



RG18

Ottawa University
Campus
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

1963

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Grand Prize Winner

Winner Essay Division

The name of the Grand Prize Winner will be engraved on the trophy donated by Madtsons.

ON READING POETRY

Poetry is concerned with life. The experience of a poem involves one's whole being. The first step in understanding a poem is to **let the poem happen**. Allow it complete freedom to do with you as it will. Let the images guide you to the poet's world; let the rhythm carry you along the channels of the poet's mind.

Only after the experience of the poem can you reflect upon its effect. What images did it leave you with? What emotions and thoughts did it evoke? What associations did you make in your mind as you read it? A simple poem will be used for illustration:

On a withered branch
a crow perched
in the autumn evening.
— Basho

The image is vivid — a rough, craggy, black branch across an evening sky and a sleek black crow perched on it. The mood is calm, serene, melancholy, lonely; associations are made with the season of autumn, evening, with coldness and sadness, with a lonely kind of beauty. There is rich association in the contrast and similarity between the crow and the withered branch. The branch is crooked, rough. The crow is rough and crooked at the feet, but full and smooth and sleek in body. The crow has life and moves of his own accord. The branch sways with the movement of the crow and the wind. The branch, the crow, and the autumn evening all seem interdependent upon each other. The branch is to hold the bird, the crow is to provide contrast, and the autumn evening is to provide some place for it all to happen and to unify the parts.

Once one has been able to name some of the effects a poem has had, he can retrace his steps and look at **how** these effects were created. Simple direct description was used in our illustration, clearly setting limits for the imagination. The effortlessness and simplicity give a feeling of naturalness and bring the reader to a reality of a living experience created by the poet. The "happening" of the poem gives one a feeling of a solitary observer — a detachment of sorts, in order to be attached to a greater whole. The fact of the experience of the poem is colored by the tone of graceful acceptance and of the peculiar sensitivity in the poem. Thus a simple, rustic, ordinary happening is rich in effects and meaning.

Depending on the poem, one should look for particular poetic devices. Rhythm of a poem is an important factor even in our little illustration. The order in which the images are presented causes an effect. The withered branch appears first. This sets the perspective — the image is set skyward. The crow is placed as if we see him perching, and the last line fills the atmosphere as the bird is suspended in a colored autumn sky.

The whole sound of a poem should be examined for effect. Meter and rhyme are devices used in many poems; and many poems are written in specific forms. This poem we are taking as an illustration has a very precise form in its original Japanese and can only be approximated in translation. The poem is a Japanese haiku and the form has three lines of five, seven and five syllables respectively. The three parts of the form complement the three movements of the rhythm. The preciseness of the form has additional meaning for the Japanese because of the beauty of its balance and because of the ancient historic tradition of the form.

The next and last question to ask one's self is what has happened as a result of the effect. Another way to put this is, "What does the poem mean **to me**?" (It is important here to stop and note that the meaning intended by the poet is not by any means the only meaning a poem can have. There are at least three reasons for this. Poets themselves often discover meaning in a poem which goes beyond what they were saying. Poets sometimes forget what they meant in poems, but this does not imply the poem is without meaning. Thirdly, the reader can find meaning in a poem which is actually there but which the poet never thought of.) What has happened to you, the reader? Have you been made able to see the world in a different way? Have you been able to have a richer, deeper experience of something?

Our poem has caused a unique experience of a withered branch and a crow. The feeling is of tranquility and unity — a certain sadness and a certain sort of joy through the experience of the self-affirmation of reality. One is made to see the meaning of his life in relationship with all of his environment — if one is reflective — and to see his place in the scheme as one not of separation but of unity.

— Bruce J. Anderson

A SUMMER PICTURE

I lay on my bed looking out the window, idly watching what was, for me, a typical summer evening. The sun was glancing over the hill, gazing back at the world he was reluctantly leaving. The sky was a brilliant blue accented with fleecy white clouds, while over in the west blazed a vivid display of reds, yellows, oranges and purples as the sun made its farewells. The sunbeams wove dappled patterns on the back lawn as they danced between the leafy branches of the stately oak trees. From somewhere in the neighborhood came the muffled drone of the lawn mower, and the fragrant aroma of the new-mown grass filled my nostrils as a sudden breeze seeped past me into the room. The twitter of sleepy birds that were preparing for bed filled the air. From far down the road, the cheerful chatter of playing children could be heard.

The peacefulness of the scene was suddenly shattered by the loud treble yapping of a puppy that sighted a white cat disdainfully crossing the lawn. With a rush and a furious bark he was after her. The cat gave one quick comprehensive glance behind her and headed for the safety of her own porch. Losing the race, the puppy gave a final disappointed bark and plodded back home, where with a drowsy grunt, he flopped down under a spreading juniper bush.

The rest of the neighborhood seemed to agree with the sleeping puppy. The birds grew silent as they became settled on their branches and, one by one, tucked their heads under the soft down of their wings. The lawn mower slowly died out, finally coming to a sputtering halt. A mother came out on her porch calling, "Billeee, Dickeee, bedtime!" "Coming, Mommy," was the reluctant reply as the children scampered home.

The brilliant colors slowly faded from the sky, and though the sun made one more feeble attempt, he at last gradually sank out of sight. A sudden silence filled the tired neighborhood, as one by one the stars came twinkling out and the golden moon came up over the distant hill, gazing at what was now her domain.

— Judith Ann Fisher

I REMEMBER HER SILVER HAIR

That city — the hell of noon,
the madness of night.
How I loved to hate her.

We met once
in a reflection.
I remember her silver hair.

She knew me by my wallet and my stare.

I saw her in the rain-cloaked lights,
the practiced grins, the lonely streets
that measure distance by a memory.

She found me in the crowds,
the alleys, and the prayers —
how I hate to love her.

— Kathleen MacLennan

SCHOLARS

Ever in this barred house
closed to all falling time
and sure reminders of loss

there sit ancient representatives
amid keepers of long regrets

who imprisoned in thought
stare out in cold longing

to the playing water and wind —

to waves of threatening grass
forgiving of the first foot-fall.

— Theodore Hirschfield

THE HUTS ARE ABANDONED NOW

The bluegrass and white fences stretched ahead of my family and me for as far as we could see. The sun glistened on the rolling hillsides and a quietness, typical of Southern life, seemed to have settled on the countryside around us. The splendor of Kentucky was presented to us in an array of glorious blues, greens,

purples, yellows, and reds. Everywhere we looked there were blue-green grass, red barns, white fences, blue sky, and an atmosphere of solitude and laziness.

This quietness has not always existed in this section of the country. Dignified signs mark famous battlefields, graves of well-known generals, and other important places dating back to Civil War days. Monuments have been built in honor of Southern soldiers, the Confederacy, and Jefferson Davis. It would be impossible to visit this state and not come to a better realization of the importance and immenseness of the Civil War.

Everywhere along these scenic paths we saw small deserted houses. These were at one time slave huts and were used to house the large families of Negro slaves who were relied upon to produce the crops of tobacco and cotton that would enlarge the wealth of the land-owner. These abandoned huts now stand in varying stages of ruin but, even in their time of usefulness, they were desolate and dreary places in which to live and raise a family. They were not constructed for beauty, convenience, or even for comfort, but merely to put a roof over the heads of the colored workers.

These tiny huts spot the countryside and, as you look at them, it is easy to imagine the life that these persons must have led. It is depressing to think of the cruelty of the human being and the inconsiderations that he can show to other humans.

In the middle of the land of slave huts, battlefields, cannons, and monuments we came upon another type of remembrance of Civil War days. This is a small well-built log cabin placed inside a massive stone and marble building. We climbed the many stairs leading into this building, entered, and stood before the little cabin. It was hard to believe that such a man as Abraham Lincoln could have been born in such a humble place.

Quietness was prevalent here, also. But this was a different type of quietness — a hushed reverence. Now, the full impact of the Civil War really struck us. Standing here, we remembered those monuments to Southern generals, the white crosses in the cemeteries, the Confederate flags, and the battlefields, but, most of all, we remembered the tiny unlighted slave huts. Here, we could see the entire story of this war. Now, we could, at least partially, grasp what this man must have thought about the situation as it then existed. We wondered what he must have thought about those slave huts, teeming with life in his day.

We left this monument with a renewed faith in mankind. There were the slave huts, but they were empty now, and their occupants had been granted a new lease on life. They had been released by a man, himself born in a humble cabin, but who gave himself to mankind and acquired greatness through his giving of himself and his talents.

The huts are abandoned now and they tell a story of a bitterly fought war between brothers, but they also tell a story of victory and courage and of the ambitions and actions of one great man.

— Rebecca S. Thomas

Winner Poetry Division

MERCY DEATH

The treasured music
has ceased,
yet
the whispering record
still turns
meaninglessly —
and no one will lift the needle.

— John Murch

The dark clouds gather
over cracked earth
and loudly conspire
their diabolical guile.

Joking —
Nudging,
they mockingly point
long and fiery fingers
at upturned faces.

Then,
massive bodies shaking
with laughter,
pushing —
shoving,
they move on,
leaving plains scarce dampened
by rains
long sought.

— John Murch

Knowing a country of no desire,
unkind, and always out of season —
we wonder at the easy dishonour
of rivers moving in their sleep,
and roads unkept or without signs.

The bridges fallen in with disuse
guarded a highway to the past;
you can see the trace of wheels
that turned in measure of the land.
Now hawk and panther are coming back.

Being no closer, we choose to forget
those who resplendent with spirit
forced the final dawning of the sun.
Instead we face an unclaimed land;
rocks breaking the plain of vision.

— Theodore Hirschfield

WAR

They planted doubt in furrows
dug to meet young Spring with certainty.
None claimed the victory —
death had silenced all but those who died.
Straining all their senses,
they scanned the edge of sanity for answers;
finding bolder questions in their search.
The burdened earth bore witness
once again to dawn's uncertainty.

— Kathleen MacLennan

THE LONELINESS OF HER ECSTASY

She loved me
too much.
She listened always
with soft ears
ready ever to hear
the worst.
She understood me
too much.
She flew high —
too high — on the wings of her
love, but not too late
discovered the loneliness of her ecstasy.

— Bruce J. Anderson

Winner Short Story Division

THE ROOMMATE PROBLEM

I was becoming more and more aware of the painful difference between typewriters and pillows. I was not quite fully awake when I heard . . . I don't know if heard is the right expression; perhaps, thought I heard — it was like imagining a voice, but I didn't think I was imagining anything, so I listened. If there was anything it seemed to be a voice very far off, calling for help. I soon gave up trying to tell where it came from. If it was anything, I thought, it was probably some students or somebody doing something.

After my nap I was ready to return to my studies. Then I felt a frisky moth flapping on my bear toes, and I gave my foot a shake, but to no relief. Not only that, but now I felt four little paws — soft warm little feet — climbing up my foot! I think I was afraid to look, but when I shook my foot again I saw a skinny pink animal (like a hairless field mouse) go sprawling on the carpet. "Not very hardy is it?" I said to myself, and by now I had courage enough to get down and look at it.

It was lying on its belly. Its back legs were much longer than its stubby short ones in front, and it had a little hair on its head but other than that it was hairless. It didn't have a tail. I thought it must be a mouse that had gotten caught in the trap my roommate had set, and then it somehow pulled itself free, stretching its back legs and pulling of its tail. Poor thing, I thought he must have been the noise I heard.

Because there was no blood or scars, the creature looked quite as if that were its regular shape. I laughed because it looked almost human and I went to the next room where my roommate was sleeping to have him come see it.

I put my hand to the bed covers to shake Gary, but my hand shook only blanket. I pulled the cover back and saw his candy striped, ivy league, button-down collar, bermuda length pajamas lying restfully in bed without their owner. I went back to the other room and sat on the floor, pondering the tiny figure again. As I turned it over my suspicions were confirmed, for there lay Gary, and he was beginning to come around.

"Hey! Gary . . . are you all right?" I asked.

Gary sat up and from what I could make out of this small face he was very disgusted, but I could not tell what he was saying. "Gary, I can't hear you. Talk LOUDER."

Gary had his hands up to his ears and looked doubly angry, and so I had some idea of what he had said earlier. Gary looked at me and motioned for me to come down. I put my head on the floor near Gary with my ear turned right next to him. He approached. I thought perhaps he would tell me how he got in his present state, but the next sensation to come to my ear was a painful bite and then he said, "Don't shout!"

Not moving, even to rub my ear, I addressed the floral pattern in the carpet in a low voice, "Gary, what happened?"

"What do you mean, what happened? All the time you keep nosing around. I'll see you in the morning" he said and stomped (as best he could) through the carpet to the next room, and so I went to bed.

The next morning I groggily got ready to go to classes and was up to the point of drying my back when a squeaky voice caught my attention and I looked down to see Gary; and then I remembered the night before. "Oh! God!" I said. He was standing there with his hands on his hips and yelling something. When I reached down and picked him up he bit and kicked till I almost dropped him, so I set him back down and I got down on the wet bathroom floor, turning my ear to him.

"Well, good morning, twinkle toes," he began. "What gets you up so early this morning as if I didn't already know. Your alarm almost blasted me into tomorrow . . . and then it was the bursting of Hoover Dam . . . followed by the Niagara Falls! Roommate, can't you be quieter? This is the one morning I can sleep until nine o'clock and you go around like an elephant playing hopscotch."

I was getting very tired of my position on the floor so I said, "I'm sorry, roommate, I'll try to be quieter." I remember wondering at this point what he would wear when he did go to class; for certainly the stylish label from a Van Huesen shirt that he wore now was not the general vogue. I was about to ask him about this problem but thought better of it, as I didn't want to be "nosing around," and I simply got up. Gary cinched his label and stomped back to his room. Drying my back and combing my hair presented no problem and I even brushed my teeth softly with a closed mouth and no gargle, but shaving did present a problem. And there was no getting around it this morning and the only present solution was my electric razor. I shut Gary's door to the bathroom and shaved quickly.

I wonder which surprised me more: the fact that Gary made it to his ten o'clock class, or that nobody else was surprised. I couldn't take my eyes off him. Somehow he had found clothes. I thought it pretty funny because from the back I could see the buckle no bigger than a pinhead, and the tiny, tiny little buttons on the collar. Writing as small as I could I sent him this note:

Roommate, your
back button is
not buttoned.

It was getting awfully hot in the classroom so I opened a window. It must have been pretty windy because by the time I got back to my seat, Gary had gone blowing off the edge of his chair and into the lap of the girl sitting next to him (who happened to be this year's Homecoming Queen). The girl seemed fairly delighted with the situation. Gary looked at me as if to say, "Roommate, you've done it again," but he did not move from the girl's lap. She would write notes to him and he to her, and I don't know how she ever read his; and that's how the class went. After class I met Gary on a window sill.

"Hey!" he called in his tiny voice, "what did you think of class today?" I started to say something, but stopped so I could hear Gary. "I didn't either," he said. "Do you suppose I can borrow your notes."

"Sure, when do you want them?"

"Before the test will be all right."

"All right," I said, stroking a scratchy chin.

At lunch, Gary again completely amazed me. All meals are served cafeteria style and there is almost always a line to wait in. As we slowly progressed towards the food (all the time I was being especially careful not to step on Gary) I questioned in my mind how Gary would make it through. I was startled when he took a tray and began moving it along the slide. I almost laughed to see him scamper after the food and carry back big heavy dishes. But most amazing of all, so completely unbelievable that I even doubt that it happened, was seeing Gary carry a tray filled with as much food as he ever ate down from the tray slide across the floor and to a table.

Lack of the proper size dinner utensils made very little difference in his eating habits. He looked like a story book character in a land of food as he wandered about his tray. I thought he might trampoline on the jello or go exploring in the combination salad or take a nap on a cozy-looking tuna salad sandwich, but instead he ate it. All of it. Gary always was a big eater.

Things got bad between Gary and me. Gary lived in fear of what I might do next. There was the time I nearly killed him when I playfully put him in a sock I had just taken off. More than once I nearly flushed him into eternity — I don't know how he kept falling in. Finally we just put a rope ladder up the side of the bowl.

Walking together was one of the greatest problems. It seemed that any time we would start out walking someplace together that we weren't getting anywhere. It wasn't just slow progress but it was like not moving at all. He never would let me carry him, so every time we started out together, I would gradually speed up my pace, soon leaving Gary so far behind that I couldn't see him.

What most annoyed me was the silent creeping about of little feet. Every time I didn't want to be seen and lots of times when I didn't care, I would hear the soft rain-like sound of his feet and look up to see him nonchalantly sitting on the edge of a bookcase ("just browsing") or sitting on the middle piece of my steering wheel ("Hi! what are you two doing?")

There were other annoying things also. At times I was sure I hadn't, myself, tied my shoestrings together, but Gary would have no suggestion as to other solutions of how this had occurred. And I could almost swear that I never tied the drawstrings of my pajamas in knots and yet I frequently found them that way. And I kept finding tacks in the most unfunctional places. Needless to say, I don't sit down with nearly so much confidence these days.

Gary and I decided not to room together this semester. There were too many differences and we decided it would be best to find new roommates. I like my new roommate fine, but I don't think he likes me very well. Like the other night when we went to the movies together and he offered me some popcorn. By the time he helped me out of the box the movie was almost over; then he had the nerve to lick all the butter off me.

— Bruce J. Anderson

I thought of how the sun was going down,
(she collected flowers in her dress)
with bones as white and cold as snow
we climbed unyielding parapets.
(Yet the flesh remembers her desire)

Across the moon the drift of night
obscured the paleness of my thoughts.
(Her sigh was the wind held in trees)
I drew no comfort from the stars
that made their mirror in her eyes.

I thought of praise as cut from marble
where nothing grows with promise of wind,
(her love is the wild grass of one summer)
where no saplings bend beneath wild water
and subtle voices play mute with time.

— Theodore Hirschfield

KANSAS SPRING

The tractor spilling dust
is an ageless symbol
joined to visible reality —

bitter as the knowledge
setting the blade; the crease
holds the brow and furrows

lines into the dry land,
the hard rhymes that bind
the bone to burning flesh.

— Theodore Hirschfield

MUSEUM PIECE

A clever king now sealed in stone
holds a long debate with time —

these two sworn enemies embrace,
each growing lovely in the night.

One rushed toward a towering-end,
the other, immaterial to sense

writes unknown lines into his face;
both exchanging vows of silence.

One had the gauntlet of the nerves
through which his beauty boldly ran —

the storm of winter in the brain
that brought in the ice of disbelief.

— Theodore Hirschfield

THE NIGHT THE GOAT GOT IN

After two years of dorm life I thought I had seen everything. I hadn't. It all started on a normal Saturday night. I was sitting at my desk minding my own business when I felt something furry nuzzling in my ribs. There had been a cat in the dorm and I thought probably someone was holding the cat against me. I said that I was busy and to get that stupid cat out of there. Imagine my surprise when I turned around and found myself talking to a goat.

What do you say when you find a goat in your room? I finally mustered a weak "nice nanny." About this time a group of fellows piled into my room and informed me that it was a billy, not a nanny.

As it turned out, some of the fellows had stolen this farmer's goat and were having some fun. They told me to give him a cigarette, which I did. It was instantly and thoroughly devoured and was promptly followed by my mid term grades, my KTJO schedule, and an old chapel program. "He's up to two packs a day now," I was informed.

After I got my composure and dignity back, we took the beast around the dorm, causing quite a stir. When we decided we had pushed the joke far enough, we proceeded downstairs to take the animal out. Apparently, we had caused more of a ruckus than we thought, for our house director was standing on the bottom landing. Remembering the rule against pets in the dorm, we retreated to the upper regions to regroup our forces.

After ascertaining that the house mother was still on the floor, we decided that we could best get the goat out by lowering it out the window. We had a guy go down to receive the goat. Then, tying a rope around him, we lowered him out of the window. Unfortunately, he picked the room directly above the house mother's window. Her husband was sitting by the window reading the paper.

The husband of the house director is very superstitious and he was a little jittery after coming face to face earlier in the evening with the black cat which had invaded the dorm. Thus, when he casually glanced over his shoulder and saw a goat hovering in midair, he went to pieces. He threw a pound of salt over his shoulder and went through some rituals which ended in his calling the police.

Meanwhile, the fellow who was waiting on the ground for the goat realized what had happened and hastily vacated the premises. Upstairs, we knew none of this and consequently, when the goat reached the ground, he found himself free to roam, which he did, dragging his rope behind him. We immediately realized that there was nobody down there, so we all rushed

down to try to catch the goat. However, at the precise moment that we burst out the door, two squad cars pulled up. One policeman jumped out and was promptly butted from behind.

There followed a chase scene unequaled in any comedy sequence. Policemen and students were bumping into each other and falling over each other's feet as they tried to tackle the goat or at least to dive on the rope. Finally, the goat ran past a parked car and a policeman made a flying tackle which should have brought down Big Daddy Lipscomb. However, it didn't stop Big Daddy Goat. On he went with the policeman clinging to his back. Finally, we ganged up and brought the beast down, policemen and all.

Needless to say, it took quite a while to explain things to the nice officers, who weren't so nice at the moment. Everybody was feeling a little sheepish, including the cops, for a sizeable crowd had gathered. After we heard a few choice words from the officers, we heard a few more from our house director.

The next morning, a fellow down the hall told me of the strangest dream he had had the night before. "I dreamed there was a nanny goat in my room," he informed me.

"It wasn't a nanny, it was a billy, I said.

— Robert Happ

DEDICATION

Closing the portals of time, I face an unreflecting self,
who, by searching for a cause, has lost one.
Hope, in passing, might well dedicate a song
to stir and spiral thought, but hastens at a spoken doubt,
returning to the safe glory of poems
that equate her with the gods.

As the last leaf turns with the seasons,
I see its spine-like pattern upon your moon-face.
Young birds deny the changing air: I hear their echoes only.
Your dimension rules my mind.
The stars are not wiser in their distance, but smaller,
thinking closeness would be death — is it thus we met?

— Kathleen MacLennan