

June McMaster-Harrison, in memory...

June McMaster-Harrison, author of the preceding article, "What Hast Thou Done With Her?": Anagogical Clues to the Lost Feminine," was born in Winchester, Ontario. She chose family and academe over a possible career in opera, and became a dedicated teacher, specializing in the literature of the British Romantics and the American Transcendentalists. She was close to the completion of a course of study at the C.G. Jung Institute of Zurich to become a practising analyst, and for the past ten years had explored the application of Jungian thought to the study of literature, especially in her teaching at Atkinson College of York University. June died on the first day of spring 1986, after a valiant fight against cancer.

This photograph of June (below) was taken in Zurich. The poem, "Salve, June" (opposite), was written by her friend and colleague Ian Sowton.



SALVE, JUNE

Such talent for renewal you had,
for transforming clichés, so even
in the fearful outrage you felt there

in Zurich, when illiterate mortality
first openly began to edit you, you wove
new texture to the story of your life

planned further installments, insisting
that rights to your history were no easy bargain.
Then with death writing you toward closure

in the standard version, you resisted
his stock of commonplaces, plotted
not platitudes like happy ending,

formulas of happily ever after,
but rarities of joy unconventionally
close to the last page. Our tired lexicon—

how much of it you energized:
for instance, heroine: gracious as silk
entertaining us in your living room

while feral pain stirs in its net of drugs
and you unable not to wonder
if your day's brave weaving is to be

unravelling in the night against your will.
Later, in your dying room you struggle
to answer greetings, still heroine

though spun out to the last thread of thin.
Salve, June, your name on the tongue
is like a month of weddings

go with whichever goddess loomed you
while not unhelplessly we fabricate
for real a text of memories together
to wear against the chill of absence.

Ian Sowton
April 1986