

## *Two Prose poems by Richard Selig*

### Overheard in the Garden

THE branches of the rosebush were languid because of summer and because the roses themselves were heavy and half-sickened by the continuous buzzing invasions of bees. "So much heat and plenitude is indeed a foretaste of what is to follow," announced a particularly effulgent rose, high up on the bush.

"These endless ravishments must stop," sighed another, trembling delicately, admitting another bee.

"The Owner seems to have abandoned us, left us to proliferate without a word of admiration; and the gardener and his wife sleep all day. There is no one to trim us, pluck us or smell us."

A newly opened rose, far over on the eastern side of the bush, said: "This morning I saw the Owner pacing in the Cypress groves by the river. He was frowning and never looked up from the ground."

A kestrel stooped on its prey. The gardener's wife, weeping, tried to attach leaves to her naked skin.

### Mid-morning of a Goose

I'VE been standing here since sun-up squawking. But no one comes out of the house to ask me what's wrong. Humans I've never seen before are setting up machinery all over the place. It isn't farm machinery.

I wish I, too, had hands; I'd make me a flute or something to make another kind of noise. I'm tired of my own voice. Its distress is beginning to sound foreign to me.

For the last week the sun's risen about eight. I haven't seen the family who lives in the house since yesterday. The blinds are drawn. Men are pulling down green cloth. Because of all their metal I can't see the corn fields or the blue hills and what's worse they don't have animals with them.

Trucks are coming.

# Roy Fuller

## The Final Period

I WATCH across the desk the slight  
Shape of my daughter on the lawn.  
With youth's desire my fingers write  
And then contain an old man's yawn.

At first my only verb was "give,"  
In middle age sought out a god:  
Ugly and impotent I live  
The myth of a final period.

I see within the tetrastich  
A jealousy as gross, intense,  
As ulcered that real love of which  
Art's tragedies alone make sense.

He pulses still the man of force—  
The armoured chest, the boar-thick yards;  
And here the woman-nature, coarse  
Beneath the dainty silks and fards.

Appalling that should still arise  
All that is dead and was untrue,  
That my imagination flies  
Where now my flesh may not pursue.

Life goes on offering alarms  
To be imprisoned in the cage  
Of art. I must invent more charms  
To still the girl's erotic rage:

Frozen in their betrothal kiss,  
The innocent boy will never move  
To loose the codpiece, and his miss  
Stay spellbound in her father's love—

And yet the actual girl will sigh  
And cross the garden with her flowers;

And I will leave the desk, and try  
To live with ordinary powers.

Bermuda or Byzantium—  
To some utopia of forgiving  
And of acceptance I have come,  
But still rebellious, still living.

The first absurd haphazard meeting  
With one loved unrequitedly,  
The insurrection caused by fleeting  
Words of my own, while I stood by—

Those fatal and recorded times  
Return like heartburn, and I see  
Behind heroic plangent rhymes  
Unutterable deficiency.

Even this noon of greens and blues;  
June's badges, roses of human red;  
Birds in the cavern of the yews;  
A lark's quaver figure in my head;

The car in the lane that circumvents  
The archipelagos of dung—  
These trivial concomitants  
Of feeling, these, too, must be sung.

And in the song all will be whole,  
Immortal, though the author pass—  
Ended his little speaking rôle—  
On to the doomed and venal mass.

She comes whom I would marble through  
Her painful and tumultuous years,  
So she would wake at last in true  
Epochs, to music of the spheres.