sanity had gone as surely as the radiant woman she once had been.

“Hereditary . . . her mother and her mother's brother went as quick as you could shudder . . . inevitable.”

In nightmares he had stood and watched his mother dragged down endless halls, unable to lift his legs and go with her; helpless he watched the ghost that was not the ghost of a dead woman.

The ugliness and horror of life was making its mark but the nightmares passed. Spring again! Walking with Carlotta in shadow-dappled beauty—no, that was later. He was walking in a wood though, cool and dark with a cynical companion. Stifled and horrified he ran away, his mind numbed and shaken. There was a musty smell now among the trees; there was ugliness among the lank, dank weeds that struggled for the light. Beauty had gone from the forest depths. Man strode on with relentless boot crushing and destroying, unsettling the balance and the beauty—Man of the self-vaunted dignity, a shallow mockery, a veil over fetid minds.

Still, there was beauty side by side with horror but the dividing line became even more fragile; a flash of thought; a blink of the eye; either was sufficient to reverse a mood. One by one fell ideals and illusions, and less and less were they renewed.

“It’s hereditary you know . . .”

Ah madness, the mind torn and reversed, broken beneath the strain—a resolving peace arising from the wreck? A freedom of thought unsown with precipitous depths? A world fashioned by the ultra-ego? What calm!

‘I’ll go mad, I’ll go mad when it becomes unbearable. I must—before there’s nothing!’ The rending of veils of beauty that were and should have been continued. Each year he dreamed and planned in greater illusion only to find his eyes receptacles for the disillusion his brain denied.

The beauty of the inanimate was gone. It could not rival what he remembered, what artists painted. In the flash and turn of a timeless movement of the animate, and the drugging peace of his dreams could beauty lurk. That was until Carlotta. In the burst of a dawning sun happiness came. A source of inspiration, of dying and renewing, of lazy peace and eager restlessness was the colour of her hair; and a changing world, her eyes. Some happy months walking in the shadows of leaves as green as in years before to his unlingering eyes, walking along the forest paths as cool and as fresh as then, through days as halcyon to his senses as his memories to his mind.

Oh *belle* the beauty of her hair, its beauty indescribable, the glow of beauty in its strands! The water-silky blackness of her hair. A living blackness to touch and feel until the blacker of the whisper: “Sixteen . . . white so suddenly . . . I started to dye it then . . . you’d scarcely know . . .”

Unnatural or naturalness; beauty manufactured; creation of man—how abject is the ugliness.

Consummate the horror; her face fell in a million mocking pieces frozen on his brain. Her worried eyes crossed his again. Mad slime trails across a

crazy path; man's brute body breaking the shrubs, birds and monuments; iron ships belching over a dreaming sea. Dogs and men cavorting and men and pigs grovelling. Sunset puddles in a tar-stained road. Nowhere loveliness without ugliness. Where is the blank, the void, the vacuum but in the maelstrom of that unknown realm of the unexperienced, that monstrous heaven or beautiful hell? That madness where his mother waited? His legs sprang into life to turn and run from that ghost. To turn and run from that woman with hair and gleaming eyes. From both those women. Both to be avoided. Struggle on, cling to the shreds before you're pulled away and down, silent and protesting.

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## *Degeneration*

GEORGE F. TODD

Two thousand naked years swirling by a broken cross,  
and clutching fingers out of the womb  
to tear blood-red tendrils  
into the heaving belly of pleasure.

From the mist, trembling arms to receive the blood-warm flesh,  
and eager mouths to search the wine-filled breast;  
yes, gagging lips  
to taste the vomit-sweet spittle.

Still their stomachs throb to an aching emptiness  
and their dead flesh hangs loose  
in the universe.

From the concrete jungles come the hollow-eyed spectres,  
to swarm like death-pale maggots,  
the rotting carcass of chance.

Furrows of frustration pock the silence of their souls,  
and they breath fear.

With animal fury they claw at passionate barriers,  
but they are caught in the socket of sex,  
and recoil numb with spasmodic shock,  
sinking into a silent gasping submission.

Stripped of their raiment, they wander the groves of despair,  
and their hearts ache for rest on earth,  
but the green pastures are no more.

## *Tropic Daybreak*

ALASTAIR MACDONALD

That Haiti sun,  
- - - -up  
Like a whip from San Domengue!  
Before you can shout the city is bright,  
Smoke white in the eye  
Right down the valley of Cul de Sac.  
Sun-dust sparks deep in the Bay.  
A jewel, blue, caught in a crab's claw,  
Hot, myriad sea in the scorch-ribbed hills  
Green and brown, shoulder, pitch to Massif Morn la Selle,  
    (the highest, a spine, half to the sky!),  
The Serpent's Back, sleeping.  
The Great Serpent.  
I hear the rattle of pans,  
Cannon from the Fort,  
Center-city, flat on a hill, salute;  
A battleship, flagship reply.  
Colour! Sky-far for a man, majestic,  
But the Mapoo trees are older than kings,  
And a beggar found time to die in the streets,  
And your cry, Marchand, carrying cry  
Is today's first in the High Land,  
The sun's flower, colour-hot,  
Petal-bursting in the Blue Hands of God.

## *A Biological Reflection*

DON MILLS

Let's talk of snails; to be specific  
They're slow and hermaphroditic.  
  
I'll say this about snails—  
There's never a shortage of available males.

# *The Hatrack*

RONALD H. STACEY

, , , Please, Hatrack, I'm addressing you.  
Will you please reply . . .  
Are you animal, vegetable or mineral?  
Come, come, don't be shy.  
Well, you must be part vegetable;  
That you can't deny.  
I see you have a mineral top;  
Can't you tell me why?  
I think you are inanimate, though.  
Wait! Was that a sigh?  
No, I see it now,  
You're just an object,  
A stubborn, stupid object.  
Planted four-square, so  
You look conceited and aloof.  
And yet, you're not aloof, you're alone.  
You look cold and frozen, just  
Because you lack a soul.  
That's too bad, Hatrack,  
Both for you and us. For  
Your clumsy maker was a  
Human, and most of them  
Can hardly find a soul  
For themselves, let alone for others.  
So if you can feel, I suppose  
You needn't *feel* too badly . . .  
But, God, I wish you could  
Cover up those stupid bones  
Of yours with a soul.

## *Fragments*

O. GEORGE HANCOCKS

Black shadows  
On a grey wall  
Through a  
Moon-misted screen  
Dance all night long.

Silver spider webs  
Snake the brick wall  
When the moon  
Etches  
A lunar mosaic  
From the tree  
By the drive.

## *Illusions*

DIANE McLAREN

November's night! Sear of her hunting wind  
Hounds a scarlet moon just past the sill;  
The orphaned leaves cry up from roots,  
And anguish a mother-hearted tree.  
Now you plead with naked arms  
To the tuneless woe of the wind,  
As I do in my loneliness.

The time for grief is past!  
Indian summer days of sorrow  
Gave winter a cruel pillage  
Of each dying branch.  
And I too have cast my leaves.

They grew in the spring of our lovetime  
Like the gleanings of this ravaged tree  
To perfection of dedicated red and gold.

A Spartan mother in  
The fall libation  
I have loosed my dreams  
To the cold streets  
And wait, for spring.

We wish to congratulate  
Diane McLaren and her  
associates on making this  
year's Folio a success . . .

Diane as literary editor of  
this year's "Oxy" has arranged  
a series of picture stories about  
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will appear in the 1954  
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