



1975

The Canon, [1974-75]: Volume 5, Number 6

Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/dordt_canon

Recommended Citation

Dordt College, "The Canon, [1974-75]: Volume 5, Number 6" (1975). *Dordt Canon*. 70.
https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/dordt_canon/70

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dordt Canon by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

1975 FINE ARTS ISSUE

The Place of the Sun

by Sandy Vanden Berg

The sun drifted lazily into the kitchen through the open window and settled down cheerfully on the worn, bald spots of the linoleum floor. A slight breeze clutched timidly at the folds of blue and white checked gingham hanging loosely on their dull brass rod, and blew the pages of the calendar up from the wall. It annoyed her—that slight movement of air around the curtains and the calendar. Pushing, pulling, in, out. Pushing, pulling, like Jenny used to do, by winging a strand of long, black hair around her finger and then unconsciously dragging it through her mouth until all the ends started snarling and splitting. It looked downright heathenish and she couldn't stand it. It was a bad habit and one that could be broken. And it was her responsibility as Jenny's mother to do just that.

Jenny had learned.

She looked up then at the calendar she had put up just the other day on the back wall above the stove. It hung there, smug, and so cosy like, that all of a sudden she was filled with a complete and horrifying revulsion for the thing. What were calendars good for anyway, but to remember days and years and events one wished to forget. It was awful to wake up every morning with this empty, aching pain and know there was no pill to take or any medicine potent enough to swallow, that would erase the grief and bitterness from one's mind and help you to forget. It was the most helpless feeling she had ever before experienced and suddenly she snatched the calendar off the wall and threw it on the fire in the old coal stove in one deft and easy movement. The year 1941 started crackling briskly, peeling its slow way around the edges, and then blew itself up the chimney pipe in a fast spurt of heat and smoke. She turned away dully, remembering the way George had smiled every morning when he came in from milking and how much joy he could give a person in saying just such a simple thing as, "Good morning." He had been forever saying things to her like, "Ruth, you worry way too much. You gotta take life as it comes and relax more," or, "when the going gets tough, then you gotta get tougher." And those things were all true but she just wasn't like George.

She remembered the day he left to help the neighbors fix some machinery, because that was the day he had left her for good. He had said, "Ruth, even if something happens to you and you hate it and it hurts you real bad, you gotta keep right on going and accepting it. You have to face pain or another person's loss with him and help that person to face it too." That was the day they had brought his crushed and mangled body back to her, run

over by a tractor, and she had clung to those words as if there was some sort of divine interpretation in them that could comfort and heal her aching soul. But then, George had always been rather philosophical at times and she had never been that deep.

And now there was Jenny. Twelve years old and laid up in bed for more than a month with a fractured leg. It had happened at school in a fall off some of the playground equipment. She remembered again how Jenny had cried and cried and said that her leg hurt so bad. Then she had come down with a fever but Doc. Nielsen had said it was just a fracture and if Jenny kept off it and stayed quiet for awhile it would soon heal. But that had been a month already and now a dark black line had started to form around Jenny's left leg and the skin had turned a bluish, motley color and when she touched it, it had felt cold, like she was touching death. It made her skin crawl just thinking about it.

At first she had tried rubbing it but Jenny said that only made it worse so finally she had sent for Doc. Nielsen again. She didn't know much about medicine but she did know that there had to be something more seriously wrong here than just a fracture.

The doctor was here now, examining Jenny in her bedroom, trying to determine what exactly was wrong.

"Mrs. Anton," he called softly, "could you come here a moment?"

She came from the kitchen then, out into the hallway, where Doc. Nielsen was standing just outside Jenny's open door. She glanced inside the room briefly but apparently the doctor had give Jenny something and she appeared calm and peaceful and quite happily asleep for once.

MIDWEEK

*It's a copout, Lord
But just for now
Please take a chair
Let's talk about the weather*

*And if you'd hold still
We could stop . . .*

*. . . Looking for rainbows
In mud puddles
and paint You
Against a backdrop
Of bleating hearts.*

Ag Vander Wal

"Well," she said, trying to be as cheerful as possible. "How bad is it?"

Doc. Nielsen looked gravely at her for a moment and then his eyes slid past her and into the next room. The silence echoed and re-echoed down the hallway and his hand twitched nervously, as he shifted his shabby, black leather bag to his other hand with a slight, jerky motion. It gave her the creeps and she felt a shudder go up and down her spine. He must have a nervous tic, she thought. She hated nervous tics. Uneasily, she stirred. What was he looking at, she wondered.

His voice startled her coming out of the dead quietness. "I'm afraid I can't give you much hope, Mrs. Anton. I don't like to say this but unless a miracle happens I don't think your daughter will ever walk again. I'm really sorry."

"But her leg," she asked numbly. "What's wrong with it?"

He shook his old, grey head slowly. "Can't tell you here. She could take a turn for the worse with that fever so I don't want her to know yet. Can't take any chances with things like that." He shook his head again and walked down the hallway, turning left into the kitchen.

Blindly, she followed him. He told her then about the infection in Jenny's leg that would take her life if it was not removed. Actually, he never said it quite as nicely as that but he didn't have much choice. He talked about gangrene and amputating Jenny's leg as soon as the fever had gone down a little bit. She couldn't even begin to imagine it, but it sounded terrible. Her daughter with a stump where her leg should be. She shuddered.

"I'm sorry," he said again. "I've done everything I could and now all we can do is wait and see what happens. As soon as she's able that leg will have to come off."

It was a final statement, as though he had already pronounced her dead, and the kitchen was the funeral parlor where the last rites were being said. This was something she would just have to accept—Jenny's not being able to walk again just like George's death. She must accept it, she thought, she must accept it, but she could not.

Even if a miracle did happen and Jenny got better again her leg would still be dead and useless and have to be amputated. In her heart she knew that her daughter would never again run down the long driveway to get the mail for her, or race Shep out to the pasture to get the cows for supper, or help chase the chickens in the fall that were to be butchered.

(continued on page 6)

A Few Clarifications

by Nigel Weaver

The last issue of **Cannon** for this school year sits in front of you; the Fine Arts issue at that. But when all is said and done, what's it all about? Do you know, and more importantly does the **Cannon** staff know? Well, we like to think that perhaps we do know what literature and, to a lesser extent, art in general is all about. Oh, we don't claim anything as unbiblical or as conceited as an absolute and infallible knowledge; just a few insights here and there. Insights that come from actually having to work with the "stuff" that comprises a literary magazine like ours. Insights that come from prayerfully struggling to determine the "religious" forces that drive and motivate a specific artist and provide the dynamic for his work. Insights also that grow out of consciously striving, in that same prayerful spirit, to produce an art that flows from our own religious heart commitment to the God of the Scriptures; a desire to achieve Christian art. In short, insights that come from having been given a specific calling to a specific area of life—the aesthetic.

We as staff are all firmly convinced that we must respond to a God-issued calling to be involved in the art which helps to comprise God's creation. After all, what is art other than humanity's response to the cultural mandate expressed either obediently or disobediently throughout history? And, of course, it goes without saying that as Christians we are interested in ours being a response of obedience. Now, it is obvious that the calling we share as staff is not our primary calling. We are called at present to be students, not professional writers, art critics, or publishers; that's why **Cannon** is a **student** publication. But we are students working in areas which lend themselves to involvement in a literary magazine. Indeed, much of the material that appears in the **Cannon** flows directly from a course in creative writing taught here at Dorcht. While it may well be that most of us will not end up as writers, we must perform this as a task that God has given us to do for the present.

We as staff are also convinced that under God's guidance and according to His good-pleasure a person "grows into" the calling God has for him. This manifests itself quite openly during our more formative years where the question of "What do you want to be?" is answered first in dreams of excitement and glamour, but ultimately in long talks with parents, guidance counsellors and friends, all of which center around interests and abilities. We also believe that these interests and abilities are God-given in order that we might serve Him in specific areas throughout His creation. If you will, God has given all of us expertise to work in certain fields. It is because of this expertise that we as staff can say that we do know something of what literature is all about. Not, as I've said, an infallible knowledge, nor a "full-blown" expertise, for these grow with time and are in a sense proportional to one's involvement in the field, which is itself a teacher.

This claim to insight, knowledge and expertise has often been misunderstood by the artist's audience and abused by the artist. This has, in the past, led to the **false** problem of the individual versus the community, or the artist versus the audience. As Christians

writing to Christians we'd like to cut through that problem and begin to move ahead. It is with this in mind that we'd like to discuss three things with you. First, the relationship between artist and audience; second, the content and language of Christian literature; and third, literature as a structured thing.

As we said before, the artist has often abused his claim to expertise by absolutizing it. He has given his work to the audience with little or no thought as to whether or not they would understand what he is trying to say; they must merely bow to his genius and accept it. When they complain or ask him to change it, he throws his hands up in disgust, calls them ignorant philistines, and storms off. The audience too has often acted in a wrong way by refusing to allow the artist any freedom at all and refuting his claim to expertise. The result has been a rigid and unreasonable censorship, under which the artist cannot work, since it denies him his responsibility to do what he does honestly before the face of God, in service to God. We as staff believe that you as audience must recognize the artist's expertise in his own field, and in an attitude of trusting love give him the freedom he needs to do his art. But, we are also firmly convinced that the artist has a responsibility to his audience. He may never 'damn' them for their 'ignorance', nor may he alienate himself from them. It is because we hold to these beliefs that the language of one of our short stories, which may have offended a portion of our audience, has been modified. The writer involved felt a responsibility to his audience and we feel that you, your needs, and your feelings must be taken into account, for it is anything but Christian of us to claim intellectual superiority, or to ram things down your throats.

Secondly, we as a staff are often called upon to deal with the question of how the content and language of literature reflect one's heart commitment and one's resultant world and life view. This question is not at all easy to answer, nor are those which stem from it. Questions like, are there topics which are less 'Christian' than others, and are there certain words that one may not use in a story as a Christian, all have to be dealt with here. As a staff we feel that this is again largely a matter between the writer and his God, but we do have some ideas on the subject. One of our stories concerns the relationship between two brothers; the language in it has been left intact, and it contains drunkenness and what may or may not be called murder. Now these things are hardly Christian and the **Cannon** staff does not endorse them, but in a sense they do grow out of our Christian convictions. Surely, one of the areas in which the Christian writer's convictions differ most strongly with those of his secular counterpart is the area of sin. The Christian sees sin for what it is, an open rebellion against God, and a refusal to obey His laws, both written and as they manifest themselves in the structuring of the creation. The Christians also acknowledges the fall and the resulting need for salvation in Christ Jesus. There are some that say that the threefold reality of Creation, Fall, and Redemption should occur in all Christian literature, and others who say that this is too broad a task for literary forms like the short story to handle. We as a staff tend towards the second of these positions, and therefore

some of the material we publish is not meant to delight or to entertain, nor to present the entire message of the Scriptures, but rather to expose sin for the death-curse-bringer that it is.

Thirdly, literature is a structured thing. There are norms for literature; God given laws that hold for it. Both the Christian and the non-Christian writer are under these structuring laws, and must obey them. For example the writer is open to choose whether he writes in first person or third person, and whether his narrator is omniscient, knows some of what's going on or knows nothing more than the reader. Once this choice has been made it acts as a limiting factor on the author, and controls what he can and cannot do. His story can compel him to say and do certain things in it because of its structural laws. Closely connected to this is the fact that the artist must be true to his art, and his integrity must be respected, not only by his audience but also by his fellow artists. Thus, one of the fine art's stories has not been published in the **Cannon**. The reason for this is that the particular author felt that in **further** modifying his story, to prevent possible offense to his audience, he was failing to be true to his art and sacrificing his artistic integrity. We as staff accepted this decision with regret, but respect the author for his convictions.

Well, here we are close to the end and time for a few last statements. We as a staff are both relieved and delighted to see this fine arts issue come out, for there have been many occasions when we thought that we wouldn't be able to publish. We have spent many taxing, and soul-searching hours discussing these three things, among ourselves, with members of the board and with various committees, and have learnt much in the process. In conclusion we feel that it all boils down to the fact that the artist and the audience need each other. They must learn to respect and to trust each other, for **both** must work diligently at bringing literature and art under the sway of Christ's Kingly rule. The Christian writer must work at his writing; the Christian reader at his reading; and then they must discuss and work **together** honestly and lovingly serving their God.

The problem of profanity in literature will probably be discussed in a special issue next year. In the mean time readers are encouraged to let us know their views.

—Ed.

LEFTOVER EARTH SHOES

*Fragments of a day begun prematurely
shuffled through my mind
in threatening disarray.*

*Vaguely recalling challenges
to work out new ideas.
But they would only be
old themes rehauled,
refinished with the
glamour of false originality
and the reek of
fresh hypocrisy.*

*Squared soles of Earth shoes
demanding
Can we really sell
our orthopedic souls
to a public that no longer cares
about fallen arches?*

*But the image can be carried
no further. It invites too
many questions.
Time for a new idol, object of
adolescent infatuation.*

*My mind is blank
happily so
Poorly stored leftovers are
a pain.*

—Nelly Den Otter

Shadow of the Silver Cross

by Otto R. Keyes

Long gangly legs stiffened and quivered at the height of an immensely satisfying stretch. Lifting his head off the grassy pillow, he sleepily scanned the horizon. Above the facade of low hills, in the distance the hoary peak of Mount McKinley impaled a hovering puff of mist. The intervening expanse of tundra was unbroken, save by an occasional grassy knoll similar to the one which now served as his bed, a brush thicket here and there, and a few struggling stands of gnarled, stunted fir trees.

As he shook his head to shoo off the mosquitos, a light breeze skittered across one of the numerous small ponds and lakes that pocked the tundra, making the sun waltz upon the water. It was still warm, but he could feel autumn in the wind. He wanted to soak in all the warmth and sunshine he could before the long nights and cold winds crept down from the north again.

With another lazy stretch, he started to drop his head back upon the grass, but rumblings deep within him shook off his propensity for sleep and aroused another thought—an afternoon snack.

He heaved his hulking body up from the warm sod, lumbered down the west side of the little knoll, and out across the boggy tundra. Each step produced a little fountain of water which helped bathe away the mud from his feet.

The breeze from the mountains pushed him along, bringing with it the occasional, icy chill of a glacier's breath. Ahead, the Kuskokwim River slowly slithered and writhed its way, like a cold snake, toward the Bering Sea.

He found it about a hundred yards from the riverbank; it was the same place he had eaten his lunch. What a land of plenty!

Even in the dead of winter the earth usually yielded up its fruit without his having to hunt too far. In their loops and darts over the surface of the water, it seemed to him, the birds also sensed it.

The cloud of mosquitos around his head had visions of plenty too, but he hardly noticed them. Mechanically shooing them away, he bent his head for a bite. The relish with which he chewed was almost a mute thanks for the providential care he seemed to receive.

He started—then cocked his head to check the direction from which it was coming. It rose and fell with the breeze.

It's a bit clearer now, he thought, but I can't quite make out the direction yet. There. It's coming from upriver.

The drone, wavering on the wind at first, steadily grew in intensity as the shadow of the silver cross danced alternately on the water and the tundra.

Medfra, what a poor excuse for a town.

Adams' snort was drowned by the throb of the engine.

How many times have I been to that place? One . . . two . . . three hundred? Mail once a week and special runs like this, carrying emergency supplies for the village health aid or somebody's dream-come-true from the wish book. Just a little row of log and tar paper shacks rotting by the river. Seems it hasn't changed a lick in all these years.

His hand rested lightly on the stick between his knees as he peered over the cowl for

familiar landmarks pointing him homeward—the teardrop island off to the right, the half-moon lake on the left. About twenty minutes out of McGrath, he figured.

A movement caught his eye. He dipped the wing for a better look. Sure enough, it was one of them. Not wishing to attract undue attention, he continued his original heading and began a slow descent as he reached for the radio mike.

"McGrath control. McGrath control. This is Delta, Victor, niner, niner, four. Do you read me? over."

"Delta, Victor, niner, niner, four, this is McGrath control. Go Ahead."

"Yeah, McGrath. I've spotted one, so I'm going to swing around and land downwind on a sandbar by the river. My present position is . . ."

Glancing up from where he ate he thought he detected a slight shift in the shadow of the silver cross as it bounced over him and skipped across the brush by the river. The steady, droning pitch had deepened a bit too. He gazed after it until it turned and was swallowed up in silence. His head bent again to his repast, disturbed only by the inevitable cloud of mosquitos. He took no notice that the birds were gone.

Prop wind-milling slowly, the plane settled gently onto the sand. The moment the wheels touched, skidded, and began to roll, Adams cut the engine and the little silver bird coasted silently to a stop.

Reaching behind the back seat, he opened a small door and withdrew a high-powered rifle. Scarred, scuffed, and rusted here and there, it wasn't much to look at, but in the past he had held his own in some tough spots with it. It had killed before.

He stepped down onto the sand. Standing beside the plane, rifle thrust through the crook of his hairy arm, he looked considerably smaller than the picture one might conceive by seeing him in the pilot's seat. He was about two rifles tall, with powerfully built shoulders and arms. Flecks of gray in his beard and a slight bulge above his belt signalled the approach of middle age.

He pulled off his baseball cap and wiped the sweat from his brow with a coarse palm. An elbow did the same job for the inside of the cap, and he clamped it back on his head. Strapping the sheath knife to his belt, he turned to face the wind and began picking his way through the brush along the river's edge. Presently he came to a narrow path that twisted up through the bushes on the riverbank.

I think it was out on top about here where I spotted him, Adams thought. I'd better be careful though; he'll probably be watching the trail.

He gripped his rifle a little tighter and started winding along the trail toward the tundra in the stealthy, dogged gait of a man at home in the North. Every few steps he would pause, listen, and then move on through the thick, dusky shadows of the brush.

When bits of sunlight again began to pierce through the mat of leaves, he stepped off the path, following the general direction he had mapped out from the plane. His movements were slower and more calculated now. Each

step was chosen with care and he crouched closer to the ground.

Then he saw him; bent over eating. Adams, was almost startled at the sudden sight and the nonchalance with which the other ate. He stealthily traversed the remaining steps to the bush guarding the frontier of the tundra. It would be a long shot.

From the air he hadn't looked so large. It was disconcerting to Adams, for he realized his first shot would at least have to be disabling in order to stand a chance of safely making the kill. The sweaty palms left greasy tracks on his light pants. Hands dry, he raised the rifle slowly to his shoulder, took a deep breath and held it, as he began a slow squeeze on the trigger.

Shee...oot! How could I forget to cock the thing?

A shell rammed into the chamber with a raspy click, which skittered across the moss and marsh grass to the other's ears.

What was that?!

His head jerked up in wild fear and he instinctively bolted forward. The impact knocked him off his feet before the second sound ricocheted through his brain. He struggled to regain his footing, but only succeeded in churning up the shallow water into a murky pool. The confused glance over his shoulder was replaced by a blaze of terror at the sight of an open mouth of mangled flesh which had formerly comprised his backbone.

He knew the only sanctuary lay in the brush by the river, but it took a moment to regain his bearings. His gaze fell upon his assailant who stared back at him for an instand, rifle in his hands. Hate and rage churned within him as he lunged forward.

Abruptly, Adams dropped the rifle, wheeled, and crashed through the brush toward the river.

He follows the man's course with his ears till the urge for survival brought him to his senses. Progress toward the brush was slow. With the soft tundra affording little grip, inches became eternities. The sharp knife of pain began to cut away at his nerves, and the law of inverse proportions slowly went to work—each increase in pain brought a decrease in progress.

Though only a few moments had passed, the fruitlessness of the struggle was evident. He could feel his heart pumping out his life. It slowly trickled down his legs and mingled with the water at his useless feet.

Lord, I don't want to die this way! I wanted to live to a ripe old age—doing whatever I was supposed to do and enjoying life, he thought.

Again the knife thrust deep, almost causing him to collapse in the crimson water.

Why didn't he just kill me? Doesn't it seem senseless to make me endure this?!

Kuskokwim's crystal clear waters lapped over the little sandy walls and filled in the toe-holes carved by Adams as he ran along the river's edge. Upon reaching the plane, he threw open the door, climbed in, and began to throw things out on the sandbar; all the while indulging in authentic sourdough swearing.

(con't page 5)

Monday He Worked

by Nigel Weaver

The man's fingertips ran swiftly over the surface of the bedside table, searching until they felt the small box of matches. He wriggled up in bed, his hand closing around the box as he did so. Reaching over, he pulled up on the chimney of the oil lamp, struck a match, and lit it. He pushed the chimney back in place and adjusted the wick. He sat there in half-sleep, shivered, stretched once and threw off the covers. He dressed and went into the main room, carrying the lamp with him and placing it on the mantel-piece. Kneeling, he pulled a match from his jeans pocket, struck it on his fly zipper, and lit the fire he'd laid the night before. He took the lamp down, cupped his hand around and over the chimney, blew it out, and turning, he moved slowly into the kitchen, greying in the dawn's half-light. He pulled his parka off the hook by the back door, pushed his hands deep into his mitts and stepped out into the quiet morning.

Away down to his left he could see the dent of the creek, its frozen surface shadowed by the steep banks, waiting for the thaw that would carry it to the lake. He stood still, breathing deeply with measured ease, as if he could inhale all sights, all sounds, all smells promised by the dawning. Only his head moved, panning slowly from left to right, his eyes taking in each object they fell upon: the highway as it crossed the creek cradling the gravel pit in its meandering arms, the bush, the patches of snow-covered rock like giant bird droppings, and the hills, endless hill upon hill, stretching away beyond sight... beyond knowing...beyond telling. He flipped his hood up, pulled tight on the drawstrings and walked slowly towards the small outhouse nestled among the spruce and balsam. He stood there shivering, wishing he could hurry up. He trekked back to the kitchen.

He pulled open the drawer to the left of the sink and began to rummage around for the crescent wrench which lay among its contents. Once outside he walked the snowpacked path around back to the propane tanks.

He closed the valve and fitted the wrench to the threaded nut, turning with an ease that came more from familiarity than any physical strength. He turned deliberately until he could spin it out between his fingers and slide it up the thin copper pipe. Grabbing the tank, he jiggled it away from the nipples pipe-end. He thought of the first time Ian had tried to change the tanks. The bloody fool had just about stripped the corners off the nut before he'd had sense enough to come and say that he couldn't get it.

"Which way were you turning?"

"Away from me."

"You didn't see the slots cut in the nut, eh?"

"Well, sure, but so what?"

"So, they're left-handed thread."

"Oh!"

"Oh me ass! Go on, get on out a the way."

He flipped the lever that switched tanks, opened the valve, and watched the dial turn from red back to white to make sure that the gas was flowing to the stove. He slid the empty tank into the back of the half-ton, tight up against the old skidoo, slammed the

tail-gate and went back into the kitchen to light the pilot.

The cold water splashed intermittently into the small kettle. He placed it on the stove for coffee and walked over to the other end of the room. There, by the frosted window, hung a calendar suspended from a small rusting nail. He squinted at it; today was the twenty-fourth, Saturday, February. His eyes skipped to the next line and the pale red mark of the felt-tipped pen that encircled the twenty-fifth. Under this someone had neatly printed a compass bearing in blue-black pen. The water was boiling; he turned the flame off, made the coffee and cut himself a slice of bread. The coffee warmed him; the bread did little to quiet his stomach. Carrying the coffee with him into the main room, he sat down to finish it. He drained the cup, and began to put more wood on the fire, hoping that it would perhaps be going when he got back from town. He snatched the truck keys off the kitchen table, snapped the padlock on the back door and got into the cab.

He took off slowly, careful to keep the wheels in the tracks that meandered on down between the snowbanks and the central ridge of the driveway which scraped hard against the underbody. He turned right, along the side road, over the creek and back down again to the highway. He pushed the button over full to defrost, and turned left towards town. The bridge was pretty icy, but not bad; he crossed it and began to accelerate up the long hill, reaching down to switch on the radio as he did so.

"...expected high for today zero to five above, low tonight around the thirty-below mark. The barometer is holding steady and we've had no trace of measurable precipitation in the past twenty-four hours. The present CKPR temperature, ten below."

Ian pushed his way into his mind. He turned the volume up and angrily drove on, overtaking a logging truck and a rusty blue volkwagon. Rounding a curve, he picked out the black specks a quarter-mile down the highway. He drew closer; they rose screaming their complaint, and circled to land on a hydro pole. He glanced down at the roadside as he passed. A dead farmcat lay there, a light powder of snow resting on its tawny body. He looked into the rearview mirror to see the crows settle back down and resume their pulling and tugging.

He turned into the Superior Propane yard, dropped the tailgate and backed up the loading dock. He stood the tank up by the small filling shed and rang the bell. The door of the office across the yard opened and a young kid came walking over, his acned face topped by a red toque. He watched as the kid walked the tank into the shed, passing between the two signs which flanked the door as he did so: "No Smoking." "No Unauthorized Persons Beyond This Point." The man threw his cigarette into the snow and walked in.

"None too warm, is it?" the kid grunted as he watched the scale and the filling tank.

"No, but it'll get colder afore it gets warmer."

He gave the kid a twenty and maneuvered the tank back onto the truck. Then he climbed back in himself. The office door

opened and the kid came out with his change he wound down the window and took it. He pulled out of the yard and on downtown to pick up the few groceries he needed and twenty-six of Canadian Club at the Liquor Store. That was pretty well it 'til the next pay check. The truck would do where it was, decided, as he crossed the street and walked down towards the small cafe.

"Cheeseburger, fries, and coffee."

"Will that be all, sir?"

"Yes, ...um, that's all, thanks."

The waitress was obviously new, the man thought to himself; they only every stayed that polite and efficient for two months at the most. You just couldn't keep calling people "sir" and "madame" when they obviously weren't.

The cheeseburger was cold, the fries greasy, but at least the coffee was hot and strong. He asked her to refill the cup, and as he drank, he thumbed through a newspaper that lay open on the counter.

He drove home slowly for he was in no real hurry to get there and little, if anything, would have changed in his absence. He turned off the highway and began the climb back up to the drive and from there to the small house atop the hill. He carried the propane tank round back, and returned to take the groceries and the bottle inside. His cold fingers fumbled with the key in the lock. He turned it and walked in. Dumping the meager provisions on the table, he turned to hand up his parka, then reached down a glass from the cupboard and grabbing the bottle, walked into the main room.

He paused to place some more logs on the slowly dying fire and sat down next to it, his legs stretched out in front of him. He broke the seal and began to drink as the dusk stole in along the hillsides. It was almost too dark to see now. He moved only to reach for the bottle and refill his glass from time to time. Ian eased himself into his mind. At last he rose and pulling a match from his pocket, lit the oil lamp. Then he saw it, lying there in the orange glow...the book...he picked it up and sat back down.

"White World, White Death, Ian McCullough's first novel, presents us with the prospects of yet another Canadian author of major significance. Mr. McCullough writes authoritatively of his native northland, capturing the spirit of the country and its people. A country which to use Mr. McCullough's own phrase, 'is the most God-forsaken land of all, yet most God-loved, for God knew loneliness when He walked our world.' A people who 'realize that a true proximity to nature presupposes an acceptance of the inevitability of death; death—stark, tragic and harsh, yet intimately necessary.'—Margaret Peterson, **The Toronto Globe and Mail.**"

He opened the front of the book; Ian's smiling face looked up at him. "Ian McCullough, a native of Thunder Bay, was born in 1948, his father having immigrated with his mother and older brother from Scotland in 1947. He received his B.A. from Queens University, and presently resides in

(con't page 5)

SHADOW

(continued from page 3)

“... that s.o.b. Smitty! That’s the last time **anybody** will borrow my survival gear.”

At last the feverish hunt for the little rectangular box subsided. Everything inside that had been moveable, now sat in a pile, shaded by the silver wing. He rummaged through it again, but still no cartridge box turned up.

In his final search, it slowly sank in that he possessed only one thing which would do the job. He reached down and grasped its wooden handle. Like the rifle, it was scarred and stood him in good stead in the past. It had stood him in good stead in the past. It had never killed before.

Having resolved himself to finish what he had started, he turned and quickly retraced his steps up the trail.

On hearing the man’s return through the brush, he raised himself as tall as he could. The pain he felt was now past the point of being unbearable, so he determined to resist until the knife was thrust the final time. The soft squish under the man’s boots pounded into his brain. He lashed out before he even came within range.

Adams hesitated; he could see his reflection in the fiery eyes. They seemed to burn with a defiant death-wish which made him regret that all this had ever begun. He could have been tying down the plane by now.

He dared not get too close, yet he wanted to be able to put enough power in the blow to finish him, or at least knock him out, on the first swing. Turning the blunt side of the blade forward, he raised the axe with one hand, and waited for the proper timing. His bleached knuckles stood out against the

grimy handle.

The rusty blade carved a dull red arch in its descent. With muffled thud, the axe twisted out of Adams’ clenched fist and looped end over end into the bloody water. Its splash broke the eternal pause—one lashed out; the other retreated.

Darkness had almost come that time. He shook his head and his vision cleared enough to observe the uplifted axe with its cutting blade now forward. Again it descended—inched its way down. He felt the knife plunge as his head recoiled under the blow.

Once more eternity waited for the axe to complete its acrobatic attempt to bury itself in the marsh. Time returned a bit slower for Adams and he was not quite out of range when the other lunged for him. Through a blurry haze he could see the man nursing bruised ribs under his torn shirt. Then a crimson film slowly washed over his eyes. He blinked, but it only brought more.

Lord, must I leave his world blind?!

His mental scream reverberated across the heavens, but was only audible as a low moan.

It jarred Adams’ attention from the growing red welt and tiny rivulet of blood making its way toward the band of his shorts.

Lord, how could I be so selfish?!

He fished around and quickly located the axe near the roots of some swaying marsh grass.

Screaming downward with the power of both burly arms, the axe passed through the point of eternity and continued on its deadly course. Hairs splintered and flew off like ricks of falling cordwood; followed in instantaneous eons by tiny flecks and then scarlet tear-drops of life which bathed the axe and spattered the contorted features of Adams.

Deeper and deeper it sank into the neck at the base of the skull until at last it severed the armor plated lifeline.

Then the eternally pregnant pause—waiting for death to be born, so life could go on.

Both of them collapsed in a heap on the marshy ground. Though it seemed a huge bumble-bee was rolling around in his head, he had at least regained a bit of sight in one eye and he felt very little pain. The man was reaching toward him; his hand came to rest on his blood-caked head.

Through the buzzing in his brain it seemed like he heard a sob.

A tear trickled down Adams’ face and mingled with the blood and sweat in his beard. He spoke in a low, husky voice.

“You don’t know what it’s like to provide for a wife and nine kids by the sweat of your ass. I’m sorry it had to be this way, but you’re gonna help them kids make it through the winter.”

The buzz gradually faded away and a calm seeped over him like the water oozing up from the tundra. It was finished.

Extracting his knife from the sheath, Adams drew it across the lifeless neck and blood gushed out in a crimson flood. He would need a rope and another knife from the plane.

As he rose and faced the river, the sun’s warmth found him for the first time since the plane’s wheels touched the sandbar. His glance back at the inert carcass of the moose was a silent thanks for the providential care his family received.

He turned and continued across the boggy tundra. Each step produced a little fountain of water which helped bathe away the blood from his feet.

MONDAY

(continued from page 4)

his hometown.” The book slid to the floor. He rotated the glass in his hand, staring at the lamp through the amber liquid.

Not much of a biography, he thought to himself. Not a part of the story was really told; the truth was hidden somewhere deep below and between the lines. Not a word of how he’d quit school when their mum and dad had died in sixty so Ian could go on, not a mention of how hard it had been, of Ian’s mute acceptance of each and every sacrifice, of his growing self-centeredness. Not even a one-line dedication in the front of the novel. He poured himself another glass, the bottle close to a third empty now.

The man had never read the book; there seemed no need to. He could guess at the plot from the questions he’d had to answer or the people he’d had to find who would answer Ian’s queries. Research, Ian had called it—more like accurate fabrication. “Mr. McCullough writes authoritatively of his native northland” the review had said; piss, he still couldn’t change the propane tanks. His book was all pretense, all lies, all foreign experience. And Ian, true to his nature, made money from the hell that other men had suffered and known, a hell that had been their very lives.

He got up slowly and placed two more logs on the fire. He refilled his glass, walked over to the window and stared out, lost in the

nothingness. And now this new thing, this new research, this playing a game that was no game. He thought of Ian out there making notes on this and that, taking it all down for future reference and future use.

The whole trip out to the hydro-line, along the Dog Lake Road, that past Monday, he’d watched his brother. Neither had spoken a word, unwilling to break the silent truce, and wearied from the hours of fruitless argument. The guttural whine of a snow-machine down the road away broke into his lonely reverie. He turned from the window and resumed his seat, his leaded eyes glazed and heavy.

Two hours they’d skidded into the bush, two hours in a pretty well straight line. As much as you could snow-shoe in four days; no, more, because you’d have to stop to make shelter and catch some food or boil some bark each night. No, more yet, your pace would slow after five days in the bush with just your knife, a survival kit, your wits, and nature’s goodness. He sat there, secure in the knowledge that Ian could not walk out. A knowledge which, like the rye he poured from bottle to glass to mouth moved slowly through him.

He’d go get him tomorrow; he’d follow Ian’s neatly printed bearing, and bring him home. There’d be another book, authoritative, true to every detail, yet false and empty, and—another bestseller. It wouldn’t be real though; it couldn’t be. Ian would always know that he only had to stick-it-out for five days. He’d never know his hope fade, nor cry for loneliness; never tiptoe on insanity, nor know the fear which cannot be

articulated afterward, but stays locked-up inside. The cold, the wet, the hunger, all these he could know—but never know himself.

He rose, and picking up the lamp from off the mantle-piece, swayed slowly to the kitchen. He stared hard at the calendar. He read the days out loud: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, counting off with his fingers as he did so. Three days; not long, not short, but long enough to know yourself. He shuffled into the bedroom, placed the lamp on the table and began to undress with the exaggerated care one always exercises when half-drunk. He went to bed and slept deeply.

He got up late that next day. It was only Sunday, and there was nothing of any real importance to be done. Monday he worked. But Tuesday, Tuesday he went out. Out the Dog Lake Road, out the hydro-line, out two hours in the bush...out...out to the balsam lean-to.

He knelt there, trying to warm the frozen body, rubbing it, rubbing it ’til it hurt his hands. He worked his lower lip slowly between his teeth, half against the cold, and half...half against reality itself. He tried hard to be one of the people “who realize that a true proximity to nature presupposes an acceptance of the inevitability of death; death—stark, tragic and harsh, yet intimately necessary.”

He pulled the body to him, damning the cursed abnormality that lay cradled in his arms. An abnormality that held a man. He rocked slowly on his knees, back and forth, and back again.



—Diana Vanderwal

THE CASTRATED CAT

*Tail over nose and curled up toes
It sleeps as if naught were amiss.
An ear in the air, a bristling of hair
A look that asks, "What's this?"*

*A bat with the paw to the mouse made of straw
Sends it tumbling under the chair.
Then in a crouch from under the couch
Moves the hunter with a stealthy air.*

*Bound upon bound and bite after bite
It attacks the poor mangled mouse.
At last a shrug, a retreat to the rug,
And peace returns to the house.*

—Otto Keyes

THE PLACE OF THE SUN

(continued from page 1)

The best Jenny would ever be able to do would be to sit around all day and do the sewing and mending or read books and keep up with her schooling. Really, what a waste it was to have such a sharp, intelligent mind and no body to keep up with it. Her daughter would die within herself and she could do nothing. It was no use to even pray for a miracle, Jenny would never walk again and she must accept it. Maybe if she kept repeating that over and over enough times to herself she might soon come to believe it. It was better than nothing and at least it was something to hang onto.

The late afternoon sun was spreading itself out in thick, warm layers on the counter and sliding down the drainboard into the kitchen sink, when into the quiet stillness of the room floated the sound of a sudden, resounding thump. She jumped then, startled, and rushed down the hallway and into Jenny's room with the doctor close behind her. There they both froze in the open doorway, like actors watching the last half of a bitter satirical comedy.

The bed sheets were lying in a crumpled heap at the foot of the bed; the blankets trailed carelessly over the side and spilled onto the floor, yet they were still tucked snugly into the footend of the bed. Jenny was no longer lying peacefully asleep, the way she had seen her only a short while ago. Instead, Jenny was sprawled on the floor alongside the

THOUGHTS ON APPLES

*Apples at the store,
Come in red and yellow (yes)
Shades of wine perfection.
Take a juicy bite—
Sink those molars into cool,
Crisp,
Concrete.
Feel the crunch
On the tip of the tingle
Tongue.
The think I like best
They don't sell anymore—
Not solid gold ones at the store.
You can afford them
Only in season
Pickled in salt tears
To preserve their beauty.
An apple of gold
Grows only with rain,
And lately,
Just lately,
It's been
Pretty dry around here.*

—Sandy Van Den Berg

*the sound:
weeping
behind
the door
seeping
beneath
the
door
flowing over the floor
(cracks drink trickles)
eddying in circles
in circles in
eddies whirling eddies
splashing from step
to
step
spilling onto the floor
wave
upon
wave
lapping against my toes
wrinkling my cold white feet
diluting
heart headed blood*

—Mimi Ernest

Special thanks to Fred Tamminga
for recommending the material
for this Fine Arts issue.

bed and was clinging desperately to the blankets, trying to use them as a support to raise herself. Her first thought was that Jenny had fallen out of bed and she was going to help her back in when all of a sudden she stopped, and stared at her daughter. Jenny wasn't even trying to get back into bed. She was trying to walk. In horror she watched Jenny struggle to an upright sitting position and then swaying precariously, pull herself up until she stood with both feet planted firmly on the floor. She still clung to the blankets tightly as if needing moral support before she dropped them and slowly swung her left leg in front of her right one. She watched the pain move in sharp lines across Jenny's pale, small face and light up her eyes with an almost wild, fanatical gleam. What was Jenny trying to prove, she thought helplessly.

There her daughter stood, a slight, small, slim figure in a loose fitting red sweater and a rumpled plaid skirt. Her long, dark hair hung down to her waist in tight braids with matching plaid bows that tied around the ends. And she was smiling, between the pain of moving forward and the failure of her fall, the most triumphant smile her mother had ever seen on her face.

"Jenny girl," she whispered hoarsely. "What are you trying to do?" Jenny turned her wide, blue eyes on her mother then, and took another slow step. "He said I couldn't do it, but I can. See, Mom, I'm..." Jenny stumbled then, her left leg losing strength, and she watched her fall. "...walking." She finished from the floor. "See, Mom, I'm

walking." Jenny's smile mingled with her tears as she tried again to get up and walk, but this time the blankets were two, too many steps away to help support her now, and she slumped to the floor again, her left leg thrust out at a grotesque angle.

It was like watching a tragic comedy, she thought again, where you want to laugh and cry, both at the same time, and you end up doing neither, because the pain is too real, too near, too deep, to permit you to laugh it away. For she knew what her daughter did not know yet. Jenny would never walk again—could never walk again. Suddenly, it was like something snapped in her brain and she felt like the four walls were closing in on her, and she saw George and Jenny both go floating by her, hand in hand. God, she thought, was she cracking up? She couldn't stand the pain or accept it anymore. Her heart was too full of pain and she had never been able to accept pain.

Looking up through the window she could see the sun sliding down now around the rim of the valley they lived in and heading towards the lowest hill to hide away behind until the morning came again. The whole sky seemed to be on fire, burning orange around the edges and then before one realized, it was gone, dying a bloody red death on the carpet at her feet.

Blindly, she turned and rushed past old Doc. Nielsen and out into the cool, dim shadows of the hallway, leaving her daughter, like Daniel, to face her lions, alone.