

"She moves towards him and he holds her. Then they make love after all, but gently, as though consoling one another for everything that neither of them can help nor alter.... Temporarily, they are more or less okay." That's good news, not easy optimism.

Fire-dwellers we all are and Margaret Laurence turned more and more of her time towards working for peace and nu-

clear disarmament. She saw the temptation to close our hearts and minds to the terror of the world we live in: "Although I would take issue with the early Church Fathers on many things," she said, "I would agree that despair is rightly placed as one of the deadly sins."

*The death of the individual is the end which we will all one day meet, but in the knowledge that our children and*

*their children will live, that someone's children will go on...The individual is the leaf on the tree. The leaves fall but the tree endures...Now the tree itself is threatened. Our aim must be no less than human and caring justice, and peace... for all people that on earth do dwell.*

## AL PURDY

### For Margaret

We argued about things  
whether one should seek experience  
or just let it happen to you  
(me the former and she the latter)  
and the merits of St. Paul  
as against his attitude to women  
(she admired him despite chauvinism)  
But what pitifully few things  
we remember about another person:  
me sitting at her typewriter  
at Elm Cottage in England  
and translating her short story  
"A Bird in the House" into a radio play  
directly from the book manuscript  
in just two or three days  
(produced by J. Frank Willis  
on C.B.C. his last production)  
and being so proud of my expertise  
Then going away to hunt books  
while my wife recuperated  
from an operation  
Returning to find the play finished  
Margaret had taken about three hours  
to turn my rough draft  
into a playable acting version  
fingers like fireflies on the typewriter

and grinning at me delightedly  
while my "expertise" went down the  
drain  
And the huge cans of English ale she  
bought  
Jocelyn called "Al-size-ale"  
and the people coming over one night  
to sing the songs in "The Diviners"  
(for which I gave faint praise)  
And the books she admired  
Joyce Cary's "The Horse's Mouth"  
Alec Guinness as Gullej Jimson a  
valkyrie  
riding the Thames on a garbage barge  
— how Graham Greene knew so much  
that she both loved and cussed him  
for anticipating her before she got there  
and marked up my copy of his essays  
These are the lost minutiae  
of a person's life  
things real enough to be trivial  
and trivial enough to have some  
permanence  
because they recur and recur — with  
small  
differences of course — in all our lives

and the poignance finally strikes home  
that poignance is ordinary  
Anyway how strange to be writing  
about her  
as if she were not here  
but somewhere else on earth  
— or not on earth  
given her religious convictions  
Just in case it does happen  
I'd like to be there when she meets St.  
Paul  
and watch his expression change  
from smugness to slight apprehension  
While she considers him as a minor  
character  
in a future celestial non-fiction novel  
And this silly irrelevance of mine  
is a refusal to think of her dead  
(only parenthetically DEAD)  
remembering how alive  
she lit up the rooms she occupied  
like flowers do sometimes and the sun  
always  
in a way visible only to friends  
and she had nothing else

### Lawrence to Laurence

On my workroom wall a letter from  
D.H.L.  
that reads  
"Dear M,  
I send you  
by this post, registered M.S.  
an article I did on the Indians  
and the Bursum Bill" etc.  
I think he used a steel nib pen  
and dipped it in ink when dry  
and you can see where the nib  
ran short and faded the words  
in his letter like "and the" above  
Reading DHL's handwriting hypnotizes

me as Mabel Sterne and Walter  
Lippman  
and Scofield Thayer flit past and are  
dead  
and the New York World of the letter  
died long ago of malnutrition  
I read the letter and my hand  
reaches for ghost ink that isn't  
there just the way he did  
and stop to think about this poem  
I'm writing (how trivial): and from  
the other side of the letter  
I can see its continuation there  
visible thru the Taos N.M. notepaper:

"from the other side" I say  
And this is what obsession does  
you read meanings into nothingness  
or perhaps into very little  
And remember a remark by Margaret  
Laurence  
"I expect to grow old raising  
cats and roses —" (but she didn't)  
What all this means is a patented  
method of jumping from Lawrence  
to Laurence and I mourn both  
from steel nib pen & ink to cats & roses  
Goodbye —