

# POETRY

## WINTER'S ONSET

The world's become an unremitting  
gray:  
The winter sky opaque without a hint  
Of colour — and its upward bending  
arch,  
In paradox, a low and seeming flat  
Impasto, out of which a few small  
flakes  
Descend in grayish whirls. Above,  
the snow  
Is dark against the zenith, but before  
The leaden rim of sky, the falling  
flakes  
Look light. With parallel and slant-  
wise strokes  
They cut right through the circling  
edge of earth  
And blend the sky to land. The  
snowy fields

Extend their textured slopes of gray  
on gray  
(Eroded by continual ground drift)  
To blurred horizons. Were there not  
some light  
That's filtered through the overcast  
and caught  
By sculptured surfaces, the distant  
fields  
Would show no meeting line with  
somber sky.  
And bushes, leafless, streaked with  
falling snow,  
Would seem to float in space, small  
islands of  
A darker gray, now rooted in the air  
And motionless in winter's mono-  
chrome.

VICTOR C. FRIESEN, Box 65, Rosthern,  
Saskatchewan. S0K 3R0



*"Motionless in winter's monochrome"*

*Victor C. Friesen*

## WHISTLING WINGS

Small bluish-gray head  
(Tiny black dot  
Almost obscure  
Beauty spot  
Below each ear)  
Bobs as the cooing bird  
Walks slowly  
And talks gently  
To itself or its mate,  
trim body camouflaged well  
In soft shades of fawn and gray,  
Searches among the weeds  
Along the dusty roadway  
For fine bits of gravel  
To grind wheat grains and sunflower  
seeds.

Arrowlike tail tapers  
From long central feathers  
Bordered with startling white  
Distinct  
From any other  
Family member  
Except the extinct  
Larger Passenger Pigeon  
(Gunned to zero from legion)  
Slate-blue pointed wings  
Squeak, creak, whistle  
Like a rusty gate  
For lubricating oil  
As the Mourning Dove springs  
Into swift direct flight.

JEAN MACKENZIE, 1014 - 7th Street  
East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. S7H 0Y8

## FLICKER'S FEATHERS

I have a fondness for flickers  
the way they come down from the  
trees  
to crouch and stab the lawn  
gravely poking holes in the sod  
probing the earth for ants.

They look so vulnerable there  
in their serious searching  
black bib lowered to the ground  
deepening their shadowed front  
blazing head lifting to scan.

Rump feathers shining white  
wings trembling with excitement  
face down, pausing, drawing up  
reluctant frenzied ants on tongue  
our flicker hurriedly feasts.

The ants in our lawn must tremble  
at this chaotic forced intrusion  
whose small heaps of fine soil  
lead our flicker to return again  
back to where he's been.

Sometimes they sprawl in the sun  
head tilted back to face the sky  
bill open to receive the heat  
resting upon spread wings  
a temporary lull in a busy life.

When I find a golden shaft  
atilt on the green grass  
shed in summer's passing fast  
I take it as a gift to cherish  
a flicker's fully paid toll.

ROBERT W. NERO, Box 14, 1495 St.  
James Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba. R3H  
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