

National Museum of Canada Archives

WARNING: POETRY CAN THRILL YOU!



Back

Stroll of Poet

October, 1995

Olga Costopoulis

CROCUS

How can such softness bear the strength
to throw off a winter's weight of snow?
Stubborn memory in stubborn root
heliotrope heliotrope
quick purple delirium
covering, pushing back
these too-close hills to mountains,
distant, perfect
as a child might draw them--
mountains you can count the flowers on.

© Olga Costopoulos ([e-poem](#)) ([home](#))

CROCUS is from *Muskox and Goat Songs* 1995,
published by Ekstasis Editions, \$12.95 Cdn
P.O. Box 8474, Main Postal Outlet,
Victoria, B. C., CANADA
V8W 3S1

BONE SCAN

Do bones scan like poetry,
their long-lined angular rhythms singing,
the gamma particles dancing
for an unknown radiologist
who might report that my bones
have taken up the phosphates
with warm, excited attraction?
Is this the ultimate introspection?
The technician says lie still, relax.
But I tingle all over knowing
this flawed poem is my body
this flawed body is my poem
formed in my dark unknowing.
Read head to foot, seeing only
the luminous dark vascular maze
which knows its way but not itself--
feeling below the words
but beyond sensation.
Out of touch's touch, the unknown
is born in the crimson marrow.

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Tom Emmens

Images of Epiphany

Light
water
a dove descending
broken roads
lined with crying children
crushed gravel
a song ascending
a pot
boiling over an open fire
lies and truth
lies and truth
a spot of tea
that stains
the fine white linen
washes too
the throat so dry
we forget
the trembling hand

© Tom Emmens
[\(e-poem\)](#)

Grief

In the time of grief
descending
I was unaware of fields
unaware of moving clouds
unaware of heart beats.
I was aware
of ashes
just like dust and gravel
spreading slowly
on the ground
where startled monarchs
fluttered
unaware of sorrow.

© Tom Emmens
[\(e-poem\)](#)

Scene at a Gallery

The skeleton tree,
black as pitch
in ink blue sky,
will be the frame.
The winter star,
piercing,
enters as the subject.
A shadow
casts so softly
'cross the diamond carpet,
where I shift,
to gain the perfect view.

© Tom Emmens
[\(e-poem\)](#)

First Love Observed

Damn your love !
So clean,
So cool,
So uncluttered,
So focused,
It rises above the rest,
a spring storm
nurturing growth.
When I see your run,
unfettered,
through flowing
wild flower fields,
I never think of
fragile crushed stems,
I think of running free,
like you.

© Tom Emmens

Russel Johnston

Relations

I think of the ideal mating
as two dogs
with their teeth sunk
into the same

bone
each knowing
that they can't drop it first
neither knowing who's barked

© Russell Johnston ([to here Russell read this poem - click here](#))

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Alice Major

Office Hours ([click here - to hear Alice read this poem](#))

hickory
dickory
click
of computer keyboard
from the next cubicle
tick
tick-tick
chatter of mice teeth
behind the bland buttocks
of padded office dividers
three blind walls
and my back
to the window
tick-tick
tick
I long for the farmers wife
to come down the hall with a carving knife
and chop computer cable
like the gristle of rodent tail
tick
tick tick
and the clock strikes
one as going
so
damn
slow
© Alice Major
([e-poem](#)) ([home](#))

Messages from Planet E

Anybody out there?
All these signals
we pump out, like a popcorn maker
puppling in the lobby of a movie theatre.
TV twaddle. Cops talking tough
on the police band. Spotlights
with their high beams on, parked
at shopping centres. Electronic snatches
of Bach and Jerry Lee Lewis. All of them
rocketed out into space, racketing round
forever.
The whole planet a small, throbbing
blinking jukebox floating around the sun.

Like the only house in a quiet neighbourhood
where a late-night party is going on
and people are breaking glass
and shouting on the lawn and turning up the bass
on the stereo, while the rest of the street
peeks out from window curtains, wishes
they'd all shut up and go to sleep.
We're just hopeful -- hurling signals
that, by some wild coincidence,
might be intercepted and decoded.
As long as we're out there
surfing the electromagnetic waves,
cruising the blacktop with our ghetto
blasters all a-blare -- well, then we'd still exist.
Even if, back home, someone's called
the police at last, and the inevitable law
arrived, and the cells are dark and cold,
and we're sorry now . . .

© Alice Major
[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

William Nichols

Untitled

I fall
down a lot
specially on starry nights
some might say
Look out where you're going
I could call back
You misunderstand my travel plans

©William Nichols
this poem was first published in *Other Voices*
Volume 7, Number 2, Fall 1994 ISSN 0838-4789
[\(click here and William reads the poem\)](#)
[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Ivan Sundal

Aha
ha ha haah
Aha ha ha ha ha haah
A *ha* ha ha ha ha ha haah
'eeeeeeeeeeeeeh
Hee heeeeeee heeeeeee
'aaaah ha ha ha ha ha haah
© Ivan Sundal [\(to here Ivan read this poem - click here\)](#)
[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Jocelyne Verret

CHINESE LAUNDRY

[\(click here to hear Jocelyne read this poem in English\)](#)

For Gee Chun, one of the earliest Chinese laundry operators in Edmonton (1895)

The Chinese family screened by a wall of steam
Soaks its pride in white bleach
Scrubs the ring around the collar of racial slurs
Rinses with its tears of humiliation
Presses with the starch of its courage

LA BUANDERIE CHINOISE

[\(cliquez ici pour écouter la version française de ce poésie\)](#)

Pour Gee Chun, un des premiers blanchisseurs d'Edmonton (1895)

La vapeur raciale entoure la famille chinoise
Qui trempe sa fierté dans l'eau javellisée
Frotte les cols aux taches noires des blanches injures
Plonge les chemises dans ses larmes d'humiliation
et les repasse à l'amidon de son courage

© Jocelyne Verret ([e-poem](#)) ([home](#))
from GENS D'ICI/GENS D'AILLEURS
PEOPLE FROM HERE AND AFAR
published by Collection Littart \$23.95 Cdn
8611 -104 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA
T6E 4G6

Lyle Weis

Louisiana Swamp

[\(sound file\)](#)

This road a tidy statement
two lanes of blacktop edged by gravel
a hand's width on either side
then swamp nice and deep
green scum floating on its own time
around the stumps of trees
and sometimes a turtle
dropping from a log into
the fertile muck

and I'm thinking:
what happens if you have a flat?
or drift sleepily off the shoulder?

this must happen sometimes
and suddenly I'm pleased
at the idea
that I'm only a doze away
from getting right in there
rubbing shoulders
with the critters or maybe
becoming food for them

just when you thought your life
was too much road
too little alligator

© Lyle Weis

this poem first appeared in *Madame Bull's Tavern*
Autumn, 1995 Volume 1.1

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Ruth Anderson Donovan

Rememberance

Peace starts small
 a reaching out
 a touch
Forgiveness offered on an open palm

 the quiet sound
 of a lifted wing

raises the dead.

© Ruth Anderson Donovan

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Nancy drinks in songs
 she cups them in her hands
 they leave as swallows.

© Ruth Anderson Donovan

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Jannie Edwards

Autobiography

The English teacher asks for an autobiography
from 16 year olds: "750 words, double-spaced."
You write it clean, no bullshit, you think.
The other girl writes 11 pages singlespaced;
mentions, in her cramped script, some sidewalks
"delineating" the lawns of her youth.
"Delineating!" and the teacher gave her 100%!
You got only 90% on your life, but you resolve
never to have anything, especially sidewalks,
delineating your life.

© Jannie Edwards

Autobiography first appeared in **The Fiddlehead** No. 184 Summer 1995

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Man finds Treasure in Map of Wife's Varicose Veins (Headline from the *National Enquirer*)

that we should all be so lucky
to mine treasure in each other's infirmities
that we should become gentle cartographers
of each other's wrinkles
that we could say *love*
and believe in this constitution
knowing that to invent is both
to discover and to create
carrying credentials
which seem flawed, fake
we offer ourselves up nervous
at the border posts of intimacy
hope to be met on the other side
with news of Eldorado

© Jannie Edwards

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Two Haiku

In the same city
I hear of my brother's death
eight days after

*

In a glance, the bright
leaves of the poplar turn black
outside my window

© Jannie Edwards

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Dialogue

Because the moon
shines through the tree

I love you.

No.

Because I love you
the moon shines
through the tree.

© Jannie Edwards

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Doug Elves

Wild Roses on Corfu

for Dani

Among white morning-glories
these offer open palms,
a greeting I remember.

Their petals do not await my gesture,
but shake out gentle breezes from the air.

When I return to Alberta,
wild roses will again acknowledge
my perspiring face and arms;
but this time when my skin is cooled
I will remember the wild roses
on Corfu.

© Doug Elves

These poems appear in *Love Song on the North Saskatchewan* which is available from [The Author](#), price \$5.00

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Figure Skater

The blades of the figure skater
glide like gulls over sea swells:
low with a slow, rare wingbeat.
They turn in a wind of watching eyes,
then leap, cupping an updraft,
and leave behind the crowd's quick heartbeat.

© Doug Elves

[\(e-poem\)](#)

The Black Swans of Gorky Park

The black swans of Gorky Park seem still:
no ripples ring them.
Their feathers swallow sunlight,
letting fall no drop of green or blue reflection.
Their backs, piled high with folded wings,

are dark sails trimmed to billow:
were there motive, they would move.
Children sit nearby transfixed
or lie, chest to lawn and chin to palm,
vigilant for motion.
From the children's narrow vantage the water is a mirror,
buoying swans on inverted clouds, upended trees
and compatriots hanging headlong from the other shore.
Parents watch, but from their standing vantage
they perceive the water's depth:
to them the mystery of webbed feet
is only half obscured.
All are silent yet intent:
young ones prostrate with expectation;
old ones waiting, waiting;
and the black swans of Gorky Park floating,
their long, high necks curving into midnight question marks.
© Doug Elves
[\(e-poem\)](#)

First Glimpse of the Parthenon

Seen by chance from tenemented avenues
below the Acropolis rock,
this idea carved in marble springs to mind sparkling
in the sun.
It remains, surviving the closing of eyes
through a hundred generations,
is by now a template for the eyes,
yet still startles every glance.
French cathedrals lift like eagles from the ground.
Houses cantilevered over brooks
are as stately in suspension as the very words:
Frank Lloyd Wright.
But nothing is like this.
Here there are no banquet halls,
no ovens, beds, toilets,
not even waiting rooms.
To covet this promises no ease or status:
it is not property.
I clutch at greed
by refusing to pilfer here,
by agreeing not to pocket any fragment;
for my spectacular theft

is what I carry away
each time I close my eyes,
having seen the Parthenon
again for the very first time.

© Doug Elves

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

Tracy Murray

OVERHEARD AT A TOY STORE

I promise
I will not ask you
To buy me another toy ever again
In the meantime
Could you get me that new
Tai Chi Machine Spy doll
I'm always bugging you about
Aside from that
Star Punk Princess Police Decoder Ring
You're gonna buy me?

© Tracy Murray

[\(e-poem\)](#)

THE CREEP AT THE BOOKSTORE

Yes
I look beautiful
And I wasn't looking at you for assurance
Now please go away
You're blocking my view of that interesting gray bookshelf
I was intensively studying
Before you came in

© Tracy Murray

[\(e-poem\)](#)

THE BEAT GOES ON AND ON AND ON AND...

Even if you're gone
From the physical world
Keep on raving
As life will never lose its beats per minutes
For the afterworld is also a
Never ending warehouse party

© Tracy Murray

Tomas Trofimuk

deer poem number 1

(9-10-7-8-8-6 haiku)

on the highway, deer are not so sure
this one slips-almost-falls on the shoulder
hooves skitter on a chalkboard
(Bambi, Thumper sprawled on the ice)
misses this swerving vehicle with pounding hearts encased/
© Tomas Trofimuk

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

heard rain

(february 20, 1995)

listen to the rain at 2 a.m.
out of place, drumming the metal awning
with crazy rhythms but no rhymes
with reality but no reason
pouring down in the dark mid-life of February
completely insane on the snow
falling beautiful in the night, a strange dream,
perfectly out of season/
© Tomas Trofimuk

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(home\)](#)

tide

the tide of you sadd ins me
i am witness to your ebbing safely back into danger
flowing dangerously forward into safety
you flow, as crocus at last receded snow up from black soil
throw yourself, as owl's dark wings off fence post against grey sky
hesitate in the rough balance created amidst copper-blue sea
and in the sparkling frozen sift of snow at -24 Celsius
a sparrow fluffs and silences on an apple bough ridged in white
outside this window pane/
this is how you ebb
but the beating life, faint blink of heart,
is felt inside this time/
© Tomas Trofimuk



Stroll of Poet

Spring 1996

Richard Davies

Rutting season

There are animals here
who have rubbed themselves raw
on mornings like these
recalling robinsong
& lovesap before
the decibels of jets.
They peer thru gauze
at the cool desired blue.
Shaved & alarumed into daylite
they weigh their lives against
the balance-sheet of sky
draw breath & drive dead-lined
into forests of stone.

© Richard Davies

[\(e-poem\)](#)

only

only on the dark
wet streets of night
can i ever hope to
find your face again
only with the sun
on april morning snow
can i tell you how
i love you still

© Richard Davies

[\(e-poem\)](#)

canvas

grey december sky
park benches etched in snow
wind strokes the last robin's wing
breath warm & then gone
like a memory
lovers lost in each other's eyes
we walk beside the river
& dream of hibernation

© Richard Davies

[\(e-poem\)](#)

A Momentary Stay

It's when you are empty
& falling thru
a never-ending hole
beyond any words...

You must remember then
to fill your heart to brim
with life & love
those highest arts of all

© Richard Davies

[\(e-poem\)](#)

[\(home\)](#)

Anna Mioduchowska

IN LONDON, ENGLAND, Briefly

the pelican in St. James Park
allows one old man
to put an arm around its neck
they sit side by side
every afternoon
cheek to glazed cheek
indifferent to the world squawking by

©Anna Mioduchowska

this poem first appeared in *Whetstone* Spring 94

[\(e-poem\)](#)

POOR RELATION AT THE DINNER TABLE

the only snag
to being taken in
by a kindly aunt
is you never know
what you will find
in you soup
should the times grow lean
the soup thin
and your cousins begin to weigh
every mouthful you lift
to your lips

and it matters not
that you take on extra chores
that your work may be neat
or finished ahead of time
every smile from your aunt
every penny earned
only doubles your chances
of another uncertain meal

©Anna Mioduchowska

this poem first appeared in *CV2* Winter 96

[\(e-poem\)](#)

WASHING MY MOTHER'S FEET

one perfect chanterelle
sprouts from each of your toes
each foot a family
firm mum irregular dad
a cluster of glabrous babies
playing in the suds

one little two little
three yellow mushrooms
reach out through the fruity steam
four little five little
ten fibrillose toes in need
of a good scrub

©Anna Mioduchowska

[\(e-poem\)](#)

MEDITATION

November morning mist
blossoms with daffodil yellow

small dog
peeing into a sunbeam

[\(e-poem\)](#)

[\(home\)](#)

Sandra Mooney-Ellerbeck

SUCCESS

Numbers increasing in size on
white paper inside my
bank book:
your name and title engraved in gold on
the plaque on your
office door;
your BMW parked for show on
the driveway of your
oversized house for your
undersized family;
last years fashions sent to the
goodwill as my closet fills up
with the newest fashions;
consuming whatever novelty is in at
the time;
the cruises, the flights to paradise,
the weekend get-a-ways;
the envy of others:
Is success really what we have
or wear or show or is
success not more than a
Western Philosophy?

© Sandra Mooney-Ellerbeck
[\(e-poem\)](#)

GHOST HAND

Find a cardboard box -
line it with all the cards and
letters of our romance.
Stack up the photographs that mime
butterfly wings in your
mind -
cover them all with the nick-knacks you
received from my hand - the hand
you once held - the same
hand that rested on your heart -
that needed to feel your life beat through -
that hand is now a ghost hand -
it is time to place the
ghost hand in the box with

all it touched -
time to seal and store
the box -
time to store the box
away.

© Sandra Mooney-Ellerbeck
[\(e-poem\)](#)

LOVE'S RESUSCITATION

Love - the soft sweet scented glue that bonds
Love - the arms that securely hold through
hard to swallow and stomach
churning times
Love - the hands that reach out and never
stop giving like incoming ocean waves
Love - the emotion that plants joy and grows smiles
Love - the lace of poetry
the soul of songs
the heartbeat of life
Love - the glue that bonds is seldom pasted to
newspaper pages
Love is good news and bad news sells
But Love makes a profit:
Love is CPR -
an everlasting resuscitation from all
that tries to kill

© Sandra Mooney-Ellerbeck
[\(e-poem\)](#)

[\(home\)](#)

Sandy Sprinkle

Shallow

*Mar. 19, 1993 - J. A. (Sandy) Sprinkle
Read Sept. 21, 1995 & Sept. 24, 1995*

**I stumbled upon a puddle
In the early light of dawn-
Reflecting mystic early light
that had been cast there-on.**

**And through this surface-
Light's mirrored way-
Predicting glorious highlights
Of the new expected day.**

**Then came the truck-
that spewed the muck-
. Asunder,
to the warehouse wall it stuck.**

**Illusion gone! - Still coming dawn
Shallow discovery - newborn pain.
I hope this day will give to all
A heavy Life-Sustaining rain.**

- - *Vision* - -

*Jan. 19, 1994 J. A. (Sandy) Sprinkle
Read @ Twelve Nights 1996*

**I believe that I had seen the sky
But when I returned and searched
For the words to tell
Of what I had seen
There seemed to be no time
For my words to be heard.**

**Nor were there ears to listen
Nor were there minds to hear the listening
had there been time
for my words to be formed
and sent.**

**What good is it to have ideas
if they are alien
to a
Self-serving
Self-pleasing
World
That has no time?**

**Creativity
Unfostered
Festers within itself.**

Tomorrow's Insanity.

man

June 19, 1994 - J. A. (Sandy) Sprinkle

**A man with feelings
is cursed in this time
when men are viewed
as rutting pigs.**

**The judgement passed
on feelings of care
without words or talk
is brutal.**

**And there is no defense
for having felt.
Only quiet pain
in truth - to try to care.**

**To defend or act
is inappropriate.
The judgment cast-
"Men have no right to feel."**

**The sensitive man
condemned - must change,
desensitized - not care.
Defense - projected pain.**

**Perhaps the sensitive man
will become extinct
for those who claim
that he doesn't exist.**

**Just another
self-fulfilling prophesy.**

the Dream

April 23, 1994 - J. A. (Sandy) Sprinkle

**I dreamed
That I was awake
And that I felt
The feelings
Of others-
And I felt
Their thoughts -
And fear enveloped me.**

For I felt their

Pain

and Blame

and Anger

and Shame

and Loneliness.

**Then I awoke
And I cried,
- - For I still Felt
All of these things.**

Karla Woloshyn

Short & Sweet - Your Voice -

Few lines - few words -
The trembling of your heart:
Je t'aime - repeats -
Echoes "darling" - so short -
So sweet - penetrating voice -
That "inner smile- feeling"
Rumbles through your whole being!
OH! so short & sweet ...your voice -
Yes, the sound of your voice has
MAGIC - special kind of magical
Tone - - tone that makes my heart
Overflow with joy;
That "inner-smile/warmth" flood
My whole being;
And when your voice floats on
The airwaves . . . I want to
Touch it - touch and hold and
Keep on 'ringing' that magical sound;
MAGIC - the sound of your voice - - -
© Karla Woloshyn

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Commands in my Dreams II

Dedicated to Irl Miller

Embrace the wind
Touch the breeze
Screen the rays
Chase the rainbow
Nail a song while being sung
Still a motion
Retrace the waves on the ocean
Hold a raindrop - intact - in your hand
Reroute a flying arrow
Sting a bee with its own sting
Scrape the scars from a broken heart . . .

© Karla Woloshyn

[\(e-poem\)](#)

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Spread their wings of protection -
While the Unicorns smirk
Kicking their hooves in sheer disgust;

Guardian Angels flail their wings
Attempting to accomplish their mission -
But the streams of powerful winds
Break their heavenly, feathery appendages;
Thus turmoil results and
The Angels' dust laden feathers -
Crumble -
Angels' Mission NOT accomplished;
And the Unicorns . . . ?
Smile and bring their own
Brand of lusty,
Mythical sound of GLEE!
© Karla Woloshyn
[\(e-poem\)](#)

[\(home\)](#)



Back

Stroll of Poe

Fall 1996

Russell Johnstone

Love Is Only A Double Negative

My memories of you go by
like rows of butterflies on crutches.

We were the blind desperately unbuttoning the blind,
lost in the blur of the forbidden.

Until your voice, like the shock of cold chicken,
ripped my heart out
and beat it like a seal pup,
into your front porch.

Suddenly, my life was invaded
by a drunken synchronized-swim team of emotions...

As the book of my soul began to fill with coffee rings.

Now I know that my life is a only metaphor,
for something infinitely worse -

But your cruelty can never keep its freshness.

One day, your beauty too, will be gone
like lost socks from a dryer.

© Russell Johnston



Stroll of Poe

January 1997

Geraldine Matus

Caged in Reflection

I pace humidity muted streets,
beneath
heavy summer skies,
painted smoky violed
by fires of emotions,
who won't reveal their face
and persist in caging me
in solitary reflection
yet,
your cells are part of mine.

© Geraldine Matus

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Who's First?

The altar of our bodies' union
lay bare but for its snowy cloth
gathering dust from beams of sunlight,
heaven sent.
Predator and prey, we circled its perimeter,
neither daring to leave the other's gaze
or be the first
to lay down upon the altar
as sacrifice to righteousness and power
yeilding
to the imagination of lover's play.

© Geraldine Matus

[\(e-poem\)](#)

On Whose Cleavage I Have Lain

I drink in the last moments
here with you -- swallow down
sadness welling around my heart
hold quietude -- reverently
communion bread dissolving
on my tongue, sip from you cup
rose dawn light -- gossamer cascade
veiling verduous hills
on whose cleavage I have lain
my head in rest and benediction

© Geraldine Matus

[\(e-poem\)](#)

Staking a Claim

With my pick axe of discernment,
and my mule named Fortitude,
I set out
across foreign lands of promise
to stake a claim on my life,
whith hopes of discovering gold
in the viens of my mythology
embedded in the stone
of inner wisdom
far below the surface
of my every day persona.

© Geraldine Matus

[\(e-poem\)](#)

William Nichols

HAIKU

**two baby robins
in a bath big enough for
one baby robin**

INTERNET AT NIGHT

Pixels go to black
one at a time
in their thousands
pulling the dark curve
of night
across the screen.
Geosynchronous,
the satellite and my chair
rush through the same
degrees of arc
to stay still,
one to the other
affording a stable view
as my hemisphere loses
its incandescence.
In my basement
I know the weather
in advance.
On the top floor
a night wind
rustles papers on the bed table
and some order to things is lost,
in the way that fuels
recurring dreams.

[back](#)

when I walk at night
I see myself
green as a tree

```
101010101
000011110101010100
1110001000101010010011
0100010010100101010010010
1101000100101101101010100
00100100111100100100100
0100100111100101001111
110100010010100
1001
0101
0010
1010
01010
010010010
```

Tomas Trofimuk

meeting at bistro

when we started it was all speaking at once
like four dogs pulling at a rag
but eventually
we all fell into the custom
of listening to one and other/

© Thomas Trofimuk

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

eucharist at
pyramid lake

a family of Chinese people are eating under my window
outside two elk bucks scuffle in the night
they lock-unlock antlers, tick benignly like chopsticks in the dark
(and i did not know that elk bucks meow like kittens, almost whimper
while engaged in this pre-mating ritual)
they are here to deliver a message
"get away from the goddamned television," they say to me,
"live! there is no life in television. come out into the cold mountain night.
look at the lurking moon. feel the cold on your face. live! breathe!"
i grab a blanket and wrap myself tight
tiptoe down the cold balcony, unscrew a blaring light bulb
stand, watch the elk inside the edge of the pines,
breathe the sight of these two, plainly doing what they must

© Thomas Trofimuk

[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

hurricane

god only knows when hurricane Jane
will strike down in some broken-hearted trailer park
where people are only coming and always going and never staying
for long
you whirl like a rabid banshee, pain hurled here, angst tossed there
snakes and ladders fallen askew, Richard Nixon on acid, dice thrown against
velvet, America the brave, litigation, litigation, migration, aggravation,

backwards geese, dead mice, hail and thunder and pounding rain, sucking and pulling and pushing your way through life
and I'm just going to pull back a few hundred kilometers
so I can watch the devastation from a safe perch
with binoculars and a glass of port, and maybe a twelve dollar cigar
because I'm way over thirty now and I've learned
that trying to get to the heart of a hurricane
is a difficult journey
even when she wants you there <

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

ice

I do not belong here in this bed
with this woman frozen by so many
indecisions
she pushes me away, pulls me towards, pushes away
pulls me in, pushes away and my heart spins
there is not enough heat in my hands
to touch her
I lie here on my back numb to any possibility
unequipped to climb around on sheets of ice
I know there's a heart in there
I've seen the signs embedded in the ice
felt tenderness, generosity, kindness from her
witnessed a loving spirit, small fearless surrenders

these elements seep out of her through the most minute
hair-line cracks

and all this time, I was looking to fall into
a crevasse

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

prairie
trees

Southern Saskatchewan is weird
There are few trees

although several pine forests you notice
miraculously grow in straight rows

Scratchy trees tuck themselves
around small farm buildings
grey, willowy sticks for protection
from dirt-stealing winds

Most amazing are the trees along the highway
from Moose Jaw to Swift Current
In this vastness the trees are not tall, stand alone
singular icons out of place in the flatness that surround

s Their loneliness strikes in the middle of you
To be so singular amidst this very much flatness
To be vertical in a Universe of horizons
You begin to worry for the aloneness of trees

Slowly you remember it is February
that winter is a time for harsh contrasts
There are the land-scattered antelope, coyotes, deer
and in the spring, birds will return, gophers arise

And astonishingly as you stretch your vehicle
across this mid-winter flatness
you can see
every single tree

has a nest in it

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

untitled
poem 62a

to leave you is an awful ripping
a movement back to those basic human elements
i become when i am alone walking
it's a fear of perhaps never weaving together
ourselves again, in the innocent strands
or that, without you, my soul is less

to see you after we have been apart
is the beginning of some wonderful event

to be able to hug you, and kiss you
for the first time
to ask: who are you with my eyes
to feel your breathing within my own

to be with you is a stripping away of fall leaves
my colours scatter the ground
i am naked against the washed sky
but you are the warm wind
and any imagined winter is merely
a small step away from the gentle trickling spring

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

waving
(for aunt marg)

People in Saskatchewan stand in doorways
and wave continually
as you drive away in your car
They will wave around a corner as you drive by
through windows steaming from their own breath
through doors slightly ajar
As if you will be safe as long as they can still see you
As if your leaving is a ripping
as if they hesitate to let you go
as if they are (rightfully) not sure when they will
see you again
And you like to think of your aunt standing there
through the days and months and moments of life
waving in her doorway
As if she will still be there, frozen in time
the next time you come
to Saskatchewan

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

the golden season
near obed summit
septemper 30, 1994

this is a dream rising
nothing I know of reality prepares
for these golden dancing aspens
tucked in veins above tight pines
crouched under rolling grey
stretched along ascending granite

I have been touching a lonely woman
who comes in a fog, awkwardly knocks at the door
stretches herself thinly above me
loves madly for all the days beyond
But i am not able to give everything
cannot create enough breeze to lean me
am tired of living this dead zone
Even here in the mountains it comes
I wonder if I was free to
what I would do

She gets in her car, pulls sunglasses on
drives the morning to the main highway
a cup of black coffee wedged between her legs

I move away from the peaks
but this camouflage of cloud prolongs leaving
is a posthumous blessing on the immediate past
I drive the sliver between land and sky
and cannot tell when i have left them
as if these beloved mountains,
this time,
did not want to let me go

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[\(e-poem\) \(back\)](#)

saskatchewan 1923

standing there against the grey wall,
one would never guess that she will
commit the ultimate act of immorality
commit an enormous act of bravery
and to this day, they do not know why
she is with her husband, three children,
a small dog named Butch
they are not smiling but this is no clue
nobody smiles in pictures back then

it's 1921 Saskatchewan and in two flat years she will do it
while pregnant with a fourth child, she will get up one spring morning,
make sure the children are safe,
pick a favorite plate down off the shelf,
collect some old letters,
then leave
she goes into town, gets on a train heading in some direction,
and never returns
it's sixteen years until World War Two
easy to disappear
the world is still innocent and large
did she look back at the farm gate?
hesitate in her loose-fitting dress?
did she pause for a second or two?
firm up her resolve?
only Butch, who is tied up out at the front,
knows for sure
and even under persistent police questioning
he doesn't say a word

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

being

it is as if our skins lose their mass
become ephemeral, translucent, liquid
an alchemy of flesh occurs
and i am insane inside this reaction
you are able to pass through my layers
blur edges
things become visible through me
i words disintegrate, crumble
but your hands whisper
you enter i softly
tenderly center where
i be

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

alone
again

this resonates in the flow of life
th is unspokenrifting past a cafe window as you
are warm with your glass of red
and in a corner a crackling fire
how many times will I have this scene?
the snow changes this world so profoundly
changes me, into something more gentle
causes a drifting romance of absense
draws sad attention to life's aloneness
without pity, or remorse
simply alone in a snow storm

still, this is a far better aloneness

than the one I had with you

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

failure
in 5/4 time

you don't know how I feel
and you ought to know
but I will always fail at this simple thing
with nine eternities, I would fail
I cliché, cliché, cliché you
and I cliché, cliché, cliché when I
think about you
and I cliché when I
hear your voice
language itself undergoes a profound failure
nothing, my most dear woman,
describes this joyous, treacherous, awe-ful thing
even if I was to sit beside you and hold you
throughout a rain storm,
from the first darkening clouds to the
slashing,booming,lightening,thunderous climax

to the becalmed lifting of light behind it all
and if I was to say nothing
invite steady silence, just breathe you,
understand your various tones of dark blue,
distinguish the sounds of droplets on leaves
if I was able to do all this as an explanation
of these feelings I have for you

it would not be near enough

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[\(e-poem\)](#) [\(back\)](#)

a lovely mess
august 25, 1994

Sophie, ah Sophie, (she's a mess but such a lovely mess)
she doesn't know whether to mourn or giggle
howl against the moon or slowly discourse the arts
love for all she's worth or invest in sacred covenants
meet behind the museum at 1 a.m. with a bottle of red
and a secret deal, with him, with him

she walks south past the city limit, through barren suburbs
with barking gargoyles tied to rear fences
she panics along highway 21 like a wise trotting dog
who looks as if she's cocksure of the direction of her nose
past dull fields, stubble brown and thick hewn
near 24-hour truck stops and bargain motels,
where stench of diesel and infidelity
remind her of all that's run away
she moves past hollow grey barns that lean in Fall drizzle,
nestle in January snow, weep in grey-lit May,
and are ringed in insipid, slow green
she dead reckons star splattered nights with a spatula and spoon
and sniffs her way home to the monster, Responsibility
she creates divine art that embodies all that is darkly feminine
in her basement, is a journey of shifting states of metal
and there's a cruel river and a pink boat with a girl named Kitty
who cries ALLTHEFUCKINGTIME and shaved off all her hair,
and only has one oar and she makes time to love me (because i thought i knew her from zero
second) and i am pushed against her by an unexpected gust and i still can't tell the difference
between an interesting woman and one who is perhaps, completely insane/

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Fall 1997

Rusti Leahy

slicing light

facing west
seeing
treetops basking
tree trunks shivering.

it's that time of morning.
that time of year.
after snow.
when the sun slices
trees
in precise slanted halves of
shadowy dawn
and early morning light.

collection of: never get around to its

i'm a collector of things to do
places to go
people to know.
i'm definitely a bit abstract
maybe even slack
don't seem to have the knack.
of getting everything done
or sitting in the sun
always on the run.
when WILL i stop collecting
do some reflecting
choose.
start living.

what did they do with their horns?

swirled, shiny, silver horntip pushes me up the rainbow
slides me down horn hooked by the seat of my pants
no present day slide
as fast or smooth as the purple side of the rainbow.
halfway up on the inside curve, her hooves catch some sticky yellow,
we eat some.

tongues turn yellow,
air turns sweet,
days move slower,
the sand we land in is cotton candy.
we sprawl on poofy ghost tree beds
and eat some more delight.
she pushes me up the green ray,
deposits me in my bed.

i wake,
start my hazy pastel color day made brighter by dreams.

altered sacred trees

you sprawl blue jewels
on altered sacred trees
made white, made thin.

i wear them inside
like some people wear
gold or silver on their skin.

your jewels contain
distinctive sounds of joy,
wrinkles of reality,
and news of kin.

your jewels of different hues
blacks, reds, and blues write in between the lines
and enter me through hungry eyes.

they lead to upturned corners
on my face and around my lips.
your warmth fueled by postage stamps curls
inside me to be called up for an instant rise.

answer my question

so you want to do whatever
i want to do...
i want to dance on the moon,
play follow the leader
jumping from star to star,
and pull down a cloud for
a bed when i'm tired..
i want to sing a lullaby to the ocean

feel gaia's earthy skin between my toes
and dance wildly in tall grass.

do you still want to do what
i want to do?



Stroll of Poets

1999

Rusti Lehay

cause to believe

**you're my royland
my diviner
my cause to believe
there is life
out there**

yes i can play the part of them
automated
controlled
robotic
asleep

but a part of me would remain conscious of

workers cut out of pilsbury dough
who whine in their cheap hi-balls
eat happy hour salted junk
dress insomnia in their suit of worries

**i need mountain granite nourishment undiluted sun
i want to dance the earth in the
soft rebel hands of a true diviner
to draw us ever nearer to an
underground source...**

**a partnership
me the wood
in your hands divining
to ripple down in vertical water
to spin off tall light
squirm slowly past society succumbing to**

watchful eyes through glass imposed concrete compliance
and

**i lean waver
reach down
in your hands divine**

**you're my royland
my diviner
i'm your wood
your wand
our cause to believe
there is life
out there**

a human piece of smoke

you came into my life
filled the edges of a gap
where there was seepage before
and emptiness leaked its cold through callused cracks

like sweetgrass
like sage
like smoke you filled my anxious spaces
softened the calluses
and wrapped around me
made a soft bed for trust to lie in
leaving no part of me untouched unknown
every wispy breath intertwined
created an infinite outer space

a human piece of smoke
strong enough
to stand tall
hand in hand with my desires
and sturdy enough to lay
a carpet of courage

to trod upon for my dream's
long walk
to the outside world

want to do the hummingbird flit with me?

lying in bed limbs fully pretzeled
you ask me for my current thought
i'm doing the hummingbird flit
want to join me

it's easy take a thought grab it out of the grey
while your mind beats six-hundred words per second
suck out its juices share with me the nectar of your thoughts
and flit to the next topic that grabs your bird's eye mind with
tantalizing flavors when we tire of this we can
adopt the snail's pace approach to thought
and cover
the same thought ground
over a longer period of time
sifting it as our suction cup minds
turn it over and over
find new angles of thought
to taste and smell
or we can be like a train
on a single line of thought
race it down the line
until the end
i wonder
if you can
race a thought to the end
or long before any rail ends
another thought
flips the switch
and curves you right
on another track of rail
and you never ev

excavating

what are you thinking is the gentle wedge that
slides out of our mouths

when we want to pry behind
each other's grin

what are you thinking is the pick that
aims with accuracy
when we want to unearth the substance of passion
under
each other's skin

sometimes though we dredge up granite sharp brutal truths
better to exhume these stones
than to encourage each other to
suffer threatened dreams or squashed hurts in silence

better to let these stones take form
practice their gnarly voice grind out rough words
order them into syntax
better this than to swallow fragments
that lodge in soft tissue to form scars and bumps

better to break these stones apart once they're out
purify them with salt drenched faces and heave a sigh
find the bluest of blue in amongst
the clouds of stone dust that hovers over our fragile space

my first time

i've mostly been a three chord
sometimes even a bitch chord
kind of player
strumming undisciplined rhythms
but that night
i was to experience another
kind of player

 i saw him
as he left the crowd
when he took the front and center chair
his long slender browned body folded around
the fat figure eight of rosewood spruce cedar
that he cradled across his lap

a curvy hollow box
and strung over the rosette from

bridge saddle to machine head
six nylon
 strands of sound
began to resonate as his hands
slapped them into jubilation
and with rounded classical nails
he picked them one by one into
a mournful cry
then warm flesh poised over nickle fret with a light touch
while his right hand plucked strings that
slid off into soft harmonic tones to ride the air
each note leapt with grace
whether it was bent
or drummed out with fire doubled
or coaxed forth with a single soothing deliberate stroke
then he thumbed them home blending sounds so diverse
from timber into timbre
 tones to make rosewood spruce cedar parents proud

i saw felt tasted the path of passion
travelling in and out
in
and
out
of the hollow cedar rib-enforced frame
it was no man i heard
but a fusion of flesh and wood
floating pulsing pushing forth

man and art first joined
then split apart
seemingly in
the space
of my held breath

it was too late
i wanted to wrap that fusion
around me
and wear it like a looser skin
but it faded
swallowed by the applause
and he stood
 the spell
 broken
 he took a
 bow

as he held the neck
the instrument linear to his body

my first time
ended
all too soon

(for Sia)

warm the hollow in my back

i feel your breath fill
the small of my back
then
move away
then
near again
as you take and release
your fill of air

twenty-nine down-under

the age of
 peaking
sexuality
and i'm just beginning to enjoy
 curves
of my femininity

i hold in my breath
i combine the pose of a soldier in full dress at attention
and a sultry lounge singer sprawled across a grand piano
waiting for the shutter click
 so picture pleased
 when it turns
 out
look so good so
 hot
under the down under sun

come home to my birth hemisphere
have my (what i thought)

best friend
mentor married mother of five
disclose to me
her discomfort with my flaunting body posture
set against the
red rock
on the rich red desert
in the down under
of koala kangaroo land
she was uncomfortable with
me
liking
this new me
she was my heroine of morality

years later
fourteen years of friendship severed
genuinely happy for her discovery
but i left
when she attempted to justify
her plan
to live indefinitely
with her husband
while concealing
her lover the woman she found as her soul mate

concealing nothing
she is now
a crusader for womyn's
sexual autonomy
and rights to parent
i don't suppose she has a problem now
with the curves of anyone's femininity

Dean Morrison McKenzie

Skipping Stone

Did j'ever

find a perfect skipping stone
miles from the nearest slough
so you pedal your bike all the way there
only to find it dry?

And by the time you get to the next one
two farms further,
the wind is up, whitening the wave-caps,

but you know that conditions will improve
with the evening's calm.

So you practice the afternoon away
with lesser stones
that the choppy wave-tops send
into erratic bounces
and premature splashes-down.

Centrifuge and wrist-snap
and back-twist and elbow-throb
and shoulder-cramp
and dying, cold wind
force the throwing arm
into a deep, pulsating ache
so now you retrieve
the stoney coin from your pocket,
flip it once to reassure yourself of its balance,
and wing it as hard as you can
toward the calmest part of the slough.
Wouldn't you know it?

At the first skip, it sails
into a long, sky-bound trajectory,
turning its lazy gyre vertical
then arcs back down
to puncture the water staccato.

It's over.

If it's any consolation,
maybe this slough will go dry, too,
and you'll pedal out in August

just to take a peek.
Y'know?

You found something perfect;
something that was all potential,
and tried to hold onto it
until conditions were perfect
and rushed it.

And Lost It!

Not the stone, the shot.
The one chance you'll ever have, it seems,
to see the interface between disciplined skill
and pure form;
pure content.
A life detail here in the abstract

After all,
the tracings on the water's surface
are transitory;
and nothing's written with this stone.

But in your wildest dreams
you go through the sheet-winding gyrations,
in your sleep,
to hurl the dream-stone flawlessly
and you can still see and hear
the long, sloping curve
and the watery tic.....tic.....tic....tic...
tic..tic.tictictictictic....
and its last motoring turn takes it
into a tightening spiral
into its own wake
before it disappears from sight
and all that is left

is a series of concentric circles
widening
on the still surface.
The complex of rings overlap and ripple.
You turn away.

Invisible, still trying to fly,
the stone flutters like a falling leaf
down
through the green algae-bloom and weeds
to rest on the slough-bed's muddy bottom.

It raises a little puff of silt
that settles back upon it in its resting place.
The touch of protein left by your fingertips
attracts the first minutiae of pondlife
to its lightly-textured surface
and slime begins anew
on this subtlest of all evidence
that you've ever been at all.

URN

Cold grey streams dispersed,
then gathered
the glacial silt,
ground it
into fine earthen sludge
and lowered it
into subterranean veins.
Clay has a memory.
In spite of its transubstantiation
through abrasion
and pressure.
It guards its stilly hold,
its particular recollection,
its molten genesis.

The potter knows this.
After countless augerings
into the gravelly stream-bed,
his bony bit
finds
the clay's Keep.

Shovelled
and heaved
into dampened skins,
it is hoarded
in stream-bank bins
to await
the wedging rediscovery
of its fluid potency.

Slapped and battered,
the pug is unceremoniously splatted
onto the center

of the wheel's grainy disk.
Balancing and opposing
his hunching back's wrench
over his pendulous foot's kick
at the wheel,
the potter's thumbs and palms
squeeze the wetness
to pull it up into form;
into function.

Then with a sinewy slice
and a gentle lift,
he adds to its spiral
the feathering touch
that details;
the clinkering fire
that tempers
the setting
and the lowering of
of the silt.

Glowing
in the fiery glare,
the glaze of grime
on his sweat-streaked,
kiln-burned face
cracks
into triumphant grin
as he grunts the lift
and tongs the graceful urn
up into the cold world
of use
and beauty.

Ages pass.

A keening cry of discovery
celebrates
the unearthing
of the urn's ashen shards
lifted gently
out of the bony dust.

Waxwing

I'm not usually a birdwatcher,
but early spring
brings clouds of
wheeling, soaring Bohemian Waxwings
through our neighbourhood,
and lucky I,
I witness their buoyant society.

Like a school
of airborne minnows,
these birds have traded
their individuality
for an existence so telepathic
that one is in awe of a phenomenon
that might just as well be called
group-mind.

With a whirring roar,
hundreds descend
into our Mountain Ash's March branches,
festooned as they are
with red berry clusters,
and they feed voraciously
on the little touches of ethanol
produced by last fall's berry-rot.

In spite of their inebriety,
their instantaneous response mechanism remains unimpaired
and they all take off
within a millisecond of one another.

Following no leader,
the flock gyrates wildly
in a huge,
wheeling roar of waxwings
before landing,
as one,
in the tree again
for another Ashberry wine sip.

I raise my glass to their society;
I join them in both spirit
and spirits.

One wheels
in a crowd of wheelers --

a seemingly aimless,
even tiresome,
pastime,
but every once in a while
a tree
laden with ashberry sustenance
appears and one rests.
One revives.
One hails the Ash.
The Crowd.
The Wine.
Dean Morrison McKenzie
Copyright 1991
Revised 1999

Etching the Blank

A blank page accuses drily
& I leap defensively
into the breach
to slam my nib down
& the blank fills with etch.
The walls echo punctuation's punch
& the crossing & dottings of t's & i's
& the wiry hook of commas
& apostrophe curls
& my thoughts are echoed
in the etch.

This thought is mirrored
& echoed in the etch;
This slow, painful, cautious, relentless push of thought
reflects
& reverbrates
& drags along with it
a reflex
of synaptic derivatives
that find a new truth
in the etch.

**This pulsating, driving, impatient shunt
of wordsmith's hammering
drags and pushes
a rhythmic sorting
of its iambic saxon flow
into the canon
of evolved thought.**

**It slams its freight of phrase
into the fray of brain-stretch
that struggles for sense
in the black-rooted echoes
of the etch.**

**I shall etch you an etching
worn to the bone
I'll write it on tablets
& carve it in stone
then I'll rub you a copy
or read you my poem
then you'll etch me an etching
worn to the bone
tell me a story
write me a poem**

Bang! * You're Dead!

(An Alarming Cynique Bemoaning The Dumbing Down of the World)

**The world is unfolding but not as it should.
How should it unfold?
Sycophants and Pollyannas and Babbitts
all know how the world should unfold.
It ought to come undone
with a papery sigh of resignation.
But, here is how a realist
who understands Mankind's intransigent abuse
of his power over nature
sees it today:
it will unfold with a Bang! *
A sharp, sudden Bang! ***

And Soon! *
Surprise! *
The world has unfolded! *
Not a gradual, continually evolving entropy,
But a Bang! *
Plaintive little slime-scum in our
noxious colony smeared over the sphere-stone
like a host-killing parasitic growth
respond with alarm at the warning signs.
"But we weren't warned! Not really!
None of us heard any warning!"
Our detritus runs into the waters * ;
our exhalations foul the air * ;
our doomy vandalism leaves permanent marks *
that the next ice-age may not rub away * ;
our moon is gouged by our footprints * ;
and our robot's tracks
write "Kilroy Wuz Here!"
on the sands of Mars * .
Too few have organs of guilt well-enough developed
to feel moved to words * or deeds *
that can budge political will.
and the bang will come, inexorably,
preventable by far too few. *
In the short meantime
We re-read our Whole Earth Catalogues * ,
our Leaves of Whitman * ,
Both Waldon Pond and Waldon Two revisit * *
and we rime our Ancient Mariner again. *
We are Thoreau-ly disgusted
by this loss of innocence, *
by this great dumbing down *
of the world.
Disgust will salvage nothing!
Bang!! *
We're dead. * (Repeat 2 or three times)

** Insert Explosions*

MIDWINTER MIRAGE

Wading in the softness
of the freshly-broken field snow
in the wake of Eli and Tad and Roy
was easy.
The crusty clinkers of hard pan
floated in the crystalline froth
and struck metallicly
against the open buckles
of my overshoes.
My dreamy meander in the easy drift
was full of Christmas.
Tonight the carollers would sing an angelus
on the CN station platform
under the lights.
I had never missed the carollers.
If heard from afar,
their songs were truly holy;
I had always understood
the holiness
of the Solstice Song.

* * * * *

"Hey, Mac!" It was my turn to break trail. I tried to run past our single-file convoy. The crust tripped me up and I landed, hard, my nose and forehead abraded by the thick glaze of deep frozen crust. A trickle of blood was licked away.

"Do up those galoshes. They'll trip you again."

I lead now, taking giant, vaulting strides to crush the pan into the softer snow beneath.

Wading won't work.

The edge bites into the shins, even through the breeches and boots. Eli wore felts; Tad mocassins. Roy his dad's gumboots, laced up. I had high-cut boots laced all up, and khaki breeches of a coarse wool. Leather laces held the breech-bottoms calf-tight while socks and boots were laced up on the outside.

And rubber overshoes perpetually unbuckling.

I tried stepping delicately up onto the crust. It held me. I looked triumphantly down into the snowy furrow in which Tad and his brothers waited. "Give me your hand, Tad." I tottered gingerly on the scab of the frost. "See? It'll hold you if..."

A dull, crushing break and down into the fluid frost we sank.

"C'mon, Mac. We'll be all day. Lead! Now!"

I crushed the slate into geometry. Its broad polygons were stony, light as pumice, cold as an Inuit frost knife, rougher than emery. My feet flailed for purchase in the cold powder under the crust. I wondered how Eli had made such good time.

The Paranich boys were right behind me. Impatient. Athletic.

A prod. "C'mon Mac! We'll be all day! Look back! See how straight and smooth our trail was! Look, where you took over, how ragged...how chunky! C'mon, get it right! Head for that double post at the corner of the east oats field."

I looked back. The slabs of snow lay churned behind us. The blinding reflection from the low sun gave little hint of any difference between our paths. I saw only the blue granular snow; it stood out, a river of frost at the edge of the granite-edged surface.

I turned and attacked the snow, headed up toward the little ridge where the fences met the darkening eastern sky. I leaned into the task. I kept the path straight. I double-stepped to crush the ivory paving stones deep into the cold slurry, clubbing at it once with a boot-strike before stepping ahead. I stopped to rest.

"That's it, Dean!" It was Eli. "I'll take over again."

"Uh-uh! I'm okay!"

"We're nearly there. C'mon! Lemme by!" I did, not even reluctantly. My scarf was frozen to my parka hood. An icicle of sweat hung from my eyebrow's corner. A pair of rivulets had frozen beneath my nostrils. A bloody icicle hung from my chin.

And I remembered the farmers' horses in front of the Post Office or at the elevator. They were like the huge steam engines with the impersonal glaciers drooling from their water lines, the ice chipped away by trainmen with picks or melted with blowtorches. To me these horses with the neglected icicles hanging from the soft velvet of their noses seemed in pain. Now I know better. Mine were licked and spat. An ungloved hand melted them from my hair, my down. They re-formed in minutes.

We were all too cold. Too far from town. Too tired. A wad of packed snow had wedged its way down into one of my boots. Its slow melt made my leg sting. I hadn't felt my left foot for some time now. I kicked at it with the other. It, too, was without feeling.

"Hey, guys!" Roy heard the brittle edge of panic in my voice.

"Cold?"

"Frozen."

"Where?"

"Both feet."

"You shouldn't have worn those rubber galoshes on a day like this."

"Maybe your boots are too small?"

"Maybe you got 'em wet!"

"Lemme see!"

"I'm okay," I said, but I wasn't.

"Y'sure?"

All this as we eyed the little ridge above the oat field. The high curl of drift hung over the barbed-wire fence. The wires' thin tensions had drilled a tunnel for each strand. The deep blue in the lee of the shady cornices beckoned.

"We'll build a fire."

"And shelter."

"No! A fort!"

"D'you still have the little spade?"

"Here."

Feet forgotten, we set to work. The cold bricks were cut with rushed dispatch--a semicircle against the fence line. The powdery grains of ground snow, thrown over the edge of the ridge, slid down and away in a crystalline avalanche. We scraped down to the prairie grass. The second row went up even faster. Then the next. After the last row of blocks was in place, bare branches were laid across the top, supported by a long pole driven into the sheltered side of the high drift. Then, shakes of snow crust, tiles of white slate, were placed on the branches.

"Hey guys, I'm in here. There's no door." startled us; we didn't recognize the voice at all.

The walls had muffled it. "The light in here is strange... it's blue-y! Cool!"

The sun was at the horizon. Eli cut a door through the fort's wall with the shovel blade.

"Now. Ammunition!"

"Uh-uh! Fire! First a fire!"

I cried at the thawing. Barefoot before the low fire with the roof dripping, my boots and overshoes and socks hanging over the fire on branches stuck up through the chimney hole, I suffered the intense pain of life returning.

"My dad nearly lost some toes, once. But all he lost was two toenails. But they still hurt in the winter. But he didn't lose any."

"Did he freeze this bad?" I sniffled.

"No. Worse. They were white and you could see frost crystals in his skin when he took his rubber boots and socks off. Mom poured warm water on his feet. That was wrong. The pain

nearly killed him, he said."

"Yeah. We did yours right. The snow rub was right."

"I know." I shuddered and smothered a sob.

The roof dripped on the fire.

"Go outside and make the chimney hole bigger."

"Here. I can do it from in here."

Much of the roof came down in cold torrents. The fire nearly died as steam filled the icy cavern of our igloo.

"Put your socks and boots back on!" We all knew it was time.

"The chimney is working now." Tad patted the sides of the icy roof-hole and ran some willow branches down the icicles to guide the glacial water away from the fire.

"Hey, Tad. Who do you like? I mean really like?" Eli's half smirk was full of fraternal tease. Tad furrowed his forehead and told his little brother he really liked them all.

"No, but, really. Who d'ya really, really like?"

All of our minds leaped into this fray; we all knew not only who Tad really liked, but we each had our favorite too. We whiled away the thawing with those boyish observations about the girls in our classroom, the stars of the movies, the older girls who had already left town for the city. None of us could tell of our own dream girl.

"I love them all, too, especially when they're singing carols," I ventured. I'd done it. I'd said the "L" word.

"Ooooooh!"

It was warm, now.

"Carols!"

Our hollow voices rang in the smoky humidity.

"Good King Wenceslas looked out
On the Feast of Stephen;
When a snowball hit his snout,
Deep and crisp and even.
Brightly shone his nose that night
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Riding on a mu-u-el."

Roy's voice, outside. "Look!"

Something in his voice...his brothers tumbled out of the little door. It seemed to take me forever to put on and buckle up the overshoes, then I crawled out after them. We stared in awe.

The cold night was aglow -- not just with the stars or the thin crescent moonset or the faint aurora, or with the eerie flicker of our sinking fire refracted through the glazed walls of our ice fort -- at the horizon were the distant

lights of farms and villages, and above each light source, a column of illuminated frost crystals leaped straight up to the very top of the heavens.

"Look at that!"

"Holy!"

"Look at Hubbard!"

From our vantage point, just over the crest of Water Tank Hill, our town lay before us under the inky sky, sending the reflected beams of its new streetlights up through the frosty night. That was then we heard them from nearly a mile away. The girls were caroling at the CN station under the platform lights.

As we stared upwards at the ice crystals floating stilly over the distant village and listened to the girls' voices singing, even from this distance, we knew how holy this prairie night was.

We sang our way home. In our adolescent tenors we sang the same carol they'd just been singing. We sang passionately, as do those who are touched by a powerful beauty but lack the talent or training to carry it off. We knew at the end of their last chorus, if they just listened for a moment to the silence, that they'd be able to hear our distant reply. And we each harboured a secret belief that the really important messages could make it across the void.

We could feel our whole prairie shining in the cold and sang its light to the heavens

"It came upon the midnight clear,
That glorious song of old;
Of angels bending near the earth
To touch their .. "

We were walking in time to the carol, and our footsteps' crunch metred this trial of our voices. "World" at the end of the carol was held for two crunches. "Solemn" got three. "Stillness" three... and so on. I knew the girls didn't think we could do it. Tonight we would join them.

"The world in solemn stillness lay
To hear the Angels sing."

Passersby and Roadskill

The crags catch snow and sunset.

The valley roads fill.

Snakes of brights race to
and streaks of red flash fro
on parallel, opposing lanes
through the Cordilleran trenches
while the crags catch snow and sunset
far above this rush in the gloomy vale.

An elk tosses his antlers
but his whistling chortle has become
a bellow of rage and pain
as his trailing innards trip him again and again
between the lanes of advancing brights
and receding tail-lights.

At every faltering trip more of his viscera
is torn from the gaping semi-trailer wound in his side
until he is hog-tied by his gut and falls;
each kick draws the stretched entrail tighter
and his bawl fades to panting wapiti-sobs
of fear drowned by the rush
of burnished steel
and hissing rubber
past his plight.

Less than a mile down the road
the timber wolf was turned nearly
inside out and upside down by the nine tandem tires that
had interrupted his lope along his riverside trail and left
him with his throat bent upward from the limp plane of his
body's lean crush to appear caught in mid-howl. His
dulled eyes collect the cold light of the veil of stars
above the peaks but transmit no image.
One still tooth in his upturned jaw reflects coldly
a glint of the night sky as do the snowy crags
above This Darkening Divide.

Alexander Samuels

Yo down Sandy Sam
Yo lo down low
Yo down Sandy Sam
Yo lo Sandy go

Sandy Sam is the last of his line
Muckin' & a-cursin' down in the mines
Sam's whole family did pit face time
'Til the deep earth laid them low

Sandy Sam's brother didn't give a damn
Lost it all at the Giant mine
He paid his dues, but he crossed the line
And his brotherhood laid him low

Sandy Sam's Granddad didn't give a darn
Went down in Nova Scotia where he bought the farm
The jiggles and the quakes couldn't do much harm
Til the deep bump laid him low

Sandy Sam's father inhaled the grit
As he sweated and grunted in the asbestos pit
Droolin' blood and fibre in his coughing fits
'Til the Black Lung laid him low

So Sandy Sam couldn't save much face
He'd just keep on a-sluicin' through the pithblend waste
He's sifting Eldorado for the tailing's trace
Til the radon lays him low

Sandy Sam's the last of his breed
Who cursed and mucked for our mineral needs
His whole damned family swore the miner's creed
Til the deep earth laid them low

Yo down Sandy Sam
Yo lo down low
Yo down Sandy Sam
Yo lo Sandy go

Alice Major

The Moon of Magpies Quarelling

shimmers in the pale sky of early morning
like a court reporter's screen. It records
the magpies' proceedings - litigious birds
with ermine draped across their glossy shoulders,
their bellies drooped in prosperous curves.
They introduce their offspring to the court's
attention in harsh, good-natured voices.
They teach their fledglings legalese, the value
of bright shiny objects and their importance
in the scheme of branches.

They do not mean to be
so handsome, so much bigger than the other
birds, or to have such clever eyes. It's just
the way things are, they tell
judiciously brightening skies.

Tracy Murray

The French Fry Boy

Ray was touted heavily
as the next big star.
Then the movie he starred in
flopped big time.
He had to go back
to making french fry commercials
if he wanted
to keep the Lexus.

Never Judge a Book by its Cover

Not all teenagers
who wear black tracksuits
are mean and surly.
Just as all mature grownups
who wear suits
are not necessarily
nice and polite.

Teen Flick in Reverse

In this movie,
the handsome lead doesn't get the girl,
the girl doesn't change her looks,
and the lead's nerdy best friend
gets the girl.
The geeky shy girl that is,
not the shallow rich gorgeous babe
the handsome lead was dating
before he met the girl

Rules for a T.V. Cop

If you're gonna be a T.V. cop,
just remember these tips:
A friend or lover is gonna be killed,
and your superior
is gonna put you off the case.
You will be defying orders.
You will fall in love with someone
who will lie about her occupation.
Only your partner will know the truth.
And will desperately beg of you,
not to see her anymore.
You will fight him
until he gives you the evidence
you will thank him with a hug.
You will be nabbed by the bad guys
and given a shot of heroin.
Your partner and some friends will save you
and help you go cold turkey,
before helping you catch those bad guys.

Your partner may suffer
a stroke or two on the job,
and may die.
ok, if he survives the operation,
gets a desk job at another precinct.
Never marry a woman
who will have trouble with her son's necktie
under extreme emotional duress,
while preparing to go to your funeral.

Never have a partner who's older than you,
looks like Claude Akin,
has some sort of mental breakdown
because he has to retire
and has a wife who looks like
Pat Crowley
who leaves him after he breaks the
furniture.
And please,
expect some unconscious sexual tension
between you and your partner,
no matter what gender,
but don't
consummate the relationship.
I love wintertime

Spring time,
Rollerblading time,
men oogling the young girls
wearing next to nothing time,
allergy time,
car stereo blasting time,
screaming Oiler fan time,
fear of drive-by shooting time,
religious fanatics on Whyte Avenue time,
Sherwood Park kids pretending
to be poor time,
I have too much time on my hands time.
Spring time.

Jack Lord Ode

Praise the man
who portrayed the great television hero
of all time and space,
Steve McGarrett,
and his wondrous widow's peak
that many still copy
to this very day,
Amen.

Geraldine Matus

Untitled

I often see the cleft
where the rib once was
where heaven fell against his heart.
. . . It is hard all this seeing.

Untitled

somehow the secular seems to have subsumed the sublime
only the bottom line counts
what adds up to the biggest profit
what gives the winning edge
gets you ahead of the others
the best bang for your buck
its the goal not the means or method
no process
no meaning
even Scrabble dictionaries
don't give the meaning of words anymore

because of clamouring . . .

they are all and none
they are lightness and darkness
freedom and imprisonment
vice and morality
corruption and purity
depravity and decency
demons and angels
fiends and seraphim
monsters and babes
they are human and they are not
they are the quintessential beings
of absolute evil and corruption

they are the diamond essence of being
-- the pearl in the oyster --
transmogrified to contorted,
evil, ugly, distorted, frightful creatures
because of clamouring . . .

ceaseless clamouring pitched to a frenzy
a frenzied cosmic scream
nearly shattering the skulls of their fellow
fetal fiends flailing in collective amniotic waters
hurling against their chorionic blister prison
clutching at each other
clambering on each other's backs
clawing at each other's faces and flesh
clamouring to get to the front of the crowd
to be the one pushing against the blister's skin
where on the other side
everything they clamour for awaits them

yet, they will not feed
on goodness -- on anything they clamour for
they feed only, and stubbornly, on dissatisfaction
they are nourished only by clamouring

to tell them otherwise
to say "stop clamouring
you'll be freed from the blister into bliss"
and they clamour over each other to be the first
to hiss and spit poison at you
to claw at the blister wall
trying to put out your eyes for seeing

Untitled

O Mistress with the strength of lions,
Hear this devotee's desirous supplication.
You are my waiting heart's alembic,
In my eyes you are the worthy one.
Your voice alone dismembers me,
So, bring your love and reassemble me.

O Mistress with eyes of towering flame,
Hear my heart's desire knocking at your gate.
Come beloved, let the dervish dance the night.
For my blazing heart's unquenchable, and
Still I wait your coming as kindling the spark,
As dawn awaits the song of an ascending lark.

O Mistress adept with the honed flint knife;
I am shrouded in the raiment of the dead,
Weak with longing for your loving embrace.
Come, loose the funerary bandages
that restrain my heart and bind our story,
Free the sinewed jewel and mount its glory.

Mighty blood red dancing Lady,
She who is the left hand of my desire.
She whose secret name I long to utter,
Slay those who advance against our love.
My flaming tongue's the opener of the way
to passion's mystery holding us in sway.

O Mistress who revives the dormant man,
Come journey with me to the fiery vault,
where burns the fragrant cedar lingham.
Irresistible lady through whom I wish to pass,
Awaken me again with your wounding fire.
My devotion's as boundless as my desire.

"Passionate Nightingale and Beloved Rose"

O Beloved Rose come to me!
Five long nights I have sent my love call . . .
Set in motion my heart . . . for want of your love.
I wait in the cloistered garden,
Mysterious Aphrodisial whisperings
Embellished on my tongue, The tongue of an ardent lover
Sending you his love call . . .

O Beloved Rose come to me!
Wreath yourself around the Sacred Tree
Where I perch, all evening long awaiting you,
Pondering memories of evening dew
Fracturing light on your diamond seat

Set in a couch of crimson petals.
When you return in Summer, my heart opens to joy
The world voice sings mantras of ruby, ivory, and gold.

My secrets are known to none but my Gold Rose . . .
I think of nothing but my Ivory Rose . . .
My desire is only for my Ruby Rose. . .
Can the Nightingale live another night without Beloved Rose?

(adapted from Fariduddin Attar's Parliament of Birds)

Gordon C. McRae

Two or Three Gathered

It used to take time for the faces to appear
By the fourth day without the blessing of salt
The fabric of the desert would begin to thin
By the seventh she would rend her garments
As I've seen done by the mourners of my enemies

Homunculi grimace from the flecked linoleum
And in the tea leaves
Cellars of prisoners
Turn their faces to the light

I am told in the East there are mounted thieves
Who milk and bleed their mares like hosts
In some parasitic marriage of convenience
By the piercing noon of my forty nights and days
The shifting mount would nurse me like a child

Even the rocks are monuments in profile
Where fractal bees
Dance bloodstreams
On unused channels

I could easily have been one of those warriors
Too tired to care if there are fresh horses
And too numbed by the endless steppe to rape
Such liquid kisses by a moon lit by lamps
I would have welcomed on the final nights

Each unforgiving mote an eye unto itself
Look down at the stars
And bathe away
This blood with sand

But now I stay at home for the most part
Let the city keep the desert from its walls
(The old whore, she wants us to think her a virgin)
And on Saturdays, if I find myself forgetting
I go to market to keep the faces from my mind

The Stone

A stable is no mean place
To birth a man
Who birthed all stables
Cut the wood like loaves from his cross
The thatch like fish from sinew
Tell those unclothed among them
The birth smell was like the rain

A garden is no lone place
To grow a man
Who grew all gardens
Carved all the lovers' loves in his bark
Their thorned hearts by hand
Tell those in blue among them
How they will call down the sky

A desert is no odd place
To become a man
Who became all deserts
Planed with his nails the marbled dunes
The sand of vales with gall
Tell those in white among them
How even flame can be fuel

A hill is no strange place
To cast a man
Who cast all hills
Hewed three masts from its sorrowed side
And netted oceans from the hold
Tell those in robes among them
How once we rolled away

Heir of Soil

My veined arms they reach so far
so far, my hands are left behind
Grafted and bound with patience
On a lap too small for care

*I would have brought you flowers
if their petals had been feathers*

*I would have brought the blood of beasts
if it hadn't trickled through my hands*

More seasons than I would care to live
these ribs in windrows of hardwon breath
Have harboured here such crops of pulse
As morning could ever give

*It was always man's work
to hunt above the ground
Run down the pounding heart
sow the spear with poison
Even our dead would be carried
beyond the earth as carrion*

The winding patterns of the rows
Are now too dense for soil or seed
In time, I would have built a labyrinth
With walls as fine as webs

*Only woman dared
put a root stick into the mother
Or wipe from its fated course
the odd tear from the river
Would that man could birth
and bleed without such permanence*

Each grain of land a mythic rock
I've swaddled with these armed veins
Anchored up to stem and stalk
And cut adrift as mist

*I would have brought you flowers
if their petals had been feathers
I would have brought the blood of beasts
if it hadn't trickled through my hands*

These oiled and sharpened implements
encircle me and meet behind
Where loves and losses form a spine
For which there is no cure

*Hands awaited sons
to keep them from the earth
The palms of feet upturned
to greet our daughters birth*

*Well we knew these things
and still we were reversed*

I've grown these rings of vertebrae
In beds raised up like Lazarus
Turning and tilling into my sleep
A dream of stillest hours

*I would have brought you flowers
if their petals had been feathers
I would have brought the blood of beasts
if it hadn't trickled through my hands*

A child lies in an open field

A child lies in an open field
Whether raw or tilled, it doesn't matter
The breeze is hung above the sun
Both held firm in hands ajar
Feet await a heavy landing
Anticipated, but not to come

A child lies in an open field
Whether raw or clothed, it doesn't matter
It could be night and this a fire
This body raised in father's arms
Playing bird or plane, it doesn't matter
Dead to time, it doesn't matter

A child lies in an open field
Hidden to the calling voice
Ready with licorice or locust
It doesn't matter, not here
Where the waves gust above the water
And the sails are down below the ground

A child lies in an open field
Seeing through eyelids or spectacles
It doesn't matter, not at all
The earth under or pinned behind
With gut or thread, it doesn't matter
Here where the rolling sky looks back

fine print

I want to be there when they take my eyes
For the girl whose loss is less than mine
I have to show her how to read the leaves
Pressed, unnumbered, within the books
How to seize the insubstantive things
That bring the night with gifts

I want to be there when they take my heart
Hold this sighing lover in my hands
I have to show the boy who'll keep it warm
The books of trees read in single calm
How snow has felled more men than thaw
And brought all praying to its knees

I want to be there when they part my ribs
And find more folded arms within
I have to tell them, I alone
What powder coursed the veined leaves
How breezes lit this shell of bark
Once, under the seeing stars

Loth.

I don't know if I mentioned it
But there are seven gnarled maples
Under which I kissed her eyes
Once seven seeds
Spun down like dervishes
To this warm earth
Thick with matted leaves
Where animals have sheltered

I should have told you before
There were offerings laid
At the roots
But two low limbs
Grew under her naked arms
From supple twigs

Now thick with bark
And old man's beard
Trails across her breasts
Like shreds of a dryad's camisole.

*Sorry I didn't get back to you
But there was so much I had to do*
Find her buttons in the twilight
Cushion her spine
With gathering limbs
And catch the endless
Strands of hair
Sticky with life
And musked with
A generative autumn
Some call the fall

Jocelyne Verret

**Unseen during spring,
summer and fall, old woman
does get winter's call**

**Cherry blossoms dot
the sky and part the temple's
white veil of incense**

**A Japanese youth
speaks too loudly on a bus,
breaks a little rule**

BUS STOP

Day breaks
giving way to activities performed
A solitary figure waits
carrying a briefcase

Unvoiced dreams
accompany the man
camouflaged under a shirt
wedged between realities

lazily
daily.
patiently
heavily.
faithfully
stoically
tightly
unpleasantly
imminent.

Anna Mioduchowska

PRODIGAL CHILD DREAMING

tired of the spring's confusions
I have no wish to see more blood
spilled this mild day, no energy
to dwell on ancient quarrels and kill
the green-headed fly on my kitchen counter
feasting on a bit of raw meat

her contentment: full belly
warm back, place to start babies -
what else does a fly need?
her contentment too naked to spoil
even though the knowledge that flies
defile all they touch might be
the only thing I'll carry
to my grave intact

the other day I tripped
on the remains of a speckled egg
thieved from the nest under the eaves
anxious robins screamed at a crow
eyeing their young, and I
painted poisonous stripes on birches
because someone said I must
or watch the trees sicken

that very night I scrubbed the bark
clean again, in a furious panic woodpeckers
might have got there first
scrubbing

I cursed the ploy
used to lure us out of the sea
to a land where life is possible only
at the price of so much killing
our ears wide open to cries of pain

what if I refused
to flood any more ant hills
slaughter aphids, what if I stopped
taking sides in the battles raging
the year round in my yard, or at least

allowed this green-headed fly
to walk away unharmed

could the sea be convinced
to open its arms, ears sealed once again
take me back?

EVE

the cashier at the IGA is a sweet young thing
freshly minted poplar leaf, still sticky with sap
aroma designed to drive mad every insect
fluttering nearby

a birdling, she is a cliff swallow half out
of the nest, hanging over the lip of a precipice
called life, curiosity untainted with premonition of loss
future sorrows, no hint of fear in the fingers
punching numbers, each masterful stroke
one step closer to quitting time is the way
she thinks about it the rare instant
it enters her mind busy with distinguishing
spinach from lettuce, apple from pear

the cashier at the IGA is a rainbow trout
on a quicksilver morning, back brushing
the stream's surface to catch some sun some breakfast
the water's origin - *did the earth just feel
a contraction coming on one day and crouch down?
did it arrive in the bladder of an alien fish
fleeing a cosmic drought?* - the water's origin
and her own destiny not as immediately important
as the handsome dragon fly arching its body
a small jump away

the hook imbedded between its gloss

SOMETIMES THEY BLEED

2,500 new brides burn annually in Uzbekistan.
Newspaper headline.

on a dry, windy afternoon
far away in Uzbekistan
the family council gathers round
to seal the fate
of a rebellious hymen

*sometimes they bleed
sometimes they don't*

the father sighs and uncertainty
hopeless compassion for his still
spunky daughter, newly rejected
bride who flares
with protestations of innocence
creases his weather-beaten face

hymens are unpredictable

it's a hot, windy afternoon
somewhere in Uzbekistan
pale smoke
from the father's long pipe
encircles his brothers, cross legged
they sit in the centre of the room
wisely nod

their straight-backed wives
on a bench by the whitewashed wall
mutely smoulder against the howls
of the rising wind

LAST OF THEIR KIND

two people making love
in bed, under the covers, because they're too old
for the floor (the kitchen table was always too small)
and it's such a cold part of the world

two people making love
by the flame of a single candle which kindly powders
their flesh, drapes shadows over harsh contours
the room grows quiet

so quiet you can hear their bone marrow
readjust as they press against each other, no hint of space
between one layer of epidermis and the other
for stray thoughts to fall in
there's been enough loss over the years
their pillows taut with loss, loss coating the mattress
the thread holding together their clothes (discarded
now except for socks because it's cold

and getting colder) they know the moment
they let go their next chance for such closeness might be
centuries down the road, an anthropologist
stumbling upon their toes, tibia

silver chain, fragments of polycotton
reassembled, they will be measured, teeth examined
for decay: were they vegetarians, carnivores
any signs of mercury in their hair?

conclusions drawn, recorded, stored
in enormous data banks together with flea statistics
birthdays of heavy metal stars
knock-knock jokes

two people making love
in every move tender attention to detail, grand
otherworldly grace and concentration
as if they were the last of their kind on earth



[Stroll of Poets](#)

2000

Jacquie Bell

there is a grey stone cell at the end of knowing

beyond here -- a place
where I have known you

a cave excavated in me
an organ removed
open air, but it does not sing

when I knew you
there was no room
light and air condensed
to amber and struggling honey

there is a small room
at the end of knowing you
The Mother says, use this knotted lash
it will help you to know
better

desire is a glass
half full

friends advised -- pull away
too close, and the boat is
sucked into a whirlpool
circling the same mistake

I slipped
smooth as muscle over

a ledge of bone

how could I pull back
when there in front of me
was all these eyes ever wanted

but to look -- was
the eye rasped by the tongue
of too much light

how cruel it is to see you now
held in relief to this new life
revealing cracks in the moulding, cobwebs in corners, higher up

when I met you--
you were naked as the light
of the first star--

what did I know
beyond goat's milk and chickens
rough hands, dusty roads
wringing out linen
on flat rocks by the river

the grasp at the end of my reach towards you is
a snapped branch

you spoke to a place in me
I never knew existed--
woke something that rose
and joined you:
compared to this--
love is a tame cousin

you were a threshold
there were rites of passage

now I watch you lead the villagers
a small procession winding uphill
each carries a candle

together, we could not have climbed higher

I never regret the light

Dolores Ewen

TOLLING THE FALL

Borne on the wings of the wind
leaves are tumbling by
Their fullness of color is gone
dead grey. Their hearts now are dry
They laughed once together and danced

Now they are bruised along
by the wind that never will die
nor grow less cruel and strong
Wind that only will rest
when the foliage of life is gone

Then trembling with hope shall we stand
naked of all in the dawn

LET US NOW KNOW

**Winds low breathing
genesis call
drawing birds V-ing
low stitching
tacks on
quilted fields
where we lie joined in
primal surge
thrusting the rhythm
of life and time.**

**Stir we in ash of
big-bang blaze
searing open bellied
moon dyeing passion agent orange
dusting hennaed lily's tongues**

hot and cold.

**We too blow so
having eaten fruit forbidden
of the tree of knowing all
that is good and
what is evil.**

Hey,
I wanna know , hon—
Is this here screwing
the beginning or end
of something?

Eleanor

**Prairie child sings
in dappled light**

but

**winds sweep dreams
like snowflake stars
till
they lie crushed
in frozen drifts.**

**Songs sigh
yearning
then**

silence.

**But hope
is not stillborn,
there will come a spring
when from melted tears
crocuses grow**

Dean Morrison McKenzie

A CHARM FOR THE MID-WINTER SOLSTICE

The Solstice is always a time of magic;
Let the crescent moon illuminate this longest night.
Let it be cloudless.
Let Moon's medicine into you
 while you and yours
 bask in its platinum glow.
Let this confluence
 of the mid-winter solstice,
 the moon's last quarter
 and you
 generate great dreams.
Let those you dream for others come true.
Let those you dream for yourself
 be willed into reality.

Elana "Long Rider" Aaserud
Dean "Charmcaster" McKenzie

Sonnet 371 September 29 2000

He knows his lot; the bard must stare askance
At rhyme whose metaphor is left to chance;
Occasionally one writes lines that don't quite make it
(The page, despite his labour, seems quite naked)
So peeks he must at poems poets have made,
And there he finds improvement -- his soul he'll trade.
(Yet deep within he knows his artifice
Will out; he'll be discovered in a trice.)
There is no poem alive can bear the stain
Of this man's work becoming that man's gain;

The toughest muse to tame, a concrete thought,
Poets do with ease; hoi polloi cannot.

There is no god can will the ringing bells
To clang a note that resonates something else.

SALOME ON 116TH STREET

Hypnotized
by the dance,
and immersed
in the spell of Salome,
The King ignores the vacant eyes
of the face
on the platter.
The eyes above the veil
are enough
And all the rest
will never be enough.
Drum, lute and flute
conjure a blue sea
edged by ancient dunes.
Every, every footprint
remains etched in the sand
while the dancers undulate,
their long fingers and direct eyes
invite him
to his seraglio's yearning keep.

The Glazier

The glazier's soul
is reflected in her work --
pre-occupied as she is
with light strained through stained crystal;

all those endless possibilities.
Just as the mason's apron bears a dusting of granite
or the printmaker reeks his inky rancidity,
so the glazier refracts
translucent virtual images
of self
through the clear resonances
of the bevelled spectrum.

On a good day
the shards of glazen
on her studio floor
sparkle
with the variety
of her transcendental efforts
to replicate
her visions of the day
into the airy volumes
of polish and tone
and moody hues.

The dark lead contains
while the illumination frees
another line,
another space
in another time,
another place.

The Beaten One

HER SAUSAGE HANGS FOR THE NONCE

She grinds the brains, giblets, lean bits
and a touch of adipose
from last week's slaughter of cloven-hooves
and adds the whispers and hints
of her mother's dowry.
Her family's ancient culinary traditions
of spiced flavours and preservatives

are pinched, powdered, kneaded, and dribbled
into the texture of the richening reek.
She adds the Blood;
Brats the Wurst;
Heuch! The Haggis;
Kyls the Basa;
Passes the Trami;
Wrenches the crankhandle
and she watches this squeeze of thickening viscera
slide its slurry
through the grease-glistening funnel-cone
into the scraped invert of gut casing,
its taut stretch wriggles
with a life of its own
and dewes form
both without and within.

She's transfixed
by this emergence
from her cranked grinder;
her sensual wrist-twist
sends it flopping over the smoke-house rack
and she controls the urge
to sense this meaty miracle
before it comes of age.

"John?"

She calls toward the barn.

"Come! See!"

AS DANCES GO

All lined across the back of the barndance hall
the men singly and in cautious pairs
gaze across
at the women sitting in the worn theatre chairs
singly and in raucous pairs
primping their wares

putting on airs.
The visitrix from the city,
 who had just the right hairdo
 and was made up just right,
 seemed, you know,
 to have 'it',
 that exosis** of trivial urbanity
 (she'd only been away a year,
 but that was enough).
The first orchestral voice
was followed by a dash
 not unlike a land rush
 across the starchy planking
 with the victor going the spoils.
He held with easy confidence
 the bodice, the hand, the eye, the ear
 with rustic charm
 and their lacy swirl
 forecast the night-long dance
 as her thigh brushed him mightily
 and his knuckle her breast
 and whispers low
 sent blushing shivers.
In the steamy car she whimpered "not here"
and in her uncle's hay loft
 he leaned over her
 and worked his musky magic
 while she danced on the rafters
 above his shoulders
 a murky one step
 with only one shoe on.
He held a hand over her mouth
 for the last couple of minutes,
 and cooed like a dove
 when the barn door squeaked.
"Who's up there?"
"Coo'oo'oo'oo'oo!" he sang
 and she laughed so hard
 through his horny palm
 that her uncle and his hired man heard them

in their lofty must***,
and both came up the ladder to see.

Dean Morrison McKenzie 1979

* *Rural Sex*

** *As "Static" has "Stasis" as its nominative form -- so "exotic" could transform into "exosis". Consider it coined if it's not in your Funk & Wagnall.*

*** *Image of the month*

VAN DAEMON'S SEEDLINGS

Their Royal Majesties bought this distant land
with blood saved from the tower's block
and shipped our great-great ancestors
half the world around.
Gibbet, axe, bedlam cell, potter's field and crossroad grave
were robbed of British tenants
by the whip-bristling convoys
of menacles and stocks.
What furtive whispers in the holds
of prison ship out and slave ship home
laid plans for hearth and family
when this long trip is done?
The Portsmouth dockyard bore the sign
"Van Daemon's Devil's Death Mates All:
Who Boards This Ship, His Fate Is Sealed!"

(For Leona, The Princess of the Crystal Palace)

Glaze

The glazier's soul is reflected in her work --
pre-occupied as she is
with light
 strained through stained crystal
 and its endless possibilities.

Like the mason's apron bears a dusting of granite
or the printmaker reeks his inky rancidity,
so the glazier refracts translucent virtual images
of self
 through the clear resonances
 of the bevelled spectrum.

On a good day
the shards of glazen
on her studio floor
sparkle
 with the variety
 of her transcendental labours
 to replicate
 her visions of the day
into the airy volumes
of polish and tone and back-lit hues,
eliciting mood and response.

The dark lead contains.
The lit glass frees.
Let this freeing illuminate another line,
 limiting another space.

The Archaeologist in the Valley of Kings

This flawless art!
Those slavish fingers hewed the stony pharaoh's self
from a marble block. His Empire grieves.

Ages hence
his sun-god's face unchanged,
despite the raging sand-blast and the thieves.

The King
and his retinue live on
in these hieroglyphs we read today;

The sculptor,
immortalized, sleeps oblivious
to the eternal dream his stony arts portray.

His skin
is parchment; still stone-dust
dusts his apron leathering his shrivelled groin.

The diggers slumber,
guarded by cat and falcon; a legion of Nubian
spearsmen grace the wall, the sun a talisman on every coin.

The river floods.
Arouse the potent priestess! Offer sacrifices
to conjure river within its banks again.

Soft wheat
and barley wave their spears; the farmer
scythes and flails eternity with his labours' pain.

Mayday

The evening sky is filled with sleet-y squalls.
From my solitary vantage point,
I count at least a dozen
ranging as far as the eye can see
in all directions.
They pile their cloudy coils
and, driven by swirling blasts,
they drool their grainy ice
into abstract air-forms
that frost-whip the warming land.
From this distance I see
the pink rays of sunset illuminate
this tumultuous mobile,

as wide as all the prairies;
These hanging squalls
are bouquets of captured sunlight
illuminating Winter's struggle
to survive.

Here's an exercise in right-brain imagery I tried at the "Jazz Poetry" mini-fest the Stroll of Poets sponsored last Tuesday night, and to bring to a close an evening of readers and singers sharing their imagery backed by tasty little combos, I went for 'pure improv' as I "read" the last poem of the night. Before I said a word into the mic I said to the band (sotto voce) "I don't have a poem for this one, you guys, so start flying; I'll let the music percolate into my consciousness and say the words your muse generates."

The band began to play with itself -- no charts, no leader, no followers, no metronome but for the drummer's driving ride and brush -- a stage full of concentration on no task but an unleashing of the reflexes of Jazz. The keyboard man noodled his bird-song and left hand diminishment while the flugelhorn blasted strident pitch-fart and the sax filled the room with a wilderness of every every yodel from treble to bass and all the leger lines between and above the clefs and the bass-man's bony phalanges rode the wires like an irritated arachnid on a frantic mission of hungry discovery while the drummer rode his brushed skins.

Their freeform generated words that went something like this:

PURE IMPROV

Let this aerial combo's sound
worm its way past your inner ear
and snap synapses as it concentrates awareness
in your perirfrontal lobe.
Pick an instrumentalist's dreaming out of this fray
and hear his virtuous touch as though he were a soloist
accompanied by the rest of the combo.
This is no anarchy
when you can isolate and groove
on any one of the grooves.
Look!
Watch your picture-making mechanism making images
for your memory to hold
that are as tangible as steel engravings
etched by the picture-making machinery
of Jazz in your Mind.
Shift your focus left a bit. There's the keyboard,

then far right to the drumskin and crash
then back centre to the stringbass
front centre to the horn and past the poet
to the silverwood's reedwind and taller, behind him,
the licorice-flavoured contralto of clarinet
all to spite these vacant words
that can barely begin to capture this*
barely begin to capture this
barely begin to capture this
barely begin to capture this
barely begin to capture this
(fade to whisper)

*Dean McKenzie
The Yardbird Suite
April 11 2000*

(*Here's an alternative denouement: instead of fading to whisper,
the following might be read by a chorus as the band eases down to
schwa.

Charly: These words can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
Charly: These words can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
Jocelyn, Diana, Moroslava, Jane: This quartet's freejam spites
these words that can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
All: All to spite these vacant words
that can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
Charly: These words can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
Charly: These words can barely begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin
All: This quartet's freejam spites these words that can barely
begin to capture this.
Nadia: Words can barely begin to capture this)

*Dean McKenzie
The Yardbird Suite
2330h/11/4/2000*

A Charm for Audrey and Roslynn

*The world stands agape at the doorway of these little girls' debut.
The White-Haired Wizard of the Hengestone, an ancient bard of the
Druids, sits cross-legged at the center of his monolithic calendar
and casts a cadenced charm in the name of Truth and Beauty to
choreograph this eugenic star-strike.*

March brought Roslynn a youthmate
the very day
the dream of Audrey's Spring
into the World came true;
and a Karmic vision takes hold
that Time shall make real.
Hand-held by Roslynn,
Audrey ventures along grassy trails
in hilly woods;
the white sound
of the clear springwater rill
accompanies their halcyon drift;
above it, their laughter rings crystalline,
and ancient tiptoe dance in the woodsy copse
is a living reflex in the blinding springlight.
Their flower'd headpieces scent the air
with Larisa's field bouquets
freshening atop their golden curls;
Platinum Audrey and Golden Roslynn
capture all the sun this newest morning.
May Turpsichore
send them sure-footed dancing
through all the zones.

Fireworks, the Scots and Moonflight

We found a bench
across the river valley
from the park
where the fireworks were
and watched,

"ooh"-ing and "aaah"-ing
like little kids,
our fifty-plus years notwithstanding.
Like clockwork the 11 PM sky show
above Mayfair Park
held all three of us air-bound
while we whiffed and sipped
our North Saskatchewan bluff away.
Then we watched the slow-moving cloud
of sulphurous gunsmoke
drift across the full moon.
Far to our left
a 737 roared its southbound takeoff
across the city
and The Airbus appeared above the Legislature
heading for Calgary.
"Holy!" I said.
"Look! That plane's going to hit the moon!
Look! Look at it!"
Then we watched it smoothen out.
It waved its wings a bit,
(at us, I thought).
And then, The confluence!
For a fraction of a second
the Full Moon had a jetliner
neatly silhouetted
within its disk,
and then it was gone
in a strobe of red and green.
One of us said,
"Did you see that?"
Then we reflected on
the silver, the smoke and the silence,
at, in and under
our leisure, our cups and The Moon.

BEANSMITH

Punch a little box full of square holes
and decor-ize with clean, well-lit tables
and chairs
and the fresh strong coffee
 flows like golden lava
 into the bustle
and chairs fill
 with mysterious new-comers
 all literate
and curious
and the room samples Beansmith's wares.

There's a poet in the corner
and he never looks up
 but nibbles endlessly
 on a stub of pencil
 to sharpen it with his teeth
and he scrawls his notions
 past the end of the napkin
and isn't even finished
 at the edge of the table cloth
and he curves its last cadences
 toward the wall.

He has to write left-handed
 to put the finishing touches
 on this poem
 and his longhand
 begins to cramp his scrawl
 up the wall.

When he finally gets up to go,
 he puts his change
 into a little canvas purse
 that clips with a snap
and wanders out onto the avenue
 toward another coffee house
 farther east --
 farther toward real life.

I get up with my sloshing coffee
and ash tray
and slide over to his table

and read the detritus
of his wandering mind:
He has written,
in media res,
"Corn flakes frozen
and the bean smiths gas
and the madding crowd grows
on this froth.
You grow on this froth
of table cloth monologue.
Hey!!
Out of the corner of my eye
I see you staring at me
out from behind your shades
and I know
that when I leave
you'll come to this table
and read this.
Okay, stranger!
Look up!
No, farther right.
See?
There by that phone booth
across the street?
That's me standing there
looking at you,
waiting for you to look!
And I shall have waited
exactly ten minutes,
no more.
So you'd better look up now
or I'll be gone
and then you'll never know,
will you?
Look! Now! Damn it!!!
The rest of this poem won't run away."

So I look.
And there he is,
with a grin as wide
as all the world

that says it all.
Our eyes meet
and he throws both arms
into the air
as though he's just won
Something Important.
Sauntering away,
laughing to himself,
he's probably saying,
"Some guys just have the knack
of making life happen!"
And I?
I feel sort of suckered!
I want him to explain that bit
about corn and beans:
How do beans smith gas?
One can wring iron
so it's wrought,
and the verbs one can perform on any egg
are nearly infinite,
including fertilize.
But can gas be smithed by a bean?
I'm a bit chaffed
at my frontal lobe's
involuntary spasms generated
by his voluntary manipulations.
I read on.

"Fooled you, man! This poem IS running away.
I cannot write as fast
as my thoughts chase this pencil stub!
But the bitterest notion of all
suggests that this idea deserves
more permanance
than a washable table cloth
in an untried coffee house
full of erstwhile southsiders
whose homes are anywhere but,
and they're all from the wrong side
of the river,
or even the tracks

for that matter!
I'm going to cross the street now.
I can see where I'll stand
so you'll be able to see me
when you look up from
My Napkin, My Tablecloth and My Wall!

Gotcha!
Signed,
The Panhandler on Whyte!"

Gordon C. McRae

The Exile's Song

My mother's feet burned a path to the river
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Red as summer it bled through our lives
Wherever I touch I touch my home

My father's fields were sown with his song
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Every planted wound a word of earth
Wherever I touch I touch my home

*Till me under the surging current
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Drown me deep in the breathing furrows
Wherever I touch I touch my home*

My daughter's eyes dissolved the fields
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Waves of grain she'd skirt with sails
Wherever I touch I touch my home

My wife wrung beads from the river's brow
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Made it mark the hours that we were clay
Wherever I touch I touch my home

*Till me under the surging current
Wherever I touch I touch my home
Drown me deep in the breathing furrows
Wherever I touch I touch my home*

Stasis

This soul was built of engines
Suckling fuel from keeping still
Quelling sparks with motion
Who am I to check its course
Or pause to ask direction

One day he said
to me he said
Forty years is
sufficient time
to spend among
things recorded
In my remaining
years of clarity
it is my hope to
learn forgetting

These eyes were formed from open hands
Blinking away the firmly grasped
Seeking forever the small and fallen
What parting soul would sanction
This suspension of belief

Another day
he said to me
he said
When one reaches
a certain age
there are no
secret places
anymore
And I am past
squinting
to tame the shapes
of feral clouds

This hand was built of icons
And this of a comprehension
That wants no words for things
Ever will you burden me with books
Opening them is another matter

The Bridge

I've died before of the purity of numbers
Asked to bore my feet into the dredge
And prop a wealth of imprecisions
Even the hours of lovers would quail to count

I've died before of the purity of love
Asked to harrow clots of natural cause
And dam and channel a tide of blood
Even the singing salt would cry to kiss

I've died before of the purity of song
Asked to land these swells of aching glory
And let sand and stone so drink me deaf
Even the longest night would wince to end

I've died before of the purity of dreams
Asked to wake for footing in the current
And drown such unborn hours of air
Even the aureoled earth would fear to mother

I've died before of the purity of words
Asked to wash the banks with heart and seed
And be left to dry the sands so dumb
Even the counted grains would rain as glass

All that Remains

Here
I have to show you something
You can see when I raise my arm
The first hopscotch with the neighbor girl
Right there
Singed by the boy she thought I was

Bless me, father, for I have lived
These old sacks of air
Taking more than they could ever give

And there
You see that one
Just there behind the knee
Just there
The first tree deserving of a name
The first that had never seen a boulevard
With all its autumns matted up beneath
I cut that one in myself
Back in the days I could still get behind

Bless me, father, for I have lived
And wept to live another day

You see that
there upon one palm
just there
The scent of the first long benediction
Lingering still these many years
Burned in without my knowing how
The scar crossed by too much else misunderstood

Bless me, father, for I have lived
Doused with light
But willing to barter limbs for tales
Brought back from the mouths of caves

And here
and here
other marks that defy my waning recollection

Bless me, father, for I have
Slept through snows that evened us all with grace
And on rising
Swept with the rituals of my years
The few small footprints from the quiet walk

The Throws of King Wên

I viewed a forest once from some distance
And was drawn into its complexities
As a tide is drawn up the counted sands
And settles into to it like the last remembered
Breath before the seive of sleep

The dry stillness of the summers were the cruelest
They would put our cages in the glaring sun
In view of the country I might have ruled
Parched with such a want of motion
The air itself was made to tremble

The chill of night was always welcomed
With its inquisitive companion, the bitter dark
Unlike the day, the two could be held
Each in a hand, full as still waters
But drawn to other lovers if embraced

I could have mingled with the other prisoners
Showed the murderer his death and the thief
The place where he kept his emptiness in chains
But these, though far from welcome guests
Had arrived first and I was bound to serve them

Robert N. Pruden

The Touchwood Loons

I hear the loons call from across the lake
It sounds like the mournful call to a loved one...
Long since dead
A hopeless heartfelt longing... a beckoning...
To bring back what can never again be
The throaty call emanates such solitude
It is a permeating vocalization
Of the dusky humidity that rises in late evening
Amongst the cattails and duck grass
Backdropped by the darkening forest
Outlined by the blackening sky
So beautiful to hear
The stars shine brightly
Somehow the call of the loon
And the cold white light of the stars goes well together;
Wavelets lap against the side of the canoe
And I am reminded of where I am:
Floating freely in the center of a lake at midnight
With no visible lights except the stars
I know whom I love
And, to a lesser degree
I know who loves me
I recall those who love me deeply
And I recall those who could have loved me
Maybe remembrance
Is what the call of the loon is all about.

Quiet Moment in the Parking lot at Mayfair Park

I linger in the park
Seated in my van
Chair rolled back and reclined
Facing a bright warm afternoon sun

The sun heats my face
Its light glints off the frozen surface of the duck pond
Blares brilliantly through my closed eyelids
I see yellow and blush red
And I feel its extracted heat radiate on my feet
Which press on the cracked windshield

It is very quiet
And I hear my relaxed breathing
I hear the pop and crackle
Of metal noises from the van

While two people walk by...conversing quietly.

The Global Weaver

Gentle rumble
Wells to sudden thundrous turbinic thrust
As furiously burning gases are throttled through the small nozzles of
aero-technology
A slow lumbering passenger jet
Suddenly accelerates towards the end of the tarmac
Creating rushing inertial compressions on the backs and heads of its
occupants
Its nose slowly angles up and
The plane does a lingering wheelie
Until the buffeting upthrusting air pressures allow
Her to slip into the global realm of travel
A ten degree climb leaves twisting grey-black trails of carbon
And ethereal vapors marking her path
She banks right and
Momentary glints of bright sunlight flood my eyes
She is westward bound
Heading toward the wrinkled snow-capped Canadian Rockies
And possibly the humid aromatic coasts of BC
Scented with sea smells, cedar, and evergreen

She weaves a thread
Like a spider spinning its fine silk
That binds us
 city to city
 nation to nation

The Corporate Cancer

Corporate profits exceed projections
And yet they are handing out little pink Hells
The trade-off is money for people's souls
Without concern
Without compassion
Without feeling
Even with some scorn
Dismissed managers get a golden handshake
While smaller deconstructed souls get the doors
So cold and dark on the other side
"Thank you for doing the Corporation right", they say
They say, "now you are free to follow your dreams"
Dreams?
How do you follow shattered dreams?
Do you walk backwards and follow the trail of scattered tears?
How do you pick up the pieces of shattered lives
Scattered on the plains of despair?
A corporate president once said:
"A lay-off would free us up to pursue our interests"
Well if we weren't pursuing our interests
Then what the hell were we doing?
Corporate greed isn't the greed of a business entity
It is the greed of a few small men
With egos enlarged like a cancerous prostate
And souls shrinking like a diseased heart
They don't discriminate
Unrestrained growth
Unrestrained profits
Unrestrained ethics
Unrestrained misery
For the people they chew up

Swallow

then spit up
Outside the company gates

The cancer takes care of itself
The symbiotic nirvana between worker and owner
Has been overwhelmed by a parasitic infection
One infection I fear
That can only die with the host
They say they do it for the health of the Corporation
But what of the health of the people?
The ones the Corporation needed to stand on
But now tramples mercilessly

As CEO bonuses get more obscene
The cancer grows
And to me “corporation” seems more a euphemism
For “me, myself, and I”
One day the Corporation
Will have no legs to stand on
And then where will we be?
Dreaming of having a decent job?



Stroll of Poet

2001

The Alberta Beatnik

EASTER

It was a moment of crystal clear consciousness
I stood there in my dull brown pajamas
jungle of hair upon my head
glasses thick, heavy, smudged and Scotch-taped
and I wondered
what the Easter bunny had to do with Good Friday
with the Resurrection
Maybe, I thought, the Easter bunny had been shot
- the way Elmer Fudd'd always dared with Bugs -
shot in the heart or in the head,
his rabbit eyes mere Xs on dead white fur
Slaughtered on Good Friday
And on Easter, the Easter Bunny rose again
But not as he appeared before
No
Now, from head to rabbit foot, he was made of dark
black

chocolate

and his eyes had turned to dabs of sugar

And somehow, somehow, this Easter Bunny had saved our souls,

even if we were all returning the favour

– a rather BIG one – by chewing his head off

That part seemed strange to me

Why would you EAT the very thing put on Earth to save you?

And then I remembered lines from church, from the pulpit:

"Take, eat, this is my body."

Of course, I also surmised

that the Easter Bunny had not been shot by a mere hunter

but by a stirring, whirring war plane

flown by a pilot named Pontius

or was it *Pontiac*?

And then, a light clicked on in my head!

Didn't Easter have something to do with *Christmas*,

with the Baby Jesus?

Wasn't there something special about Jesus?

Wasn't Jesus the Son of God or something pretty BIG like that?

Didn't Jesus walk around curing the sick

and pulling people out of graves and stuff?

Ah! Maybe Jesus had tried to SAVE the Easter Bunny

Maybe it was JESUS, who had turned water to wine,

And that's why I call it DUM Sum
Potato chips? Fuckin' A Bubba!
But that's not a MEAL, man
Pizza?
Pizza's okay, if you're drinking a few brewskies with your buds after a slow pitch game
Or if you're all alone and hammered at 4 in the morning
And even then, I don't care how good that ham and mushroom tastes
or how good those honey garlic chicken wings taste
They're coming UP anyway, man!
But I would NEVER spew a burger, man!
NEVER!
A hamburger is a holy thing
I could eat, like, a hamburger for every meal
One day, I figured I'd put my meat where my mouth was.
What I mean is that one day, I did!
One day I did the whole circuit,
from McDonald's to A & Dubya to my personal friend: HARVEY'S
And I was in food fuckin' HEAVEN!
You know, I feel sorry for people in other cultures,
in less developed parts of the world,
 like Ethopia or whatever
Man, in Ethopia, those scrawny little big-eyed kids'd probably fuckin' DIE
if they sucked back the Harvey's triple burger I had yesterday
Yeah, but they'd die HAPPY
The western world, man
We got it ALL
And half of us don't even appreciate it
 But I do
 Cuz I
 fuckin'
 LOVE
 hamburgers

God Exists

Attention all Christians,
Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, etc.,
etc.,
etc.

God exists
in the spaces between us
when we want to be
closer

Great Men

Great men write great books... The Holy Bible, The Koran, The Art of War
Great men wrote the Bill of Rights
Great men write our laws
Great men lead church congregations, entire countries,
international coalitions
Great men build great big companies
Great men bang their secretaries and joke about it with other great men
when they get together to whack balls on great green golf courses
Great men have great lust
Great men conquer lands
Great men lead not-as-great men on battlefields soaked with the blood
of men who just weren't great enough, I guess
Great men lead lesser men to build great big monuments...
...until other great men come along, destroy them,
and build new ones in their place
I'm tired of "great men"
Give me the short, fat, bald, impotent man instead
Give me the guy who sits behind his desk and twiddles his thumbs,
the guy with the crèam-coloured slacks and a great big bum
Give me the guy who has no chance in hell of banging the blonde
so he blushes every time she walks by
and secretly jerks off in the office can
Give me the guy who sits in Taco Time on a Friday night - alone -
having another soft bean burrito
Give me the guy who lives with his mother and can never hold down
a job for more than three weeks
Give me ANY man who isn't a "great man"
and I will show you the face of peace
Great men cause great damage.

NEW MESSIAH

A boy of 16, taken from his home and taught to fight
fight for what's right -
kill the west
and oppress his sisters
and he fights and he kills
he does as he's told
He was raised to be a good Muslim boy
Now we hear from the news
Kabul's "liberalized"
but freedom's taste
is the taste of blood
and that boy of 16, he lies in his own tonight
and more will spill and I've prayed it before
but I'll pray it still...

What the world needs now
is a New Messiah

September 11th, 2001...
A Christian kid and his family sit watching TV
the evil glow of the day, it burns the boy's eyes
at age six, he learns fast
how to fear, how to despise
His Mom tries not to cry, his Dad makes a fist
"In Bush we trust, we're gonna get those guys,
those terrorist Muslim brown-skin devils!
We'll hunt them down and shoot them all and
God will send them straight down to hell."
And the boy, he goes to sleep,
praying hard
for a brown-skinned school friend
he'll never play with again
And love gets killed and I've prayed it before
But I'll pray it still

What the world needs now
Is a New Messiah

Jerry Falwell, George Junior, Osama bin Laden...
The time is now, the time has come
The end of the world for those who WISH
the end of the world
Your God, He will not have you, the living or the dead
Because your hearts and your heads, they're not

they're not
they're not big enough
Big enough for the God who loves His children *all* the same
Big enough for the God who speaks in thunder and rain
Big enough for the God who will turn this night into day
Big enough for the future, it's coming, get out of the way...!
Hear us raise our voices in anger and love and shrill
We've prayed it before
And we'll pray it still...

What the world needs now
Is a New Messiah

What Will You Take?

Hello, good morning
It's the end of the world
What will you take with you?
A photo album full of yellowing memories,
 Like the time you wiped out on your bike,
 the one you just got
 for your birthday?
 Like the way your Mom applied the bandage,
 with extra love and concern even though she knew
 you'd never learn,
 just wipe out again?
Look, there you were
in the picture
You looked so... small... back then
Now it's the end of the world
What will you take with you?
 A laptop, so you can write about life on the other side?
 A box of your favourite CDs?
 Your car?
 God knows heaven'd be hell if you couldn't drive
 to the corner store and get a pack of smokes
 or maybe some porn
It's the end of the world
What will you take with you?
 An axe, to chop down the blossoming backyard apple tree,
 the one you and your wife got stinking drunk under
 one hot night last summer?

Your family, your friends, the hand of a child, the
helpless squeak of your cat?
Or will you go to the Gap and run up your credit card one last time?
Get a wide-screen TV so you can really see who wins on Big Brother?
The new Survivor?
What if there ARE no survivors?
Good morning, it's the end of the world
The door is open and you've got to go through it
So what will you take?
A heart full of hate for who did this, who is to blame,
this side, that side, everyone corrupt and fanatical
and kooks all the same?
The door is open, no time to think
Just blink and grab whatever you have that means the most
For Heaven's sake,
what will you take?

SEDUCING FARRAH FAWCETT

It happened pretty much every time I watched
CHARLIE'S ANGELS
A single pulsing hard
beat throb
at the centre
of my brown and yellow striped
pants
And I remember feeling bad once,
as my imagination was slowly peeling off
her clothes
as I sat on my Mom's
and Dad's
toilet,
one eye staring at
the new Starlog magazine,
one eye staring at the spring
Sears catalogue
one eye staring at those fleshy
bras and panties and all that Farrah
hair
one eye staring at Lee
Majors as the Six
Million Dollar Man

No, I didn't have a thing for Lee Majors
But I did
look UP to him
So it felt a little creepy, a little
prickly, sweaty, seedy, squishy and
goopy
when I imagined Lee stripped
of all his bionic limbs,
a helpless stump chump
watching ME strip his real life wife, Farrah, of all her
clothes
And of course, Farrah would be brainless and blonde and spread
and ready and frozen
in suspended animation
And after I did what was done
– and it was done in 10 or 20 seconds –
I'd pull up my
brown and yellow striped pants,
and thank Farrah for a stab at romance
and then I'd forget all about it
Until I'd go to school and feel like a fool, hot crimson
face and all,
the centre
of my brown and yellow striped pants standing
tall
when I saw Farrah in a swimsuit
on the front of my friend's
tight
white
T-shirt

WHOLE

Okay, I'm going to be real, here
Real enough to say I'd be nothing
without
love
God, I have a flash now and then,
of a life lived alone
Click-clack tapping away
with nothing
new

to say
Another grand tumble of words typed entirely in vain
Stuck behind
an unwashed window, I watch couples in love
Hands clasped
forefingers in each other's pockets
or pinkies forever joined
and kisses that say it all
I'm going to be real, here
This poem isn't for everyone
It's for one
The one I lay
beside in the dark, in dreams,
The one I
sometimes ignore when she's explaining some miniscule part
of her day
I wish life wasn't that way, a wash of one day into the next until we forget the flash we have now
and then,
of a life lived alone
I could walk the earth, travel all time and space and never
feel at home
anywhere, any place,
no Amazing Grace in heaven
without the one
who made me whole

Smitty's, Shitty's

When I was a kid,
my family would make the trip
Uptown
to Smitty's
Family restaurant
with blue hairs
No blue cheese
and Pattie-melts!
Process cheese on Wonderbread toast
Wonderbread
Wonderbra!
That waitress who leans down is kinda sexy
to a 10 year old
When I was young, my Dad never liked the bill

but it was low
 at Smitty's
Family restaurant
 with pigs in a blanket
 and pigs in a booth
 and Pattie-Melts!
Meatloaf ground-cow flesh fried up nice
 Screw the rice
French fries put greasy lustful sparks in a kid's eyes
 And now I wonder when it is
 we
 make the jump
to tell our folks you just don't
 have ketchup with Chinese food
and pineapple chicken balls from a mall just
 don't
 cut it
 And Grandpa...! - Grandpa farts in public!
and Smitty's is Shitty's
 innocence
 tastes like a pattie-melt

PURE LOVE

Here is the time we were at a neighbor's party. She was wearing that funky purple summer dress. That's my arm around her, holding her close. I like to hold her close. I like the way she feels. Her fragrance. The way her thick cinnamon hair brushes against her chin. And in the breeze, it brushes against her lips just once before she pulls it away. Here is the office Christmas party. That's me with the hat – I had a bit too much to drink. And the way that guy's wife took the picture makes my ass look huge, doesn't it? But I don't care. Cuz SHE was there, beside me – like always. Like the Folkfest, that one summer. See the picture? It's the one over there, on the right hand side of the mantelpiece, the one of me and her and the guy from Blue Rodeo we met by accident. God, was he stoned! Or something, I think. Yeah, take a good look at THAT shot. Look, I wouldn't be offended if you said she looks hot... downright... I mean, you'd want to throw her down and do 'er right there. I'll bet that guy from Blue Rodeo wanted to! What a bastard! But who could blame him, right? Whatever. Look, what the guy from Blue Rodeo and her and me and her don't have in common - AT ALL - is that – well, this is the way I see it – some people have a HISTORY. Some people have really BEEN through it, you know? Been through it TOGETHER. Like that summer after college when she was dating that law student? What was THAT all about? And that other time we went to Café Select and drink our faces off and then she struck up that conversation with those two gay guys, one of whom I guess she

vaguely knew from somewhere? And then, on the cab night back – home – all she talked about was how funny it was that gay guys were always the best looking ones? “Yeah,” I said, “What’s with THAT?” There’s the picture of us EARLIER that night. We look a lot better in the picture than we did in the cab, that’s for sure! I was so pissed with her that night. The moment I saw her walk out of the bedroom – oh – she looked HOT. I was feeling like, “Wow, you’re doing this for ME? Looking like this?” All I wanted to do, all night, was open up my heart to her, pour out my soul, you know? Well, I really, really wanted to reach under the table and touch her knee, too, because I KNOW she wanted me to – the way it would just lightly brush against it, now and then, each time she’d turn her head. It would have been pretty innocent, too – AT FIRST. Then, my hand would slink up her smooth thigh, closer and closer to her hot little... What am I DOING, here? Why am I talking about her like this? I mean, she never did ANYTHING to me! She never said ANYTHING like this about me! Did she? God, I wish she did. I wish she was sitting in her bedroom right now - yeah, her mirror would be graced with perfect beauty: bra, panties, pink skin, messed up cinnamon main. A perfect pure beauty. Touching herself. And looking at the pictures on her dresser of the two of us – together. No. No, I can’t do this. This is SICK! Let me tell you, I am one sick puppy. If she knew that, she’d probably NEVER speak to me. Or... I mean, maybe she’d LIKE it. There’s a slut in her. I know it. Why do you think she’s been with so many guys over the years? Hang on. It’s only been three or four in the last 10 years, really. Or so she says. It’s not like I can see what or WHO else she does when I’m not around, right? But I guess she can’t see what I’m doing, either. She NEVER could. So I guess all of these thoughts are okay. They’re just thoughts, right? And what I do in the privacy of my room on a Friday night alone is between me and God, even if I wish it was between me and HER. Her... my love. Her... that bitch. She’ll never know. She’ll never know PURE LOVE like I do.

HOUSE HUNTING

Other people’s homes, they all look so

BEAUTIFUL

White picket fences lead to pristine lawns

that lead to utterly *inviting* French doors

that open to stunning hardwood floors
and soft smiles of children,
a loyal German shepherd curled up at Dad's argyll socks
and Mom getting high on scent of apple pie in the kitchen
This is why house hunting really SUCKS
Subliminally, you are being asked
to take on somebody ELSE's life
And you must choose wisely
Make the wrong move and you could end up
a bitter, depressed alcoholic
who blows his head off at four in the morning
Or a divorced 40-year-old nymphomaniac
who prefers leather pants laughably tight
and heels that snap off
at other people's otherwise serenely sedate garden parties
The thing about house hunting is that we're DOING IT
all WRONG
There's something timid and way too politically correct
about WAITING
for other people to MAYBE
put their better homes and gardens up for sale
If you see something you like, just TAKE IT
Screech to a halt in your rusted old K Car,

stumble out half pissed,
kick the head off the nearest lawn gnome,
and don't just the ring the little ding-ding doorbell
but BANG on those French doors
put your fist through the glass
FORCE your bloody way in
and TAKE that beautiful house - AT GUNPOINT!
Tell the nice sweet family in there
they've had it WAY too good for WAY TOO LONG
Now, it's time for a little TRADE:
THEIR home, THEIR life,
THEIR prestigious jobs and big ass bank accounts
for YOURS
Let's see how THEY like living
in a dusty old moldy meatloaf sandwich apartment
beside an old snake-skinned hag who hacks up her each and every lung
each and every morning
Let's see how THEY like the hangovers, the dry heaves,
the Saturday mornings
waking up with a drag queen you thought was a real woman
Let's see how THEY like working a new odd job
every three months
Let's see how THEY can live

with no money, no faith, no hope, no love
Look, they say the grass is always greener
on the other side of the fence
Mine's just full of weeds and shit from somebody else's dog
Or someone else's kids
Or maybe my own ass, because who can remember
what really went on last Friday night?
MY grass is full is red army ants
MY grass gets shoved up my hole
by the "superiors" at work, every time I get canned
"Your ass is grass," they say
MY grass is full of termites from a rotting fence
MY grass is usually "lifted" by so-called friends
or confiscated by the cops
Look, don't you think, on principal,
that a bit of happiness should be doled out to EVERYONE?
You look like a nice, clean Christian family
You go to church
You worship Jesus, right?
Jesus liked beggars and whores and thieves, right?
So where is your sense of charity?
Of kindness?
Where's your HEART?

Frankly, if you won't let me TAKE what you've got,
even after you've supposedly worked SO HARD to GET it,
if you won't let me, the Great White House Hunter,
bag me your trophy home and wife and more,
well, you obviously don't DESERVE what you've got
And the next time a car pulls up real slow
beside your house at 11:15 on a Friday night,
remember –
it could be ME

Ryan Baier

Falling

Sunlight drifts through
fiery leaves on trees,
falling to the ground
within the warmth
of sunset's mellow
colors-dappled through
the spaces that abound.
The sound of fall is a
rustling blowing kind of
energy glowing, the
earth trying to collect
strength for cold months
ahead-of being layered
with winter's white gown.
Tumbles of swirling leaves
dance off trees slowly
becoming brown and naked,
like red and golden butterflies
saying good-bye to another
Indian summer that has
graced us with longer warmth.
Night seeps in quicker, with it's

inky darkness-trying to drive us
indoors, preparing us to seek
comfort in cozy quarters
during another one
of our long cold winters.
All along the river, the trees
in fall are an ocean of flame,
and every year that goes by
leaves each of us a little
less the same...

My life to the sky

Starlight
millions of dots
scattered across
the blueblack sky-
Infinitely high
Crying out why?
Then hearing
Nature's beautiful
reply
Don't cry
Just close your
eyes and
fly through
Endless skies

Celebrate

Being able to write and read almost completely without restriction.
Being struck wildly with the MUSE-endless creative meanderings, prolific
passion for expression.
Finding solace inside poetry, and reaching into so many images, ideas,
places, emotions, despairs, joys, struggles and raw, beautiful experiences.
The ability to paint kaleidoscopic word pictures full of heavens, hells
and everything in between.
Going far deeper than what is seen.
Testing the boundaries of your own imagination.
Everything and nothing at once.

Saying it all, without saying anything at all.
Catch the flow, ride the stream, feel the dream, untie the seams-until a
cataclysm of vision pours forth, unrelenting-unstoppable, endless words,
no limits-
all inside the universe eternal...

Storm Broken

Sail the high seas of tumultuous thoughts. Waves smashing the shadowy galleon that billows with
wind in her sails, out there-so far out there, to never return-sea sickness at the edge of the world,
this last conceivable drip, drip of wisdom, falling forever down a tunnel of blueblack
water. Suddenly all we see is waves cascading down, down-frothy whiteblue streaks
disappearing like an immense waterfall, the subconscious mind follows, then all reality, all
knowledge, all wisdom, all thought spills over the edge, like a falling dream-try, try to stop
falling, no return, once you are gone it's like drowning in space-forever a balance to chase, losing
it all to find it all in lostness

Electric

All of the infinite, all of the time. Cycles of energy, intertwined with reason and rhyme. Electric
pulsations, twisting sensations, skull bursting with adoration.

A plateau of sonic jubilation-reaching, always reaching, the sky is tearing apart, with one heart,
one mind. Ready to find the meaning, trees in a butterfly wind leaning. All that we see, all that
we are-a bright shooting star. Come down from afar, healing scars-turning truer through each
day. No matter what we say, no one can take the truth away. Soul cannibals eating rainbows
and steel-forever stay true to what you feel-the kaleidoscope wheel of All that we know-just
GO!

Marcel Fayant

MYSTIC WORLD

I find myself sitting on a grassy knoll in this city

All by myself for a while, it's so nice, things look so pretty

I shut out the city which is just too loud

I lie on my back and look at a cloud

I call, "come on down cloud and ease my mind,"

"Mystic World is what I want to find."

The cloud comes down and speaks to me

It says, "close your eyes and Mystic World I will give thee"

I close my eyes and find myself off to Mystic World land

Finally there, I thank the cloud for giving me a hand

I look past the higgledy-piggledy of my thoughts

In the horizon I begin to see the playing of little tots

To the west I see the gracefulness of trees a swaying

It almost looks like they are dancing and playing

I look to the east and see a dove

Feeding her babies she must really love

I turn around and look to the south

I become astonished and open my mouth

I see myself sitting on a grassy knoll in a city

I can hear myself saying, "things look so pretty."

The cloud begins to take me back

The vision of the other me goes black

The cloud has left my mind as I can feel

I look around and see Mystic World is real

Mystic World can be the real thing

Happy doves begin to sing

Watch the children laugh and play

Light winds make the trees sway

Here I am sitting on a grassy knoll

Seeing the beauty from my inner soul

The beyond is really there

Sometimes I forget, something we all share

Wanting and Needing

No gods

No devils

Just people wanting

Just people needing

No heaven

No hell

Just people wanting

Just people needing

STEADY AS IT GOES

Arrgh, over there mate

A life style you want to create

Standing there on the plank

In life, where do you rank

Come on and jump into the ocean

We call these colored waters, THE SEA OF EMOTION

Jump on in and swim in the green

Jealousy can be mean

Feel the red

Could create rage in the head

How about a little blue

Sorrow, does it suit you

Wade in the yellow

Happiness, peace of mind, almost mellow

Cannot jump, too much to gain

Come back on the ship and do not feel vain

More chances, new hopes will come

One of days you will leave the H.M.S Asylum

CATASTROPHE

Things spewed here and there

What came through had no care

Money, paper, is abound

What is that giant mound?

Clothes and tapes make a hill

Enough dirt, looks like and oil spill

What do you call the place of doom

From what I heard it's called a bedroom

<< WHO'S MINDING THE MIND >>

(left to right)

HER	=>	HIM
You I love	=>	is that what you think of
It's not the only thing	=>	did the telephone ring
Do you hear me	=>	Uh, I hear thee
I'd like to go out	=>	what, and shop about
How about a show	=>	I choose you know
Do I have a say	=>	yes, in a certain way
You make me hurt	=>	is it the way I blurt
You make me burn	=>	I've got lots to learn
Am I bland	=>	please take my hand
I heard you utter	=>	get me out of this gutter
Lets go for a walk	=>	yes, then we can talk
What are you thinking of	=>	you I love

TEARS FOR SEAS AND OCEANS

One tear from my eye from crying
fills seven seas

One tear from my eye from laughing
fills seven oceans

My seas fill with tears
And I watch the oceans fill with rain

War Was Irredeemable Indian (WWII)

I wanna feel the nice winds overseas
I wanna see how the snow falls overseas
I wanna see how the rain falls overseas
I wanna see the green grasses overseas
I wanna be away from my colony
I wanna be free
I wanna be away from my reservation
I wanna be free
I wanna travel by air or sea
I wanna travel by air or sea

The world calls for freedom
The world calls for me

I don't like the smell of the winds
I don't like red covered snow
I don't like rains making puddle of red
The grasses of home are not red like these
I wanna be back on my colony
I wanna be free
I wanna be back on my reservation
I wanna be free
I wanna travel by air or sea
I wanna travel by air or sea

I look above and see a falling gloom
I will travel no more, BOOM

Laryalee Fraser

As Days Unroll

Some days will drip in slow descent
along the creases of our skin;
they leave our inspiration clogged,
the texture of our labors thin.

Some days will coil with cobra-stealth,
attack when we are least prepared;
we cannot walk unscathed and yet
survival's sweet - for we have dared!

Some days erect their wired barbs;
we struggle, bleed, admit we failed.
(And foolishly withdraw in shame -
as though our virtue was impaled.)

But ah, the days that string their pearls
across our shoulders, warmly rest
their sundrop auras...these we clasp
in awe, aware that we are blest.

The Wanderers

They plod along their dusty roads in search
of purpose, carry labels stuffed in bags
(they'll choose the one that fits). Small glories perch
on nearby fences, waving giddy flags.

They build unfinished scaffolds, spend their years
manoeuvring for status, study lists
of possibilities and swallow fears
they'll never see beyond the pallid mist.

They catch each silver-noduled hope that's flung
from sterile data labs. They hear the sound
of molecules awakening; among
genetic secrets, Meaning will be found!

They insulate themselves with flippant skin
to hide the stagnant emptiness within.

White-Limbed Fury

My little dresser, crafted from
a skeleton of white-limbed pine,
supports my daily scavenging
for whimsy - never gives a sign

of retribution for the smooth
denouement of its destiny.
But high on mountain slopes (vacated
now, since slashing industry

left roots to die) pale limbs of ghosts
entreat the leaden sky. Dark nodes
of pelting rain converge, expand,
and soon an army forms, explodes

its liquid shrapnel, desecrates
the blameless land. Its pounding drive
devours, spews our heritage;
our makeshift barriers can't survive

its rage. It heaves regurgitated
mud, as though it would malign
validity of hopes that cling
to strewn boards of white-limbed pine.

Clutter-Addled

Clutter scampers through my cupboards,
perches sideways on the shelf;
then it sneaks in dresser drawers,
coily wraps around itself.

Clutter somersaults in corners,
leapfrogs into sassy piles;

gives the eager creepy-crawlies
shelter for their domiciles.

Clutter races through the hallway,
takes a detour down the stairs;
contemplates the vacant basement -
promptly buys up all the shares.

Clutter studies blueprint sketches,
learns the detailed layout plan;
likes to hide behind the bookcase,
calling "Catch me if you can!"

Clutter wilts in pale exhaustion,
passes out beneath my bed.
Sometimes with an off-key whistle,
clutter climbs inside my head.

Rusti Leahy

born a farmer's daughter

i've aged two decades plus
since i exchanged my rural route two address
for paved streets and avenues
neighbours on both sides
twenty feet away
instead of at least one hundred acres
on one side and over fern creek across hunter's hill on the other

but
these black and white censored images
become my urban daydream distractions

*winter calluses softened by dewy spring mornings
when my bare feet slid in damp grass to the hilltop
to sit and read in sun-dried-grass by the barn
lone vehicles raised gravel dust now and then
on the quiet courtesy corner intersection
the only honks came from chevrons of geese*
downtown edmonton assaults me out of this reverie
and i ponder why my mouth corners curve up
and why do my feet bounce in rhythm to the
hum of the trolley
grind of delivery truck gears
growl of diesel motors
buses that belch blue exhaust and
commuters that honk their jasper avenue road rage
as i'm jostled about on busy sidewalk freeways

my italian shoed feet tap city concrete in time to catch
a white permissive ghost at each downtown corner
it is what i do not remember that tells me why
this city the loud pulse the concrete center
is forever mingled with my scramble for freedom
the reality of my youth lurks behind daydreams
and this city was my chrysalis

three decades in the mirror

i comb my hair differently
when i miss my sisters
mine red with blonde
acts as a natural camouflage for any gray appearances

light brown with chemically removed gray
she was a mother before i was born

or black with streaks of gray that stand out more
she would dress change and feed me along with her dolls

color is beside the point
no part in the middle of my hair and
i see the face of my sister with the lighter brown hair

part mine down the middle and
i see the face of my sister with the midnight hair

the only chance to see them now
is to plan a glimpse in the mirror

we've never really seen each other
most days i part my hair on the left

some days i'm lonely
and i let my hair choose

primal moves

i watch the flowing lines of your body in motion
it makes something residually primal arise in me

i feel stifled by the noise suffocated in stale mall air
my space invaded by the brush and rush of bodies
fluorescent dried eyes ears bombarded by
clicks clangs pops people mouths moving
but watching your body move creates a veil of defense
shelters me from the montage of frenzied consumers
allows ancient passions to move freely
causes something instinctive my possessiveness fills me

in a moment of seated stillness aside from the crowd
the knowing you were mine made my spine arch to recline
against the front bent chairline of your body
my neck tilts for the brush of lips before the moist soft touch
your voice conducts a whisper through flesh speaking to my bones
i feel the fertile red power surge of ancient cavewomyn who
with unpolished teeth unpinched cheeks proud wide hips
openly vied for the alpha male's attention

but i need not compete desire no protection

because in the absence of cosmetic counter flirtation aids
this softly rounded low-to-the-ground plain-faced freckled woman
bathes daily in water-cradle-softness of your devotion
your rare granite solid loyalty has me
reach inside
to forgotten inner spaces
to seek and share uncensored unspoken woman dreams
together we stumble upon passion as ancient as matchless fires

it must be

when i see a meadow of dandruff
coat the wrinkles in my black socks
it must be

when i see formerly smooth skin shrivel
become a cousin to sandpaper
it must be

when a hug becomes an auditory experience
as hands attempt to slide
skin hooks *t-t-t-t-t* over
tightly knitted attempts at warmth
it must be

it must be
winter

it must be
alberta

moving at a standstill

glacial ice is neither a liquid nor a solid
my mother and i are neither love nor hate

glacial ice heated up
moves like lava
also like melted wax or warm honey

open up
 crevasses

we both
threaten each other with
 falling away
 she into death
 and i into closure

cold silences dominate and we
continue to tread carefully
on the familiar ice
of our silences heaved
 against each other

they crackle and echo deep

we are like fluid stone
connected yet separate

on the move
sound a retreat
 open
close

never as transparent as glass
but twice as sharp

i'm not sure i'm that small

i love my jacket
guaranteed for life
green
mine for life
it's a small
i cannot cease
thinking i need

at least a medium
to hide in
i haven't cut
the tags off
still thinking
i really need to take it back

i'm big
or i need to look big
too many nasty things
almost always badder than me in the dark
i get scared of being so big i'll explode
like all my edges can grow outwards with violent intent
with jagged shards
that scar from the inside
on their way out
and then i'm afraid i might fragment into tiny pieces

i'm not really small
there's too much in me to be small

maybe
my outer covering
my bag of skin
that holds me all in
is really a small
ready to burst at the seams
like an overpacked suitcase
i'm just not sure it's safe to take another breath

rhea perlman had a great role on cheers

i want to live life like carla
and laugh like a human hyena
when customers
ask for a replacement
of their annual identification card

some say they washed it
some lost it
a few tell of stolen wallets
but the worst is when
they declare it wasn't in their envelope

i know
i looked
i matched and spoke each name three times
before i stuffed and sealed
card
receipt
letter
folded just right for the address to appear
in the plastic window
sealed only after one last visual check

then some have the nerve to
claim their envelope was empty

in my best non-carla voice
i suggest they look on the floor
or under papers
where they most often open their mail

some apologize
some don't
after they have found it

so i want exorbitant tips
like carla received
just for being her natural rude self
i want to be feared

growl freely
jump on the back
of anyone who gives me trouble
i want to hang on like carla
like bobcat and lynx
when they slay larger prey
with claws that cling and pierce

i want to live life like carla
daily sharpen my claws
and practice her laugh of derision

Dean Morrison McKenzie

THE MOON'S LAST QUARTER

The moon's last quarter
filters a tiny grid
 through the draperies' crack
and the venetian blind's slab
 bias-cuts the platinum ray,
coldly illuminating
 my bed's cold breadth.
I can barely see to write
 in its thin metallic glare.
All the prairie night
 lies in this molten drop
 that punctuates pillowprint
 and writing tablet;
one moonbeam illuminates the very spot
 the next word must go.
Line by line I slide pad
 up the pillow
 so that this indelible pen
 might capture
 the fluid essence
 of moon metal.
Here.
Let me refine this cold lunar ore
 with bright heart heat
 into form
 before I nod off.
I shall trail incoherent scribbles
 into the snoozy dark's slumbersong;
I shall snort my drooly nightwind
 and mash my bespectacled face
 into writing-pad-pillow.
Morning may cool this,
 may illuminate some subtlety
 that this night's penstabs
 etch into the hardening slag.
Cold moonglow;
 and heart heat.
There was another moon,
 fuller,
 textured by Pre-Cambrian pine boughs

in the long-ago night.
It lit her upturned face
and glowed redly from her curls
and glistened from our sweat
and glittered from lips
and nipples
and forehead
as I traced her charm,
her heat,
her wet.

I seldom slept then, either.

ECUMENICAL EARTH DAY

There is a Vastness to this Spin --
It Transcends Time;
Behold The Space We're In
And Sing Its Rhyme.

Gaea Will Find Her way
Into The Human Mind
This Earthen Holy Day
Is For All Mankind.

Our Peaceful Prayer
Reflects The Eternal Dream
While Far Above This Air
The Starscapes Stream.

The Brilliant Majesty Above
Makes It Known
Our Endless Need For Love --
We're Not Alone.

And At A Star-Lit Feast
In The Name of Gaea,
We Earthlings Resurrect
An Ancient Prayer.

And All The Prophets Sing
To Gaea's Glory.
They Return To Their Starry Thrones
With Our Earthling's Story:

Our Mother Is! Abides!
Her Name Be Hallowed!
Her Kingdom Comes! It Provides!
Her Will Be Followed!

There is a Vastness To This Spin
That Transcends Time;
Behold The Space We're In
And Sing Its rhyme.

Seventy-two Virgins Await You

In a lofty hexagonal room,
each wall bordered by twelve rows of arches,
draped and scented entryways
hint at an eternity of Eros;
This sensual paradise awaits those of you
whose human lives you had lost
in defense of the honour of your god.
Your little cult has been taught
that if you martyr yourselves,
expending your earthly lives
in the struggle against The Infidel,
that you shall spend eternity
immersed in the euphoria
induced by seventy-two unstained maidens.

O faithful ones!

O martyrs to a divine cause!

O strong and brave men,

believing you've been forgiven

of all your mortal sins!

Your salvation accompanies the death you died
destroying The Infidel!

So, go, now!

Go to your three-dimensional heaven,
scented with ambrosia and the oils of the east.

Go to those heavenly seraglios

waiting just for you

so that your eternal joy might be unconfined.

Go in!

Sire men-children only!

WHYTE NIGHT

As I approach my city
from the South-East
at Three A.M.

it is illuminated
by the pre-dawn light
of midsummer.

But I can't get into town.

The barricades are up and manned.

My festival avenue is now a war zone.

We are at war.

Maybe Canadian racists

are at the throats of other Canadians;
or a pair of species

struggle for supremacy:

Homo Sapiens bites Canis Vigilantis.

Or an insurrection has been mounted by the poor
to protest unfair distribution of the nation's wealth.

Or the raving sleepless ones

have taken their war dance
into the streets

to the tune of the booming wheels of war.

Or the city has organized a drill

in preparation for the dreaded real thing.

Only a few hours have passed

since the anti-aircraft batteries
filled the skies with puffs of smoky cordite
and the block-busting bombs bursting in air
move those prone to the postures of war
into assuming the position.

A uniformed man like me,

apparently my enemy,
advances;

a practiced belligerence
in his walk
tells me

he's out to get me

to make me a prisoner of war.

I raise my arms.

SKIN KNOT

Here, you introspective ranter!
Gaze upon your navel!
Peel back the scars
 this atrophied umbilical scar has become.
It is a Gordian Knot whose age is your age;
its mystery can only unfold
 to the skilled knotsman
 who can release its truth
 by solving the problem of its untying.
Uh-Oh!
Beware the impatient Macedonian
whose sharp wit would give this untying
short and painful shrift --
 his quick, short cut
 shall leave you very mortal,
 very forgotten!

TO MIRANDA |

|
Another Tyger Burning Bright! |
Long have I admired Miranda. |
This divine symmetry, |
 forged to foil |
 Uranus' eccentric moon, |
this sweet Miranda |
 rules with smooth thought |
 and a wit nourished |
 by classical schooling. |
The gestalts |
of the Caucasus |
 grace her esteem; |
the Steppes and Crimea |
 have sculpted her face, |
 smoothened her midnight hair, |
 set her dark eyes' gaze, |
 guided the steps of her hectic dance |
 and directed the focus of her dreams. |
She sings |

and the world shall know |
her soul. |
No Anastasia, this! |
Miranda rules! |
She's an uncrowned sovereign |
reigning over these many hearts. |
I exult, |
agape in admiration |
of this woman |
that the heavens' confluences |
and the eugenics of her birth |
have framed. |

HARBINGER OF DESSICATION

He told me they'd never lost a crop in January.
I referred to last winter's spare snows and asked if farmers could depend on water tables and capillary action to provide.
"Provide?" He raised his voice. "We've never lost a crop in January!"
I said this all seems more like climate change than simple weather.
I said this was different -- bigger than local weather. A hemisphere of deeper lows and slower-moving highs and narrower gradients and more powerful storms -- I said something ... something wicked...
He swore at me. He called me a jinx.

It's May, now.
Here we are, submerged beneath a restless sea of air. Its waves? Breakers. The distance between peak and trough? Minimal. The height of each wave? I don't know, but down here we can see the dunes rippling with the effect of the undertow. The drag. Along with these expansions come things wicked. My plains are being blown fallow by the storms of this aerial sea.
The night wind seems driven by incubi with a demonic vengeance. The dry, cold rush floods upwind nostrils and breathing is difficult. Crisp, sear meadows. Chapped lips. Gritty hair. A high roar that bends treetops in its current yet hints of no rain. The squalls drain rain into the dry air below and the droplets evaporate before they hit the ground.
Surely something ...

"Doris Regina: A Thebean Comedy" (A Libretto)

by Dean Morrison McKenzie (c)2001

It profits not an erstwhile queen
To invoke her personal deity
To save herself from the shots and slings
Of those who'd slam her piety.

Doris, Princess, by God ordained,
When crowned, she'd stand alone
Against the traitors in her domain
Who'd usurp from her her throne.

A small town barrister there came
Who defended a man accused
Of playing with children an adult's game.
Doris was not amused.

Her rant was heard across the land
Against this soliciter's deed,
Even though he'd taken the advocate's stand
To fulfil Great Justice's need.

As The Hustings gave this ambitious marm
A chance at a last "Hurrah!"
She glibly told Papparazzi's swarm,
"Que sera, sera!"

She was once a man, but medium's magic
Polled all in an e-mail game;
The referendum's results were comic-tragic --
The Populace changed his name.

Nor can she erase the gaffs of her past;
Its stigma sticks much too tightly;
Doris shall lose when the die is cast
As a loser should lose, and rightly.

Soph Ocles 410 BC
(Midway to the Birth of Time)

Skipping Stone

Did j'ever

find a perfect skipping stone
miles from the nearest slough
so you pedal your bike all the way there
only to find it dry?

And by the time you get to the next one
two farms further,
the wind is up, whitening the wave-caps,
but you know that conditions will improve
with the evening's calm.

So you practice the afternoon away
with lesser stones
that the choppy wave-tops send
into erratic bounces
and premature splashes-down.

Centrifuge and wrist-snap
and back-twist and elbow-throb
and shoulder-cramp
and dying, cold wind
force the throwing arm
into a deep, pulsating ache.

So you retrieve
the stony coin from your pocket,
flip it once to reassure yourself of its balance,
and wing it as hard as you can
toward the calmest part of the slough.

Wouldn't you know it?
At the first skip, it sails
into a long, sky-bound trajectory,
turning its lazy gyre nearly vertical
then arcs back down
to puncture the water staccato.

It's over.

If it's any consolation,
maybe this slough will go dry, too,
and you'll pedal out in August
just to take a peek.

Y'know?

You found something perfect;
something that was all potential,
and tried to hold onto it
until conditions were perfect --

and rushed it.
And Lost It!
Not the stone, the shot.
The one chance you'll ever have, it seems,
to see the interface between disciplined skill
and pure form.
A life detail here, on this page,
in the abstract
After all,
the tracings on the water's surface
are transitory;
and nothing's written with this stone.
But in your wildest dreams
you go through the sheet-winding gyrations
to hurl the dream-stone flawlessly
and you can still see and hear
the long, sloping curve
and the watery tic.....tic.....tic....tic...
tic..tic.tictictictictic....
as its last motoring turn takes it
into a tightening spiral
back into its own wake
before it disappears from sight.

All that is left
is a series of concentric circles
widening
on the still surface.
The complex of rings overlaps and ripples.

You turn away.

But, invisible, still trying to fly,
the stone flutters like a falling leaf
down through the green algae-bloom and weeds
to rest on the slough-bed's muddy bottom.

It raises a little puff of silt
that settles back upon it
in its resting place.

The touch of protein left by your fingertips
attracts the first minutiae of pondlife
to its lightly-textured surface
and slime begins anew
on this subtlest of all evidence
of your ever having been at all.

Poetry Month

We poets live our poems;
Our every utterance is a poem;
We carry the language
of our high art with us
like a dazzling accessory;
Not a second flees before our awarenesses
that we cannot capture
in the dynamic of our muse.
We are Poet!
This, our month!

Modestly, Modestly

"Are you ready for the full frontal moment?
Nod in preparation
and I shall slowly turn toward you
raising my near arm just so
and you can watch the breast rise in response
to this taut flesh-stretch
and see the cool studio air
tilt the pap, filling as it is
with warm blood
and the blush from flesh pink darkens in modesty
to a deeper tone, a higher tone, a darkening
that sends its own highlight
an eyetrail! See? Look how big my nipples grow!
It's as though my breasts offer milky contents
to a voracious hunger, unweaned,
who would try these toughnesses
between tongue-tip and teeth
and drain the varnish from my unfreshened teat
and create involuntary clenchings in my nether parts
and wetten all in readiness for your rising body
and freshen me in the spillage of rut-shot.
I am so wrung out with want
your painting can definitely wait.
Here!
Place your brushtip here
and raise a second
to surpass this first in sighs of stretch

and I shall spin a gyration I learn
from your oily mauves.
See how they enwrap my torso as I maintain contact?
Higher! Higher!
Do my lips with that ochrous stick tasting of deeper earth,
And Here! Let me throw a leg over your shoulder
as you kneel in awe
and plead for the other ochrous flavour of my deeper earth.
As I slide down your rancid smock
and hang myself like a damp chamois on your hook
let those lower arts shift in their urgency
so these higher ones can have their sway.
A dance we do now for heaven's sake
and a fading of consciousness
ensures that this freshness
shall be captured forever
in The Great Post-Coital Painting
that shall surely follow.

THE LONELIEST MONK

The monk on his knees
elbows on stony sill,
searches his heaven for truth;
he strolls the hillside
overlooking the Elbe's dark meander
between the castles and the feudal fields;
his coarse woolen hassock
swings with his slow, grave step
as he confronts eternity
clutching his beaded cross to his chest.
His cowl veils his hooded introspection;
his mumbled prayers
are rife with his plea for forgiveness
for mercy
as he plots his next move;
he would out-Machiavelli Machiavelli
as he wrestles control of human souls
back from the Holy See
to free them from the bonds

the indulgences
the fiefs
of the Imperial Prince in Rome.

What Monk would,
 Monk does:
 Monk's will being done;
 Monk's bonds a-loosening
 Monk's combo a-broadening
 Monk's sidemen a-swinging
 in time with this new signature
 Monk's hammer mounts the chart
 for this New Combo's Free Improv
 Monk's heart beat
 sets the pace for the whole band
 to wail this new hep through the centuries --
 an iconoclastic new option
 yet no fundamental is compromised

Monk! Pounding on the door,
 hammering a farewell
 to the old hierarchy.
 Let the masses swing up and away
 into a new freedom.

What Monk Would?
 Only One!
 Maybe Two!
 The Monk! The Monk!
 The Loneliest Monk!

The most under-rated genre in the world of literature is the dramatic monologue, perfected by the two Roberts, Browning and Frost. Characterizations include the poet, the performer of the poem, the speaker in the poem, the antagonist spoken to in the poem, the listener in the poem and each listener in the audience. This suggests that no two listeners give exactly the same spin to the poem's resolutions.

Here, then, is a dramatic poly-logue:

The Great Debate

by The Jazz Poet

A tough room is better than a vacant room
 a live room than a dead room
 Fill any room with phillistine converts
 and a clean sound
 a pure sound
 a strident limbeck of notes

held to the straight line of the time signature
at a pace held constant by metronome mind
and skin-beat muscular

Place a verb in the sound
modify it
dramatize it
direct its patterns
reflect on its narrative possibilities

A tale's being told in many voices
one loaded with philosophical debate

Go reedy clarinet and the saxes
pick up the vibes
the staccato 32nd notes
parlay the male protagonist into character!

Anthropomorphic and protohuman guitar
with her double font of octaves
her hourglass shape reflects her lover's
manipulating picks and frets
her bubbling lead lines obtrude not at all
maleness is the guitarman
she is woman
her responses under his fingertips
prove the sensual alternative

The bird scats unison
a hungry three and a half octave need
modulating vocal chords
to become the fretted melody
effortlessly traversing the treble clef
conjuring sheer magic
as timbre disappears into the lead instrument
an echo with no bounce time
exercising perfection of pitch to exhort listener
to join her agape state

Thin low bassline slides a new voice into the fray
offering machismo tempered by growl and lunge
his alternative even tastes diminished
he grieves a minor fourth suspended
and arpeggiates a new sonic echo
from deep pelvic recesses
no scream here-- a philosophy of compromise
lay back, bassman,
then lunge your predatory skill,
your callous

(See how his ear funnels this combo
into his basso-centric gestalt
and slopes and curves the stereophone)

Enter the lip-stridden horn
leaping the redundant melody
then yodelling the scales
proving the accidental nature
of much human discourse --
every every major ninth scale
in a great circle of fifths
that moves the dialogue
into a dizzying rush
horn pulls horn along
until the bone-man proves his power
bugling a maternal climb
over the reedy ladders
of the woodwindmen

The horizon for this setting is cruised
by the 880-fingered pianoman
follow his flying fingers
his wilderness
of melody and harmony
and discord and resolution
brain and ear connected
nearly without synapse
to the reflexes of fingerprint and ivory
he gives this mating of staccato and sustain
a levelling and a flow --
that narrative absolute
the wordsmiths' transition
film makers' segue

Hail the brazen cymbal-crash and brushed, taut skin
hat me a double, deario
doff it in appreciation of the moves this tale makes
control, oh time-man
synco my pate
cool my heat
break my reverie
echoplosive the openings left by the protagonist,
while the monologist cries for emphasis
brush me a snare to trap my fancy
leave me a-dance and a-laugh
drum me dreaming, swaying catatonia
my head will bob all the way to the next gig!

So flute and marimba and the Duke of Whyte play
their roles in this unending discussion
this battle with only one victor
You few whose lives are characterized
by these stage-hounds

these irrepressible egos
these working musicians
Thanks, everybody!
You've gotta love this playhouse!
This sweet, sweet suite!

IRONMEN AND PUSSYWILLOWS

Gentlemen!

Grunt me no more your bellicose grunts!
I reflect on the dregs
of our race,
half of whom are misnamed.

The war goes on.
The pillowy adipose of
our antagonists is unloosed
and they have clearly won!

I holler "Uncle"!
I can struggle no more
against these smoothnesses
that fill my recurring dreams.

I count among my allies
the millions of us
who have lost our stomachs
for these confrontations we cannot survive.

Let us call for Peace!
There can be no war
when the combatants' arms
are outstretched for embrace!

Gladly Beaten

In Memoriam: Christopher John Schroer 1966-1997

These images that follow are part of an attempt to honor Chris, my first guitar student.

He lost the long battle he gamely fought against cancer.

His family and I first met in 1970 and we all became friends; I watched Chris and Catherine grow up. Iconoclastic Helmut and Winifred proved blood's thickness as the children's careers exploded.

Risky, creative deeds define all four lives.

Now there are three.

No!

We won't permit Chris to perish into dusky anonymity. His passage was fraught with hope-filled, miraculous remissions from debilitating pain, and Chris worked hard at his craft through it all.

His career in the tough and unpredictable world of Rock Music was getting off the ground when his illness interrupted a triumphant New York studio session. So close.

So far.

Here, aspects of Christopher's Dream.

Dean

The Guitarman's Dream

He saw the connection
between the things of the world
and the things of the human soul;
between the sense-able
and the sensual;
between the harmonies of nature
and those capturable by an artist's
invention.
He would gather the intensifying hum of

a wasp's nest
shaken by a sudden windgust of
summer storm,
illuminated by thunder-flash,
struck by storm-hurled droplets
spattering against its dry papery skull;
And he would set interpretations of these
surface sounds
to music against the crash and rumble
of the sky-vibes reverberating
from day-world surfaces.
His intuition told him
in no words that we could
understand
that these echoes
would echo past the end of
things.
They'd echo in another world.
A deeper, wider world; one just beyond
the edge
of human vision,
just beyond the limit
of human hearing;
but a world nonetheless.
A world in the abstract; one
whose structures are pitched
polychromes,
where multirhythmic signatures are the
order of the day,
and subtly-flavoured delicacies
are served up on diamond
hardnesses
at the farthest bony end of the
scale,
and those metallic rumbles cross the
stormy sky
and are hammered and pulled and
distorted
into a life storm.
A life story.
The guitarman's life story!
His music tells his stormy story.
Listen.
It fades, but not to silence.
Now it passes.
A heavy dew-fall hints wetly of the

storm's effect.
Torpid insects await the light of dawn.
The air is heavy with ozone.
Battered flowers shall recover
more effusively beautiful than
ever.
But listen.
Just over the horizon,
the restless, aerial fray
still struggles to be heard, even at this
distance;
the thunder-stone still tolls its tale:
the story's essence is still perceptible
to those of us
who stop what we're doing long
enough
to listen.
Really listen.
I mean, just listen, Man!
Listen to the music!

OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS

The first flake of winter lights,
then melts,
leaving a wet iridescent pearl
on the fabric of my cashmere sweater;
its only contaminant: a mote of dust.
But, before its melt,
the sharp crystal's geometric exactness
refracts the sun's flat ray
into a spectral sparkle.
It is so with the glacier in the Nahanni
named by the first missionary to see it
"Our Lady of the Snows".
Nearly vertical off the saddle back's cornice,
the wind-sculpted blue ice
and eroded granite
imply the Holy Spectacle.
Mediterranean cowl binds Her brow
above the veiled, sightless orbs
in their icy sockets.
They peer over the Northern vale
while from beneath Her stony robe's folds
Her toes grip the earth's sphere;
Her outstretched hands invite
and gather.

Snow's buoyant swirl softens everything
excepting Her igneous form.

It is the same with the annual expansion
and contraction
of the Northern Ice Cap.
Beneath the blue-green boreal light
it stops time with its freeze and melt
and keeps time.

It is so with an Ice Age.
The fluid frost traces its random geometry
while the polar world
flows
down
to the sea's briny plain.

THE KING AMONG THE KINGS *

We Kings had been led from lands afar
By this star's hallowed light;
The heavens above us would proclaim
This Infant's Royal Right.
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
This Infant's Royal Right!

A Prince of Peace! A Heavenly King!
A Babe in Bethlehem
Whose star-predicted birth this Holy Night
Would fraternize all men!
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Would fraternize all men!

Tyrants are threatened all
By this Child's lowly birth;
Astrologers predict His Holy words
Would echo round the Earth.
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Would echo round the Earth!

We came prepared to honour Him,
But we would need a sign;
We'd bow to no one but a prince
Born of a Royal Line.
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Born of a Royal Line!

Look at this! It is to laugh!
He's just a child newborn!
But the Angel Gabriel appeared
And blew a herald on his horn.
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Blew a herald on his horn!

What could we do? These were the signs!
And Heaven began to sing;
The shepherds heard the angels' choirs
Sing praises to This King!
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Sing praises to This King

We offered tributes to this child,
But we could not know then
The gift this new King brought for us
Would immortalize all men.
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Immortalize all men!

We turned our backs on Herod's land;
Took the news back to the East;
Our message to the world is clear:
"Born is the Prince of Peace!"
No ilky mo batat,
No ilky mo batat,
Born is the Prince of Peace!

Catherine McLaughlin

carbon dated

in the cave
at Charlie Lake
they found a bead
abandoned
with a stone tool

nine thousand years ago
she took sinew
threaded beads
gathered beauty
to her throat

I touch the gold
around my neck
and smile

visit: Ruth

she tells me
that when she is well
she visits the psych ward
shares cigarettes, listens
holds their shaking hands

in her apartment she reads
prays, takes her meds.
checks herself in
when her fear is too great

wednesdays she is not at home
no phone, no one at the door
wednesdays she is healing

I wonder at her strength
you are a bridge, I tell her.
her head jerks up, grey eyes stare

I had a dream, she whispers

I was outstretched
facing an abyss.
my exposed spine
a scarlet track
of quivering nerves

the gleaming ivory
of my bones
guided my friends
as they crawled
slowly across me

news

I remember the light
in the kitchen. I stared
at my busy hands, trying
to avoid the sorrow
in your eyes

I don't understand, I said.
so you spoke again

what are you telling me? I asked, afraid
of the place
where my question was taking us

I thought you knew, you whispered.
then you told me

the passing

at dawn
the artist dreams he
climbs
the mountain takes his
breath

memory flash sunlight
piercing

aspen limbs star
sparkling
lights the snow
swaths of pewter streak
the big sky

waking, gasping
with the climbing
struggle
he turns to her he tries to
call
to draw her closer

pressure on his chest,
pain
waves pounding
it is he who moves
away to mountains

now he stumbles
paint box tips
colours tumble down
the path
red blue yellow
sunsets rivers skies aspen
snow swans swirling
into watercolour vision

illuminated rainbows arc
into one colour no colour
he sees only light

borne aloft on white
wings
swans trumpet his arrival

about "the passing"

Prominent Peace River Country artist Jim Adrain died of a heart attack, suddenly and unexpectedly, at the age of 61. His watercolour landscapes of this beautiful place, including the rare Trumpeter Swans which breed here, are a priceless legacy. I met Jim only once; I enjoyed his work for years. When I learned of his death I began to wonder what a

*painter might see and feel as he left this realm for the
next.
This is what I imagined.*

Catherine

she's easy

look at her, making eyes at autumn.
when she sees his hazy glow on the horizon
her breath catches.
a while ago, all she spoke about
was summer. oh she loved
the touch of his heat
sweat a slow drip
on her skin

someone told me
that she even fell for spring.
charmed by his youth
her eyes could see the green
that is only a wish, first sap flowing
beneath the white of aspen limbs.
but now I see her opening to autumn
gathering his gold to her heart

show her your colours
show her the light
that only you can flash
from your spokes
in the wheel of the year

I tell you, she's easy.
look at winter, taking notes

Robert N. Pruden

Fuzzy Remnants of Old Dog Shit

I cleaned a neglected part of the yard today
Amid labored grunts and dribbling, bad tasting sweat
I found the remains of my youth bent, moulded and rusted
There were no Grecian sculptures
No fine wines
No dusty trophies
Only broken pieces of asphalt shingles
Old bent and tarry nails and screws
Rusty colored pieces of Christmas tree branches hastily trimmed and tossed
aside in the freezing winter
A busted and crusted stroller for dolls
The fuzzy remnants of old dog shit
Amid the dead husks of quack grass and broken bits of black beetle bug

In someone else's yard I would have suspected
They were remnants of a bygone era
Items to be buried by the raining volcanic ashes of Pompeii
Of layers of time
Forgotten detritus of the living
To be petrified by eons of mineral exchange
And finally discovered, excavated, dated and classified by
Searchers of the wondrous ages of the past
Who think how good the old days were
And how did we ever manage to live as cleverly as we did with what we had

In my yard they were something else
They were my recent past
Marking the passage of my youth
Degenerating fluidly before my eyes
In the fuzzy slow melt into something else
One golden era melting greenly into the next

It's amazing how life's pauses can take up our thoughts in time
Only to keep us in check
By the fluidity and degeneration of the bonds that hold us together
We go into the cluttered closets of our lives
And do a clearing away of the remnant uselessness
And BOOM!
Suddenly we are aware of just how much of everything has past
And left breathless we are forced to sit down

... let the palpitating heart ease itself
And work out a way to catch up on those things we have neglected

My children are no longer children
When I look at them I see burgeoning young adults...young immortals
Who no longer tolerate simple orders
But require hopeful requests with detailed instruction before they decide
to
proceed
Or not
They refuse instruction because they are way over my head already
And roll their eyes when I try to explain something
Even if they don't know it but hey, it's only dad talking
What a parochial old man I am
... I have become...only because they are young and I am not
I get disdainful impatience when I attempt exercise fatherly authority over
non-issues
How far we have come

I remember when that doll stroller was prized and fought over
I remember when those bits of shingle were thrown down during the house
renovation
I remember the time I had to trim the Christmas tree branches
I froze my ass off
And the dog shit which to this day seems a perennial feature of my front
lawn
It will melt into nothingness
And so will my dog
And so will I
And so will the young immortals.

God Waits While I Think Old Thoughts

Writhing legs
Aching to stretch
Along the length of my pen
Seek peace solace solitude satiation
Through the miles
Heel to toe
Heel to ballpoint
My breath flows through my fingertips
And billows through the dream catcher

My journal
But its loose netting
Only slows the wisps
That swirl around the strings
Barely fan the feathers
Then curl away and dissipate into the universal collective consciousness
Waste bin of old thought
To flow through the fingertips of another
Lost poet
Over-thought expression
Nothing new retold in a thousand million redundant mullings
While God sits alone
Idling
Drumming fingers on the flat of a stray galaxy
Waiting...
For us to think of something new.

Insh 'Allah

(Arabic for "God willing...")

... we will be able to follow our dreams
our dreams will be our reality
our realities will follow the common thread
that is woven into the tapestry of eternal life
and marked as a bright new star in the night sky
for all to see and praise
in worship of the God of all things good
who teaches us to listen to our hearts
and love those hearts that cross our paths

With each strike of my pen on paper
... through the modicum of God's language
I expand the universal accretion of thoughtful consciousness
Which expands the domain of Heaven
A domain that I would open unto your naïveté
To teach you of my acceptance of you and to ease your fatigue
Just as the arms of God would embrace and comfort you in troubled times
I thus embrace your heart

I am an archangel and I stand strong
In belief of you and the journey you take
Know that the fear of Death is the fear of Life
With every breath taken and expelled
Go forth in strength and faith
And bring to conclusion every deed that inspires your being

Concede your heart to none who would devour it
Sweep them aside like cold ashes on a stone hearth
Thus swept aside you are free to follow the path before you
Let your substance stoke the fires of your being
And believe in your immortality as a child of God
And so walk boldly forward

... sallam alekum ... alekum salaam.
(peace be with you ... and also with you)

Silent Moon Trails and Long Neck Feathers

silent moon trails float on quiet summer waters
lakeshore humidity rises into the hot night air
as insect faeries dance worship to Luna

the water pulses to life and the moon beams scatter
swells gently crest and roll ahead of floating families out for a midnight
swim
one long neck leads
followed by one, two, three, four, five, six ... seven goslings
another long neck trails behind like a rear-guard
two more huddling families bring up the rear
a feathery mystery moving magically
across the surface of pooled silver diamond melted by the lunar light

I can only imagine the hidden underwater world of webbed feet
churning to keep the easy pace
just as I can only imagine the hidden world of your own heart
censured by the serenity of the moment
a moment enwrapped
by a rapturously wondrous black sky
emblazoned by stars reading the lexicon of ancient thoughts and desires
a vast vista of life's hopes and death's final domain

a speeding satellite echoes the sudden white fury of a burning meteor I
espy
in the peripheral
... a falling star
... a fallen star
... a wish upon a heart

while I track the satellite it passes defiantly across the Big Dipper
peeling silver shavings from Polaris in its meddling usurpation of

astronomical design
the satellite rotates on its own axis in easy calculated turns
sending off regular pulses of Arabian light
it causes me to think of heady rooftop nights in Saudi
scented with pink frangi pani, white jasmine and the mauve vines of
bougainvillea
before it fades into distant reaches still sending its electronic signals
into forever

a shrill night sound pierces the air
it's some kind of winged night flier
surely a great horned owl for its nightly feed of skittering vole and mice

I am glad I came out for this stroll though midnight poetry
that eases my mind into thoughts sensual and peaceful
it reminds me how much I love solitude
yet desire the company of fellow beings
and I feel a level of peace that no other country in the world allows
as I begin my walk home along the trails of my universe.

Edmonton morning

0542 h
the morning rush of blue and grey is on
it's the 17th street rush
80 on 60
passing rushes in singles or staccato bursts of internal combustion workers
while the only prairie fire I've ever seen rises redly with the morning sun

Sheila Chandra sings Aboneadrone
Gentle winds billow prairie rye
A lone avian arcs across the rising bright
Which dims petro-chemical luminaries into redundancy
It's time for me to get a move on
To join the greys who support the blues
Who turn the wheels of industry
It's another great Canadian morning
At the edges of a great Canadian city.

Diane Shuller

Moondreams

the nightshade yawns

beneath the moon - expels

her deadly perfume

sweet moonlight asleep

upon a meadow . .

hum a lullaby

continents from here

the moon rises over

my childhood home

Kathie Sutherland

full moon

in the full of the moon
i glide across the forestscape
flowing like mist
my paws sinking in the soft earth
my seasons filled with
leaves sighing in full night moons
that sing with voices
like wolves on the ridge
in the darkness
my skin sprouts
fine hair prickles
on the back of my hands

last waltz

slow dancing with you
half turns in
an intricate waltz
learned on our father's toes
held in mother's arms
i followed you
entwined into twilight
you were leading my steps
until now
one shoe is tapping
and i am dancing away
to the door

walking with my friend

we walked today
me and my dog and
my absent friend

i met her there
in the polar wind
she sang up the hill
her tenor voice
in the tops of the trees
holding bare branches
to paint feathered clouds
on the empty sky

golden she danced
in shivering grass
swirled about in her
windy dress
reaching out
to billow my hair
she touched my face
with redden hands
lingering with
long fingers
caressing the wind chimes
she held her breath
while geese warbled
low on the river

she was hiding there
under the spruce
nodding at bluejays
playing chase
along the walkway
that stretches ahead
the ending
lost in the trees
i'm pumping along
my heart
flying

we turn to come home
her sunny arm
warm on my back
she whispers pearls of

wisdom in strings
of words
scattered like
jewels on velvet

ice angel

at the edge of the river
morning sunlight warming my back
diamonds floated in the air
hoary bearded twigs
fell away down the embankment
toward the chink of river ice
crumpling at the bridge
in the bank of fog
my golden angel stood
radiant wings sweeping her feet
a shadow
golden, holy, precious
i laughed aloud
held my arms out
and she embraced me

Flow

I take the coat of Mystery
And fit it loosely about my body
Using my senses as the guide to go
Inward
Where the breath of God is warm and dry
Where He sighs through me
Like the wind
Through the naked branches
Of the winter trees

Hunter

sigh of dawn breeze
breathing tendrils of fog
across the slap of water on the beaver pond
morning creeping across the hill

scarlet autumn sumac
hugging the logging road
great, grey clouds
press down upon the mountain
pushing the great black moose
across the clearing
i touch my father's hand
point toward the sound of beauty
crashing away into the golden brush

one crow rises on long wings
massaging the air in slow waves
rippling the fragrance of pipe smoke
and the aroma of coffee from the thermos

a silent ghost, with me always
red plaid jacket bright against black rock
my hunter father watches pine boughs
sweeping against the sky

Thomas Trofimuk

excerpts from *The Floe Lake Suite*

1.

hold your breath
the mountains inverted this morning
valleys created of peaks thrust down
the world reflected backwards
and more beautiful
across this pale emerald lake
silent, time stopped, completely still
and I, hesitate,
feel guilt,
about rippling this moment
by washing
my face

1(a).

³There is surely nothing other than the single purpose of the present moment. A man's whole life is a succession of moment after moment. If one fully understands the present moment, there will be nothing else to do, and nothing else to pursue. Live being true to the single purpose of the moment."

from Hagakure
by Yamamoto Tsenetomo

2,000 foot slogging climb
inward journey on suicide switchbacks
burning legs and lungs
 ascent to Floe
 not a flowing ascent
no elegance. little grace.
only suffering
But Zen knowing of
each painful moment
The bottom did not exist.
The top does not exist.
The path is small, narrow

There is only the next step.

3(a).

We begin to know this place

Little things like the time of day the sun hits

the small Buddhist prayer flags above the tent

the colour of the larches<a steady movement towards molten gold

the smell of earth in the morning

the descending temperature of the air five minutes after sunset

the sound of the mountain

the curve of terminal moraine across the lake

This knowing is a joy for us<our eyes and hearts are open

Normally we up and re-pack and move on to new passes, vistas

But here, we have rooted for a few days

We watch other hikers move on, move through, this high camp

We have become deliberately, carefully, observant

Around 2:30 p.m., with the sun at 1 o'clock on the mountain, ten degrees

above Floe's upper ridge, we pour our first scotch and water of the day

We call it the start of happy hour, but really

they all are.

9.

It's an act of faith to crawl into your sleeping bag

in darkness, in mountains, with only a thin nylon tent wall

between you and what's out there. The tent is an illusion of safety.

It's only real purpose to shield from rain, dew, a little wind.

It's faith that lets you fall asleep with blackness all around. And the mountain banging rocks and ice down its face throughout the night. What was that?

Oh. The mountain again.
Tonight, after dinner, a hundred metres along the edge of the lake
I saw bear tracks in the sand.

too early for this!

I do not want you to pay attention to this--not yet!
It's 8 a.m. and you have eaten your breakfast
You've been changed and fed and now it's my turn
I emerge from the shower to find you sitting up,
nested by pillows watching television with steely eyes
and stretched neck, your face a blank page
I am horrified. You are my innocence damn it!
I switch off the horrid wasteland and run to the bookshelf
for an antidote to television.
Mark Twain, Hemingway, Alice Munro, some Buddhist texts...
The Old Man and the Sea!
I rush back ready to read to you, ready to save you
But you have fallen asleep with your pink blanket
pulled up beside your face
and the soft light through the maple tree flooding the room
and I am in love with you again

I have learned my lesson.
I will not let you look upon the wasteland again
until I can prep you for the void.
Tomorrow, I will turn you around
encourage you to look into a different screen
at trees and sky and clouds, weather and cats, birds,
the colours green and blue, flowers all periwinkle,
and tangerine tulips and bruised irises,
puddles reflecting trees and sky and softly rolling gray.

sounds

I have heard extraordinary sounds in my years-
Malher's 5th Symphony, Miles Davis in Montreaux
wolves at mountain twilight across from Pyramid Lake
the heartbreaking guitar of Stevie Ray, Keith Jarrett's Köln Concert

And I have heard the melody of icy rivulets over broken granite
the thunder of icefields protesting gravity by cracking in the dark

the music of oceans reflected by wind in a thousand thousand pines
and silence so profound that heartbeats win

And I have experienced the peculiar noises of loving-
the loud and unrestrained bellows, guttural metronomed grunts
soft and steady purring in rooms without edges
and mere whispers of orgasmic delight

But nothing prepared me for this-
a sudden exaltation of happy, bubbling water sound
from this three-month-old child
who surprises her parents with an unprecedented, joyous giggle

a marriage of snow

I'm not against the idea of marriage
Okay, it's true, I have railed against
the institution
The commerce of it all.
the fuchsia bride's maid dresses,
shoes and poofy hair and pastel taffeta
matching baby-blue groomsmen
the printed match books
I have been known to say:
We've got it backwards-
that marriage should be solemn
as a funeral
And funerals, drunken celebrations
of a life.
And I have watched as marriages
around me stumbled and fell
And all this time I have not
taken that leap of faith
into *Until death do you part*.

In the middle of Elk Island Park
sheltered under a tall, spreading pine,
protected from insistent rain,
I begin to think about
a marriage of snow
With mountain winds throwing
upper limbs of trees back and forth
against miserable gray sky
and the temperature dropping by degrees
I begin to think about the nuptials of weather

Do you, the warm, moist weather from the west,
take this cold, bear weather from the Arctic,
to love and cherish?

My hiking companion and I
sit smoking our cigars and pulling
on the whiskey flask
as a ceremony takes place
above our heads
We witness the forest's passage
from doldrums of fall into the small, winter death
The rain transforms into long streaks of white
against the dark pine
The world slows
The forest becomes quiet.
A muffled silence descends
The sound of the rain pulls back-
is held in a gentle hand slightly above
the ground
like something half-remembered

Our hands are frozen as we
pack up our gear
and hike to the car
through a blizzard of confetti

There is a look

There's a certain 3 a.m. look you give
to a dying parent, when there're in a coma
lying in a bed
in a hospital for the close to dead.

You look over at them with hope and dread
You look for a single breath
no matter how thread bare
A small rising of the chest
under pale green sheets
movement, any movement

Tonight, after a long, still, sleep
I leaned over and looked at my daughter
who is only two weeks old

and I gave her that exact same
frightened look.

thoughts of a new bodyguard

I think about what I would do
if a madman with a vendetta against
poets pushed through
the doors of this cafe
toting semi-automatics
and opened fire
I never used to have morbid thoughts
like that
But now I go through scenarios
Like a red sports car, out-of-control
smashing through that window
How would I throw my body
to protect yours?
Or an earthquake. Or a tornado.
Or a steer run amok through city streets
What would I do to save you.
Or how about something fallen from a jet
thirty-thousand feet above
What then?
I never imagined feeling like this
when you were born
But it seems I've become
this sort of mad Holden Caulfield bodyguard
suspiciously eyeing strangers
people with cold, fishy hands
gray-haired women with razor blade cheek bones
and guys with downcast, shifty eyes
And when I run across the *fucks*
scrawled in public places
Will I wish to scrub them out
to keep you safe
another hour, another day
another night?

Lyle Weis

Night Desk at Motel # 47

this one's the worst
hell's bedroom perched
on the shoulder of the transcanada highway
rumbling 18-wheelers shaking the floor
and of course the motel is the last one
on civilization's edge

no choice but to take the pen
from the nicotine-stained fingers
of the bouffant blond who sizes me up
"writer, eh . . . waddya write?"
a challenge, she doesn't believe it or
does and knows only weird guys do it
not real men

so I reach in and whip it out
slap it down on the counter
but it seems to shrivel
under her harsh phlorescent gaze
"kinda small, isn't it," she says
"well," I explain, "it was my first book
and poetry is shorter, after all"

"yeah," she grins
"my first husband was like that"
her mouth parts curls open
to show lipstick flecks on tooth enamel
"wrote poetry, I mean"

I take the key knowing
she must have been
one tough editor

Amber Young

I am your weary lover

I am your weary lover
Left to drown in my tears
And I almost did
Fall back in
To the place we were before

But the truth broke through
And called my name
Reminded me of the pain
Once again I am alone
But not as sad as before

I stand alone, but not by myself
For I cannot forget my angels
Who stand so very tall
And sing to me in my sadness
Who fight and win the brawl

I dance in my dreams in skylight
The sun has barely blinked
And I see a sight more lovely
That I doubt the truth I see

