

# The Trinity Review



Volume CVII Number 1  
*Winter 1993-1994*



# The Trinity Review

Volume 107 Number 1

*Winter 1993–1994*



*James Arthur*

**The Trinity Review**

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## **Winter Haiku**

Through a shell of snow  
black twigs poke against the sky  
skeletons of other, buried seasons.

*Brooke Clark*

## **The Brahmin Visits the Half Caste**

That night  
he, walking on  
lotus leaves  
rubbed tiger balm  
on my swollen heart  
and rocked my  
broken body.

But pitiful creature  
I could not  
even with  
clenched fists  
tattered lips  
bear the pain  
of his embrace.

*Sharmila Anandakrishnan*

## Traveller's Tale

In the spring, at a party given by my brother, I was introduced to two students who were going to Hungary to do research for their doctorates. (To Hungary, they explained, because they had to go somewhere exotic, or which could be interpreted as exotic.) They asked if anyone there was going to be going to Hungary.

"I might be," I said.

"Why?" someone asked.

"Just travelling," I said. I don't remember much else about the party; the conversation at my brother's parties is always much the same. One of the students gave me the address where they would be staying in Hungary, and also their phone number, which I was to call to find out when they would be there.

I decided to travel in Hungary for a month, and then go on to Western Europe, which is more organized to present itself to tourists. I would go to visit the students at the end of my month in Hungary. It would be interesting to talk to them about what they had learned of Hungary, and to compare it with my own impressions.

However, in the summer, when I began travelling, I found it impossible to get any unified impression of Hungary. All my experiences seemed to circle around a central presence, or absence, of which I could understand nothing. I put off telephoning the students. Eventually, I realized that my time in Hungary was nearing its end, without anything's having been clarified. However, it was still possible that when I came to talk to the students, everything would make sense. I called them. No answer. The next day I called them again. Again no answer.

I began calling them more frequently, with no more successful results. Finally, I arrived in the town where they were supposed to be staying. I telephoned them several more times. In the evening, I went to the address they had given me. The house was dark. I waited for a while outside, then rang the bell.

An old man came to the gate. He explained that the girls I was looking for were not there. They had gone to Budapest to do some research. They would be back in a few days. He also said that their telephone wasn't working. Now everything made sense. The Hungarian telephone system

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is very bad. Sometimes all you hear is silence on the other end of the line. Sometimes you hear someone else's conversation. Sometimes you hear your own voice echoed back to you. It doesn't necessarily matter how often you try.

So I caught the next train for Vienna. I had always wanted to see Vienna.

*Hugh Thomas*



*Archangel*

*Gabrielle McIntire*



## Five Cantos From the Prayer Book of Aphrodite

Love is a black beetle,  
chitinous, serrated,  
many-segmented and complex.

Love is the soft ear  
of a wild cherry flower,  
a Japanese pen and ink.

Love is a strange sea bird,  
fractious in its cries  
as it flies inland.

Love is a chambered nautilus shell  
thrown into startled hands  
by a devilish sea.

Love is the fickle moon's round reflection  
caught in a sieve  
by the fishers of memory.

*Sandra Kasturi*

## **The Haiku City**

Come see our city;  
see where Everywhere is a  
building on John Street.

Snare drum plays backup  
to the bounce of her long hair  
as she promenades

The streetcar hero  
quietly pays his fare  
and triumphantly boards

Blades of purest ice  
skate along sheets of metal  
in rhombus patterns

Personal dragons  
sing us asleep each nightfall  
in haiku city

*Alex Wiebe*

## Kingston

The crows woke me up, outside it's cool.  
Green leaves keep their color, as  
does the lake, or is it river.  
Stone buildings stand and shiver,  
ghostly and appalled, too scared to quake.  
History cannot leave, the limestone shows.  
Layers and layers do not disappear  
to be replaced by fake slates. They work  
in and grow, molded or flattened  
by a mass amnesia, wiped off the board.

Morning glories hide the wood.  
Walls stop up the ugly stories.  
Webs are everywhere, the spiders grow.  
The clock chimes, everybody knows.

*Lena Ann Friesen*

## **“More like a fine library than a bookstore”**

*(a slogan of the University of Toronto Bookstore)*

More like a library than a fine bookstore.  
More like a bookstore than a library fine.

*Hugh Thomas*

Expectant  
Exhilarated  
Insinuated by the light  
My eyes, hypnotised by the fire, are reddening  
And blood throbbing in my temples catches ablaze.  
Chanting is encroaching  
Accelerating faster  
Pitch becomes higher  
Souls of those forsaken are saved  
Around me, frenzied bodies in fantastical rhythms of power  
And pleasure pulsing through my veins  
Possesses me insanely  
Manipulates  
Mutilates my senses with celebrated madness.  
The drums beat  
Savage  
Can ravage my mind  
While spirits sear welts on my skin  
And blood and sweat stain the sand  
Where I writhe naked  
Inviting the pain of being forcefully stripped  
Of consciousness and realism  
By an exotic spirit inflicting erotic punishments  
On my bare feet  
And trailing wisps of smoke along my tongue and beyond  
Blurring my senses with a depraved exhilaration.  
The fire, flicking its fingers at the undulating darkness  
In a sensual dance between  
Under and around the tangible night  
Burns deep beneath the realm of human flesh.  
Though bonded by their cries of pagan ecstasy around me  
And forces shaking and sweating under my skin,  
I soar with the wind whipping at my hair and my limbs  
Are wrapped brutally in the tangle of spirits  
Subjugating me to slavery.  
I whimper with their touch of tortuous savagery  
They know my being from the inside and slide to forbidden heights  
Until my mind becomes blind.

Beginning from my exposed and bleeding fingers  
I become another and catch the spirit of the fire  
Betrayed by my raw instincts and addiction to obeah,  
My mind pleads to stop but the shadows seduce me on  
I yield to their strength and let demons  
In the trembling rhythms  
Of the drums  
Pull me to new heights in limbo between here and beyond.  
Powerless to the cutting energy of the shrieking  
Screaming spirit resurrected by my senses  
I dance among the stripped  
Shards of cloth at my feet  
Until I fall to my knees  
Crying for the scratches inflicted on my skin  
And in fear of their fingers lashing in glorification  
Of my wrongs and my sins. I beg for my wounds  
Forced on faster and further to obey the demands of the drums  
Vaguely aware of the circle of people heaving and praying  
Lusting for what I savour  
I never touch ground  
But dance  
On the smoke from the fire  
Its tongue and fingers entwining beneath my gown  
Bruising my rational into oblivion  
Beyond reason  
While my senses shudder in divine revelation before  
I fall and fall into unconscious delirium  
Abandoned  
Unshackled  
Left lifeless and broken  
By His possession He ruins.  
I come alive again tonight  
And in the blackness  
Of a smoldering, unknown calling  
Of an obeah that rages with the night  
Perform the rites and willingly invite  
His violations.

*Gabrielle Hosein*

## **Poem for Suzy**

Weight of words: a backpack full of books.  
Airmail letters are always light,  
on onionskin for "airy thinness";  
heavy words only those traded along the trip.

My Lao Tzu went south with you to Greece;  
your Wallace Stevens headed east with me.  
Now, there's not much time; your ticket's for tomorrow.  
We swap the books back.

Later, at the train station  
no good words serve.  
"Hope I'll see you again, soon!"  
Hug, smiles, then the train's gone.

But I can feel the new weight  
of your gaze on the books you borrowed.  
(When she read this, what did she think?)  
Having been here, you remain beside me.

*Hugh Thomas*

## Requiem

What do you do  
with a dead son's bike?  
This flaming purple testament  
to asphalt hours of "try again"  
to plucking gravel from bloodied knees  
to . . . Daddy . . . don't let go.

In this musty, voiceless alcove  
I resurrect you from the  
Memorabilia Shoebox  
worn by the tireless ritual of opening  
With the stitch of years  
You are mended, my love  
First arm and heart, then fiendish  
Inquisitive eyes.  
Broken by this halfway metamorphosis  
into living flesh.  
I rage against your haunted silence  
Cry over psychedelic backyard polaroids  
And remember a betrayed promise  
Of protection.

*Lisa Kovarik*

## **A Contemporary Fable for the 1990s**

There was once a large monster that built itself a cave underneath a cathedral and settled down to live there. It had become accustomed to living beneath churches of all sizes; when it was eventually discovered the parishoners would always ask the monster to leave under cover of darkness, so as not to frighten people away from the next morning's service. They never threatened the monster, or spoke of it overly harshly. As such, the monster was content to continue to live underneath cathedrals.

The monster was quite large and required a steady diet of human flesh, preferably in bite-sized portions; which meant, of course, that its preferred diet was small children. It had tried to eat adults on occasion, but they never digested well and more often than not made the monster terribly ill. The eating of children was intrinsic to the monster's nature and could not be helped. It could not survive without food. It had to be fed.

A curious by-product of the monster's existence was that the cathedral under which it lived, whichever one it happened to be at the time, invariably grew larger and more picturesque the longer that the monster ate and defecated in its cave. It had something to do with the peculiar metabolism of the monster that recombined various mineral elements on a molecular level as they were digested. After a few weeks of the monster's residency, the very rocks of the cathedral would begin to themselves feed off of the monster's waste. Also, if the acoustics of the building were sufficient, and the earth between the cave and the building was dense enough, the faint grumblings of the monster could, if you were listening from the inside of the cathedral, approach the level of music.

Since it was often part of the duties of the clergy to tend to the basement works such as the furnace, and since the monster's cave would often eventually encroach on the lowest basement room, the clergy would usually be the first to learn of the monster's presence. But they would be reluctant to act; and after a while longer, many parishoners would learn of the monster's presence, but be reluctant to act; because after all, their cathedral had grown so pretty, and there was such glorious music emanating from the building, that there seemed no need to change the situation at all. The monster's dietary habits were seldom discussed.



In some cities, this led to professed adults standing by their cathedral, eagerly devouring the spectacle of their wonderful new house of worship with its sparkly stained-glass windows and its vast opulent dome, while their right hand impatiently pushed aside the child tugging at their pant leg, trying desperately but in vain to convince its elder that it would rather not be eaten alive.

Eventually, however, some innocent parishoner, who had been carefully steered away from the basement all this time, would stumble down to the furnace-room and discover the secret. This could sometimes be kept quiet, but it was always inevitable that the monster should be found out once and for all, and then it would have to leave, under cover of darkness, with a small group of well-wishers to see it off. They might even offer it one or two more of their children as a farewell gift, before it left to lumber off and find a new parish to call its home. These well-wishers would return to the city, and, looking back at their splendid cathedral, sigh mournfully for the loss of the beast's rumblings, but know in their hearts that they had done everything for their glory in the eyes of God, and the Church. It was such a terrible shame that the monster had to be driven away.

After all, the monster's intrinsic nature could not be changed. It could not survive without food. It had to be fed.

*Alex Wiebe*

## **Tense at Nancy Clarke's Wedding**

Nancy Clarke's getting married. At Trinity, naturally. We all come. There's dancing afterwards. In fact, perhaps it's not a wedding but a birthday party, and from years ago at that, back when a birthday was an unmitigable event, not a continuation of the perpetual intermittent party. We know:

    this is something her father bought her  
    this is a one-time-only special  
    she gets to be queen for a day.

The guests set off to set up for a let down if they're let in at the Journey's End. Nancy Clarke stayed. I try to avoid the present tenseness of the moment. Nancy Clarke and I started to dance.

    What could be likelier? Many people have danced with Nancy Clarke. In my case it was different (I enjoyed thinking) because I was dancing with her at her wedding, the closest thing possible to marrying her myself.

    It is by thoughts such as these you may escape a tension. (Parentheses help, provided you don't let them convince you you're in control of the situation. Then you might try to put Nancy Clarke in parentheses, right on the dance floor, and there are laws against that in this state.)

    The dance is over. Nancy Clarke goes away to put on her going-away dress. The guests come back into the silence she left. They construct a swimming pool out of the collective unconscious.

    "It's such a hot day and such a cool pool. Out of their formals, everyone looks the same," they say. "Underwater, you might mistake your own legs for someone else's."

*Hugh Thomas*



*James Arthur*

The tattered remnants of the snow are soiled and shameful. The traffic island stands, waiting, a lonely, barren slab of worn concrete, trapped in the maze of painted lines. On either side the poisonous, inconstant tide of traffic screams. In her room, my friend speaks in hesitant half-gestures. She cries for her distant, dying father, and plays disco music for two days. Outside, the park is grey, yellow, and brown, a sea of melting puddles. There are more squirrels than ever. The brittle tree branches moan with their rustlings.

*Sarah Wilson*



*Male Physique: Study No. 2*

*Bruce Boswell*

## Thrown

The tilt of your head  
to smile  
in silence;

how do I say this –

sweetness grows  
invisibly  
petals curve behind green  
armour

then bloom,  
growing, grown.

These trees hiding  
lights in leaves  
sussurrate in the breeze.

A veil drop, a glimpse.  
We smile  
in silence.

*Lena Ann Friesen*

## **1982 Toyota Tercel, extension cord orange**

Low-leaning branches muffle  
distant sirens  
where the concrete cannot stretch  
it crumbles  
ashen and sodden  
in the deliberate  
ponderous  
last drops of dark summer rain  
Clouds scurry in the half-grey sky  
east to west

He squints to blow smoke from his mouth.  
not thinking  
He touches the scar  
to stroke a scarlet snake  
wound on his neck  
ants tear across my ragged fingertips  
my toes curl on the wooden steps

A tuneless complaint  
from the distant night bus  
already fades  
beyond the gate's rusting hinges

the city sky echoes glassily  
with the forgotten whistles  
of sleepy, unheard fireworks.

*Sarah Wilson*

## Giants of Jazz Volume XIV:

### *Buzz Hawkes's Last Gig at the Alley Cat*

This is the only film ever taken of him, and it shows him old, dissipated, playing what turned out to be his final set. In fact, Buzz Hawkes never made the *Giants of Jazz* series—the director decided to cut Buzz's segment after his death, claiming that the single reel I have been watching over and over was not sufficient footage for a complete portrait of the man. It is a black and white film, the sound full of pops and cracks, the image scratched in places, and the bumps and irregularities in the wall on which I project it seem to suit both the film and its subject.

It was filmed with a small, hand-held camera, and opens with a slow shot down a filthy street, taken out the window of a moving car, which gradually stops in front of a decrepit club with a sagging marquee that announces *Tonite: Buzz Hawkes, Legendary Trumpeter One Show Only!!* A jump in the film, then a long tracking shot of Buzz coming down the narrow hall to his dressing-room behind the stage of the *Alley Cat*, a New York club that he would have turned down ten years before the film was made. Maybe even five. He is dressed in black pants that look too baggy for his thin legs, a black jacket, and a white shirt, unbuttoned at the neck, with a slender black tie loosely knotted, clothes made for a lost, younger body. A cigarette dangles from one corner of his mouth, his trumpet case bumps against his leg. He lilt and weaves as he walks, as though he were drunk, or about to faint, occasionally supporting himself against the wall with his free hand. It is hard to make out his face in the shadowy hall, but when he sits beneath the harsh lights of the dressing-room it is lined and creased, the flesh seeming almost to sag off the skull. The camera shows merciless close-ups. For a moment, he looks straight into the lens, twists his mouth into a grotesque half-grin, and says, "Well, here we go again," his voice a wasted rasp. He looks away and plays a few scales, warming up, then roams all over the range of the horn, hitting high notes and low, the sound taking on a breathy, dying quality as his lungs empty. Something in that failing sound tugs at the inside of my throat.

Then he plays a few themes: *My Funny Valentine*, *Love for Sale*, *You Go to My Head*, wandering off again into notes that seem unconnected. Smoke rises from his half-consumed cigarette in the ashtray, the notes

following the translucent pillar of grey towards the ceiling. The film jumps with a sudden crackle that startled me the first time I watched it, though now I know every sound, and he is wending his way among the front tables towards the stairs that lead up to the stage, the hands of patrons reaching out to brush against him as he passes. The camera pans across the faces in the audience, faces that express pity or shock at the state Buzz has sunk to, faces that remember the pin-ups and movie deals of the past, and then he lurches by, the trumpet dangling loosely from his left hand, hooked over his index finger. He steps onstage, the applause dying away as he launches into the theme of *'Round Midnight*, his favourite opener. The piano tinkles, the brushes sweep across the drums, the bass murmurs, as though all the other musicians were afraid of shattering his fragile sound. The stage is filmed from near the back, and a few shadowy people can be glimpsed seated at various tables as the camera slowly zooms in on Buzz. He begins his solo, eyes closed, horn weaving slightly in his hands. The notes ride gradually up the scale as the camera closes on his face, his eyebrows rising into an almost painful expression as he reaches for a note at the top of his register, and makes it, though the sound trembles, on the verge of collapsing into a wheezing gasp. Just as it seems the note cannot last another second, the film crackles like gunfire and ends.

I rewind it, listening to the hum of the machine, the end of the film clicking around the reel like a fast drumbeat. Carefully, I thread it back into the projector, start the film again.

The *Alley Cat*, the sagging marquee, but I see the bright neon clubs of the early days, *The Paradise*, *The Velvet Horn*, all the musicians who wanted to play with Buzz when he first emerged. He was big in those days, cut heavy ten-inch L.P.'s with everyone in the business. No one could get enough of that quiet tone, his solos that seemed to roll out of the trumpet with no help from his lips or fingers. An image of him, naked in a brimming bathtub, his trumpet straight up in the air, playing *Anything Goes* fast and furious, feet tapping out the impossible tempo on the silver faucet, fingers dancing along the valves, a crowd of girls gathered around him, their appreciative giggles tumbling from between their thin, pale lips. Pictures of him on the cover of every magazine, resting his chin on his trumpet, staring at his trumpet as though he wanted to ask it something, cradling his trumpet in careful hands, the dark shadows of dimples around his grinning mouth. Buzz in a red car with the top down, playing *Makin' Whoopee* to



the girl in the car next to him while they sat at a stop light, she pulling away and he chasing after her, foot on the accelerator, still madly improvising off the theme, taking his right hand off the valves every few seconds to steer.

In his lilting walk, the rhythmic bump of the trumpet case against his leg, I see the child he was when he first played the trumpet at age six, see him carrying his bulky instrument to school to play in the band, the case at the end of his long, thin arm banging his knee, his shoulder slouched down on the side carrying the trumpet, the nervous excitement before every school concert in front of a sea of parents, his wanderings over tunes in the music room at lunch hour, no matter what the weather or the games to be found outside. He stood on a hill above the high school, two girls seated on the grass in front of him, Buzz bent over so that the horn pointed straight at the ground, his relaxed wanderings through the structure of *My Ideal* spreading out from the bell of the trumpet while his hair fell free and arched down before his face. The girls bobbed their heads, following him along a rhythm that seemed inevitable.

He turns to the camera and says, "Well, here we go again," the only words spoken in the film, before he reaches for the trumpet and begins to warm up. It is the only time Buzz addresses the camera, the only time he shows any awareness that he is being filmed, and it draws me. As the viewer of the film, this is the only moment that belongs to me. His practice scales are for himself, his playing onstage is for the audience in the club, and only in a single instant do I feel that the two of us make contact, even through the distancing machinations of camera and wobbling beam of light. Those five words are an invitation to look behind the wall he has constructed against the last years of his career, and through this slight crack I see the worn core of tired resolve that has forced five years of final, impossible notes through a convoluted pathway of tortured brass. I can see a kind of fear in his direct eyes in that moment, a fear that perhaps, tonight, he will discover that he has lost a note, somewhere at the top of his register, that each month he loses another note, his range wasting away along with his body. In this image of apprehension I come to the only true insight one can gain from this film, and find a moment that is the same no matter how many times I view this last concert.

Buzz falls silent, and under the harsh lights of the dressing room his mouth works as he prepares to warm up, to search the range of both the

instrument and his lips, nervous as the first time he raised the foreign circle of cool metal to his child's mouth and desperately tried to recreate the sounds he had heard on the crackling radio, tapping his foot without even knowing he was doing it. The fear in his eyes as a child prophesied the fear in his eyes as an adult, the youthful lines that were so endearing prefiguring dissolution, the descent into a wilderness where he blew lizards and dragons out of the bell of his trumpet, where snakes crawled up his mouthpiece to devour his tongue and thick green liquid brimmed up and over his fingers each time he pressed a valve down, where the horn bent and melted when he hit a high note and his lungs shredded like wet tissue paper, a bloody mess of tissue paper that he coughed and retched into enamel toilets behind seedy bars in Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm, the only places that would take him as he tumbled through ages of dusty notes and scratched, aching records.

His lurching walk through the tables is his stagger from his mother's grave. He took something to keep himself steady during the funeral, and as they lowered the coffin into the ground he saw her hands, trailing ragged flags of flesh, break through the coffin and reach for him as if to embrace her small, bullied son, saw her sit up, empty eyes oozing black tears that dripped onto all the cuts and bruises of his boyhood, and Buzz stumbled weeping from the grave, leaning against crooked drunken stones for support.

The picture jolts angrily as someone jostles the cameraman where he stands, then steadies, and Buzz' face gradually fills the pitted, scarred wall, his face crumpled like the skin of a dead animal, his eyebrows rising as he reaches for that last high note. In those eyebrows I see the surprised expression of the maid who found him the next morning, slouched on his sofa in the hotel room, arms wrapped around a cushion, the sudden red splash of his last cough sprayed across the ivory white of the sofa cover, dried black droplets clinging desperately to the silver trumpet mouthpiece that lay silent on the coffee table in front of him, his last note a dry, guttural choke.

I remove the film from the projector, turn the lights on, light a cigarette of my own. I am in the habit of checking my palm each time I cough into my hand, looking for prescient red drops, though I have found none. Tomorrow night, I will watch the film again, the only film of Buzz Hawkes, and search out the paths of new biographies among the faded

images that stumble across my uneven wall, among the crackling, dusty notes he played that final night in the *Alley Cat*.

*Brooke Clark*



*James Arthur*



*Sam Burgener*

## Holiday in Turkey, with Suzy

She walks by the sea  
to escape personality.  
Her absence is kind to me;  
why should I care?

If I walk by the sea  
it means nothing to me:  
boring immensity,  
unpleasant glare

(but ignoring the scenery  
seems like a waste to me;  
surely I ought to be  
observing my share.)

Talking with Suzy  
her experience baffles me:  
“What an interesting country,  
wish I was there!”

And she was the first to see  
some mutual affinity.  
Oh, what’s it like to be  
Suzy Menair?

*Hugh Thomas*

## **Beginning**

Before Bronze, before Stone  
Before unbanished gods they stood  
Shedding primate fur.  
Like holy statisticians  
Molding myth from observations:  
    “She, the goddess, made the fruit,  
    Gave the fruit, is the fruit.”

Is a lie. Do not eat.  
She is serpentine, with every limb extended.  
Do not be tempted in the unbanished garden  
to swallow mythology whole,  
Or you will fall from grace  
like Newtonian apples  
Charmed by gravity.

And now one fledgling gaze is fixed  
At table height, with dangling feet below  
Compounding abstract arithmetic fruit.  
He sees the myth now, sees the lie,  
Sees this blackhole, wormhole void  
Diazamine drenched and dyed a perfect red.  
The myth is dead. Banished now.

Do not eat the apple.

*Georgia Wilder*

## **Moved, Not Shaken**

*(A Found Poem)*

If you are moving into a new living space  
follow the guidelines listed below  
for a smooth and easy transition:

Find mailbox  
Determine postal code  
Identify laundry room  
Learn superintendent's name  
Do not annoy neighbors

When making initial apartment inspection, check:

Stove and refrigerator come with all parts intact  
Toilet is operational  
No formica or arborite peeling  
Screens are not damaged or missing

You have all your books  
You have toilet paper

And your vanity  
has no scratches, cuts, cracks or burns.

(Taken from Form #4041A-72—Incoming Inspection Report)

*Gemma Files*

## **The Gretel Papers**

They phoned me yesterday  
to tell me what you had done to yourself  
and all I can think  
is why and why and why  
I suppose I ought to have known  
that it would lead to this  
but in truth  
I never saw it coming, Gretel  
I never saw it coming

You were always gay and golden-haired  
before those weeks in the woods  
and even now  
it is that image that stays with me  
not that of the silent young woman you became  
the woman they tell me  
is lying in a hospital bed  
attached to tubes

Did you put your head in an oven  
to atone for what you did  
what *we* did  
in that little cottage  
in the woods  
all those years ago

Is this your way of shouting?  
Is this your trail of breadcrumbs, Gretel?

We had no choice  
but to try to survive  
me with my chicken bone  
through the bars  
and you  
living in fear



but waiting for just one chance  
I saw what you did to the old woman  
Gretel  
and only applauded your courage  
your quick wit

Why did you never say anything  
to me of all people  
over these many years  
I who suffered with you  
who understood you  
who stood fast beside you  
in the darkness  
after the breadcrumbs  
had disappeared

Gretel  
my sister  
I'm coming now  
to hold your hand again  
in your new terror  
to push back the darkness  
and lead you out of the woods  
once more

But remember  
Gretel  
remember my love for you  
and know  
that when I sit by your hospital bed  
and ask to take your hand  
to feel your fingers in mine  
know  
that I,  
I will not be fooled  
by a thin chicken bone

*Sandra Kasturi*

## No Thinking Zone

"When the legislation was first introduced," Mr. H was saying, "it seemed so obviously a good idea. My first reaction, I remember it quite plainly, was one of sheerest optimism."

"Quite right. My reaction exactly," Mr. C commented.

"But the problem is," Mr. H continued, "that you had to leave people space to think *somewhere*. So what you find now is people standing just outside their office towers, clustered together, thinking like mad. Almost every time I have to enter a public building, I also have to wade my way through a huge dense cloud of rumination!"

"Hmmm, yes," Mr. C concurred, "I'd noticed that too."

"And I'm simply unable to frequent cafes late at night anymore. Why, quite often the mental activity is so thick you can barely manage to speak! This legislation, rather than making our lives easier, seems to be having the opposite effect; it has not *reduced* the amount of thinking in our city, but rather *concentrated* it."

"I couldn't agree more," Mr. C chimed in.

"What really puzzles me," at this point Mr. H took a small pause in his ramblings to ensure that nobody was just entering the washroom, "is why the young people start. They must know how harmful it is for them. Just look at our generation, toppling over dead left and right because we'd all been thinking so heavily as teenagers; worrying ourselves dry with higher concerns. We didn't know it was wrong back then, of course, but these kids should know better. They must think they're immortal or something."

"Mrs. R is celebrating her 218th birthday tomorrow, and she says she's never entertained a notion in her life," Mr. C corroborated.

Mr. H did not respond immediately. "I suppose I'll never live that long. I've tried to quit no end of times; it's comical, really, sneaking a quick think in the washroom like a schoolboy."

There was a brief silence.

"I say," Mr. H had just checked his watch, "we'd better get back to work. The supervisor will be back soon."

Mr. C coughed and drew another long drag from his cigarette. "Certainly."

*Alex Wiebe*



