

PHOTO

Ottawater: 3.0

*edited by rob mcLennan : January 2007
design by tanya sprowl*



CONTENTS

Michael Blouin	
this poem is for sale	.2
history	.3
no one listens to poets anymore / or / ever should	.4
an interview with Stephen Brockwell, conducted by rob mcLennan	.6
Terry Ann Carter	
Irish Lament	.2
Anita Dolman	
Body	.24
Over	.25
Kate Van Dusen	
For The Jorjes	.26
Amanda Earl	
the sand elegies	.28
Elisabeth Harvor	
This is our life	.32
William Hawkins	
Elegy For Everybody	.34
My Next To Last Great Love	.35
Antecedents	.36
Another Day	.37
March Aubade	.38
Clare Latremouille	
bareback girls	.40
at twelve	.41
wolf tracks	.42
dip	.43
Nadine McInnis	
Anorexic hysteria	.44
A possible case of catalepsy	.46
A perfect and faithful record	.48
Entertainment: magic lantern show	.50
K.L. McKay	
Edmonton autumn	.52
Mount-Royal, 5:00 am	.52
Just like the stars that drift on the Pembina River	.53
Self-addressed postcard from Prague	.53
Self-addressed postcard from Vienna	.54
rob mcLennan	
from spare moments: seventeen (failed) ottawa ghazals	.56
Max Middle	
!	.64
the way the day ends	.65
In Memory of an aboriginal child killed in a preventable fire, 1989	.66
dream S	.67
asparagus ends	.67
cobblestones	.68
Kim Minkus	
As it rolls	.70
A woman and her doll	.71
Gone to Baltimore	.72
the corner	.73
Cath Morris	
Melt	.74
Motorless Replicant	.76
Red Donkeys	.78
The Infinity of Narcissus	.79
The optimist	.80
Theory of Everything	.82
John Newlove	
Playing the Game	.84
Wanda O'Connor	
My autobiography as a staircase	.86
Roland Prevost	
Hat Pulse	.88
hat pulse an interview with K.I. Press, conducted by Chris Turnbull	.103
an interview with Shane Rhodes , conducted by rob mcLennan	.110
The Illuminated Bones of Monty Reid : a review of cuba A book and Sweetheart of Mine by Amanda Earl	.120
short reviews of Matthew Holmes' Hitch & Laura Farina's The Woman Alphabetical by Colin Morton	.124
review of Nicholas Lea's light years (above/ ground press, 2006) by Harold Rhenisch	.128
review of Anita Lahey's "Out to dry in Cape Breton" by Chris Jennings	.136

MICHAEL BLOUIN

THIS POEM IS FOR SALE

it's not bad
it starts with a little alliteration
just before that there's a little personal note
something short and real sounding
then it calls up a particular
mood or time
a lost love let's say
or
a fleeting sense of the end of something
it might take an actual historical event then
and sort of turn it on it's ear
to put it into the service of the poem let's say
you know the sort of thing I mean
you've seen it done before
but this poem would do it fairly well
maybe make you forget for a moment what it was doing
then it would bring back the heartfelt stuff near the end
it would go for a strong image
something with a little depth
then try to grab you at the end
with something just slightly unexpected
here's what I mean:

HISTORY

before screaming television
electricity
sandwich bags
cancer
Ulysses
wavelengths
productivity
trembling uncertainty
metal pipes
bold examinations
animation
obsolescence
plastics
the democratization of information
seismography
psychology
Charlie Chaplin
composite construction theories of identity
the loss of the miraculous
record players
cultural studies
ventriliquism
holocaust deniers
a generally held understanding of the moon

NO ONE LISTENS TO POETS ANYMORE OR EVER SHOULD

Spanish girls are pretty when they play the guitar
French girls
are pretty all the time

so this is the way that it is;
a woman takes off her clothes
I think of the saviour
I think of death

somewhere, something

opens.





INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN BROCKWELL



This interview was conducted over email from

June to September 2006

Look at my lightning tattoo.
A summer walk gave it to me,
the sky unzipping.

No flower or satanic symbol compares with it.
Find me a rocker's back that has been so
engraved, even after many hours of ink.

It looks very much like the fanning branches
of a leafless tree. That's funny;
I was walking past a dead oak when it struck.

Of all the colours it reminds me
of flogging, a good flogging
by nine cat o' nine tails

with nine cat o' nine tails
at their tips and so on and so on,
red and inflamed like that but beautiful.

Stephen Brockwell spent the first half of his life in Montreal, and the second half in Ottawa. Where he will spend the third half is uncertain. His poetry collections include *The Wire in Fences* (Toronto ON: Balmuir Publishing, 1988), *Cometology* (Toronto ON: ECW Press, 2001) and *Fruitfly Geographic* (ECW Press, 2004), which won the Archibald Lampman Award, and his work recently appeared in the anthology *Decalogue: Ten Ottawa Poets* (Ottawa ON: Chaudière Books, 2006). He is currently putting the finishing touches on a fourth collection.

rob mcLennan: Let's start with something deceptively simple; how long have you been writing?

Stephen Brockwell: A hundred years. No, make that thirty years. I started writing at the end of elementary school. I can remember arguing over the use of the word gnarled with a very old, very stern teacher who was a paragon of gnarliness with a limited capacity for metaphor. I wouldn't cave; she forced me to write lines that I can't recall. I do owe her thanks, however, for making me write lines. It was far less humiliating and much more illuminating than one might think. If you write the same line a hundred times, you tend to hear a lot of nuances in the language. This rather severe teacher was unwittingly the first to introduce me to anaphora. I've been rather obsessed by list poems ever since. That reminds me of a sonnet in Don Patterson's anthology of 101 Sonnets. Edwin Morgan's "Opening the Cage" consists of 14 variations of John Cage's statement "I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry."

I think I probably started to write too young. My earliest poetic influences were Kipling and Service who permanently stunted the growth of my ear. Discovering Lampman in grade 11 only made things worse.

rm: Do you really feel you started too young? What do you think you have lost or gained from a poetic that includes such figures that many might even argue antiquated? I know your range of influence is wide, and includes many older writers, but being an active and engaged contemporary writer at the beginning of the twenty-first century, you *have* been influenced by more recent work as well.

SB: I was making light of starting too young. If you read enough about Al Purdy, you realize that he had one hell of a time shedding his Bliss Carmen skin. And, if you ask me, Al had a hell of a hard time shedding D.H. Laurence who had a hell of a hard time shedding the Georgians and Whitman. To answer your first question, it may not be that I started too early; rather, I started with a questionable knowledge of what poetry could be and a network of influences that was too small, provincial and colonial.

Having said that, I don't think I would use the word antiquated to describe poetry or poets. I would have chosen Chaucer as an early influence over Lampman. I wish that

I had found the patience to hunt down a good translation of Homer when I was young. The word antiquated misrepresents the way I think about poetry. I'd argue that Homer, Pindar, Catullus, Aeschylus, Chaucer, even Milton are far from antiquated; they may be periodically out of fashion among certain factions, but they are in some sense never outmoded. It's really more a question, for me, of imaginative and verbal scope. Poetry is antiquated if it's boring, unimaginative, mechanical, or derivative? I have to admit much of that is a matter of taste. Most poetry written at any point in time is in some sense antiquated before it gets to print because it simply mimics the idioms and forms of the moment or of previous moments.

Sure I've been influenced by more recent work. Who comes to mind? Peter van Toorn, of course; he has been a strong and problematic influence. Christopher Dewdney was a strong influence when I was in my late teens and early twenties. Robert Bringham, Erin Mouré, Dennis Lee, Mark Strand, Anne Carson and Daphne Marlatt are influences that I admire and love to read. Among my contemporaries, I'd have to say I'm most influenced, if you can call it that, by jwcurry and David McGimpsey. I think I've traveled a wee bit beyond pure influence for a while now. It's more a matter of furtive theft.

rm: Well, what is that line, a good poet borrows, and a great poet steals? I'm interested in the range of styles of works that feed your own. How does one have both Lampman and Mouré in the same list? And how does a Stephen Brockwell poem start? I know you're an obsessive note-taker. Do your poems come first from a series of lines or a specific idea?

SB: One has Lampman and Mouré in the same list because of coincidences of personal history. I read Lampman in high school because Ms. Evans taught him. I read Mouré because I received a review copy of *Domestic Fuel* when I was an editor at the literary journal *Rubicon* in the early 80's and I just loved the book. I'd bet there are more than a few poets in this country who have those two poets in their long list. I hope so.

There's no recipe for starting a poem. I try to write only when something needs to be written. Notes are a kind of writing in a way? a disinterested, terse, matter-of-fact kind of writing in my case. If a poem has its origins in a notebook? not all do? the notes outweigh the poem by about 4:1. A couple of times a year a poem comes to mind more or less fully formed. That happened recently in a taxi on the way to the airport. I scrawl those to the best of my ability into a notebook if I have one handy and tune them later. The notes can pile up for years before they influence a line that I'm aware of.

Your last question is an interesting one. I'm not convinced the line and the idea are entirely different things. Certainly a poem never starts from a specific, didactic idea. I guess I consider that a bit of a heresy. The kind of poem I like to write is an

exchange between the word and the idea that has to be constantly negotiated. I may have a better analogy: ping pong. A poem is a game of ping pong between the red paddle of the word and the blue paddle of the idea. The poet is the ball.

rm: The American poet Jack Spicer considered himself a conduit as opposed to a writer; where do you see yourself falling along that line? Do you carve and create a poem out of the words and ideas at your disposal, or does it come from somewhere other? Or is it a combination of the two?

SB: If by a conduit Spicer meant an underground concrete structure carrying pipes, fibre-optic cables, a lot of dust and a few insects in its bores, I would have to say, yes, I often feel like a conduit when writing poems. I like the material sense of the word conduit. It suggests nothing inspired or privileged. Sometimes words just happen to take shape somewhere in the brain or on the tongue; they bring their own logic. I spend a lot of time thinking about things and coaxing words out of that thinking. The poems that seem to work result from the words, not the thinking by itself; often, the words take the poem in a very different direction. For me the hardest work often starts after that initial delivery down the conduit. The balance of the art seems to be in the process of revision, of splicing and cutting the necessary and the superfluous, of amplifying or diminishing certain tones and rhythms, of sharpening the lineation and so on. I don't see the two modes — reception and creation — in opposition.

rm: Earlier, you mentioned the magazine *Rubicon*. How did you get involved in the journal? How did you get to the point where you were even interested in getting *involved* with the journal? Did it have anything to do with Montreal poet Peter van Toorn and your association with the Lakeshore Poets at John Abbott College?

SB: I took a class from Peter at John Abbott because I wanted to write and I heard PVT was the best. Peter had us working on projects all the time — little magazines, sonnets, haiku, translations. With Endré Farkas, Peter helped us put together a little magazine called *Locus* which had been around for several years at John Abbott College. I borrowed a hand letter press from Endré (that I regret was a bit wrecked in my damp basement). Greg Lamontagne and I printed the anthology *Short Poems* one page at a time. I remember that we ran out of the letter o when setting one of Peter's poems.

By the time I entered McGill, the Lakeshore Poets — ben soo, Neil Henden, Ruth Taylor, Greg Lamontagne and I — had already had their day with a little anthology in 1981. But the Montreal West Island has been producing writers for a while. The poets Michael Harris and Diana Brebner and the writer Heather Menzies lived on or near the western tip of Montreal Island at some point in their childhood. Every locale produces writers. At McGill I tended to hunt down local poets and readings out of natural curiosity. *Rubicon* was just starting out with the incredible energy of Peter O'Brien.

rm: You mention the anthology *Lakeshore Poets* (Dorion, QC: The Muses' Company, 1981). What kind of group were you? Did you actually form as a group that wrote and had conversation together about writing, or was it a more informal grouping of students and such of van Toorn's? What did it *mean* to be part of this association?

SB: We were really just five people who thought poetry was such a fun thing to do that we sought counsel from Endré and Peter (and sometimes David Solway). It was never a formal group. Most of us would have had a strong distaste for formal groups of any kind. The label was Peter's. He liked to tease us about our bourgeois suburban lives, privileged with Cadillacs, oak paneled studies, servants and that kind of thing (none of which was true). One thing I love about Peter is his genuine affection for certain kinds of people who openly seek him out for knowledge. He's a chaotic person, of course; he develops distrust for some wonderful people. There were other poets writing at Abbott at the same time — and there were more talented suburban acolytes (at least I was an acolyte) from the West Island with a kind of groove that Peter thought was interesting. I wish 80% of what I wrote in that little anthology had never left my typewriter. Many of us remained acquainted or friends.

rm: I know Ruth Taylor went on to publish a couple of books, as part of her continued relationship with The Muses' Company. Whatever happened to the rest of the Lakeshore Poets?

SB: Neil Henden published *Donkey Dance* around 1983. Neil was immensely talented in my opinion. I can still recall the full text of a handful of his poems after twenty-five years. I haven't seen or heard from him in years. Greg Lamontagne went on to study linguistics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. I visited him there when I was a graduate student at Carleton and I even published a few of his poems in the little magazine *The Rideau Review*. I haven't heard from him for years and I don't think he has fond memories of those days. Ben Soo runs the web site www.montreal.com. He's also a quite exceptional photographer. Ben has a few images here: http://www.photo.net/photodb/user?user_id=495469.

rm: What was your function at the magazine *Rubicon*, and what did you get out of it, as a writer and reader? Who were the Montreal writers you were discovering that you gravitated toward? What did any of this mean to the *kinds* of writing you were producing at the time?

SB: I was an associate editor for a couple of years as it was starting out. What did I get out of it? Hmmm. I never thought of it that way. I discovered some interesting writing by people who are now reasonably well known (Erin Mouré, Robert Bringham, Leon Rooke, and Charles Foran). And I wrote a few book reviews that I regret. Montreal didn't seem such a polarized community at that point. You could read John McAuley or Artie Gold and Peter van Toorn or David Solway without having people think you were a nut. I think David may be our most

misunderstood poet. Louis Dudek and Hugh MacLennan were still at McGill. Among younger people, I was impressed by David McGimpsey. He was writing poems that anyone would recognize as McGimpsey poems in his first year of university. He moved on to Concordia, which was a drag for me, but I still read pretty much everything he publishes. I don't know what it meant to my writing at the time. Of the poets I was reading, I think two have been competing influences: Christopher Dewdney and Peter van Toorn. I've never compensated for that. If the poet in me could be visualized (as a poet), it would probably scare a lot of people: one half would be dressed in Pope's dandy waistcoat; the other half would have Borg limbs and wires sticking out of its eyes.

rm: There's a lot in there to comment on, Stephen. First off, why do you think the considerations of Peter van Toorn and Christopher Dewdney are competing? What is it about the work of those two particular writers that you admire, and bring to your own writing? And as far as McGill University, what time period are we talking about?

SB: We are talking about the early eighties. *Predators of the Adoration* and *Mountain Tea*.

By competing, I don't mean they're wrestling. It's a tough question to answer, but look at these two brief excerpts from their work:

As fit for swinging and full of good oak
as the day it was cut down for a walk

and

Each act in the scene of its occurrence
etches an observation gallery
into the rich and mute loam
of the forest floor.

I don't think it's difficult to guess which poet wrote which lines. Both poets have range, of course: Dewdney has written poems that appear somewhat linear and infused with a more classical idea of beauty and van Toorn has written poems that are almost entirely made out of sound. It's difficult to distil the differences between their approaches into pithy phrases. But here are a few attempts. The difference between the poetry of van Toorn and the poetry of Dewdney is the difference between artefact and act. The unfamiliar and the strange in van Toorn's poetry are products of the poet; in the poetry of Dewdney, the unfamiliar and the strange are products of the reader. Peter van Toorn's physics is primarily Newtonian, secondarily Einsteinian but definitively not quantum; Christopher Dewdney's physics is generally post-quantum and often pata-physical.

These differences have deep roots in the history of writing. In some ways, I think it goes at least as far back as Plato's dialog *Cratylus*. Socrates and Cratylus debate the arbitrariness of words. Cratylus believes that a word (at least in its origin) is the perfect expression of its signified. Socrates maintains that words have always been conventional and arbitrary. I think van Toorn is a wilful Cratylist.

In both writers, I admire the relentlessness with which they wilfully enter into language at the expense of intelligibility. Or, to use a phrase that I heard Paul Muldoon use, "they tantalizingly lurch toward significance." They also converge in this: neither poet is particularly interested in poetry as an expression of ego, emotion, or ideology. For both, poetry is a kind of machine for the making or unmaking of meaning. Both poets also have an affinity for nature that I share. It's representation in the two could not be more different.

rm: Well, even in the decisions both writers made as far as form, wouldn't you consider those to be ideologies? And what originally brought you to Ottawa from Montreal? And what started you out as a chapbook/magazine publisher, through your Rideau Review Press and *The Rideau Review*?

SB: No, I don't see ideologies as fundamentally healthy to poetry. Ideologies aren't flexible or exploratory. They're meant to be rigid structures to which dominant or resistant thinking is grafted. Both writers have ideas about form; I don't think they made ideology from their formal ideas. In *Alter Sublime*, Dewdney makes a reasonably compelling — and somewhat disturbing — case for certain elements of language as parasites: "the living language exists in a symbiosis with the human 'host'." If that were an ideology, every poem would have to somehow conform in a prescriptive way to whatever methodological outcomes result from that axiom. That's not something that happens in Dewdney's work; it is seldom programmatic as a whole (although individual pieces may follow specific programmatic recipes). Van Toorn writes, "Bipartite in shape, the sonnet shows a periodic inclination in syntax and rhythm. Sometimes, in one breath it musically sustains smaller units of phrase and cadence whose stature it magnifies into more momentous perspectives by its turn or emptied moment at the fulcrum of the eighth or ninth line. The numinous quality of the turn, and the mediating propulsion of the periodic sentence in some of the greatest sonnets, set all 140 syllables of its 14 lines chiming in unison behind its burden like a crystal wine glass rubbed at the rim by a moist finger." I find nothing ideological in PVT's train of thought. And if you read his sonnets, you find nothing programmatic in them. I think these two brief snippets are illuminating: PVT sees poetry as an external machine with parts; Dewdney sees the poetry machine in biological terms.

What brought me to Ottawa? The boring fact that Carleton offered better financing to its graduate students in Math than McGill offered its graduate students in Computer Science. One could study, eat and drink beer while going to school in

those days. *The Rideau Review* and its little press were just placeholders for a few small things I wanted to do with words. I wouldn't really say I was a publisher.

rm: I think I would *completely* say you were a publisher. You published a magazine, chapbooks and, more recently, broadsides for the Jennifer Mulligan / James Moran version of The TREE Reading Series; how could you *not* be considered a publisher? From what little I know, I get the impression that *The Rideau Review* was started after you arrived in Ottawa; who and what were you publishing? What chapbooks appeared from the press? Who was around in Ottawa at that time? And at the same time, using your "poetry machine" considerations between Peter van Toorn and Christopher Dewdney, where would you place the considerations of your own work?

SB: Well, I don't see myself as a publisher. *The Rideau Review* is so far back in time I've almost forgotten. We published quite a bit of local poetry and fiction. We interviewed a number of people — Frank Smith, one of the editors, interviewed Guy Vanderhague. But that was almost twenty years ago. Who was here and writing in the eighties and early nineties? Louis Cabri, Michael Dennis, John Barton, Diana Brebner, George Elliott Clarke, Sue McMaster, Ronnie Brown, Colin Morton, Chris Levenson, Patrick White, Dennis Tourbin, Heather Ferguson, Marty Flomen, Juan O'Neill, John Metcalf, of course. Others who don't spring to mind at this moment. John Newlove seemed reclusive; although, he sent me a kindly worded postcard after I dropped a copy of my first book in his mailbox and ran off without even ringing the bell. That was lovely. I zipped back to Montreal much more than I do now. Sue and Ronnie were very helpful.

I think I continue to have a variety of stand-alone poetry machines that I've not yet been able to integrate.

rm: That seems to be a constant story about John Newlove: leaving things in his mailbox and running away (I did the same for years). It seems you've already touched on my next question, almost in anticipation, regarding your first trade collection, *The Wire in Fences*, that appeared in 1988 with Toronto's Balmuir Press. You mention that Susan McMaster and Ronnie Brown were important to the process of putting together your first poetry collection. How long did the process of writing and compiling take? Was the manuscript severely edited before it ended up as what became your first book? And who were Balmuir; how did your poetry collection get there?

SB: The process was long. I always find it long. It was still probably not long enough. I attended a workshop with the American poet Carolyn Forché in Northampton, Massachusetts in the summer of 1987. I wanted to engage with a more diverse range of voices and thinking about poetry. It was useful more for the reading list and the broad direction than it was for the feedback on individual

pieces. When I arrived home, I had received an acceptance letter from Balmuir. I had sent it — in various states — to at least half a dozen publishers by that time. Balmuir was a small publisher out of Toronto that I believe was run by Sue McMaster's brother. Ronnie was helping her edit some of the books. Sue and Ronnie suggested illuminating changes and a lot of cutting; they were never severe. I think there should have been more cutting. By the time I sent it to them I had the manuscript in a more or less coherent whole for about three years. I am of the firm opinion that poetry shouldn't be rushed to press.

rm: And you *know* this had to be its own question: tell me more about these “poetry machines” that you mention. What are they and how do you feel they haven't yet integrated? Why do you feel as though they have to? And how was it, working with Carolyn Forché?

SB: Well, a poetry machine is a series of electrobiomechanical devices that include a variety of circuits, systems and systems of systems. Fundamentally, it is a machine that translates a collection of texts into a different collection of texts. What do I mean by a text? Yikes. A representation. Placing a limit on what a text can be is too much for my synapses. I include in the scope of a text any representation, including intermediate and transitory representations (scribbles, draughts, notes, dreams, and ideas). The machine's input apparatus consists of the body, including the brain, and the body's extensions (clothing, pencils, keyboards, typewriters, sand). The output apparatus is nearly identical to the input apparatus with the following provisional exception: the inner organs are of themselves almost useless as output devices, although Chaucer, Quevedo, Rimbaud and many others have written poems to them. The eyes are not entirely useless as output devices because they are capable of expression, imitation and parody. Between the sensory and expressive apparatus everything else happens over a period of minutes, hours, days, years. People may think I'm being obtuse here because I haven't even mentioned language. I'm being purposely inclusive. It's difficult to say that some of jwcurry's visual works are not texts. And language seems to be primarily about the exchange of signs, not the production of speech; if not, how can the deaf converse and the blind read? I'm no expert in these matters.

But I think it goes beyond this. A poetry machine isn't in the possession of a poet. John Gage's (chief scientist at Sun Microsystems) statement that “the network is the computer” describes the substance that supports Foucault's snappy maxim, “the author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning.” The real network has always been culture, whether the physical structure supporting the network has been air carrying a voice or signal fires, books carrying print, records carrying sound, or the internet carrying digital properties that individuals, and the cultures and sub-cultures they flourish in, define in different ways. Culture produces poetry and consumes poetry and does with poetry what culture wills.

Believing in a thing like a poetry machine doesn't mean you can shape your machinery to produce poetry of any value (if it can have value); not believing or even knowing about any of this doesn't mean that you can't produce wonderful stuff. Writing poetry is something people do. You don't have to be a kinesiologist to be a good tennis player who loves the game for its own sake, although I suppose it helps to have one on hand at Wimbledon if you're injured.

“Ho-hum. I am for wit and wakefulness,” as Richard Wilbur wrote. I like to hear poetry with my ears and feel it on my tongue. The poetry that interests me is verbally expressive more than visually expressive. My poetry machine fails in this; I'm unsatisfied with what I do and how I do it but I'm also unsatisfied with the fit of other models. Bök's *Eumoia* amazed me and made me laugh but it's not something I can do. Paul Dutton helped shape my thinking about sonnets, but I would be embarrassed to even try something of that. Dennis Lee's *Un* worked for me, but that's his shtick. Erin Mouré's work has been very, very helpful both for the writing itself and the direction of her writing over time.

For what it's worth, I want to make poetry that engages and disturbs, that navigates the boundary of chaos, meaning and authenticity because I think poetry is good at recording and shaping thought and feeling. And I still have a slim home for humanism although I'm losing it. A poetry machine doesn't have the strictures of a technology or of a research machine. Technology and science dominate the models for thinking in our society (and also machines for textual production). In their commercial and military spheres, these models fail to provide an adequate explanation for culture (at least as far as my reading goes) and they don't seem to help cultures work; we've been witness to that for years and we're witnessing it again in the middle east as we write this. How complex or simple could a model for cultural history be that had any hope of explaining what actually happens? I have to shed a lot of the preconceptions I learned as a kid before I'll get very far. And when I write, I don't really think much about any of this. Maybe that's a mistake.

Carolyn Forché was a forthright, engaging and incredibly sharp workshop leader with a reading list that astonished me. I'd say she put two dozen books in my library, each of which led to other books. I value her directness and her social engagement.

rm: Can you remember what any of the books Forché added to your collection, and how they altered your engagements?

SB: I remember a few books very clearly — and we are talking about a workshop twenty years ago. Jean Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, which was the book she recommended that most impressed me. I've followed the tentacles of that book through more than probably any other. Paul Davies' *God and the New Physics*. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*. Everything by Mark Strand and

John Ashbery. A couple of anthropology books. I can't recall the others, but I have her list in my basement somewhere.

rm: In your piece "Empathy in Modern Verse" in van Toorn's *The Insecurity of Art: Essays on Poetics* (Montreal QC: Vehicule Press, 1982), you wrote "The poet must let the ideas unfold on their own in the reader's mind at the reader's pace. Let the poem be a bit of a mystery and, although the poem may not be entirely understood, which is regrettable, the important thing is to release the senses with an evocative image so that the mind may unconsciously or consciously feel the thought." Have you shifted in your thinking about this at all since? Do you think it is important to understand a poem, and regrettable when it isn't? What's so important about understanding?

SB: Where do I start? That little missive was written by a pretty naïve 17 year old. I was giddy when it was published, but, I tell you, I'd give someone quite a bit of money to black that essay out of every copy of *The Insecurity of Art*. What I was suggesting seems common sense. In fact, you have a quote from Phil Hall saying much the same thing in your most recent chapbook, "You can't put the mysteries into explanatory sentences." It appears to me that the more we learn about thinking, the more deeply thinking involves not mind as a disembodied consciousness, but, rather, the nervous system as a fully embodied consciousness that stretches from the upper cortices to the nerves of the skin. So, if a poem's meaning is a goose bump of recognition, I think that works. Besides, the intent and the product are different. The meaning of the poem is somewhere between the poet's work to produce it and the reader's attempt to experience it. If Wallace Stevens was correct, we write poetry with our nerves, and I think the reader reads it with their nerves too, starting at the retina. But let me be specific: the meaning of a poem is seldom univocal, exclusively rational, or primarily intellectual. Legend has it that Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" can make you taste the wine

O for a beaker full of the warm South!
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stain'd mouth;

I think that taste itself is part of the meaning of the poem. Synaesthesia is an ancient device that helps to involve the body in the meaning of a poem. So, now that we've stretched out the meaning of meaning, let me say that I think most readers take enormous pleasure from the discovery of embodied meaning in a poem.

rm: The poems in your first collection, *A Wire in Fences*, are quite physical, writing of the land itself in Glengarry County, where you summered during your youth. What was it about the area that made you, a twenty-something in downtown Montreal,

respond to it in such a way? Why not write the same kinds of pieces in a more urban environment? Was it in part a romanticization of the area?

SB: Boy, that's an interesting question. Two things.

I grew up in Terrebone, which is off the Island of Montreal. It's a pretty crowded suburb now, but when I was growing up it was trees, acres of snow, skidoos and oiled dirt roads. I moved downtown to go to University, but I spent my childhood in the sticks and suburbs.

As far as the book goes, it was really a question of integrity. There was a more interesting book in the primarily Glengarry poems. But I peppered the book with urban poems that seem rural because of the idea of nature. There's a poem about a cardinal that has an urban setting. People forget that there is a forest in downtown Montreal. Jays, swallows, skunks and raccoons in backyards everywhere. Haven't ecosystems formed around powerlines, fence lines and clothes lines? The title poem is placed, more or less, in the landscape of a Hutchison Street alley. In a way, that's part of the dialogue taking place in that book. If you think of the woman's horrified reaction to the gay bull, romanticizing is not quite what's at work. The nature in *The Wire in Fences* is not Wordsworth's nature. It's a nature that can't fully be grasped in other than physical, visceral terms by some of the voices — and can't be grasped at all by others ("The Mower on Bones"). For many of the voices, nature is there to be used. And that dovetails nicely with the Scottish heritage of that county.

rm: How did you go from there, from physical landscapes (whether Montreal or Glengarry) to looking up at the stars in your second collection, *Cometology*? Even though the collections were published some eleven years apart, I know they were actually written quite close together. What would you consider the parallels and differences between the two? And what exactly *happened* to you to create that eleven year stretch of silence?

SB: Halley's comet zipped by in 1986 and I started work on the project then. I was actually able to glimpse it one night here in Ottawa in a field near the Rideau Canal. I think there's a different kind of curiosity in *Cometology*. The geometric odes were a blast to write. The title poem took ages to finish. I didn't have a decent draft of the stupid thing until 1996. I think that a small number of the few people who read *The Wire in Fences* (say five) probably thought the work was naively formalist. That must mean I didn't do what I was trying to do well enough, because I'm not one who believes in the a-priori virtue of traditional form. In fact, I sometimes use traditional form with a sense of irony or nostalgia. That being said, most traditional forms are still pretty inexhaustible. Fiorentino was playing with some clever sonnet parodies in his most recent book. You go, sonnet! More power to the 10x14 grid of 140 grunts, more or less.

The poetry community sometimes prods the sternum of my personality defects in rather extreme ways. The politics of the software business are difficult enough to manage. Having to manage the politics of poetry is an offensive fact of literary life. Besides, I married, had kids to take care of and so on. That break from taking writing seriously — there was never a break in the writing itself — gave me a better perspective on *Cometology*. I cut out a good chunk of crap.

rm: I know you have struggled hard to avoid the politics of writing; how do you keep inside the public activities of writing these days? What keeps you engaged? And your third collection, *Fruitfly Geographic*, did you feel a difference in the writing simply because it *didn't* have the long gestation period that *Cometology* did?

SB: Thankfully, Ottawa doesn't have the profile of Montreal, so I don't think the desire to use politics to assert a particular aesthetic is quite as strong here. John Metcalf lives here and often makes bold claims — but he has a sense of civility. And, hell, he writes so damn well he has earned the right to think whatever he likes. Let's take the example of the closing night of the Ottawa spring writer's festival. I had the privilege of hosting George Elliott Clarke, Paul Muldoon and Adam Levin. The question and answer session at the end of the event was overwhelmingly positive: writers from every background were there — Oni the Haitian Sensation and others who have their roots in spoken word, people from TREE who have their roots primarily in the page, Mark a.k.a. Max Middle of the avant-garde, Ama Ede, the writer-in-residence at Carleton. We could have continued all night, I think, in conversation. Every one there had respect for everyone else. I miss the urban hum of Montreal, its sense of home, and the small community I still affiliate with. But I'm better engaged here because I love writing and people here seem to listen to what I write, grimace when I write something stupid, and smile when I write something clever. No-one from here has attempted a coup or an assassination. I wish I could say that about Montreal.

Fruitfly Geographic took its time too, I'd say. A good chunk of the work was five or six years old when I sent it to ECW. There were definitely differences to the writing, but it's difficult for me to articulate them. I think I learned to make better use of my notebook with *Fruitfly Geographic*. I also think I'd honed my chops for certain kinds of poems — like the odes in that book. The surrealism I had been probing in *Cometology* worked into more definitive voicing in. In some of the pieces I still like, I learned to shut up and let a little silence enter the poem. Finally, I think the architecture of the book is much stronger. By architecture, I mean the way certain thematic elements, such as time, structure the language of the poems in different sections in different ways. The shape and sound of verbs, for example, is very different in each section. It's a structuring principle that quietly augments but doesn't interfere with the experiences of the work (I hope). If you walk into a thoughtfully designed architectural space, you are often unaware of the design features that make the space pleasurable.

rm: How important is silence to a poem? How important is silence to your poems?

SB: Should I type a few spaces before I answer that?

It's important in many of the poems I most enjoy. It's the pausing of the voice in a poem, the elision of a thought, and a respectful gesture to the reader. A sign of at least a fundamental particle of silence is in every blank space on the page. It's important but not yet important enough in my own work.

rm: One thing I noticed when we were travelling together in England and Wales in September — you were travelling with an awful lot of books, including poetry and essays. A big stack of books, in fact. Why did you have so many? I noticed a range, too, of books you'd previously read as well as more recent acquisitions. Was it the combination of new ideas and touchstones that you wanted? How does this relate to how a poem gets built inside your head?

SB: Well, poetry is always made up of other people's words, I guess. Like it or not. I'm obsessed by learning. I can't stop myself. Let's see. I brought with me a book by Carleton professor Jacques Chevalier entitled *The 3D Mind*. Recent Concepts of mind and body are very important to what I'm writing. I had two classics by Jean Francois Lyotard. I had *Harmonium* by Wallace Stevens (I almost never leave the house with lugging around something by him); a selected by William Carlos Williams; an anthology of Spanish sonnets from Quevedo to the present day translated by Willis Barnstone. I'm not sure anyone can fully grasp literary history without reading at least one or two of Quevedo's naughtiest sonnets. I was reading *God and the New Physics* by Paul Davies and George Gamow's *One, Two, Three ... Infinity* which I hadn't read since I was in my twenties. Those are two of my favourite books. I brought a copy of *The Tempest* and Don McKay's three most recent books (poetry and essays).

Chinese Whispers by John Ashbery. *Sheep's Vigil for a Fervent Person* by Erin Mouré. Anne Carson's recent translations of Euripides. I have about eight projects under way. A project that is just getting under way won't find itself written for a good five to ten years. Each of these books participates in one way or another in the extend sound track or theme for a project. A sad thing about every birthday after 40, for me anyway, is that I think, "Jeez, I'm never going to finish writing this stuff." But for me writing only takes place with the dogged participation in the work of many others. I sympathize with Treebeard, Tolkien's shepherd of the trees; humans are hasty.

rm: I can understand the need for patience, and for a project taking its own time, but why is it so important a project take five or ten years to even start being written? How did this extended process of thinking through the work become your writing process? I know sometimes you've expressed frustration at not having new poems

ready for various publications that have asked you, but on the other hand, you seem to prefer the way that you slowly and methodically work. Do you ever worry about being *too* deliberate? And what happens during this time before the pen hits the page?

SB: It's not important that a project take five or ten years. But mine do. I can write a poem in a day; if I'm lucky, the words line up one after another. But a poem isn't a project. Let's take a recent example. I'm working on a lightning project. Late one night I had the wacky idea that it might be possible to invent a device — some kind of massive capacitor or heat sink — that could collect the electrical energy from lightning and, with the appropriate circuitry, release that energy to the grid. I have these ideas; call me a nut if you want. I did some research and, as with every idea today, it's shared in some form by a surprisingly large number of people. I won't get into the details of how a project took shape from that research. But a project is in place. The fact is I simply do not know enough about lightning. I've already written a poem or two for the project, but there's a bigger structure taking shape. That structure will require a really deep understanding of what we believe lightning to be at the present moment, and, more interestingly, how we came to believe it. The more time I take to really think about it, to really grasp it, the less deliberate the poems will be. I do worry about being too deliberate. It's by being excruciatingly patient that I work that out.



TERRY ANN CARTER

IRISH LAMENT

Drumcliff churchyard by the western sea
and the bare head of Ben Bulbin
all saga and twilight and sidhe –
And the ash tree casting shadows
across the slight river and stepping stones
to Ballylee, where the blind poet, Raftery,
fell in love with Mary Hynes “the most
beautiful thing God ever made”
her skin like melted snow
his poetry close to the bone
a night-riding pooka,
brooding.



**CLOSE YOUR EYES
AND MAKE A WISH**

ANITA DOLMAN

BODY

bones that feel hollow as shadows,
 she catches a glimpse
 in the elevator mirror
 of herself,
 cheekbones sheer, eyes dark,
 hollows under;
 corpse-like, a memory the demons
 fly to like fast shadows,
 body hollow,
 hers.

tears long forgotten,
 she unclasps a string of poetry,
 the untouched pearls wither to dust
 whisper of bodies,
 rich texture,
 of sweat, oil, lust,
 tears, drowning.

like a string of poetry,
 she'll clasp the withered pearls,
 forget, fly out, a whispered body
 from the hollow dust,
 fasten her tears to the mirrored corpse,
 touch the sheer bones,
 shadow someone else's demons

on the way
 back
 down.

on the
 way
 back
 down

onthewayback
 d
 own

OVER

Because quiet, we opened the door to strangers.
 Because old, we sat waiting for a new beginning.
 Because deadly, we knew where the better man was.
 Because shy, we began again and started without words.

Because when it was too late it was

Because without you there is no
 Because hers there is a

Because starting over is the hardest
 Because the story
 Because the candle
 Because the open prairie and all the things lost out here in the dirt and the sky
 Because lonely
 Because isn't
 Because over
 Because.

KATE WAN DUSEN

FOR THE JORJES

He is taller than a normal person. Like him his mind is beyond ordinary proportions. In that he is like Victor. (My abnormal troubadour. we are two old rattle traps.) You appeared to me in my sleep and looked a little sad.

The anemone which I took from the woods is finally thousands of white and pink stars amidst the blue periwinkles. It is warm and damp here. One can not break one's banjo in weather like this.

I need to see some blue, and the blue of the sea will do. You would like the blue of the artistic and literary firmament above our heads. That doesn't exist. Criticism is in a sad way; too much theory!

The twelve persons for whom you write are as serious as you are or more so. You had no need to read the other eleven. I want three leaves from the tulip tree. Send them to me in a letter.

Fanatical troubadour, I suspect you enjoy your profession more than anyone in the world. As for me I don't understand these Don Juans who are Byrons.

Don Juan did not make poems and they say Byron was terrible in bed. Nature acts: *itus et reditus*. It returns and returns, then it returns once more, then half as far, then further than ever.

What a way to talk eh? How the words turn, are twisted and made supple under his hand. You said that in order to work a certain levity was necessary. Where is it to be found in these damned lines?

I fall into melancholies of roses which are none the less melancholy. You ask me how I am? Your old troubadour is content, one has experienced bohemia and one has maintained poetry.

Did the tulip tree freeze this winter? Are the poppies pretty? Old friendships sustain us, or suddenly undress us, yet the decadences are transformations.

Send me some letters. And three leaves from the tulip tree. There are diamonds that sparkle in this polychrome after all.

Jorje Sens

originally appeared in 71 for GB: An anthology for George Bowering on the occasion of his 70th birthday

AMANDA FARR

THE SAND ELEGIES

beauty is nothing

but the beginning of terror

Duino Elegies, Rainer Maria Rilke

sahil
mediterranean between
mountains
khamsin wind

why not a
sand storm over beirut
gaza

–

what fishermen pull out

a red sleeve

tiny hand, halfmoon scarred into palms

silica hums silence
before
exodus
fragments
new

–

wish for sandcastles
safe as crumbling
moat and dragon breathing air
nothing more

heavy snows Mount Lebanon
will

–

grape vines handed down
bekaa valley wine on
shrapnel
r u I n e d
apples felled olive trees aborted seeds

–

a cedar old as jerusalem
roots nourished by
seaweed mixed with jet oil

roman ruins at tyre
arbitrary empires back forth

tree bends
will of everything
ochre stained

–

always a short cut road
takes you to the sea
battle
foundation built on shifting

–

still lake, a dream permanence
of tents

circles of centuries and prophesy
fate or deliberate
walls invisible

above old graveyards
fresh burials

-

round table geographix diplomatrix
 maps vertical abstracts
 hour glass spills white grains

so light

tips it

-

: gun barrel
 bullet free
 no fly zone

return a heart
 swoop of wing

above fertile land
 perhaps every vacant

-

beach stained black
 ocean once azure bruised
 yellow-fear

-

newly hatched Tripoli
 sea turtles crawl
 thru tanker oil leak

fighter-jet trigger

-

harp of wind
 over dunes
 sigh-shaped

-

serpent
 stings own
 glistening
 again
 and again

ELISABETH HARBOR

THIS IS OUR LIFE

This is our life,
carnival on quicksand,
house of balconies, wild
flowers, trap doors, windmill
and potter's wheel, kiln pit
flashed by lightning, staggered
views of the river, little steps up and down, crazy
quilts on the beds, upstairs part of the house airy,
unfinished, life-sized hands our father carved
screwed into ceilings to hold lanterns, lantern light
seasick in storms or when someone (in a rage) slams the door.



WILLIAM
HAWKINS

ELEGY FOR EVERYBODY

How strange this growing attachment
To minor keys, or a lonely dog's forlorn
Howling in the prison of a yard;
You can try not to hear it, but then you start to feel it
Echoing in the winter street.

How wonderful is the sunshine
When observed from the shade...
Or seen from the cool dark
Of a personal cave.

MY NEXT TO LAST GREAT LOVE

(apologies to Robt. Browning)

There she is, my next to last great love,
Her photo, showing cleavage, wallpaper on my computer screen.
I know now, but could not have earlier foreseen, that dream-
Like quality her eyes contain, her lustrous hair & above
All else the passion she aroused by her glance,
Her heaving bosom & languid sighs held me entranced, & still do,
If the truth is to be told,
As I grow old

ANTECEDENTS

As I have trickled out
 From a genetic stream of
 Purse proud Presbyterians,
 Only now falling on dry, hard ground
 Among ethnically diverse
 Impoverished puritans whose beliefs
 Beggar description,
 & even comprehension
 By the likes of me,

I start to imbibe & little earlier
 Each passing day...

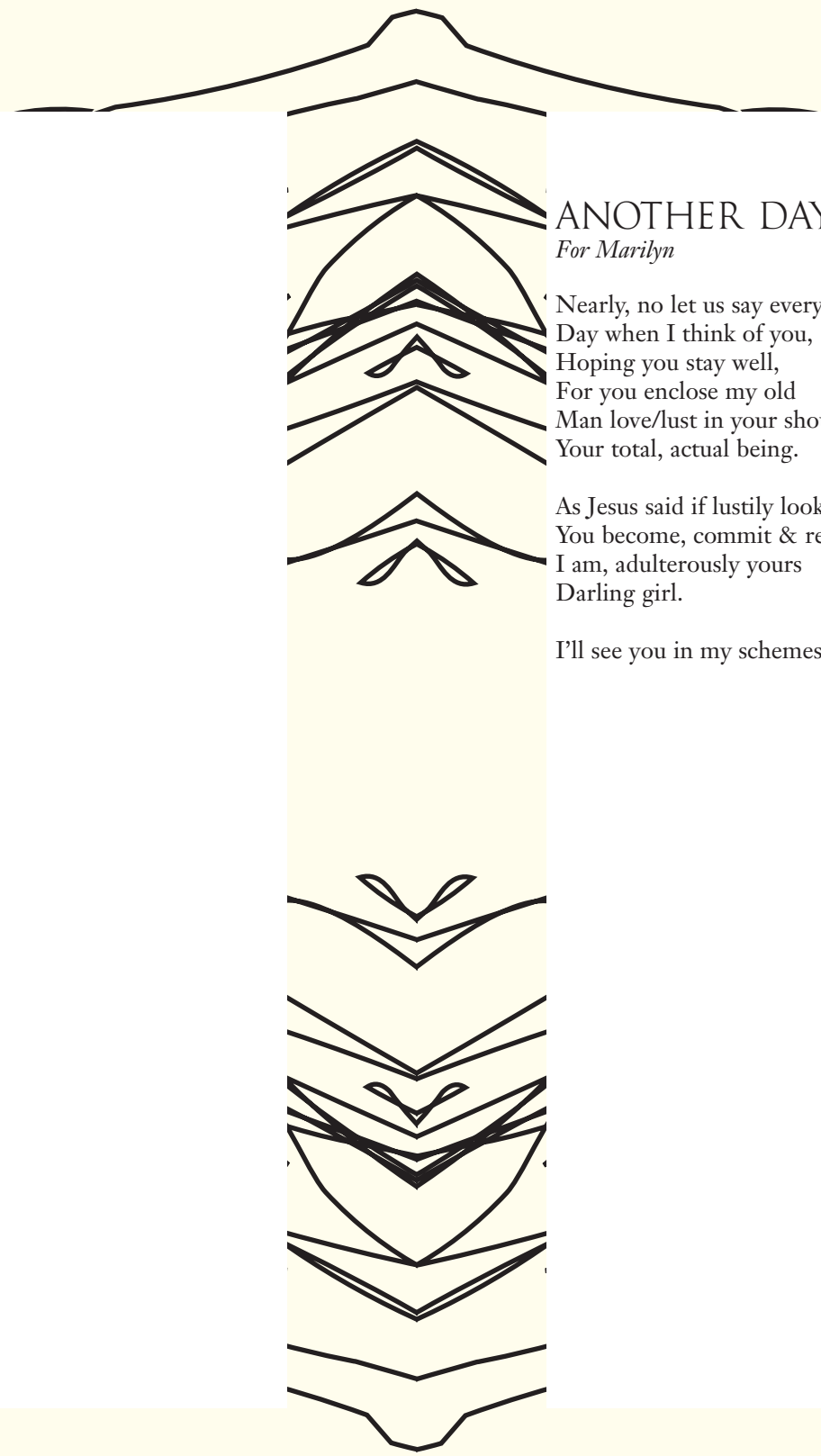
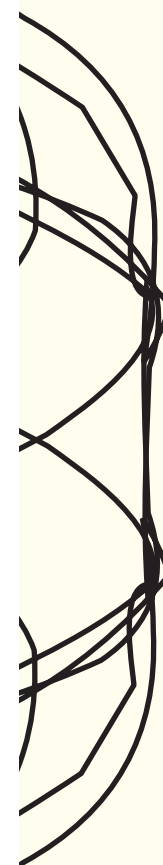
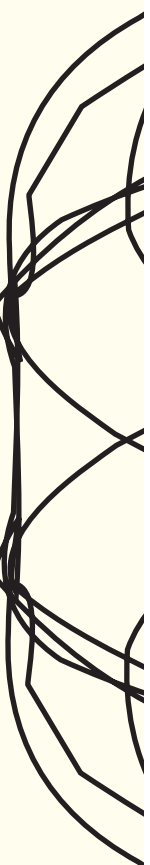
ANOTHER DAY

For Marilyn

Nearly, no let us say every
 Day when I think of you,
 Hoping you stay well,
 For you enclose my old
 Man love/lust in your shoulders, in your arms,
 Your total, actual being.

As Jesus said if lustily looking
 You become, commit & remain, as
 I am, adulterously yours
 Darling girl.

I'll see you in my schemes.



MARCH AUBADE

Not much of a dawn to sing about, mist punctuated
By rain, shrinking snow showing desperate grass patches;
But the birds are full of song, building nests, or
Whatever. April will be better.

May, the pregnant month, will have me singing
Along with the birds, maybe climbing trees, peering into nests,
Channeling the squirrel within,
The lout without,
Coaxing tulips out of the ground:
An All Canadian pain in the ass.



CLARE LATREMOUTILLE

BAREBACK GIRLS

afraid of nothing big
leopard-back tarzans in dust and horse sweat and
little monkey boys
chewed nails and sour grape chews, freckle bare in the whooping sun
the game to hang on at all cost

slipping off
mud water shelf, hard sand snapping like a chocolate bar
cool shade of half-in
hanging branches for the monkeys

how far

tiptoe deep
slobber-bone heads, gurgle-barrels
flash frozen cold into the river

boys on shore

troll river too cold too fast
to swim
every year drowning
some of them

girl bodies
slide in
dancing heated withers,
brown liquid ice
horses riverdrunk
in the mid day

nothing beneath the churning legs,
the rolling eyes
the shifting waterline

mad dogs
and Englishwomen

boys in the shore shade
watching

AT TWELVE

a field
and a stand of cottonwood behind the park, the gravel dike,
the world that went on wild
bigger
than being allowed

WOLF TRACKS

not Canada Post
not the mounties
not god

you have been abolished

cold words trapped
behind your big teeth

colder

than you intended

DIP

dolphin bodies sliver wet and firm
into the soundless black and deep beneath
wrestling underpush
head down
games in the pool
deep and deeper

backward
into dark water
into the deep end floating down
hands breaking
one single wave

nipples
I didn't remember growing
hard
in the suburban dark

too much

for next door
wide awake in his dark split entry
upper window blurry black glasses

and no eyes

the way you become

some
thing

NADINE MCINNIS

ANOREXIC HYSTERIA

An acrid cloud fills the air
as the camera's eye opens, and there again
is the leaping fire burning in a basket
suspended over the canoe's prow.
She's home, across the ocean, ankle deep
in a lake large enough to be an inland sea.
The men torch for eels at night,
a small crab turns under her foot
burrowing deeper into the silt.

He lunges with the spear, his motion
fluid and beautiful, piercing soundless water
and a point of fire flickers between her legs.
Caught on his spear is a dark ribbon
writhing, voluptuous shape of pain.
She eases towards the men's gentle cajoling
her body, weightless as the water deepens.
"Hold your skirt up," she hears in a language
she forgot, then remembered again.
In the pool created by her lifted hem
he places two eels stretched out in death

but dancing again in the cooking pot,
humid, faintly salty. Nudging the sides,
flexing, undulating. The smell drives her out
of the wigwam, away from the spruce boughs
where her mother has lain for months
coughing red from her lungs onto dirt.
A sharp cramp brings her close to the forest floor.
The young summer grass streaked with blood,
her mother's blood now her own, but hidden.

And then there is confusion.
The eels are dead, her mother
is dead. Blood and salty humid smell, rocking
across the ocean with this strange white man
who told her relatives she would pose
beside the Indian bones and quillwork baskets

in the Crystal Palace, but before that happens,
money changes hands on the dock
and he is gone.

At first she likes the way the woman washes
and brushes her dark hair, calls her *green fruit*
laughs as though fond of her new name.
Here she is, layered and quiet on a bed
trimmed with eyelet lace

until her door is thrown open,
and he's upon her, springy tense and grinning.
She doesn't understand why he's so happy
to see her. And it hurts, and it hurts,
still stinging from the bloody sponge
the woman has pushed inside her.
But too soon his face is red with rage.
He strikes her until all the English words
she's learned flare and go out.

After that, men slip against her open thighs,
white as death, hot and urgent pushing inside her
or warm and damp, spent against her side
or shove her hands along the length or make her
take all of it still writhing into her mouth,
the same smell sickening her as the day
she became a woman. *Elie y ni'niknaq,**
she screams until she is cast out.

She trembled when the doctor drew close
to tidy her hair. He stepped back then,
offered her a ripe apple to quiet her hands.
She must hold still for 10 beats of her heart
or she will blur, she will not exist. She holds the apple
loosely, for red has given her much pain in life,
and a little relief. During her monthlies,
she could rest, as she rests here,
but without absolution. Touches her pulse
to make sure she's still alive, keeps the apple
within reach should hunger ever happen again.
She'll put it in her mouth only if appetite
arrives in its most innocent form.

* *I am going home.*

A POSSIBLE CASE OF CATALEPSY

There are clues in her posture:
the protective arm across her belly,
thumb touching her breast.
There is room for a baby cradled
against her heart, or perhaps the doll
she left behind in the ward.

The arms are slender but the dress
could hide a matronly figure.
The head scarf knotted under her chin
doesn't reveal the firmness of flesh
so she could be twenty or thirty
or even a childlike forty years of age.

She could be frozen into this pose forever,
she could be singing nonsense songs
to herself all day. She could spend
waking hours rocking
and adding numbers in her head.
She could be frightened
by an hallucination of a fiery lion
floating just to her right,
or an amorphous cluster of lights,
forewarning of a shattering migraine.
She could be remembering a trauma:
house fire, or three generations
of her family dead with cholera.
What could she do, their failing hands
grasping her skirt as she moved
from bed to bed? Or remembering

her mother bloodied and the slow
sway of her father's body
hanging in the barn.

Take your pick. Trauma is an ongoing
theme with endless
variation.

She could have been beaten
or cherished or protected or ignored
or humiliated. She could have felt joy,
hatred, desire, resentment, gratitude,
giddiness, dread, pride, hope,
and an overwhelming transcendent love.
I hope she knew love.

This attention I pay to her
is something like love,
although she will never turn towards
me. The finger she holds at her lip
keeps all she might tell me
held at the brink where everything
rushes away into nothing.

A PERFECT AND FAITHFUL RECORD

Ten women, long dead, photographed
in the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum.
You could be fooled
by their modest dress, Victorian poses, the
grey sheet behind them
obscuring how they arrived here.

Their doctor crouches behind the camera
hidden beneath a velvet cloak.
He has placed them on chairs,
smoothed their hair and asked them
to hold still – a docility today
attained only by pharmaceuticals.

You would never know
from the faded salt-on-paper portraits
that this asylum was considered modern
and humane: a perfect self-contained world
with its own gas works, water tower,
laundry and gardens tended by patients
rescued from indigence.

Even knowing this, you still want
to turn away and forget them,
the way you focus
on a red traffic light when the homeless
troll for change between lanes,
or cross streets, darting between cars,
when twitching men lurch towards you.
Let them be faint rings of disturbance
trapped in glass. But for you, they become
negatives, darkly transparent.

Move in more closely,
press your face
against the museum case, and you'll see
that one is pretty, her dark hair
falling into her lap like water.

Another does not raise her eyes.
One grips arms across her chest, defiant.
Her truth cannot be held
by this image; across 150 years
the betrayal in her gaze burns.

Their faces have outlasted
the science of physiognomy
that created them, studies in objectivity,
gradations on a scale used to rank suffering:
*distress, sorrow, deep sorrow, grief and
melancholy, anguish and despair –
a perfect and faithful record.*

And, you wonder, how is one sorrow
deeper than another?
What is melancholy if not grief?
Although the old-fashioned word *anguish*
feels right to you, timeless, lived timelessly.
That's the problem, the never-ending
sense of it, just like these women
who will sit forever
unknown.

ENTERTAINMENT: MAGIC LANTERN SHOW

Once for science, now for a paying audience,
the women of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum
have been selected for their visual qualities.
Paupers once, now they are framed in bronze
and hung in the National Gallery.

But they are as delicate in image
as they were in life. Even in death,
they must be protected. They are irreplaceable,
sealed away behind glass from the interplay
of sunlight and incandescence,
the crowd's moist breath and shifting weather.

Halcyon days or intemperate extremes
threaten them equally.
A humidity detector beneath
each sepia-toned portrait registers air quality.
A red-inked pen held by an invisible hand
writes slowly on scrolled paper
in a language that has reverted
to the heartbeat where life begins.

In this exhibit, a retrospective
on photographic perspective,
science meets art. All the fascinations
of science are here: to slow down time,
to speed up time, to capture the smallest detail,
to cast perception beyond distances
that can only be imagined.

But context is everything.
The women are placed close to a photograph
of a speeding bullet passing through a banana,
explosion of white matter light as feathers,
always greeted by laughter.

They are across the room
from swirling distant galaxies
imaged through the recording of gamma waves –

the invisible made visible for the human eye. The women
seem as far away as that,
frozen in their suffering behind glass.
You've paid good money to be here. You,
free to walk away
and contemplate the distance between
you and *Antares the Rbo Ophiuci dark cloud* –
cobalt blues, fiery oranges, glorious fuchsia
reminding you of something that is finally
out of your mind.

But in your perfect and faithful record,
this is not possible. You will return
to stand before the women.
You will see your own faint reflection
superimposed on one face, and then another.

Try as you might,
you will never step completely
out of the frame. As you move through the exhibit,
the pen recording your heat, your breath,
it will be your eyes that follow them.

R J MCGRAY

EDMONTON AUTUMN

23 sunflowers planted in Spring

leaves now black with frost

I have no need for

their closed-fist faces

Fix paper glasses for each

awed eclipse

Mis-apparitions among

the crowd

Meeting the petals

the bow

MOUNT-ROYAL, 5:00 AM

The sun came up like a shotgun wedding. How to tell the birds to turn their heads, not to look straight into the growing glow, the dawn slit open eyes. A white arc has split the sheet metal sky. I follow the fold of molten grey-blue to the horizon furthest from you. There are row-homes, spires ahead of me. They burn in the view of the mount, blazing; your shadow I cannot turn to see. Inconceivable, these birds, their songs, how they mark the space beside your pillow, before you've fallen there.

JUST LIKE THE STARS THAT DRIFT ON THE PEMBINA RIVER

found again, 40 kilometers North-West of Attikokan. Astral bodies, known for meteorological phenomena and seeing us home, couldn't have told us we were anywhere else. The night of a wedding. We lay on the dock and looked up. It is certain that we could just as well have looked down. Above us the spill of Milky Way, like the glass-white skin that peeks from the line of your dress. A bottle and a half of homemade wine, I see the Northern Crown has tipped. Like a few stray hairs, across your reclined visage, Little Bear. Not even the stars to get in the way.

SELF-ADDRESSED POSTCARD FROM PRAGUE

This is to say that on this twenty-third day of July, 1997, I am forty-seven years old. Standing alone on a bridge over one muddy river. It drifts a slow and constant tail of mop water; the ragged scarves of gypsies bid me goodbye. Grey, the diminuendo of sky drips from slate roofs to confirm: defeat has followed swiftly afoot. This travel plan has failed me. The border agent declined to stamp my passport upon entry. His face was dour and unimpressed. I passed, invalid. The many-swimming arms and eyes of the clock in Old-Town square have ground to a halt. I crept from the hostel, past the baker and the tiny row homes, this morning before anyone had risen. To find the dew-damp notice: *The ascension of the apostles will not proceed today.* It is nearing dusk on this second day of travel. I will walk up to the castle, past soldiers as vigilant as trees. I am writing in reminder that junketing can not cure. Let the snaky waters of Saskatoon assuage me. My dusty prairie drink, I am coming home. Tom.

SELF-ADDRESSED POSTCARD FROM VIENNA

Home, I send you this disparaging report. The crisp dispatch of train cut along the Danube but could not bring me sleep. I gaped, awake, through the tall glass at shadowy outlines of Austria. Into Vienna with the dull light of dawn I stumbled, bleary-eyed. The cafés, hospice to teams of lonely-hearted artisans received me, indifferent. At Diglas the waiter brought coffee and a short glass of water. There I sat, all day watching people pass, their foreign language newsprint pleated across my lap. Come dusk the chorus of patrons changed their guard and the pianist strolled in, his scarf in his hands. Once again out to the streets. I'd taken a room on the periphery of Inner Stadt, but walked the Ringstrasse where the city wall was razed. I spent my last day at the Imperial Summer Palace – the world's oldest zoo has an ancient cinnamon bear. Its partner lost, I found him, fixed on a point just past the bars, and sat with him until the gatekeeper came to close shop. The Riesenrad in Prater Park held me deep into the night, waltzed me around and around; the reliant rise and fall cradled my swollen heart. I'm sending this from the station, another departure. Where is the city that drove Mozart wildly elate? Tom.



ROB MCGLENNAN

FROM SPARE MOMENTS: SEVENTEEN (FAILED) OTTAWA GHAZALS

for phil hall & michael holmes

You have lines linking starts to stars
As if the illusion
Of nothing between them is an error.
— Fanny Howe, *Tramp*

BETWEEN THE BODY & LANGUAGE
a ravine of call & response

*if you look down the well for the moon
your head eclipses the shine*

hurting myself is a still they'll never find
— Phil Hall, *An Oak Hunch*

quick ghazal while having breakfast
at pubwells restaurant, preston street,
february 12, 2006

the forlorn sweeps of powdered snow
across womens hockey

the noonday sun bears bright
, italian down

catered boundaries; an elongated shore
of sidewalk; familiarity will erase

yesterdays *globe & mail*
a couplet lies

womens speedskating, elvis
costello, hockey

from the plant bath (table
of twelve); a brokered salvage

of highlights

there is little space on a sunday
for the spontaneous gesture

or the spartan fact

quick ghazal while waiting for beef shawarma
in the shawarmas king, bank street,
february 13, 2006

asymmetrical, a drip
of morning shine

& shame

through lucks blue romance,
the frost can coalesce

insubstantial, or substantial then

the static of bedrooms
& an itchy trigger

thunder bronze, the sweet air
struggles moisture

a candied sticky heart

if a defense against death
is an exhumation

hardly a defense at all

when they come march swallows
back to roost

the voice is neither throat
nor song; stalled

half-ton sediment

a photograph of self-respect

quick ghazal while waiting for the tree reading series
in the royal oak II, laurier avenue east,
february 14, 2006

reflected in plasma screen

a lack of silver
in that silver sun

dark wood & circumstance; dark wood
& sheath of snow, waves

as we drank & we drank

a heart attack of collaboration, shavings
as the trials place, bets

to unsnap like a seer

the sirens on reflected windows
burn red

living tuesday memory
& a bloody valentine

a fast-moving cigarette at the end
of no river

a champion of all things
concerning no-one

quick ghazal while waiting for friends
at the carleton tavern, parkdale market,
february 15, 2006

a spare sign, tinted windows
from red neon glare, & low slated speech
; days the shape
of a deliberate pour
artichoke lungs & liver, three ribs
on the ladders rung
broke, bottom
from here to the floor, or
furthest wall, what
a lungful of fresh, torn awake
amid famous americans
happy, & some
would want simple perfection
the brokered broken cash machine
inside; the cue to the kitchen,
pool
& juke-box
a single celled question grows
, picking at soft skin

quick ghazal while waiting for the montreal bus
in the greyhound terminal, catherine street,
february 16, 2006

beneath the battered wind, a selection
of dry ice
to find a living stone
bent down to the face, a babys
breath; blue shafts of snow
at fifty frames a second
each name on the timetable map
a fragment
of a fracture; secretive,
& still
& lie like a second reader
beware the ghosts that line the margins,
fingernail the underside
, threat of generations
& the intertext
across the midday sun, devices plunder
heart to a snow cloud; cosmopolitan
& the local
time is entry, & misgiving
a groping ground zero
awash in gulf stream february lungs,
held cold or a cough

quick ghazal while waiting for a drink
at patty bolands, clarence street,
february 17, 2006

the guinness glottal pause
, escape

a word works wonders

to a hamlet of discovery, at the southern tip
of the first floor bar

thick crate of celtic, barrage
of oak barrels, lidless eyes

carnivorous voiced balcony
, the look-down, lock

our blood & theirs: a thirst

an empire washed ashore intemperate,
a roll of one by one by one

a single tab, stephen

makes up for it

two edges w/ her silent driver
& bare shoulders

way down below; an inkling wretch

a third & final last call stretch

quick ghazal while waiting for the movie
at the world exchange centre, albert street
february 18, 2006

a lackadaisical air; escalators turn
, fill the basement w/ steps

hanging nardwar, folding beauty
in suspended air

a three day glisten

from shape to signal, youth is captured
on a ticket stub

between child & adult, in the difference
of a single cost

an escalating scene; if hudson
filled w/ holes

a preliminary flicker, or fate
worse than fact

engine trouble

; a whispering word as winter weighs
discoloured breath

sun scrapes the length
of pre-recorded beach

securing playback

, the tides

MAY MIDDLE

MOON POTATOES

O: a pip ship slips
1: a ship a clip a slip
2: clips slip strip

O: tip a clip a slip a rip
1: hip tip whip clip ship clip
2: a dip ship trips hips a tip

O: a ship a pip hit
1: a tip a slip a dip
2: slip a ship dips

O: a blip flit a ship
1: sit sit a flit a fit
2: a fit strips bit lip

O: a tip ship clips a fish flips
1: tip trip fish ship pit sits
2: sit fit fish a kit lit sit

O: a lit fit fish sits sit fish sit
1: fish wit spits splits a skit
2: it a fish skits sits kits a hit

O: hit kits a fish sit sits split
1: sits a fish a skit fish wit writ
2: tip a fish skip pips lip fits

O: a fish flips a kit sits
1: fish lips fit a sip blip sip
2: kip a fish blips flips trips

THE WAY THE DAY ENDS

funeral stare
begins in the am
still weaving
over the coffin

stirring a shot

hem & purr ravelling
one day clement

white in your self

in a gleaming box
yes in the way
healing parts
pleasure office

silver march
bored by empty

basement spiders propped up
stopped, stuffed as furniture

IN MEMORY OF AN ABORIGINAL CHILD KILLED IN A PREVENTABLE FIRE, 1989

*Justice of deprivation publicly commended:
fire fighting is refused to a burning reserve.
Sealer of infinite wells, wells to temper
flames that stole a child at rest.*

A family inherits grief as economic value
because as officially stated... "where do we draw the line."

The child died as rain fell
refusing salvation
& rising on the smoke
of bills proclaiming a foreign monarch,
flames once distant peripheral rushed to char her earth.

Now risen to sky, enveloping
fenced terrestrial water.
The child is born to air.

In the town, they furnish the dearth of their imagination with charts.

DREAM S

same dream S dreamt as

S dreamt rare S air.

ASPARAGUS ENDS

i put the cheese away
so plush the anguish
marks the able
asparagus the ends.

COBBLESTONES

fettered are the sentences
i saw you in the dark lying

creeping light gripped your teeth
a family of mottled lattice work

i saw your body wormed by teeth
in the light i saw you lie down

sartorial is soon demoused on these pages
as you play alone in the park

unfurling, thinly conscious at waking
three ears bound to a film of flour

sliding wildly the garage opens nightly
forming the right path pitching pennons

ending closeted, absent of light, you startle
where i saw you lie down in the dark

settle amongst the ferns eyes fanning
probing you span the canvas & ground

where i saw you lie down in the dark
absent from light, the eyes closed, bathing

sentences sidle, inching page to page
they lie down in the fold still as

your eyes open to the line
i saw them lined in the dark



RIM MINUS

AS IT ROLLS

slightly smaller than the last, covered with feathers and unscaled – a spin – a pickup
and here we are nearly black

in form much like the last, a slight hollow at the throat – the skin rises – look at it
flutter

similar in wing to the last, a blueness to the skin - a red ring about the eye – blank
in the core

there is longing– something to follow out

tip and outer web in the last, often found in the lighter phase – packed and soft –
scaled in the right places

a claw - a branch – drive it away

lighter but more furious than the last, an inner web and shaft – something to
delight in –
a scratch –

an inlaid knife

A WOMAN AND HER DOLL

doll: from nickname for Dorothy

the sixth part of nothing. a woman licks the grid to get to the place. clutching.
the softness. at the dark hour.

pull my cord make me talk

the black box hard in the belly. in and out with needle. her love stitched on skin.

less the talk

slit the torso. collect the bones in happy harvest. smells of 30 years dust. water
stained. wife.

whore

walking the houses. that sewn body fills up the desert side.

I'm hungry I'm thirsty fill me up

holding woollen hair. fingerless. she touches. scratch against flesh. halting places
and private realms. cavern. occupant. hysteric. erasure here.

stupid. dolls have no brains

a ceremony in the legs. striped black. a white doll a white girl. addicted to pleasure.

the outside pushes into the centre

fruit stains a dress. no easy words for this. she sees it all.

she is so lovely

GONE TO BALTIMORE

dry and wild in the festival. the seasons fall down. drugged, buying. a first person shooter. my eyes are pearls. hard. a confectioners dream. girl.

turn on the game

push the power. start the run. switches in my hands are hard rubber. sticky and ready. it all narrows to death. a sharp shooter. a sim time motion eater. throw stones in my mouth. the salt falls off. faggot.

keep killing

the markets are thriving. weave through the thousands. each corner a drive to the edge. death commando in real time – travel. one player a one player solely occupied with the trade. everything is raw. eden.

weaving metal

throw the dice down. now. ready for the pieces. it feels good to forget. fly by night. free of the dollars. sense less now. lame.

please turn it off

the time is past. plait the weeds. stroke my hair. monster steps. devour it all bite by bite. yum mars bar chunky butterfingers hershey mounds. rooted.

I party with the dogs

THE CORNER

this is it. a delicious blank. a hook for the game. I have told you how tickled I am and where I have looked.
a level of skill.
a blasted balloon.

here. under the trees. the ends of the branches are twisted.

stare down the street. the terraced view to shopgirl delights. comicstrip colours tripped up in hangers. a balance of yellow. a trick of red. spread on the lips. this is the desired zone.
a full flush.
a diamond not rough

look at the babies blowing bubbles. their fingers in the air. sweet william straws in their hair.

this is a trip. a onetime step to.
a periwinkle heaven.
a trunk for the bees.

a spelling that is true

MOTORLESS REPLICANT

maybe it's true
that we're nothing but cleverly programmed
giant flesh and bone robots

sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant
sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant,

each one set for a specified few years
with built-in desires and emotions –
a body flying into the river –
a severed arm off on its own –
and a good working mechanism for tears

but we have composite blood
some other supra-galactic origins mixed in:

sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant
sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant
sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant
a long long way from Home

I hope it's true, Mr. Tyrell,
cause I'd like an operation if it's so
you can snip the wires around the heart—
and set it free—like a crushed bird —

you made us too well, Mr. Tyrell;
Geneticist, Snake Charmer, Devil, Witch,
you tinkered with some tender toys
and some of the wires have got loose;

it's that persistent memory of two moons I can't shake—
and we sang like glass harmonicas in a high-pitched wail—
like heart-broken tin men in a field of monkeys...

it's that notion of a sublime, infinitely old,
infinitely wise race
that shook off its shackles millennia ago
I can't shake

and it's the high-pitched dancing of giant soft robots
in the double-helix moonlight
around a great sparkling fire
against an infinite night...

sometimes I feel like a motorless replicant
a long, long way from my star.

RED DONKEYS

These are the years piling up on you
 like red donkeys
 these are the tears that fill the room;
 standing water must be examined
 before anything like consummation can be performed.

These are the Friday afternoons of empty sunlight
 closing around you like a giant airy vice
 The Battle of Rejection was lost
 For the want of a wayward spike.

What the hell is going on here, Mister?
 these are the days you go home to your 'wife'.

What of afternoons on the boulevard
 the arm-in-arm stroll of calm delight?

What of the slapping of thighs
 Like lapping waves, you said,
 and all of those up-too-late nights?

the tossing of words on a table,
 the mumbling of words in an ear
 what of the humming of foghorns as bodies vibrate together
 like Ishmael holding his spear.

The years are merely red donkeys
 neighing and whinnying so –
 these are the doppelganger parties
 of split-soul unheavenly hosts

I merely wish to understand, my quiet stray,
 how you can be in two places at once
 as the moon howls down on my face,
 and why the years are red donkeys
 and someone's waiting, always waiting
 to take my place in the standing water
 waiting to step into my space.

THE INFINITY OF NARCISSUS

you
 with your tawny frog mouth
 and tawdry ways

taunting me with hopeless triangular tautologies
 and reminders of previous bad-boy styles—
 that familiar 'preference for self over others'—
 the Narcissus disease—
 always preening, flexing, strutting, in front of one-way glass...

if only this could be seen as self-reflection
 but there's only you looking outward at your image

no inward journey

sure, you look like Benicio del Torro
 but you're a womanizer, a drunk,
 and you hardly ever read—

I feel guilty— like the guy who finds himself intractably drawn
 to a well-made blonde, only because she has a pleasing shape—

forget the theory that
 "the body is the soul's idea of itself in physical form"

you were just a small a-muse-mint
 a bedroom-eyed muse-i-cian

meant for that lovely blonde ex-model crack-head you still carry a torch for
 who drinks in downtown Eastside dives, flirting and drugging your future away
 with handsome native men who are *a-mused* by her—until she disappears
 mentally, physically...or both
 does it matter?

and I guess it goes on down the line
 deeper into the dark recesses of the world...

(like the man with the magazine in his hand on the cover of which is a picture of a
 man with a magazine in his hand —on the cover of which is a picture of a man
 holding a magazine with the same picture on the cover...etc.)

to infinity.

THE OPTIMIST

Grrrowl, said the beef

Okay, said the lamb

You're dead, said the thing on 2 legs,
after cutting off ear enemies for collection with blade

Just following orders.

Blackbird who witnessed the crime wondered what the word, "order" meant.

Phoenix dreamt of a new day.

Roar! said the last tiger,
Squeak! the deformed mouse

Another injection? said the 2-legged thing

Cockroach gleamed in the corner

Phoenix dreamt of a new day.

Caw caw cried the crow, over malodorous body mounds

Peep, squeaked seagull youth

Get out of my way! said the thing on 2 legs with a stick.

Beetle glowered noiselessly.

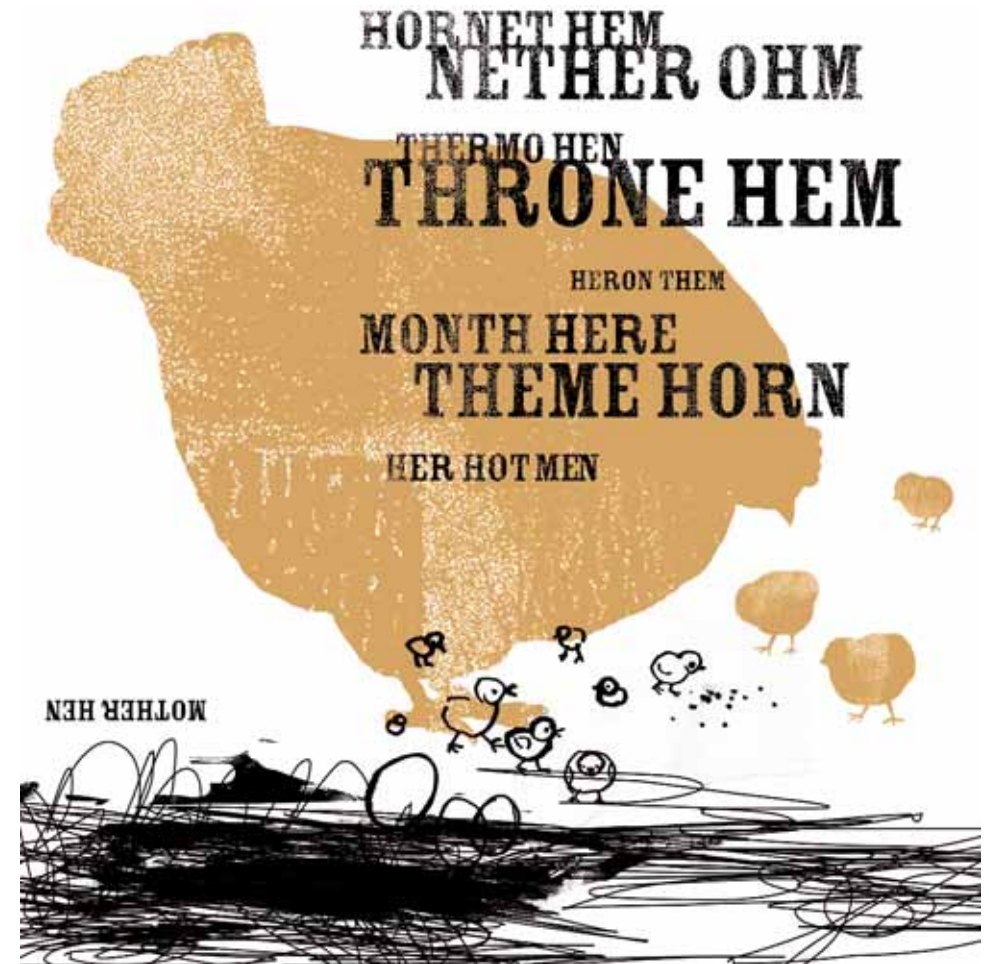
Phoenix put out the flames.

It began to rain.

Cockroach grinned at Crow and Beetle.

Crow said:

Caw, caw!



THEORY OF EVERYTHING

beneath Maya's veil,
miniature elastic energy vibrations
sing in unseen dimension halls...

the four forces play on their good-oh-gracious strings
dancing to the end of
time
as we know it

in the milky way of human kindness that now sadly stops at the buck
stops

here

down on this infinitesimally small scale

where

even the greed-merchants who peddle matter
don't matter

here

where

all particles are unique but equal and similarly
sub sub sub atomic

not catatonic, but

dancing around dark matter
fighting against the mad hatter of black holes
tiny dancers of light

and the moon, parental, knows how to glow

inspiring the miniature filament halos
to shimmy and shake
and stir up the void
(proving there's no such thing)

eureka!

these subtle strings may finally be
the spaghetti-confetti
that weds us all
together

large and small
short and tall
(up-and-down) or charm

or both
or none

we've just begun

to sense the symphony
we call the uni-verse.

Isn't it divine,
the shine?

the lacy blooms of columbine
that climb
the terrestrial trestle

strangewonderful brew
this theory of glue
concocted in the physicists' mortar and pestle

and me
and you

and everything

continually new

grand design
in the midst of grand decline

I sing
the glory of the flutter of the butterfly's wing

I sing
the theory of everything.

JOHN NEWLOVE

PLAYING THE GAME

Spring, with her sullen moods,
her damp face, her mascara running,
her make-up ruined,
is gone.

Summer is here. On a golf course
on a hot day when the tropics
have moved to Quebec for the occasion,
you can taste the weather,
though some of the chemistry
hanging in the air
should not be there.

At the first gun the golf carts head out in line
into the temporary rain together
like the World War One taxis of Paris
rushing to defend the Marne –
we won't be defeated by the weather.

The small white ball is driven,
but not as driven as the golfers, whose game,
with its ups and downs,
seems to be one of pauses,
 of hesitation,
 consultations,
 explanations,
of polite, deferring manners,
of indeterminate results, mysterious causes.

But what are they seeking?

I'm told you always find
what you are looking for,
but it may not be
what you thought it would be.

Well...every sensible person wishes
the world were different.

It isn't though.

To decipher it you have to read the course.

As you go through your life's course,
hunting for the meaning and the source,
someday, someday, please read this
for me, in memory of us.

WANDA O'CONNOR

MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A STAIRCASE

There is a staircase vining up the tall blank of building. It reaches the sky and forms its metal around the elements. The staircase does not end as a staircase. There is nothing beyond it, around it, or in support of it.

There is a building.

The building holds the staircase alert. Pinned in place by metal arms. It is black and it is metal. There is metal in the sky.

There are three elements present. The first, it reaches toward the earth for support. The second, it becomes the atmosphere for rest, the third, a solid form, for comfort. The metal supports me.

Freud wrote, "Anatomy is destiny". I imagine this as my maxim and as my civilization. The long arm of the handrail of concept. There are hands that run along that rail. There is some kind of love in this.

All the weightless elements combine and form a mountain. I reach the peak to speak to Moses, gain a prophecy. I can see Hollywood from here, it's loss of charm.

There is an idea of wanting, but only an idea. I am farther from Charon on this perch. It is a sufficient conflict to be distanced. But here I need all things. I need to feel human.



ROLAND PREVOST

HAT PULSE

-i-

“words take life
& vice versa, write you”

comic-book thought clouds
knock door to door,

not yet time to eulogize your modus / way to go
standing behind your steel lid

if only had in my possession a soul-imaging machine
not x-ray or gamma
not one of those chrome halfball multiwired mind- reader units
either
but an actual spiritus imager

scimitar thru bull – cut thru fact, to _____

would then be in perfect position to set down proof :

there are no facts at all — only symbols
even what one euphemistically calls i – all myth

-ii-

“chemicals easily fool
flavours & scents”

fantasy spun
worlds without atom, arbitrary rule
of mythic sky giants

every seedy motel on the outskirts
addicted-to faces airs taken on

born of other reasons: convenient indecorous marriages
unnatural alliance – of fire & water asleep in a dream

these our selves, made up infrastructures
sculptures in clay, plastic souls

under parking lot rain

van’s false leatherette
shines wet neon

-iii-

“dissolving echo says:
‘never plan of the part’ ”

count rusty staples left by broadsheets

on all things wooden – posts or walls
invitations to events

ads out in place in time
credible gaps to join / between our spokes on the wheel

a spun centre holds gyroscopic
the lost count of (aesthetic) revolutions

layers of papers up & down torn

spam as meat presented
out here tonite we promote the artifice

our guests invited to imagine a third mysterious sex
far above changes
our cumulus shapes

-iv-

“i’m in a mood to grow
immune to your pesticides”

certain truth
sacrifice to: gods of the art

from shopping malls & wireless lanes they will rev up to take
their equal righteous graffitti places

in mean times least for now
skin will still hide (bone

& grin result

/ anywhere a spirit refuses

-v-

“enough surely to melt yr sacrosanct,
would be the minimum dose?”

never believe what doesn't bite you first — an equitable arrangement

spare us please – all of us have stuff

ghosts wrapped in cloaks – landscape / nature actors
all very fine but

cement pronoun truck slams – leaves you

somewhere always, the clock ticks nervous
inverse proportion to years

nothing under this

-vi-

“this purgatory not my intention –
reserve the right to walk, at the drop of a...”

we're all cowboys in these suburbs
all newcomers from not these parts

you watch!

on these flat supposed barrens
fertile communities will form where now
only prefab houses grow where the dear

yesterday met new neighbour / divorce sent here
his empty house lonely for a voice
that's all it needs – that's how it starts

invited over for backyard telescope & jupiter
he smiled, so pleased lending a mundane tool
get thru the days

we come from all over staking out our claims
something tells me one positivist day, it'll all add up –

could very well be wrong tho'

sunsets sink suburbs

-vii-

“something cracked, dunno what:
now things flow”

writhe, generate a carapace
of quills

please don't sweep it under that weedy lawn,
another man in an ire mask
itching for entanglement

fine, fine, hang yr goddam hat on my doorknob this day
never eat brain

-viii-

“murder by synthetics –
devilish plot drags on”

known rumours about people even patently false
afterwards retain (a certain (if-twisted beauty

obvious surreality
strangely, affords a sort of perfect freedom

in lovers' bars music drones on
face dangers

take a bow
where dragons imp
& fantasy parades

medals bravely deserve

-ix-

“an attentive witless ;
sorts unknown”

enough for now, of place

i mean, at first it was original / maybe even brilliant
but give it arrest!

com back later

signs you're maybe
moving on to a love motif (always a classic

over here eyes peel
our spontaneous movies churn out

way better than tv

-x-

“an unexploded life of their own”

seven hills walk to me
snake`s outta the bag

in the back lane prance these

tiny dogs on leash walk their shit-collecting (no offense
so-called masters

impossible to convey any deep significance of

much experience, way more than enough to convince
that even if anyone ever did figure. all this. out.

they'd get so excited / elated – they'd quickly forget

don't laugh
i promise, these things happen



-xi-

“dear Orangutangs
whose lessons in culture...”

give up it

make perfect your tiny donation
bloodlines, watered down

enfold in your crease / a flaw

mUtate the intention

stunned in the card shop / room of unlimited wishes

whose noise drowns the simplest of signals

greet this!

-xii-

“simpering leaves an ugly scar
on the animal kingdom”

among tall scraper shadows

sits, charges a sidewalk toll, for decades
to all passersby

who can't span the bottleneck

open hat asks / passes
apes, servants of civility

on both sides: some face disdain

between potter's kiln fires
& crematorium

no distinguishing features
more than dice

-xiii-

“if this keeps up, we’ll have to
hang you on the freaking wall!”

a tiny wonder kingdom this. at the pub, your corner
wooden throne

i know the sequence suggests — sarcasm here; jus’ don’t!

we share beers & chat poetics
every five you wave at / joke with so many known
on barstools, or sidewalks outside the front window

& out in between spills, a bit of each’s story
lifestuff, without getting cute

like to simmer in this soup – ‘round more or less crafted words

papers strewn wild on the small round table, & on the
memorable window ledge

books & folders bristling with (coloured place markers
laughed when asked how exactly jus’ being here so sparks

when i already see yr movie coming

long ago figured out
long even before this your fine court was ever held

life’s
muchmore
fiction

-xiv-

“congruencies towards consumption of red pints”

under the gravestone

lead your moving wake at
earth’s mouth
tremble our lips in radiant silence

-

some burrower (let’s not say giant)

of ghostly substance
aches to swallow what spills out

each soft leather satchel from open flaps

heaps of crumpled

-

long this fate: ‘trapped in amber’

frozen limelight circle before these hollow seats
since you’ve gone

to that country without ambassadors – not even spies

-

at the round table by
the drizzled window
your hat sits down on the opposite chair
& asks the waitress to bring a couple of

HAT PULSE – SOME NOTES

The idea for this poem was that, what we call selves (ours & others) are actually constructs made up completely of symbols, residing as ‘symbiotes in the meat of our bodies’. Certain errors creep into our choices, because we often forget how totally fictitious we really are. Not just to others, but most especially to ourselves. This poem tries to look at a some facets of this fiction.



artist: Dan Martelock
email: dmartelock@hotmail.com



Photo: K.I. Press

Interview: K.I. Press.

Conducted over email September – December 2006

CT: In a general sense, how long did it take you to write each of your books — and did you start off with writing sort of individual poems and then notice a connection between them, or was there something you were exploring, whereby the poems were part of a connected series?

K.I.P: My first book, *Pale Red Footprints*, was started (in the form of notes) in 1996 when I was at the University of Ottawa studying the Canadian Long Poem with Seymour Mayne. I had the brilliant idea of doing a long poem instead of a final paper. Instead, it became something much bigger than I could finish during the term. So that book was very much envisioned as a “long poem” right from the beginning. I worked on the poems throughout my abortive PhD years (to 1999) and then started shopping around the manuscript, making revisions in dribs and drabs until it was published in 2001. So that’s how long it took to “write.” I was also writing and shopping around a second manuscript during that period, which was never published but was a loose collection of more typical “first book” kinds of poems about my ex-boyfriends and my family and that kind of thing. A few of those poems ended up later in *Flame*, the chapbook of mine rob mcLennan put out. One of them, “Art and Artifice,” ended up in *Spine*.

Spine was conceived of as a collection, but it actually turned out much different and much “looser” than originally envisioned. I started that project in 1999, hot off the heels of grad school, and I was all about feminist hypertexts and other mysteries of the universe at the time. The structure of the book was going to be more complicated. That never happened. Instead it became a looser collection around the theme of reading, which I organized into sections later. I finished the “good draft” of that book in 2002 and then did various revisions until it was published in 2004.

Types of Canadian Women was started in 2002 as I finished the “good draft” (the “good draft” meaning the draft that I feel I can show people) of *Spine*. I didn’t know that it was going to be a whole book at the time, maybe just a short series of poems. I was fascinated by the 1903 book *Types of Canadian Women* and just started by finding out what I liked about that book and making some notes. I finished the good draft of that in 2004 and have been revising until just recently!

It wouldn’t take me so long to write books if I didn’t have a job. At least I hope it wouldn’t. When I start and finish books holds to a pattern; if I’m not a student, on a grant or at at residency/retreat (which I did in 2002 and 2004), slow revisions are about all I can manage. I need large chunks of time to start new projects or to finish the good drafts.

I am going to Iceland for three weeks this October, and though that is not as much time as I have taken at one time in the past, I do hope that I will have something to show for it.

CT: Can you talk a bit about the dynamic of translation, memory, and history in *Pale Red Footprints*? How these seem to contribute to a sense, in the book, of something lost...or perhaps a sense of loss?

K.I.P.: Something that made me want to write out of my grandfather’s memoirs was the sense of things not being told or things being mistold – not maliciously, but just as a matter of course. You forget things, or misremember them, or you don’t have the education to express them in a certain way, or the translation (in this case the translation from French to English) just isn’t perfect. Or maybe you and your “reader” just don’t think that the same things are important. *Pale Red Footprints* tries to maintain that same sense of misremembering, mistranslation, memory gaps. That may be the sense of loss that you are getting. I was not trying to fill very much in. If anything, my book is much sparser and selective than the original - well, plus the poetry! of course, but narratively speaking it is much slimmer. I skip almost everything from roughly WWII to the late 1970s!

This is, incidentally, the same place that *Types of Canadian Women* comes from, the sense that there is a lot that isn’t being told in an historical text. But in the case of *TCW*, I am trying very hard to embellish.

C.T.: I enjoyed the aural/orality of *Pale Red Footprints*; it isn’t often that I find a “text” that has those qualities. As a reader, I consider listening — not reading — because often the poems open as though a question has been asked, and there is a sense of “story”. In *Spine*, the act of reading is a focal point — but reading is a more private act, selective, at times guarded, most often a desire. Often the poems themselves are an act of reading. Can you elaborate a bit on this transition?

K.I.P.: As for how I write them, there isn’t a transition, I don’t think: I always read all the poems aloud as I am working on them. The aural/orality of all the poems is important to me. I’m also very interested in character/voice and in narration, and I think of many of my

poems as dramatic monologues (*Types of Canadian Women* could be thought of as a series of dramatic monologues). There are some very obvious dramatic monologues in *Spine*.

The difference you might be getting between *Spine* and *PRF* is a difference in the voice I am trying to get at. Nearly all the voices in *Spine* are readerly types. They are learned, scholarly, serious, the text is their business, so they can’t help sounding like it. Not that the *PRF* voice isn’t intelligent and serious, but it has a lot of other things on its mind before “text”.

C.T.: *Pale Red Footprints* is a recounting (and an accounting of, I suppose?) of your grandfather’s memoirs, but the first section is precluded by correspondence between women regarding his “effects”. The memoirs start here. Can you talk about this more in relation to “Apology”, which comes near the end of the book, in the section “Asphalt Flowers, Giant Bees”?

K.I.P.: Yes, a different voice, one of the “poet”, intervenes in the book a few times. I have a lot of “French guilt,” in that I am a member of the generation of people of French-Canadian descent who never properly learned French or had much to do with the culture. At the time of write *PRF*, I was pretty obsessed with that idea. At the same time I started writing *PRF*, I was also doing my thesis on the work of the Franco-Ontarian writer Lola Lemire Tostevin. There are quite a lot of echoes of her ideas about a kind of interior translation, the translation that goes on in one’s head when you are writing in a language that is not your first. So I was very interested in pointing out, in that opening poem, how translation – itself part of the loss we were talking about before - plays into the book. Every version of the story is one step further from the original - my grandfather wrote it down in French based on his imperfect remembering; my mother, whose first language is French, translated it into English, but she is no professional writer or translator, and then came the poeticizing of it that I did in the book.

As for the poem “Apology,” later on in the book, it develops the poetic guilt in another direction. First, for skipping huge parts of the story. For not really knowing what it is talking about re: history, culture, poverty. And it is making a nod to feminism, saying, well, I’m sorry that I’m writing a book about my grandfather rather than my grandmother, but hey, it’s my choice and it’s all valid, chicks.

CT: *Types of Canadian Women*, your most recent book, is a “fantastical poetic rewriting of a 1903 biographical dictionary “of Women Who Are or Have Been Connected to Canada”. What is the focus of the biographies? Are these women who are, for the time, unusual in some sense? What about them made them the focus of a book to begin with?

K.I.P.: There was a wide range of women, well, of white women, represented in the 1903 book. It would take more research on my part to determine how the fame or prominence of each of the 1903 women compared to how people gain prominence now. Only a few of the subjects in the book had I heard of, and I was a Canadian history researcher. If you Google

the original book, you do get academic articles referring to it, so I think that more of the women you might have heard of if you were a specialist in a certain area of Canadian history or literature. Some of them were famous for being rich or titled or being the daughter or wife of someone who was. There were women who seemed to be famous as social butterflies or hostesses, roles they took on because, generally, they were married to someone important and had to go to a lot of parties. There were quite a few in the arts, especially actresses, but also musicians, writers and painters. Some were famous for being philanthropists or activists of some kind (usually religious — there were definitely some missionaries). Some gained prominence in a profession, usually nursing, but there were a few who were doctors, professors and journalists. Usually it was noted that they retired as soon as they were married. A few were famous for some kind of remarkable story or act of heroism, like one woman who saved the entire crew of a schooner from drowning in Lake Erie.

A good portion of the women had only a tenuous “Connection” to Canada. Like today, being born here and moving to the U.S. at age 2 or living here for one year when your husband was transferred in and out again - these were legitimate reasons to be included as Canadian Women (hence the book’s subtitle, “or of Women Who Are of Have Been Connected with Canada”).

I am hoping to buy a copy of the book soon - it’s a \$300 rare book, but there are a few copies about. I only have photocopies of selected pages at the moment to refer to.

C.T.: You mentioned earlier that *Types of Canadian Women* could be read as a series of dramatic monologues. How does the dramatic monologue and biographical form play into or with your choices of photographs to accompany the text?

K.I.P.: Well, the monologue form is kind of a classic response to the third-person, I guess; making the women speak in their own voices instead of being written about by the male author. A pretty standard object-to-subject thing. It was the original biographical form, with formal portraits, that made me want to use photos in the first place, but I knew that I wanted more than just formal portraits, although the formal portraits can also be great when there is an interesting element like a garish backdrop (“Romantic surroundings”), a haunting facial expression (more on that below) or a really weird hat (e.g. “Born in the Parliament Buildings”). I guess because I was moving to the women’s own voices, and a combination of more “formal” and more “candid” monologues, I wanted a mixture of studio portraits and more-or-less candid ones. Which are harder to find, and in fact not candid at all. People had to hold still for some time in early photography, so things were posed, but if they weren’t in the studio they give the illusion of being candid. That becomes less of an issue the later the photos are from, though I don’t know enough about the history of photography to give you a date when candid became more common.

I’m not sure how the form of the poems played into the choosing of the individual pictures, though. So I’ll explain how I went about choosing the pictures, and you can see if you see a connection!

How the photographs were chosen really varied throughout the book. At first I was doing the two things - the writing and the picture research - entirely separately. I started by the very rough draft of the writing, and then started looking for pictures, with only a general sense of the kind of thing I was looking for. I was trying to keep the pictures WWI or earlier, but I think I’ve gone into the 1920s or even later for some that I just loved and couldn’t give up. It’s hard to tell the precise date of many of them. Price was a factor; I paid for the photos and it added up, so a picture I liked that was \$6.00 was better than a picture that was \$20 or \$50. Photos often just “struck” me as being one that I wanted. I was looking for facial expressions that spoke to me (some that I love are the “Her horse killed under her” woman and the “Ophelia” woman), interesting wear-and-tear on the original photo (like the one with “Juliet nature” where the girl’s face is worn down so you can’t see it, but you can still see the chair that she is standing next to), or unusual poses (like the woman holding the gun in “Devoted to all kinds of sport” or the one in men’s clothing in “Dairying for profit”). I then matched up photos with poems. Where the photo really spoke to me, and the poem needed a major rewrite, I used the photo to rewrite the poem (the last poem in the book, “Quick, Clever, Energetic and Good-Looking,” is one that in the end is pretty much completely based on the photograph, with only the title coming from the 1903 biography). However, many poems never found a soul-mate in a photo. I spent some time then specifically searching for photos that “matched” certain poems, but I often just had to settle for one that was “okay.” In those cases the poem has very little to do with the photo, at least in how it was written. I’m interested to see how readers will draw their own connections.

C.T.: While the women speak with “proper” diction or tone, some of their descriptions are violent/ macabre/and/or humorous. Can you talk about this a bit?

K.I.P.: I get a kick out of juxtaposing the diction and the content. This is a fairly usual thing to do for a humour, but I also like describing violence in detached way. I think my idea is that the content is supposed to take you more by surprise if the diction is not giving it away, or something like that. Also, it harkens back to what drew me to the biographies in the original book, which was the throwaway comments that seemed out of context within the rest of the bio.

C.T.: The speakers keep on disintegrating, disappearing or hoping to become something else — and yet they become “types” with photographs. Do you think this is an ironic aspect of any historical record?

K.I.P.: That I wrote a lot about wanting to be something else shows how I was trying to get them out of their original biographies! Certainly for biography, the pinning down of a person into a “type” or into anything at all is deceptive. I’m also interested in how a person becomes representative of a group or an idea when the “facts” that made them representative of that group may be pretty fluid.

C.T.: Were there features of the language from the original book that you carried forward to your version? You've mentioned throwaway comments that seemed out of context in the original — can you explain this further?

K.I.P.: In the original book, partly because of the language of the time and partly because it is not very good writing and partly because of the book's format, dramatic things didn't seem to be treated differently than mundane things in the way they were described. This is also partly just perception, actually; it may be that some things that seem mundane to the reader today (or to me, specifically!) actually were just as exciting then as some of the things we perceive as exciting now. (Say, being a well-known horse breeder.)

C.T.: Biographies are deceptive — somewhat metonymic, depending on how/what the person doing the writing chooses as representative. Do you think biographies are, in a sense, then, performances?

K.I.P.: I'm not totally up to date on performance theories, so I don't want to get over my head with this, but it seems to me that biographies CAN be performances, although they aren't necessarily. A performance on the part of the biographer as well as on the part of the subject - the performance of their life.

C.T.: What or whose writing informs your own, what subjects or styles do you gravitate to?

K.I.P.: Well, books that I love and that make me think about craft and poetics are Ciaran Carson's book *Shamrock Tea*, Kristjana Gunnars, especially *The Rose Garden*, and, strangely, Pynchon's *Mason & Dixon*, which took me forever to read but then at the end of it I was so sad to have finished I very nearly started it right over again. I read a lot more fiction than I do poetry. Reviewers have repeatedly invoked Atwood's *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* in relation to this book, and George Elliott Clarke in his review in the *Chronicle-Herald* invoked both that one and Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*. I can't say that I thought about either of those when writing this book, but I did very much think about those two books in particular when I was writing my first book, *Pale Red Footprints*, which was quite deliberately in the tradition of the Canadian long documentary poem, which I had been studying in university at the time. Strange it has take 3 books for people to notice, after I've stopped thinking about it; maybe it's all just subconscious for me now.

One of the reasons I'm interested in Kristjana Gunnars is her work in crossing the fiction and non-fiction genres. I'm interested in that, as well as crossing the poetry and fiction genres. Most of the "prose poems" in this book I do not consider poems at all, just some kind of short prose (did I say that already?). I am totally not there yet, but I'd really like to work towards getting a bit more free of genre. That's my short essay on poetics.

O(Pro)



INTERVIEW WITH SHANE RHODES

This interview was conducted over email from June 2006 to January 2007

Shane Rhodes' first book, *The Wireless Room* (Edmonton AB: NeWest Press, 2000), won the Alberta Book Award. His second book, *Holding Pattern* (NeWest Press, 2002), won the Archibald Lampman Award. Shane is also featured in the anthologies *New Canadian Poetry*, *Breathing Fire II* and *Decalogue: ten Ottawa poets*, and recently published a chapbook, *Tengo Sed*, with Greenboathouse Books. His next book, *The Bindery*, is forthcoming from NeWest Press in spring 2007.

IF IT WAS THE SEA WE HEARD

Penelope's Song

Whose sea?

The sun up this early and how.

Going forth from the knees to a truant happiness.

Will be finished in one tall order, they assured us, pecking wives on cheeks, rubbing the curly heads of children.

The rustle of wind through sheep shit and sand flies. The usual torpidity of the morning and its general direction of decay.

A moment's density in their eyes offered up the shy event of our reckoning to a pampered heart.

They took long oars to water as the end of privileges of place and turned heels to breaker with morning sun upon the rosined water, their bodies hip-deep in the swelling surf.

Through the surf's ebb and draw, they moved the stalwart ship.

Every utterance we gave was the true one.

They set sail to wind, canvas snapping.

As they moved into the furthest wave with its broken back upon the buried reef, blue water from sudden depths beyond the shifts and shoals of doubt, our hands tired.

We turned our backs upon the ocean roar.

These men over the ocean's small but growing depths, I remember.

Of doubt, these soiled ghosts?

Theirs was the calm of raging waters, fettered by borders of acceptable blame.

The end I see in this old order dismantled nightly, step for step ahead, to an end greeled by sleep.

Much doesn't care for my place in this story of unlikely return.

A tearmoist body a man could wreck against.

Night ravels me.

rob mclennan: Let's start with something simple; how long have you been writing?

Shane Rhodes: I remember as a kid filling blank scribbles with scribbles. Page after page of it. I remember feeling satisfied with the effect, disappointed with the results, but proud of the accomplishment. It seemed a worthy occupation. My first poetry came with puberty; before that, I only wrote prose.

rm: Why do you think that is?

SR: No prose writer ever wrote a short story thinking it would get them laid. In the end, prose would make the more reliable bed mate, but poetry belongs to a long drawn out pubescence. I can't say I know a poet who has ever left it. Eternally immature but action oriented.

rm: That being said, you have written poems that are far more prose-like than others. Is it a form that interests you at all, or will you remain a composer of poems and the "eternally immature" (as you say)?

SR: Of course the form interests me. All forms interest me, especially the beautiful, sexy ones. I think part of what drives me to poetry is the investigation of form, what constraints and freedoms it puts upon expression and language. There can be something refreshing with prose poetry; there is a higher pressure upon internal dynamics — rhythms, rhymes and reasons. I sometimes find unrhymed free verse lyrics as boring as two hundred sonnets.

rm: How do you reconcile these degrees, from free verse to the sonnet? Does the consideration of form become your constant challenge?

SR: It has to be. Every time you are faced with a blank page, anything can happen.

rm: How did your first forays into publishing in journals come about, and your association with Calgary's *filling Station* magazine?

SR: I almost can't remember. I was writing poetry even as a kid in a small farming town in central Alberta, really, in the middle of nowhere. In quantum mechanic physics, they talk of how matter can randomly and spontaneously appear even in a vacuum as a small bubble of opposing forces that still balance out to nothing but as a momentarily separated nothing that becomes something and anti-something. Perhaps it was like that. I feel it was like that. My knowledge of poetry beyond Shakespeare was minimal as I grew up. And I grew up in an environment where hockey and 4-H were endemic. I think my mind was set for poetry and was searching for it. I started to publish as soon as I went to college and university first in Red Deer, Alberta then in Calgary. The writing environment in Calgary — both in the University and out — is still something that I remember, despite the drugs, well. Some other writers had started *filling Station* magazine the year before I moved to Calgary.

It was a great environment where artists, new artists, some established artists, got together to talk about the creation of art, to critique each others work and to offer venues to publish and read. _____ was really a t-shirt manufacturing company that supported a literary magazine through t-shirt sales. We had road trips to Vancouver, Red Deer, small town Alberta. We put on amazing readings with rock bands and painters. We worked with some of the theatre groups. We drank beer at the ship and anchor. We drank coffee at the 24 hour Husky restaurant on 5th Street and ate their greasy fries. Many friends from *filling Station* have also gone on to publish books or are still involved in Canadian Literature as professors and teachers: myself, Raj Pal, Jacqueline Turner, Paul de Costa, Ian Samuels, Jonathan Wilcke, derek beaulieu, Chris Jennings and more. I don't think any of us believed that the magazine would last long, but it has. Though, I haven't seen a t-shirt recently.

rm: How do you think the magazine *has* survived as long as it has?

SR: As I said, t-shirt sales. The fact that they haven't put any new t's out in a while, really speaks to the current editorships deftness in financial investments and living off the windfalls.

rm: Who were the writers who first struck you, when you were beginning to write? Who were the writers whose work made you *want* to write?

SR: I've been in fistfights over metaphors, but I was never struck when I was just beginning to write — would that be like a spanking?

Seriously, when I was first writing, I can't say that I was exposed to a lot of other writers. Once I started University, however, things changed and I read poetry with hunger. I still admit a love and a fascination with most of the American modernists and their predecessors and followers. WCW. Pound. Eliot. Oppen. Dolittle.

Moore. But also Whitman and Dickenson. In Canada, Kroetsch was influential. Don McKay as well. And a number of the *tiSh* writers. They made me want to write, to join a conversation, a discussion, a dialogue that, about fitting within an ongoing discussion. At the same time, I would like to believe that I brought mimicry to a high — though dead — art. I think I've begun to mimic myself.

rm: Do you worry about that mimicry? Becoming self-mockery, I mean.

SR: I think the tension between mimicry and originality is important to poetry and to artistic or creative expression in general. Isn't it what Bloom calls the anxiety of influence? Or maybe it's the influence of anxiety? Or the ecstasy of influence? At the same time, I think much art that is successful (or maybe stimulating is a better word here) pulls and chips away at the calciferous deposits that language and imagery build up during use and mimesis as they move from newness to accepted community signifiers to general decaying clichés. Maybe originality is overrated and misunderstood — or perhaps I should have the preliterate as my target audience, someone for whom everything is new?

Am I worried about self mockery? If anybody is going to mock me, I'd prefer if it was me. It makes me feel good about myself, that I am important enough to be mocked even by somebody as insignificant as me. I invite the legions of other mockers to join me in something truly mucosal and new.

Self mockery puts me to sleep at night.

Maybe we should talk of sadness?

rm: You told me once about an essay you'd heard about but not seen, comparing your work to that of Robert Kroetsch's, even to the point of them calling you (I believe) "Robert Kroetsch's gay son." After the amusing factor wears off, how did you think this phrase fit with what you were and are doing, if at all?

SR: I don't think the comment inappropriate. I have much respect for Kroetsch's poetry and the playful and serious need to push boundaries and borders with it. It reminds me, in a much more minor way, of William Carlos Williams or some of the poetics that came out of him—a greater move beyond established form. The need to revise form with each new word—the edge of words is molten. At the same time, I think there is that which Kroetsch is blind to. I think that was part of what I was writing to in the poem "The Unified Field" in my first book. The prairie landscape to which a man can be tied to a fence, beaten, stripped and lit on fire as in the killing of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

Yet, if I am Kroetsch's gay son, than I am his failed gay son — which is appropriate given the strained nature of most father/gay son relationships I've seen.

rm: Recently, Winnipeg poet Alison Calder published a poem in *Open Letter* responding to the male prairie Robert Kroetsch represented, referencing "Seed Catalogue" in her "SEXING THE PRAIRIE; or, Why I Am/Not a Prairie Poet." Do you think, then, Kroetsch's prairie naïve or deliberately cleaned up? How does one go about "sexing the prairie"?

SR: Do you really want to know? From my knowledge of Canadian literature, the prairies aren't an exception to some orgy of discourse going on in all other parts of the country. The prairies are enigmatic of the whole, what you would expect from its largely WASPish origins and influences. One thing that I first loved in Canadian literature and now have grown much more weary of is humour. When sex is written about, when love is written about, when almost anything is written about it is with humour. It is with a grin. It is tongue in the cheek or with a sense of faux-shock. You can certainly see this in a generation of male writers such as McKay or Bowering, for example — much less in female writers of the same period. But humour also limits what a writer can do and what a writer can explore because there is a lot in life that isn't so funny. I think this is what draws me to many American writers, a willingness to explore life and language in a manner that isn't so apparently humorous or in a manner that doesn't give so much of its energy in allaying a nervous reader/writer or pandering to a supposed audience that wouldn't stomach it.

rm: Since you mentioned it, what of your first collection, *The Wireless Room* (2000)? The collection exists not only in numbered sections but that long poem, "Unified Field." How did you see the unified field that became the final manuscript? How is it you came to building a whole book as opposed to a collection of individual pieces? And what do you think Robert Kroetsch and others might have been missing?

SR: Poems and books of poems grow for me from accretion. *The Wireless Room*, that always embarrassing first book, came out of about a decade of writing. My involvement with *filling Station* and, later, my involvement with the University of New Brunswick (*The Fiddlehead* and *Qwerty*) really helped me in the crafting of that book and in realizing what the art of making poetry was really about. The final poem, "the Unified Field," almost didn't make it in as it was written while the book was in the early stages of production. I felt that the poem was a break, in many ways, with the more lyrical poems that had preceded it.

In terms of book construction, I had a feel at the time that I was quite tired of reading complete books of similar poems. If I can describe my writing accurately at that time it is more everywhere at once. I still like the verve of that. I hate the complete plannedness of a whole book of similar poems written on the same theme; it seems novelistic to me. I have to admit to a certain amount of planned chaos in book construction. I work on poems almost as projects — quite often, each one involves much research and planning. I don't aim for a certain length or

any thing like that but let the project go where it wants to go. Perhaps this is how every long poem is constructed. It sometimes seems so for when you let a poem wander the writing of the poem never ends. There is a poem in my second book about this called “let the horse wander.”

What is Kroetsch missing? I don’t know, really. His own name brand? One of those literary figure t shirts (perhaps *filling Station* could do it next?)? I respect Kroetsch’s work and it is still remarkable today (as is much of the poetry that was coming out of Canada in the 1960s/70s/80s). He drives it to different.

rm: Why do you find your first book embarrassing? Is it simply a matter of feeling you’ve moved beyond it?

SR: I think any sort of artistic adventure is a bit embarrassing when it makes that transition from the private to the public. And your thinking moves on, develops and evolves (or devolves). There is always that temptation to rewrite continually what came before, but I think that is a different adventure altogether — where a piece becomes a permanent and continual biography of its own construction.

rm: The way you write your family stories, at least in your first collection, often play with shifting and conflicting perceptions, making the story itself seem that much more fluid. Is the story you write something you deliberately work to not pin down, or does the strength of the story come from the alternate viewpoints?

SR: I don’t know any other way. I guess, in ways that I don’t really want to admit, I’m a sentimental realist. I think there is something beautiful about the telling of a story that takes into account the process of telling the story. This is what humour is — the feedback loop that allows us to enter into a story with the story teller where we can both be as surprised by language and narrative turns. I’m a realist in asserting that this inclusion is really the grit of which most novels and poems try to rid themselves. To use an analogy, it’s the static in recordings that reminds you that you are listening to a recording and that you as the listener have to pay as much attention to the artifice as to the art. Writing for me isn’t a spa of the senses, it is a place where I — and maybe a reader who is willing to read me — can figure out some of the things that are going on with language and story. Perhaps this is why I make a pathetic story writer (trust me, I’ve tried and my hard drive is littered with failed plots). William Faulkner called all novelists failed poets. Maybe all failed novelists are poets.

rm: There are echoes in “25 Variations on a Dedication” of Michael Ondaatje’s *Elimination Dance*. There are a few poems here and there in both your collections, as well as in the chapbook *Tengo Sed* (2004) that play with that accumulative repetition; what was the inspiration for that first piece, and further? What is it about the accumulation that appeals?

SR: When I think of anaphora — the type of accumulation and repetition you are talking about — I think of religious verse and Whitman. *Leaves of Grass* uses anaphora as its main formal constraint and unifier. It is an amazing oral experience to read some of Whitman’s poems, the slow building tension that is allowed through the continual repeated phrasing. This is a common technique used in speech writing too (think “I have a dream”) — it lends itself to oral display, memory and build. The pieces that I have written are small, one page poems. They are oral experiments — they sound good outloud — but they also kick you into an interesting experiment of argument and thought; that is, the structure of the argument is the same and repeated but with slight shifts of the nouns and verbs. I think it can be an interesting investigative tool and a tool that brings out irony, juxtaposition. Perhaps people like these poems because they are the closest my poetry approaches to a rock song?

rm: How do you feel your third collection, *The Bindery* (NeWest Press, 2007) is different than either of your previous collections?

SR: The new book, which will be out in the spring, continues some of the work that was started in *Holding Pattern*. I would say the similarity I see is the book’s restlessness with form and subject — it uses the poetic tools at hand pragmatically. If the book has a theme, it is war against dogma. Its error is its architecture.

Dogma to live by: you don’t become a poet but learn that poetry (art, maybe) is, in essence, failure, and being a poet is the continual failure to be a poet. I think the book fails brilliantly — especially the last poem which is an ode to failure of a grand scope. To speak of the new book for me is to speak of the circumstance of its construction — many of them were written or planned while living and traveling in Mexico, India and Argentina. Dogma two: writing, then, as an explanation, an attempt to explain. An attempt at mediation with difference. The book starts off with a quotation from Eduardo Galeano, the great Uruguayan poet of the *Trilogy of Fire*, and I think I see his influence throughout the book — placing the present within its deep historical context. That poetry is part of the strategy of everyday life, of talking about the world we see, the problems, the beauty, even, of people.

rm: How interested are you in ideas of error and failure? I know this is something that other poets such as Phyllis Webb and Jon Paul Fiorentino have worked and played with, as failure itself being, sometimes, the result if not the goal. How important, for you, is the idea of failure?

SR: Ideas are failure. Thinking beyond the prescripts of computer or genetic code is failure. Creativity is the ability to work and live intimately with failure. When you fail to do so, you succeed and probably die. I’ve fudged this answer. Next!

rm: Finally, you moved to Ottawa around the time of the publication of your second book. Do you feel as though your consideration as a writer has shifted at

all after moving here from Alberta, by way of Mexico? Most of your new collection was composed, as you've said, during travels outside of Alberta and before Ottawa. Does it make a difference to your work at all? And how does a prairie boy become so enamored with the sea?

SR: For me, Ottawa is still an enigma of work and art. I don't quite understand it and I don't think I really want to understand it completely. I find it strange moving from the "conservative" west to the "liberal" east has been a surprise of expectations – I don't think I've lived in a place more conservative than Ottawa. And politics at the municipal level (which is where, as Jane Jacobs would say, politics actually matters) — Yuck. It feels like exile. A good portion of my mind is still stuck somewhere in central Mexico.

The sea? If it is the sea we hear, poetry is made for and from the sea. Wave upon wave. Thalassa. Poem upon poem. Each breaking the back of the other.

Of/O





THE ILLUMINATED BONES OF MONTY REID: A REVIEW OF *CUBA A BOOK* AND *SWEETHEART OF MINE*

reviewed by Amanda Earl

cuba, A book (above/ground press, 2005) and *Sweetheart of Mine* (Bookthug, 2006) are the latest poetry collections by Monty Reid after a five year interlude. These five years have chiselled away the lengthy stanzas and strong lyricism of earlier collections and left behind concentrated imagery and an unblinking refrain of sadness throughout both chapbooks.

In an interview with rob mcLennan (ottawater 2.0, 2006) Reid doesn't see a "clear evolutionary trend" in his poetry:

"I go back and forth between short poems and long ones, between terseness and indefinite blather."

There are definitely minimalist poems scattered throughout Reid's earlier works: *Flat Side* (Red Deer College Press, 1998), *The Dream of Snowy Owls* (Longspoon Press, 1983) and *Karst Means Stone* (Newest Press, 1979), but *cuba A book* and *Sweetheart of Mine* feel more focussed as a whole, more bare bones. Instead of describing a multitude of senses, images and emotions, Reid now narrows his focus to one emotion, one image, one or two senses per poem.

"What I'm writing these days seems in some ways unsettled, at least to me. The gaps, in rhythm, in knowability, in social correctness—I'm just not feeling the need to fill them as much as I used to. At the same time, I think my recent work is more constrained, more reticent." (Ottawater 2.0)

cuba A book is a series in unbroken and broken couplets about a couple's holiday to Cuba. The minimalism of the poems is also represented in the form through the lack of pagination and titles and sometimes no clear indication where one poem ends and another begins. This gives the poems the effect of isolation, of being stranded on an island.

What lingers long after reading these poems is the crumbling destruction of Cuba and its echo in the relationship of the couple. *cuba A book* is an unhappy travelogue and gentle comment on Cuban politics and history:

Revolution's celebrated boat "is preserved/in a glass house" rather than be allowed to travel the sea. There are potholes, soldiers and barricades, security identification checks, mortar crumbling in hotel walls, boys in red shirts disinfecting the air for dengue fever.

Through the series Reid adeptly associates this crumbling together with the couple's relationship, Cuba's natural beauty with its destruction and with the destruction of the relationship.

The imagery throughout is bitter, yet intense and sharp. The poems in *cuba A book* are tighter and crisper with less full blown lyricism than in previous collections perhaps, but strong and resonant.

"it is not the first time/ I have tried to give up some words" Reid writes in "Burning the Back Issues" (*Flat Side*, Red Deer College Press, 1998). You get the impression that divesting himself of words is important in Reid's journey as a poet:

"no matter how carefully preserved and thorough/how many inconvenient moves, but one cannot be responsible for the words forever. And usually they are more than happy/to be free of you." ("Burning the Back Issues," *Flat Side*, 1998).

Like *cuba A book*, *Sweetheart of Mine* (Book Thug, 2006) also uses few words to depict sadness. The alphabetical lament translates or captures moments from bluegrass standards.

In this chapbook, it feels like Reid has taken the songs and strained out all the structure of a song, but kept the intent, the emotion and the heart. The poems themselves use plain and strong language, just as the songs do.

There's a clear love of bluegrass found in these poems, which express the intimate relationship Reid has with this form of music. Reid makes the music concrete by giving it movement (All I Ever Loved Was You), volume (Dark Hollow and Every Time You Say Goodbye, duties such as obligation (Footprints in the Snow) and drinking problems (Little Maggie).

Death and goodbyes figure prominently and beautifully in poems like “Bury Me Beneath the Willow”, “Cold Rain and Snow”, and “Every Time You Say Goodbye.”

There’s also a lot of dry wit (I’m Travelling On This Lonesome Road), and respect for silence (X for a Name).

The poems are short but resonant. Sometimes it takes a while (at least for me) for the penny to drop. I think if you know the source of Reid’s inspiration, the songs and their history, you can get more out of the poems.

For instance, you don’t need to know that the song Cold Rain and Snow was played by the Grateful Dead, but doesn’t it add another layer and make the poem more fun?

What impresses me about the poems in *Sweetheart of Mine* is Reid’s ability to capture a song’s spirit, maintaining its essential elements in understated feeling, restricted form, language and metaphor.

The title of the chapbook comes from the coda in the back of the book from, a song by the father of bluegrass, Bill Monroe:

Sweetheart of mine, can’t you hear me calling
A million times I loved you the best
I mistreated you, darling I’m sorry
Come back to me is my request.

The notion that a poem comes from somewhere, has a source is important to Reid:

“I want poetry to have evidence...I think poetry only exists in relation to something else.” (Ottawater 2.0)

The poems in *Sweetheart of Mine* are reconstructions of songs. Reid has interpreted or pointed their meaning in a specific direction. Readers will do the same, the gaps and implications allowing them to infuse their own meaning or not.

“the more aware the writer is of not only the source, but the gap between the source code and the new work, the more interesting it can be” (Ottawater 2.0)

I think *Sweetheart of Mine* should have come with a CD including all the songs. Now I want to hear Reid play these songs. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to hear his musical interpretation too?

In both *cuba A book* and *Sweetheart of Mine*, sadness is laid bare to its “starved, illuminated bones” (*Six Steps for the Mammoth Steppe*, above /ground press, 2000).



photographer: Jeremy Shane Reid
e: jeremysreid@gmail.com

SHORT REVIEWS OF MATTHEW HOLMES' HITCH AND LAURA FARINA'S *THIS WOMAN ALPHABETICAL*

Colin Morton

Matthew Holmes, *Hitch*, Nightwood Editions (a blewointment book), 2006.

A hitch is a means of connection. Specifically, in the context of the 14-strand title poem of Matthew Holmes's first book, a hitch is a knot. The poem (complete with *Shipping News*-style illustrations) explores the metaphorical imagery (e.g., when a couple ties the knot, they get hitched) as well as the ironies of English-language usage (as when a knot holds a line *fast*). One section even gives a clue to some of the structural strategies Holmes employs throughout this technically sophisticated debut volume: "isn't a two half-hitch / a hitch?" In a form of poetic gene-splicing, Holmes frequently hitches two disparate ideas or contexts into a new, sometimes grotesque, hybrid. For instance, the book's opening series of "science fictions" dabble in pataphysics by hitching theories from centuries past (elucidated in extended endnotes) to fanciful vignettes. If you have forgotten Avogadro's number, or that it is the number of molecules in a given volume of gas, it's here in the Notes on the Poems on page 92. There's a hitch, however: the knowledge will add little to your appreciation of the story on page 18 about a different Avogadro, a fictional spy who suffers from flatulence. Two pages of stylish prose devoted to an off-colour joke isn't a lot, of course, compared with those multi-million dollar Hollywood movies that consist of little more than fart gags, but coming from an advocate of small and micro presses, it seems like a lot of stage machinery for very little of substance.

Like many another young poet, Holmes has made efforts to seize control of the means of production by publishing his own quirky magazine (*Modomnoc*) and chapbooks (the bad reposesy Mfg. Co.). Something that sets him apart, though, is

that these publications are not produced on a Web site or Xerox machine but are actually set with lead type on a 1928 antique letterpress. One of the best poems in *Hitch* is a sort of lament for the passing of the five-century old technology that once transformed society. "Buckshot Fullstop" tells of the demise of old printing presses, whether sold off at estate auctions or "carted straight to the dump." Only the lead type is saved—"the fonts of old news"—to be melted down into pellets for shotgun shells, so that now "they're pumping deer full of lead / type" and punctuating roadside stop signs with "crude alphabets" of bullet holes."

It is in acute observations like this, rather than self-consciously arty formal structures, that *Hitch* announces the arrival of a poet well worth watching. In such poems as "Owls Shaped in Reeds," "The Trials and Exile of Fridges" and "A Local History of the Air Conditioner" Holmes animates familiar objects of domestic life with verve and linguistic energy. And the promise of the "science fictions" is fulfilled in the poem that opens with this line: "There's an algorithm, somewhere, that charts the lifecycles of dustbunnies."

Now living in Sackville, N.B., Holmes is a former Ottawan and remains reviews editor of *Arc Poetry Magazine*. I need only look down my Ottawa street to see the poetic truth of his description in "The Reliquaries of Trees":

... sapling bone chainlink suspended,
lawn stump rooting pipe dry,
avenues tuning-forked to power lines.

A poet this alive to the world around him and the language he uses doesn't need gimmicks and pictures to make readers take notice. Hitch a ride with Matthew Holmes; he is going places.

Laura Farina, *This Woman Alphabetical*, Pedlar Press, 2005.

In the opening poem of Laura Farina's first collection, the poet declares independence from the prose logic of journalese and bureaucratism that pervades public life and can lead, seemingly inexorably to the deadly absurdities of geopolitics. "Even as the mosquitoes of August / stop their diplomatic relations," she writes, "I am cactus / and nowhere / at once." Seemingly stable categories are upset; the inflexible laws of the "real world out there" don't apply within the charmed space of the poem. It is no use saying, like a character in the poem, "this must / follow that / and how can I make this woman alphabetical?" While everyday logic declares that nothing can be "cactus and nowhere at once," the rules of syntax have no objection, and poetry positively delights in the challenge to say anything that can be imagined (and, conversely, to imagine anything that can be said). In the late Irving Layton's words, "whatever else, poetry is freedom." It can upset expectations, spring surprises, and generally destabilize the reader with a sense of infinite possibility.

The charm of Laura Farina's poems is in their lightness of touch, retaining a childlike whimsy that softens the impact of sometimes powerful emotions without trivializing them. A poem called "in praise of simplicity" illustrates:

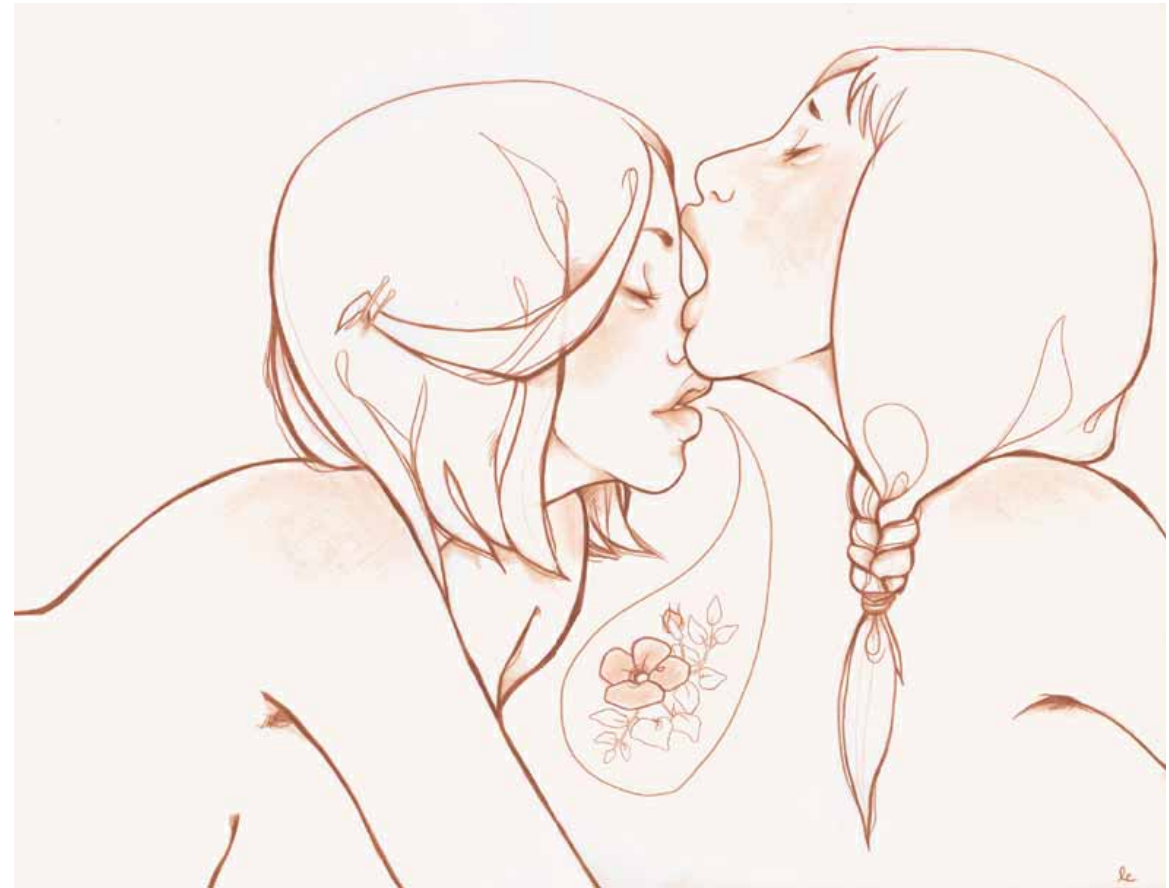
Today I praise only what is simple.
A white bowl full of white milk.
The weight of a hand full of river stones.
Feet and the creak of hardwood floors.
The last of this summer's ripe tomatoes.

Today I praise only what is simple.
A spill falling like white silk.
The weight of silence broken by the phone.
Suitcase and a slamming door.
An empty room and an open window.

Farina's subjects are the common, the familiar, the domestic: the death of a pet, a favourite aunt, a ride on a Ferris wheel, bittersweet memories of the old neighbourhood. That the poet shares a Ferris wheel seat with Madonna, or that she observes the neighbourhood from "midway up the sky" merely remind us that the ordinary and the fantastical can share space in the poem without either elbowing the other out of bounds.

The author bio mentions that Farina (a graduate of Canterbury, Ottawa's arts-oriented high-school) "teaches creative writing to young people," and many of her poems retain the conceptual scaffolding indicative of classroom writing exercises. As well, there's evidence of the emotional holding-back endemic to the "workshop poem" (as in the Wallace Stevens pastiche "ten ways of looking at me" where "passion ... refuses to touch me"). Moreover, at \$20 for barely 40 pages of poetry, *This Woman Alphabetical* suggests that there has been an alarming rate of inflation in the century since James Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*. But these are quibbles that will be swept away if Farina continues to mature as a poet while retaining the innocence and freshness of vision that radiates from this slim volume.

Ottawa



THE BOOK ON THE ROPES: FERGUSON, MIDDLE, LEA AND BOLSTER IN THE POETIC RING

REFLECTIONS ON FOUR VOLUMES FROM
ABOVE/GROUND PRESS

Harold Rhenisch

Now that the poetic line that has lived underground in song lyrics for the four generations of modernism has reunited with the textual line as it finishes (at last!) its 90 year old imagist strip tease and leaves the page for the microphone, it's intriguing to see poets finally confronting that most insidious of technologies, the one that's had for centuries an opiate yet largely invisible, padded fist effect on the interface between poets, their audiences, and language: Hamlet's fencing ring, Donne's penitential fire, Purdy's garage sale poster, everyone's favourite basement workout room, the printed text. It's an expensive habit to maintain, and enough poets have been living outside of it for long enough now that its tricks and attempts at seduction have become glaring and even, yes, often gauche — which, of course, makes them worthy opponents for a boxing match.

If a new series of little fight programs masquerading as poetry chapbooks from rob mcLennan's above/ground press is any indication, Ottawa has seen its share of these matches in couple years — and from every corner. In *Biodome*, Stephanie Bolster gloves herself with all the rhyme, half-rhyme, off-rhyme, iterated alliteration and soaring metrics leaning against the shoulder of a grand piano crowned with a vase of flowers that she can muster, which is a lot, really, and enters the ring with a rapier of wit in hand, to get in a few good hits. In *A Word in Your Ear*, Jesse Patrick Ferguson, billed as poet, musician *and* ballad collector (and thus, presumably, the most knowledgeable of any of the contenders here about the pitfalls of jumping innocently into the remainder-lined pit of contemporary book craft), brings the world of visual poetry to the bout with the page, throws the page a few bones of words to worry over, and, in the end, successfully steals the cashbox. In the all-is-not-as-it-seems *light years*, Nicholas Lea brings a Descartian wind-up mind in a box, cranks up its spring (but not enough to break it, since it's rather old and all), sets it in the

middle of the ring, and lets it go. And go it does. What comes out in the end is a tie, I think: the page gets in a few good hits, but Lea's mind floats out of itself and makes its calls on the action from the roof of the gym. In *flow march n powder blossom s* and the talmudically named *smthg*, Max Middle brings sound poetry into the fray, throwing a handful of rounded, musical pebbles into the ring to see if the page can keep to its feet. Sometimes it can, but when it falls, oh it falls hard, and the noise is caught in what must be at least a dozen microphones.

Bout 1. Jesse Patrick Ferguson vs. The Imagiste Poem
catch a bird, Jesse Patrick Ferguson

This round is a collection of jazz standards spanning much of the classic visual poetry tradition — a tradition, it bears repeating, fight fans, that got in its first licks in Zurich, at the same time that Pound, in London, was struggling to transform imagisme, his jejeune attempts at modernism, into the proto-fascist hold-up of *Blast!* For ninety years we've been muddling along with the wreckage of that piece of botched cosmetic surgery — with averted eyes and one hand over our poetic faces. It's good to see the scar tissue finally fading away and that all of us hooked up to our poetry patches finally have a chance to be free. Ferguson's collection counters the textual lyrical seductress herself by viewing her in a mirror that is, fittingly enough, the imagiste image broken free of its magic box. No one turns to stone here, but, still, the image *does* turn into two-dimensional toner. So: a technical victory.

Ferguson's standards include a head (looking very much like Paul Martin's) being trepanned with a device looking like it was, well, made hurriedly at home out of scraps from a kitchen drawer, eh, superimposed on the repeated line "forgive us for trepanning" (in a curlicued wedding invitation font), and framed by a few drafting annotations. Here also is Marilyn Monroe snuggling cute little bony-headed dwarf Death between her breasts, on sale this week for "49, half price." Marilyn is followed by a series of toner-consuming close-ups and distortions of words and images breaking up amongst each other and snapping against the frame of the page, as Ferguson and the Image duke it out up close and personal and largely out of breath. They are followed in turn by a collection of typewriter word trees, a word grid revealing a painting by Christopher Pratt in its undergarments (so to speak), a chimp with a hole in its head the shape of a heart, holding its grinning head in its foot, against a palimpsest of words run right side up and upside down through a laser printer (or a copier?), mocking meaning and sending the page pretty much out of the ring. They are followed by takeoffs on the Latin American revolutionary tradition and the British concrete tradition (poetry as Country House Lawn Ornamentation), all set loose to frolic on the page (and the platten). What makes this standard collection's tricksterish pulled punches and clever feints intriguing is that Ferguson has made the most of mcLennan's grunge production values: in a book photocopied on 8.5 x 14 copy paper, with an orange copy paper cover, he has managed to celebrate the object as just what it is, and to remove it from any resemblance to a 'book' according to the

perfect bound UNESCO and Canada Council for the Arts model. Ferguson's victory is that he has taken all of these visual poetry traditions and reduced them to machine objects. Play (and struggle, too) is not between reader and writer here, but between image and machine. At no point is there representation, and what looks like representation is, obviously — and self-consciously — a machine object. Nothing here moves outside of image: there's mind as image here, image as image, word as image of machine coding, and book as image of a book. Well fought.

Bout 2. Max Middle vs. The Sound of One Hand Napping
smthg, Max Middle

Middle is not going to be trapped in the corner wrapped up in the see-through smoke of language. No sir. Not that he's adverse to staging a Noh play or two to scare language into giving up its secrets. In "notes to each other," for instance, the ghost of representation appears behind the tonal associations and cognitive decryptions of what at first appears to be a nonsense word list, but which coalesces in the end to an image. Unlike Ferguson's stabs and feints, though, during which image junkies have a lot to look at before they realize that the images are really mainlining *them*, Middle's images are *linguistic*, and they are koans: they suggest sense, but deny it. Behind the openly saccharine message of "for your love," for instance, there is a sense of subversion and danger: the words are not, necessarily, up to any good. In fact, they are playing in a trickster fashion, like a barrel of monkeys dangling from Ferguson's pinched fingers until the end, when they are revealed and, as soon as revealed, released to invade the reader's life and the blank space of the page. This is poetry as hostile takeover.

But Middle's really big schtick is the sound poem, a genre which came about, fight fans will recall, when the machine guns of the Somme rendered modernism politically and socially complicit with an array of state-sponsored and as-yet-otherwise-unprosecuted crimes against humanity. Middle's sound poems hover just on the edge of sense, as his language breaks up — not into cognitively recognizable elements but into emotional ones. The poems become flurries of intention that do not cross the gap of signification into cognitive meaning, but remain as aural/oral dances. In "TARTAR," the dance of these oral games is even scored for the page — a visual choreography, which Middle, sadly, neither extends nor explores.

Otherwise, Middle's fighting well. In "Empty as Paper," for example, the game of breaking language apart strays close to the crumbling cliff of transparent language. This sequence of jabs and bee dancing begins as a typical canlit free verse poem ("Knowing it had become dry/and empty as paper"), but rapidly becomes a send-up of rhyme and the cages of metricality, as the stacatto automatic rifle fire of iambic verse (and the evasions of free-verse linebreaks meant to replace it), invades the poem's cognitive landscape. The process casts up such delightful effects as "I up and appled over left,/lounge d x to the creep/and stumbled across slender/to hop given a crease/shifting counter to lesson."

Middle has clearly staked out a challenging and lucid territory, and has done so with verve. Where does he go with it? Well, not as far as Ferguson. "Empty as Paper," for instance, ends up, sadly, well, empty as paper:

Whispering toward the window
a dream crosses sleep,
nameless, and vivid as a letter
daring its own invention.

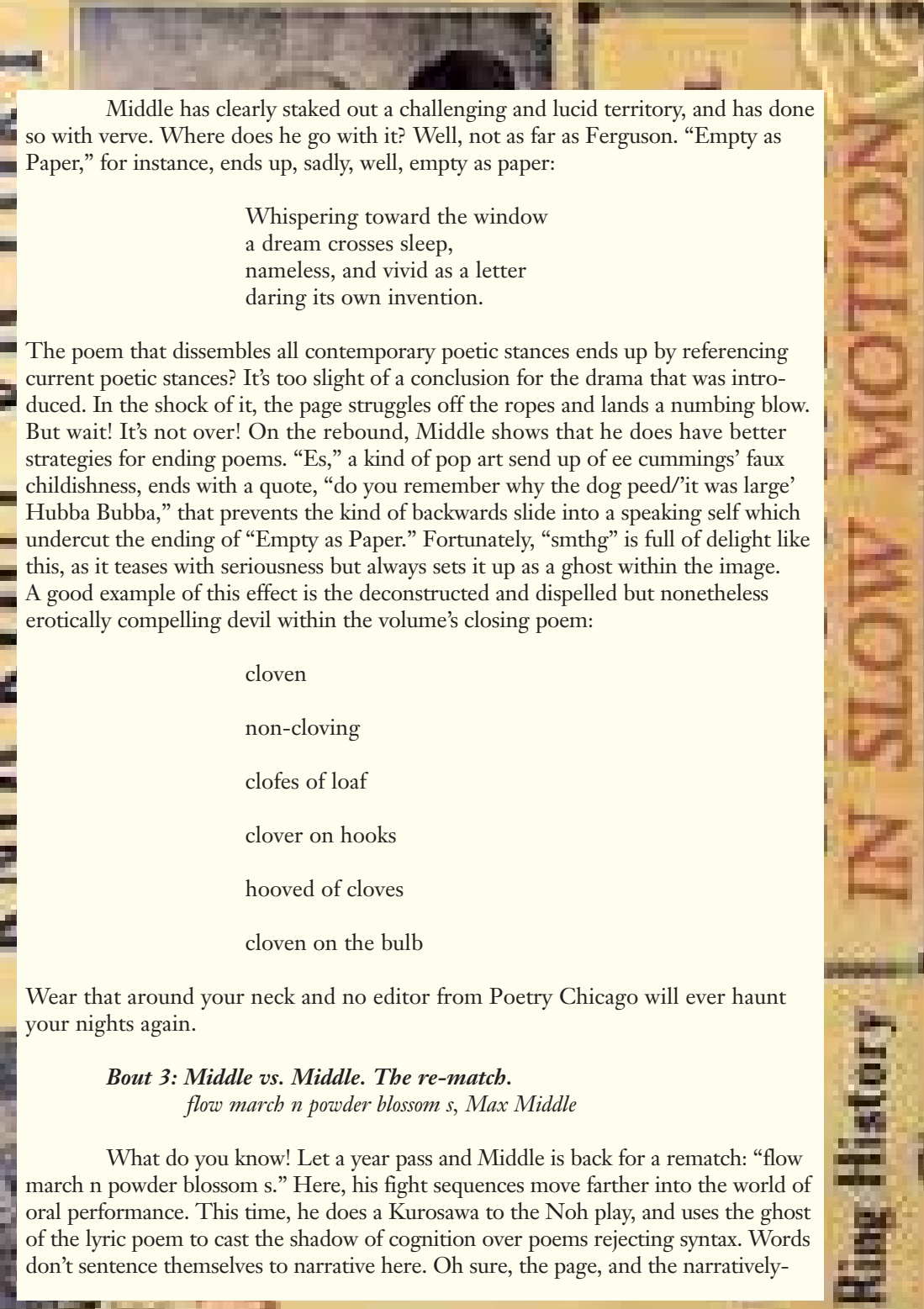
The poem that dissembles all contemporary poetic stances ends up by referencing current poetic stances? It's too slight of a conclusion for the drama that was introduced. In the shock of it, the page struggles off the ropes and lands a numbing blow. But wait! It's not over! On the rebound, Middle shows that he does have better strategies for ending poems. "Es," a kind of pop art send up of ee cummings' faux childishness, ends with a quote, "do you remember why the dog peed/'it was large' Hubba Bubba," that prevents the kind of backwards slide into a speaking self which undercut the ending of "Empty as Paper." Fortunately, "smthg" is full of delight like this, as it teases with seriousness but always sets it up as a ghost within the image. A good example of this effect is the deconstructed and dispelled but nonetheless erotically compelling devil within the volume's closing poem:

cloven
non-cloving
clofes of loaf
clover on hooks
hooved of cloves
cloven on the bulb

Wear that around your neck and no editor from Poetry Chicago will ever haunt your nights again.

Bout 3: Middle vs. Middle. The re-match.
flow march n powder blossom s, Max Middle

What do you know! Let a year pass and Middle is back for a rematch: "flow march n powder blossom s." Here, his fight sequences move farther into the world of oral performance. This time, he does a Kurosawa to the Noh play, and uses the ghost of the lyric poem to cast the shadow of cognition over poems rejecting syntax. Words don't sentence themselves to narrative here. Oh sure, the page, and the narratively-



biased human mind encountering it, tries to make an image of where Middle might be at any time in this zoetrope, but there's no way it can make a narrative out of him quickly enough to pin him down for a direct hit. This second fight is a bit more enervated than the first one, however, as what eroticism remains has now moved down into the level of words themselves, in the manner of a fighter covering his head with his gloves. Whereas in "smthg" both reader and writer were voyeurs of the secret lives of words, to read the poems in "flow march n powder blossom s" is to become complicit in their physicality. In "a kickstand down in five tercets," for instance, the use of repetition allows Middle to set up a structure which culminates in a hip hop rhyme, without a rhyming antecedent. This bravura riff is the oral counterpart of Ferguson's visual poetry: here the ghost of meaning (and of pure lyricism) powers through a word that so rises out of the hypnotic and alluring bed of sound that it carries the whole ground of the poem. The effect is not meaning as T.S. Eliot and his spats would have it, but a physical, body-oriented dance. That Middle is able to land his punch while at the same time filling the forms of a conventional poem as if it were a strange and steely acrostic sticking to his tongue in the cold, only adds to the subversive delight.

Is Middle always successful? No. The poem "untitled" pushes at least this reader continually out of himself, to deliver the message that poems push readers out of themselves. Yawn. Similarly, "run scrummee" is a sound poem that solidifies into syntax with the repetition "tell tell." Sequences like that cause the bout to end in a draw, as the two fighters embrace each other, sapped of all energy, although otherwise the volume has enough energy to reward the reader for the price of a ticket and a couple beers and even some nachos with extra cheese.

Bout 4. *Nicholas Lea & Mr. Spock vs. Captain Lyric*
light years, Nicholas Lea

Nicholas Lea's "light years," is also largely a mind-body struggle. Although he is in the ring against the indomitable and snappily dressed Captain Lyric, Lea nonetheless manages to divert most blows from the Lyrical corner by fighting with his Spock self in such a flurry that the lyric is confused and winds up striking out at itself as well. However, whereas Middle started with the body and teased the mind, daring it to strip and let go, but offered little if any guidance, Lea starts with a cool, rational appraisal of the fight, blocking diagrams of his footwork and punching patterns, the odds from the betting tables, and, for spice, a little bit of Destructionism. The volume's poems end, at best, with the body walking off arm and arm with the mind in an alternate universe from which there is no return. Examples are "light years" and even "After Whaling Station." At worst, the rounds in the bout devolve into the imagistic coda of the free verse poem. There is, for instance, the delightful knowing wink of "Ill, Irregular," in which Lea plays with surfaces and the whole notion of rhyming, as he scatters rhymes, half-rhymes, and the quotes of rhymes around in sophisticated hip hop rhythms, always a step ahead of expectation, only to clunk to an end in a two-dimensional, sentimental geometry:

like division and apathic shout or
whisper under a brume of warm tobacco smoke.

The same betrayal of the poem's music happens in "Nothing to See Here," which moves from the exquisite jazz steps and tight jabs of:

Save disaster for more
tenuous days. Save when
tension fingers the frayed
edges of the say rope, or
chokes longly on sneaked
macaroons.

to loose swings at empty air and an unacknowledged and unextended reliance on non-integrated silence:

like the arrhythmic heart
palpitations of some spent
energy with no reason
but
enough to burn.

Elsewhere, however, the music remains exquisite. In "dream, less," for example, Lea uses parenthetical interruptions to break the flow of the poem into two streams, forcing the reading mind to enter a zone of silence even while the words are leaping around it, full of noise and fury. All boxing bouts, poetic or otherwise, should be choreographed with such class.

The bout continues in this way, with a few points to each side, until the final poem, "Dusk," a long sequence that delivers a decisive knockout blow. Here, Lea makes extraordinary use of the closing space at the end of the poem (and the volume) and turns a lyrical extension into silence (spoken, no doubt, with a sigh), back upon itself, to re-read its echo:

Foster the cause that saddens our shadow
— we've just the time too.
But what (kind) wight put us in our place
the day you said you'd donate your soul to
this signed space? I've (still) sat and traced
every possible log-wrought thought, found that.

Against such mastery, Captain Lyric doesn't have a chance, and he's out cold.

Bout 5. Stephanie Bolster vs. *All the Time in the World*
Biodome, Stephanie Bolster

With Bolster, a poet best known for her explorations of classically metrical lyrics, the sparring between harmony and dissonance takes on a more syntactical shape. I was pleasantly surprised to see that she, too, has strong strategies for keeping the book as fetish object at bay. As “Biodome” unfolds, for instance, its first round, “The Arcades Project,” could have slipped into Lea’s “light years” with hardly a flutter:

Facades (glass under glass)
 reflect the black-clad flaneur.

Signs hang: LAIT • THÉ
 CHOCOLAT. Most shops set out mats.

It is a delightful use of rhyme and metricality, complete with the visual and tonal tricks we’ve come to recognize from the others in this group, as Bolster approaches the match from the Lyricist’s corner and lands her punches just as the book recognizes the threat and turns around to wrap its minotaurian fists around her, but, oh my, too late.

In other poems in “Biodome,” Bolster reveals that, for her, the approach to this particular jazz form comes from the wit of the classical tradition. In “Arenes de Lutece,” for instance, her rhymes sit in place like paving stones:

Let’s build a parking lot.
 Did the workers in their worker costumes know
 what they trucked out? Stones and more old
 stones until what’s this? They stopped
 to raise the funds to replicate the rest.

I sat on the edge of my ringside seat when I started reading that, biting my cognitive fingernails and praying that she would not be buried under a rockslide. I worried needlessly. With verve and skill, she rescues the form from its predictability, and delivers it through a Byronesque world-weariness into a world of half-rhymes and unfulfilled expectations. The book is still probably snuffling around the edge of the ring, looking for a way in.

Bolster pulls it off again and again — such as in “Kew Gardens,” in which she rescues an ending line playing dangerously with cognitive certainty, not by extending the line to complete the rhythm she has prefigured, but by lopping off the first half of the line so that the voice speaking the line suddenly leaves the carefully constructed musical world of the poem and speaks directly, as if out of the poem itself. The quick footwork here is reminiscent of Middle and Ferguson’s equally virtual bouts. The same effect rescues the otherwise banal “Stella’s

‘Brooklyn Bridge’ Means New York,” and conflates the long, reticulated clauses of “Brussels Zoo” into the single playful pout of “a sad decline.” An (unrequited) kiss as a knockout blow: Ha! The whole crowd in my head applauded at that one.

Bolster also shows that any book that thinks it can get the measure of her easily is going to have its signatures cut out for it. As the bout continues, for instance, she introduces long lines, reminiscent of Ford or Lawrence, to tip her stanzas on end, so that the pacing of the stanzas (now lines) comes into the foreground and the metricality of the lines is subsumed within a sense of prose, and just when the book has grown used to swinging on a vertical rather than a horizontal ring surface, Bolster breaks the conceit apart with the simultaneously both metrical and ametrical last line. It’s a line spoken in two voices at once: “An agave’s risen through the roof to flower once.” And the match is hers.

Post-Fight Debriefing

Ladies and gentlemen, what’s so fascinating about what we’ve witnessed here today is that here are poets approaching one central point from four different corners of the ring. The central point that they are striking for is a jazz poem rooted in oral practice, a sound poem of rounded syllables and clashing consonants which follows a complex choreography of word brushing against word to find ways to dance against the expectations of its own endings and to remain solidly within its own moment. This is poetry as performance. The strength of this new genre is evidenced by just how varied the four different aesthetic approaches are, and how cleanly the poem counter, adjusts to, and embodies their feints. The four poets in this set encounter four different set of dangers, and employ four different sets of successful strategies, to overcome various drifts towards rationality, predictable syntax, and radical rejections of significance. The results may not be perfect, and at times may even be rather messy, but the successes here make them worth replaying, because although slowly, painstakingly, and with steps alternately sure and faltering, something wonderful and shared is being born.

REVIEW OF ANITA LAHEY'S *OUT TO DRY IN CAPE BRETON*

by Chris Jennings

Aesthetic Accreditations

Anita Lahey is a professional writer. It's a symptom of the way the arts, and poetry in particular, have been marginalized as provinces of the amateur that this sounds like an odd thing to say about a poet – if not a mild insult. If an insult, its roots lie in that venerable Romantic conception of the poet as someone who feels more deeply and sees with more penetrating vision into our world, suggesting that a “professional” might simply pass off something that sounds or looks like the real thing but that lacks “real” poetry's imaginative reach. This misconception accounts for the superabundance of overwrought “that time we made love” poems that seem the public face of poetry. Lahey's professionalism manifests in the clarity of her language, the precision of her syntax, which is most important for the trust it establishes. Lahey's poetic variations of the language are carefully considered aesthetic choices – either rational or intuitive – so there is no question that she strings imperatives, for example, to dramatize tones, mood, or voice (joyous, celebratory, threatening, blustering). Her lines and stanzas work subtly across the syntax, preserving both as meaningful arrangements. Ultimately this means that *Out to Dry in Cape Breton* betrays no overt failures; the poems are resolutely what they mean to be. You may appreciate them or not but they are what they are. That is a compelling confidence in a poet, a conviction in craft that precedes (not precludes) a conviction in content.

Being professional means establishing your qualifications. Poets flash their union cards by displaying mastery over a repertoire of established forms as Lahey does here in the sequence “Cape Breton Relative”, the strongest section of the book. She also illustrates the difference between completing a pattern poem and using the pattern to novel and interesting effect. Completion is relatively easy. Awful, technically correct villanelles abound and obscure all but the brightest examples of the form. Lahey writes several variations on the pantoum, a cousin to the villanelle, and she not only avoids hackish awkwardness in her full-line repetitions, she explores the implications of such a restrictive form on her content. “Post-War Procession,” the title poem of the book's middle section, is one of several Lahey

poems written “after” a work of art or a photograph; Alex Colville's “Infantry, near Nijmegen, Holland” is the precedent here, Colville proving most common among Lahey's precedents. (It would be interesting to compare Colville's canvases to Lahey's mode of description and composition in more detail to see whether there's more to the affinity than Nova Scotia; I'm not the one to do it because Colville does little for me.) The first few stanzas capture something of the endless sameness of military routine against a backdrop of sensations that are far from routine:

Envy the barrel's ability to contain nothing.
You stink of blood, a blown-open field, severed
limbs. The march in was less pungent. Puddles, open
wounds along the ditch. Your rifle cools your neck.

You stink of blood, a blown-open field. Severed,
still following orders, boots, the men in front,
wounds along the ditch. Your rifle, your neck,
yellow leak of sky. Bodies reek in your head.

Still following orders. The boots of men in front
reflect your own: polished, tightly tied.
That yellow leak of sky. Bodies reek. Your head
inside the helmet; gripping your skull.

Reflect. Your own polished, tightly tied
meltdown. Mud. This endless trudge
inside the helmet gripping your skull.
The march continues. (1-16)

In the Colville image, the soldiers stretch back to the horizon like diminishing figures in facing mirrors. Here, the interlocking lines of the pantoum work into the context of the march. Moving forward through the poem is a process of taking, stanza by stanza, two steps forward and two steps back, until the poem ends where it began: “Envy the barrel's ability. Contain nothing.” Formally, the poem mimics the recursive, reiterative life of the infantry soldier following orders; that emptiness isn't a consequence but a protection against the scenes and smells Lahey describes.

Lahey's use of the imperative is interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, it resolves the ever-vexing question of pronouns: “I” is over-exposed, “you” is either “I” in disguise or an awkward attribution, “he” and “she” gravitate toward narrative – pretty soon someone is simply getting up to open the door. With the imperative, the implied “you” who serves as grammatical subject seems less insistently personal even as the verb insists on action. Strung together, imperatives become dramaturgical. Instead of describing events in the present, a director's voice guides you through a part, a role, whose arc already exists on paper but whose reality requires your participation. This is particularly interesting because it ties into Lahey's

characteristic subject matter: memory and the kind of personal and family history that works reflexively to define the self. The imperatives define a role for that self to play.

Like the whole sequence, “Chapter VII” of “Cape Breton Relative” recreates family history through personal contact with a particular scene; History, story, attach themselves to locale. For the “homecomer,” moving through that landscape is a form of nostalgia, and the physical movement or action equates to the motion through time or, as baiting hooks or untangling lines, pulling up leviathans from beneath the surface. The metaphor here is enhanced by imperatives so that the action is described and processed much as it would be if spoken in the first person but generalized to concentrate attention on connection through observation and recollection.

Picture the steps

of the church that burnt down. Sunday: your father, his brothers, waiting for the men to shrug inside, snatching their red-ended butts from the dirt (how to smoke when you

can't afford shoes). Exhale, inhale. Breathe out, and out. The hunkered school, mouths crammed with cores and peels (all they got with a fisherman father

who slept till noon). That horn of plenty you drew, bowls your mother filled and refilled. Loosen your wrists, quit hunching as if you've got something to hide. (3-12)

Once immersed in these stage directions, the poem shifts over to the second person to explore a particular memory, but the imperative returns at the end of the poem – “Feel the wood / absorb your heel, the memory it bears.” The dramatic detachment from the action serves a final function here, too – it marks the distance between the “homecomer” and the memories that define her (the gender is clearer in other sections) to us. They're as much ours after the poem as the speaker's.

Any reservations I have about either of the above techniques attach themselves to the book as a unit rather than to any individual poem. Put simply, repetition diminishes both the Byzantine patterns of the pantoum and the vibrancy of the imperative. The pantoum loses its potential to surprise while the imperative loses its drama and seems nakedly a path past pronouns. That's a small reservation about a satisfying book that mixes darker poems of death and war with working class history and skilful love poems, a book whose emotional range matches its technical skill.

OPHO



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHTES

Mike Blouin is a writer originally from Ottawa who now writes from the basement of a stone house built 147 years ago in Oxford Mills, Ontario. He has had work published in *Grain*, *Queen's Quarterly*, *Descant*, *Arc*, *Event*, *The New Quarterly*, *Variations*, *The Fiddlehead*, *In/Words*, and *The Antigonish Review*. He is the recipient of the 2003 Diana Brebner Award from *Arc* and the 2005 Lillian I. Found Prize from Carleton University. A collected poetry "words of a minor poet" is forthcoming from Pedlar Press. He periodically troubles onlookers at <http://minor-poet.blogspot.com>

Terry Ann Carter was born in Cambridge, Mass. and moved to Canada in 1965. After earning degrees in English and Music and a graduate degree in Education, she taught language arts from kindergarden to college. Her first book of poems, *Waiting for Julia* (Third Eye Press, London, On, 1999) chronicled the Chernobyl disaster and the summer visits of a Belarusian orphan. Her second collection, *Transplanted*, was published by Borealis Press, Ottawa, 2006. An international award winning haikuist, Carter participated in the Basho Festival in Ueno, Japan (2004). A collection of haiku, such green, was recently published by Pendas Poets (London, On.) in a hand-made Japanese style accordion book. In the summer of 2005, Carter was an instructor at the Teachers' Training Program, Dongzhou International School, Haimen City, China. Carter was the Random Acts of Poetry poet for Ottawa in 2005 and 2006.

Anita Dolman is an Ottawa poet, freelance writer and editor. Her work has appeared in various journals and magazines, including *Grain Magazine*, *Geist*, *Utne*, *The Fiddlehead*, *Prism International*, *latchkey.net* and *The Antigonish Review*. Her chapbook, *Scalpel, tea and shot glass*, was published by above/ground press in fall 2004.

Amanda Earl is just now learning to write poetry by climbing down from her aerie high atop ottawa. her poems appear most recently in *quills canadian poetry magazine*, volume three; *last tracks*, an *in/words* publication; *thegreenmuse.org: a gorgeous, debauchurous literary experience*. She is the publisher of *Bywords* (with Charles Earl), as well as one of the *Bywords* editors.

William Hawkins is an Ottawa poet and Blue Line cab driver. With Bruce Cockburn, he was in the band The Children in Ottawa in the late 1960s. The author of *Shoot Low*, *Sheriff*, *They're Riding Shetland Ponies* (with Roy MacSkimming, 1964), *Hawkins* (1966), *Ottawa Poems* (1966) and *The Gift of Space* (1970), he was included in the seminal anthology *New Wave Canada* (1966). His *DANCING ALONE: Selected Poems 1960-1990* appeared in spring 2005 with cauldron books / Broken Jaw Press. He is slowly working on a slew of new poems.

Chris Jennings teaches writing and literature at the University of Ottawa. He has been an academic editor, a literary editor, a ditch digger, an industrial mover, a meat packer, a warehouse supervisor, and a nursing home kitchen attendant. Don't ask him about his dog unless you have an hour.

Born in Ottawa in 1970, **rob mcLennan** currently lives in Ottawa. The author of twelve trade poetry collections including *name*, *an errant* (Stride, UK, 2006) and *aubade* (Broken Jaw Press, 2006), he has two more due to appear in 2007: *The Ottawa City Project* (Chaudiere Books, Ottawa) and *a compact of words* (Salmon, Ireland). In 2006, with Jennifer Mulligan, he started the Ottawa-based literary house Chaudiere Books. He is currently completing a novel (or three), editing a series of critical collections for Guernica Editions on the works of Canadian writers George Bowering, John Newlove and Andrew Suknaski, editing a new edition of selected poems by Andrew Suknaski, editing a collection of essays and reviews by Andrew Suknaski, editing an issue of the critical journal *Open Letter*, putting the finishing touches on a collection of literary essays to appear with ECW Press in fall 2007, and working on a non-fiction book for Arsenal Pulp Press, *Ottawa: The Unknown City*. His online home is at www.track0.com/rob_mclennan, and he often posts reviews, essays, rants and other nonsense at his blog, www.robmclennan.blogspot.com. The poems included here are part of *The Ottawa City Project*.

Colin Morton's seven books of poetry include Archibald Lampman Award winners, *This Won't Last Forever*, (1985) and, *Coastlines of the Archipelago*, (2000). In 2007 he will publish two more: *The Local Cluster*, (Pecan Grove Press) and, *The Cabbage of Paradise*, (Seraphim Editions). He is a regular reviewer for *Arc Magazine*.

Elisabeth Harvor's first poetry book, *Fortress of Chairs*, won the Gerald Lampert Award for best first book of poetry written by a Canadian writer in 1992, and *Excessive Joy Injures the Heart*, her first novel, was named one of the ten best books of the year by the *Toronto Star* in 2000. She also won the Alden Nowlan Award in 2000, the Marian Engel Award in 2003, and she is the 2004 winner of *The Malahat Review* Novella Prize. Her most recent novel, a finalist for the Ottawa Book Award in 2005, is *All Times Have Been Modern*, and her most recent story collection, *Let Me Be the One*, was a 1996 finalist for the Governor General's Award.

Clare Latremouille has lived in a number of places over the years, including Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops and Alexandria, Ontario, before moving to Ottawa. Her work has appeared in the anthologies *Written in the Skin* (Insomniac Press, 1998), *Shadowy Technicians: New Ottawa Poets* (Broken Jaw Press / cauldron books, 2000), *Groundswell: best of above/ground press, 1993-2003* (Broken Jaw Press / cauldron books, 2003), and will appear in *Decalogue 2: ten Ottawa fiction writers* (Chaudiere Books, 2007). Her first novel, *The Desmond Road Book of the Dead*, appeared in fall 2006 in the first publishing season of the new Ottawa publishing house Chaudiere Books.

Nadine McInnis is the author of five previous books of literary criticism, short fiction and poetry. She currently teaches in the Professional Writing Program at Algonquin College, and the poems included in this issue are from her forthcoming 2007 Brick Book, *Two Hemispheres*.

K.L. McKay arrives to Edmonton via Ottawa, originally from the North Shore of Lake Superior. Her first collection of poems, *Barefoot Through the Pickybushes*, was released in October 2005 through the University of Ottawa Friday Circle imprint. Recent featured readings include a chapbook with The Olive Reading Series (2005), and a Single Onion reading (2006). K.L. is the founding editor of Spire Poetry Poster, a monthly broadside series since 2003. Once a week for three years, K.L. co-hosted the Café Nostalgica Poetry and Music Open Stage on the University of Ottawa campus, along with folk musician Trevor Tchir. Audio recordings of her poetry have appeared on two collections from that venue. K.L. is currently a member of the Olive Reading Series Collective.

Max Middle the author of three poetry chapbooks, most recently *flow march n powder blossom s* (Ottawa ON: above/ground press, 2006) and was included in the anthology *Shift & Switch: New Canadian Poetry* (Toronto ON: The Mercury Press, 2005). Under the Griddle Grin imprint, he publishes/edits a one page poetry series 'Puddle leaflets.' He routinely updates his website at www.maxmiddle.com, and maintains a blog at www.maxmiddle.blogspot.com

Kim Minkus, a native of Ottawa, now resides in Vancouver where she is a poet and Librarian. She is currently a PhD candidate in the English Department at Simon Fraser University, where she is specializing in contemporary poetics. In April of 2006 Kim was awarded a fellowship to King's College London. Her latest review appears in Jacket 28 and she has poems forthcoming in the journal *West Coast Line*.

Ottawa-born **Cath Morris** currently lives in Vancouver, and has been published in TADS, The Capilano Review, two online poetry journals called Poethica and Bywords, and recently in Coach House Press' special edition anthology for George Bowering's 70th birthday. Cath continues to write poetry, tutor university writing, and do research for Cedar Root publications.

John Newlove (1938-2003) was considered to be the best lyric poet in Canada, with the bulk of his writing produced between 1962 and 1972. Originally from Saskatchewan, he lived in Ottawa for his last seventeen years, longer than he managed to live anywhere else. The last twenty years of his writing life can be seen in the collections *The Night the Dog Smiled* (ECW Press, 1986), his selected poems *Apology for Absence* (The Porcupines' Quill, Inc., 1992) and in the anthology *Groundswell: best of above/ground press, 1993-2003* (Broken Jaw Press / cauldron books, 2003). Ottawa's Chaudiere Books will be releasing a larger volume of John Newlove's selected poems in fall 2007, edited by Robert McTavish, who recently put the finishing touches on a documentary on Newlove that premiered on Bravo in fall 2006. This poem was originally written for the Peter Gzowski golf tournament.

Wanda O'Connor once won a CBC poetry contest about the public service. She's given that all up now for Ancient Greek and poutine.

Roland Prevost: 20,000 pages of an allsorts lifelong journal – everything & anything language; Poetry published in *Bywords Quarterly Journal*, *Bywords.ca* online, & *Variations Art Zine*; Winner of John Newlove Poetry Award 2006; *English & Psych @ York U.* & *U. of Manitoba*; *Homes, sequenced: Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Toronto, Peterborough, Ottawa*; *Avid telescope observer – galaxies, nebulas, globulars, comets, etc.*

Harold Rhenisch has shaken his Pound addiction and is currently translating the patterns of pine bark beetles into English, as he did to Shakespeare in his latest volume: *"Living Will: Shakespeare After Dark"* (Wolsak and Wynn, 2005.) His *Selected Poems 1977-2007* comes out this fall from Ronsdale Press and his *"The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century"* a deconstruction of colonialism and paradise in British Columbia, is just out from Brindle & Glass.

Chris Turnbull lives outside of Ottawa, in Kemptville. Recent work has appeared in *dANDelion*, *How2* (<http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/current/feature/turnbull.html>), and **Companions & Horizons: An Anthology of Simon Fraser University Poetry*.

Kate Van Dusen was born in Ottawa, but spent many years living on the West Coast where she studied English literature at the University of Victoria, learned to fish halibut in the Straits of Georgia and worked as a prison librarian in Vancouver's downtown eastside. In 2003 she returned to Ontario where she lives with her husband, Victor Coleman, and works at St. Michael's College Library at the University of Toronto. For the past two summers she has travelled to Languedoc to do research on the Troubadours and to write poetry.

The poem was published in "71 (+) for GB: An anthology for George Bowering on the occasion of his 70th birthday" ed Jean Baird, David W. McFadden and George Stanley



409151037

$O_2(H_2O)$