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concrete impermanence

by Nadine Lee Miller

A Creative writing Project
Submitted to Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department of English Language, Literature and
Creative Writing
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor.

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

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lingerie

watch

he pauses
to take off his watch
this is the man whose

yellowed socks i wash
knife in the butter dish i complain of
teeth i inspect for flecks of breakfast
hands are gentle and probing

just after he pauses
to take off his watch

you

**the aloneness of you
the tall stillness of you
the soft otherness in your eyes
the quiet of you and even when you embrace me
the awayness of you
the space between your skin and mine even when we touch
the wonder of it all**

the way you

**clutch charcoal
working it over the page
stiff thumbbed and intent**

**balance your brush
transferring paint to canvas
loose wristed and absorbed**

**grasp clay
pressing hollows into the form
bent fingered and ecstatic**

could create me

gift

the gift
of your skin
smell of your skin
after you've been bicycling in the sun
freckles and windswept hair
the damp weight of your shirt
clinging to your arms
then falling to the floor

the gift
of your skin
weight of your wrinkled brow
after you've been studying shadows
your hand holding a
brush thick with paint
weight of payne's gray on canvas

the gift of your skin
your smell
your weight
pressing me down into cotton and foam
the gift of your skin

lingerie

i tried to embarrass him once before we were married
took him to a lingerie store
saleslady smiled at me
ignored him
dollar signs where her pupils should have been
that is from our wedding collection, dear
i shrugged
if i wait til then i may never wear it
browsed through slippery satins
peek-a-boo lace
wraps and robes
held a hanger from something black and shiny under my chin
what do you think of this
he took it from my hand
threw it on the floor
it'll look great
i didn't know whether to be
aroused or ashamed

today
i fold laundry carefully
rolling his socks into balls
placing them on the counter next to
red bra
french cut panties
old woman asks for help with her coins in broken english
glances at my neat piles of his n hers
checks for a gold band around my next to smallest finger
smiles up at me knowingly
i finish my sorting
swing past the door
take an elevator
basket perched jauntily on my hip
later at home i pose
white pearls and heels
twist to see every angle
our bathroom mirror cuts me off at the waist
i kick off stilettos

file silk with worn out boxers
tourist t-shirts
baggy track pants
get ready for bed in long sleeves
wool socks
he's asleep with a book in his hand
grimy baseball cap still angled on his head

aesthetics

i pluck out my eyes
hand them to you
let you look through them
now you will believe
the man i see is taller than the one you see in a mirror
you throw the breadth of your shoulders
depths of your thoughts
out of proportion
my scale rests where yours
teeters out of balance as we weigh
your words your works
give me your eyes
they were meant to measure me

moan

remember when you held your breath
balanced between ecstasy and torment
so that you could watch me
teeter
tumble
first

i could
twist my fingers into your hair
push my breasts against your chest
wrap my thighs around your hips
pull you toward me
grip you inside me

i would almost do anything to keep you here

casting

i remember nerves tingling
awake with the slightest breath of a touch
hairs standing on end
but today
my skin is lead
these breasts too heavy for my lungs to move
diaphragm weighed down
even thoughts stick
my brain suspended in molten metal
eyes turning slower as it cools
once you poured me out with asbestos gloves
heat-proof shield lowered
to protect your face from my splashing burning glowing love
but now
the control box swings unmanned from its wires
above an empty crucible as i
congeal

four sights

**your hands taught me
I learned**

**fingers gripped me as feet kicked
living room carpet burning my skin when I fell**

**fingers stung when your arms swung
hall closet doors braking my fall**

**fingers printed my throat
waterbed giving under our weight**

**my fingers bruised your cheeks
sealing our secret awakening**

kitchen knives

i don't sleep much anymore
i lie awake and think about
kitchen knives
you're good with knives
dart jab slash before i see you
cut just deep enough to make me bleed
enough to remind me that you're there
when one wound is crusting over
itching driving me to scratch
your arm swings and i'm
losing blood
the walls are stained and the furniture is getting worn from my
knocking into it in quick retreat
the carpet looks bare and matted down from too much shampooing
i know you'll say i used to wield
butcher's blades and fish filleters
i lie awake thinking
once i could have fought back and it would have seemed
natural

touch

I want to trample your skull
instead I walk gingerly across your body
as if the soles of my feet meet hot coals
each time they slap against your skin

I have learned to love the sound of screams
something familiar resonates in pain so I
smile to myself know I could inflict such torture
even as I flinch when you frown

I would like to put away these thoughts
forget the insane ramblings that spill from my mouth
as I cringe shake press my hair to your feet
bathe them with my tears

power tools

**you sever speech centre to reach
gray memory
you want it all back
rip from my skull
who I became with you
lover
bride
wife**

**my words come disconnected
tenseless verbs
caseless nouns
I can no longer name my self**

**you leave a jagged gash behind
I touch it gingerly
fingers slick red
feel my brain pulsing
try to heal
wish you had used a sterile scalpel
instead of that chainsaw**

selfish

I want to yell until I hyperventilate
give my body over to anger and pain
a spoiled three year old
I want to throw myself into a couch
too solid to be hurt by my kicking feet
scream at someone too strong to do anything but laugh

I want to cry until I fall asleep
give my soul over to terror and grief
a neglected three year old
I want to collapse onto a chair
too soft to bruise my floppy arms
sigh at someone wise enough to do anything but laugh

rentals

rentals

patent shoes dodge puddles
wet feet carry me from the basement apartment we share where
you didn't answer when I said
don't you love me anymore
where you said you don't plan on moving

right hand stings
fingers white against black umbrella handle
back pack on my left shoulder protects

penny savers
classified sections

outside pocket bulky

quarters

clink in payphones

blue highlighter

circles ads for rooms

underlines

timesroman qualifiers

cozy

central

red pen

scratches notes on white stock

dollar signs followed by

three digit numbers

nouns like first and last

plus symbols

short hand for hydro electricity

september

maple leaf stains mark my route
measured pace on wet concrete
I walk to my door
orange letters

apartment for rent

welcome me home

laundry waits to be carried to the cellar
I wade through a labyrinth of flat u-haul cardboard
books still boxed
knickknacks crated
dishes bubble wrapped

spend an hour
turning dials scooping soap folding hot fabric
throw out frayed underwear
threadbare socks

laundry cools
I bow to mildew on crumbling walls
sit lotus on this cold floor
rock back and forth
settle in

table for four non-smoking

mexicali rosa's
table for four
first time i've seen you since I left you
married friends here only for the weekend
so we try to share them
you go to the washroom
faces lean toward me
whispers *are you okay*
i nod
tell them
myself
everything will be fine without you

bathroom door opens
silence
you return
hm hmmm *hmmmmm* over the menu
as if you might order every item
no one looks up to react
you're working too hard
misreading your audience
for once your act flops
i memorize the dessert list

lunar calendar

footsteps bend rusted fire escape
his retreat
I lean against the window
right hand brushes dust from blinds
stops short of separating slats
I leave by the front door
take a route I know he won't
walk to the Palace
watch a movie alone

shoulders back head high I
march home
street is unlit
moon shows me empty sidewalk
half of her missing
other half tilted
porcelain roundly hanging
teacup
my left hand reaches up
as if it could set her upright
fill her with memories
right hand stays limp at my side
content to watch her wane

vocabulary lists

he is gone

I have had to discard pronouns

nouns

that I no longer understand

we us

love lust

search lists of names for states of mind that fit

find none

you speak of ecstasy

the kind you can buy in a pill

e

liquid e

speed

mind altering drugs

I would have ignored you a year ago

confident in who I was

now I listen

words unfamiliar

enticing

alone at one a.m.

**fingers stroke white rounded plastic
fumble with buttons
beat rhythms from polished polyurethane
wrists rest against flexible rubber**

**distracted by the absence of your hands
can't sleep
so I type until my vision is blurred**

speechless

**my tongue trips against my teeth
words invade my ears
glottal stops and voiced fricatives
scattered vowels
even the chatter in my head
the constant ripping apart
building up
suddenly mean nothing
I could reach for the phone
invent something to say
but there is joy in silence
terrific joy**

under deconstruction

claw hammer and crow bar
hooked into my toolbelt
pushing a wheelbarrow I
tear down
cart away
everything we never did
rip planks from the bungalow we never built
kick up sections of log from no path
dig stakes from rows empty of carrot greens
chop down cherry trees unplanted

grandfather used bits of wood
crate ends
fence posts
to build things
nothing a good coat of paint won't make new
tired of second and third layers of latex
I pile these scraps
douse with lighter fluid
drop a match

autobiography

**chemical impulse by chemical impulse
I build this mind
bend space
distort gravity**

**hemoglobin molecule by hemoglobin molecule
I maintain this cosmos
refract light
blur stars**

**counted breath by counted breath
I destroy this universe
rip time
liberate worlds**

bricktown

our two bedroom was close to the downtown windsor terminal
first time we took the tunnel bus to detroit
you and I exchanged five dollars for tokens
in the machine at the renaissance centre
didn't realize it only cost fifty cents
you wanted to ride
see the city
check out greektown maybe
computer voice said
next stop joe louis arena

we overheard someone say
barnum and bailey's is at the joe
I giggled so loud you agreed to take me
we bought two fourteen dollar tickets
one program with full colour eleven by fourteen's of
lions zebras elephants
tightrope walkers fire eaters clowns
you got bread pretzels and
too much cotton candy
promised I wouldn't eat it but you knew I would

my bachelor apartment is further away
unpacking my last box on tuesday
I found the rest of the tokens
grocery shopping I took the city bus from the a and p
missed my stop got off at
your address
realized I no longer lived there
I walked the ten blocks to campbell street
plastic bags cutting off the circulation in my fingers

I decided to cross the border that weekend
took the tunnel bus
smiled at the driver
hoped he'd pass the time with small talk
he didn't

customs officer waved me through
without asking where I was going
I walked the remaining block to the renaissance centre
escalator was empty so I climbed while it moved
rode the monorail
recorded voice announced fort and cass
bag of my old harlequins heavy on my lap

I remained seated
passed john king used and rare books
six story warehouse of irregular penguins outdated texts
filmy double paned plexiglass blurred my view of
office buildings apartment complexes scheduled for demolition
ornate scrollwork still whole
palisades solid
dirty broken windows revealed
lumber stacked to the ceiling
torn empty cartons
abandoned furniture
people mover automated announcer mumbled
next stop bricktown

this much

this much

jackie
kendra
me
back seat sister squabbling
dad drives the chrysler lebaron
mom reaches from passenger seat
changes the radio station
I am nine
haven't started opening windows
grimacing in protest when
dad lights a cigarette
jackie is eight
she hasn't surpassed my height
looks up to me
kendra is three
braids of skinny ash blond hair
flank her smiley cheeks
we quibble
I love mom and dad this much
bony elbows hyper extend
try to encompass the world
I love them this much times two
well I love them this much this much this much this much
we are nine
eight
and three
haven't graduated to high school algebra yet
argument does not escalate to infinity plus one
dances in the gym are still in our future
waiting by whitewashed concrete walls for
rugby pants boys to lead us out onto the floor
hasn't occurred to us
we have all the love we need in these spindly arms
all the people we need
mom
dad
raggedy ann
to share it with

tree fort

**told dad i was going to build a tree fort
asked for help
he was too busy
said i didn't know what i was doing**

**i nailed boards into apple wood -a ladder
wedged a five-by-four sheet of plywood between branches
so that i could spy on him
while he mowed the lawn**

**he was interested
dad constructed walls
mounted and hinged a cupboard for a
purple plastic tea set mom and I sipped from**

**i stopped playing there
hornets made a nest in that cupboard
it had stood long empty of plastic saucers hilroy rule books
in a chainsaw happy moment
my dad took the whole tree down**

metallic blue fishing rod

grass stained blue jeans

filthy baseball cap

ponytail out the back

mottled cowboy boots

a fish hook

a styrofoam cup of red clay and worms

head and shoulders above me

my dad

sparkling river

sun burning bare bony shoulders

five inch trout

toolbelt

**pink skinny knees under
toolbelt just like dad's only kid size
lee cut off jeans above
sockless feet stuck in
tennis shoes that step up up ladder rungs
reach split level roof
follow shirtless hammer swinging shoulders
straddle small pieces of scrap wood**

**four year old hands count bent nails
tiny fingers wrap around
molson bottle necks
lift dewy glass
lips purse when sipping uncle mike's beer
smile when scolded for tasting**

hands

look at these hands
he says across the table
i look at two

cracked dry callused
knuckle tired
moving van loading warehouse stocking
worker's hands

but i see
hammer hefting orchard home building
fever cooling nightmare destroying
homework editing
father's hands

dorset

almost 10 o'clock a.m.

**cornsticky husk stringy hands
crinkly plastic bags and a
black and speckled ceramic pot big enough for the
growing pile of peaches-and-cream-corn on this
paint peeling red splintery step
something to do for small bodies waiting for
the sun to rise over the
pine oil and birch whispering
rock face and
warm the lake for a swim**

macintosh delicious no granny smith

this afternoon the apples start to fall
scented breezes brush heavy boughs
thud thud thud thud thud
sparrows and robins startle
lift themselves from branches
settle on grass or fence
wary of cats
my two sisters and i stand at the edge of the shade around a tree
dad grips the trunk
sinewy arms sunburned shoulders tense
shakes the tree
i can almost hear its roots rip free of terracottaclay
thudthudthud thudthud thud thud thud thud
we bend over
sometimes crawl
rescue apples from the earth
drop them in crates large enough for all three of us to sit in
once crimson wood pink from years of rain and sun
tree to tree we move
biting into fruit polished on our tshirts
squinch our faces up when we remember worms
mom takes dozens of the sour kind to the kitchen
peels cores slices them with her paring knife
seals them in plastic ziplock bags and freezes them for future pies
relatives whose names i don't remember squish our cheeks
leave with plastic bags bulging round
later this month we'll pick orangewrinkly ones from the ground
bugs and all
bin them for juice

a love poem

i wished for a mother who would

**play with my hair
tell me i looked pretty
show me how to use makeup
give me recipes and cooking tips
show me a little bit of her heart
sometimes hold my hand but**

i never looked to you

**now i've found you
each time i see you i can't wait for this
mystery to unfold**

pacemaker

brittle finger nails scratch
skin pulled tight above her left collarbone across a two inch cube
counting seconds as they slip away from a heart that can't
white hospital walls glare against
gray of the whites of grandmother's eyes
who is she
spiny finger reaches toward me
accuses me of being unrecognizable
my right hand reaches for a ringlet on my shoulder
adjusts my glasses against
my nose
betrays me reveals who
i'm not anymore
i perch in a chair with wheels and no middle to the seat
want to look concerned want to feel concerned
panic wraps around my throat
my fingers scratch at my skin
i try to breathe
mother enters and exits
enters and exits
chirping small talk with too much enthusiasm
tries to make dettol in bed pans
day old urine and
unemptied garbage pails seem
ordinary

epitaph

the last time we spoke
she took a picture of Anthony and me
sitting on the weatherworn porch
behind her green beachfront cottage
she fed us buttermilk
kisses good-bye were sticky sweet
hugs a sugar happy rush
there were tears in her eyes as we pedaled away
but i didn't know it was forever

paper dolls

paper dolls

**grade one scissors too small left handed anyways
blunt edges bend frustrated newsprint
no outlines to follow
no sharp copy fluid smell
no long skirted teacher
big dangly earrings bobbing over well charted lesson plans
I hold crumpled no bodies
try again to draw the right lines
dream paper men holding hands
encircling me coming
unfolded whole
I shake off oddly shaped bits of what they aren't
snip and tear
stare at sterile offspring of a
snowflake and a crippled gingerbread boy**

short skirt that swishes on a windy day

i walk down the street
chin high
arms swinging
legs striding
aproned shopkeeper on the sidewalk turns his head
whistles
suit and tie driver slows his car down
honks
unshaven cabbie sticks his arm out the lincoln window
waves
i laugh
shake my head
steal glances into dark windows
suck in my stomach
roll my shoulders back
expand my chest
ever since i left you i've noticed
who i become when i wear a short skirt that swishes on a windy day
how men respond to a lipsticked smile
what it means to be
watched

rideau canal

**mark held both my hands
bestfriendbutthenagainaboy shy
spun me round round the largest rink in the world
five miles of ice
he knew the guy who designed
collection boxes bright yellow plastic
we dropped coins in heard them rattle
watched zambonies sluice away cracks in the ice
slid past holes spray painted so we'd miss them
his ankles got sore
we stopped at dow's lake for
hot chocolate and beaver tails
i grabbed his scarf ends let him pull me
we slid past snow sculptures
wrote in pencil on little ballots both chose
maple leaf with a zipper in the middle coming undone for first prize
we wanted to go back but spring came early that year they
towed away the skate sharpening stands
replaced them with paddle boat rentals
he stood on shore fingers against my elbow
steadied me
i stepped onto a yellow seat
he passed me my shoes**

baseball cap blues

**smoky room
bass fingers on
glass table tops
tapping our tune
trying to croon
da da da
da de da
do do do
scratchy ink marks this on
discarded credit slips
wish i could sing
instead i mumble to you**

lepidoptera

**i write poetry
wear long skirts silk blouses
lock myself out three or four times a month
pick up fallen leaves
chase monarchs net in hand
you shake your head
laugh with your eyes
hug me**

**but i'd like to warn you
i collect with this notebook
i describe the way you
seek and obliterate tension in my shoulders
choose a chic flick but forget the title
drive thru tim horton's for flavoured coffee**

**flattened labeled
you are pinned on my wall**

housewarming present

you asked me if i could write a poem about anything
say your green lamp shade for instance
i said yes
i could easily write a poem about your green lamp shade
your apartment really
bachelor pad poem
you pouted
complained that it wasn't a bachelor pad

i pointed out the football helmet clock
model schooner
t.v. tables
 they're oak you insisted i'll have them for the rest of my life
 yes I concurred but they're still t.v. tables

i called your attention to
second hand orange arm chairs
candle holders swiped from a hotel strategically positioned around
the room
garage sale telephone stand
voluptuous woman on a pepsi tray yet to be hung on your wall
eucalyptus lavender massage lotion on
hand-me-down coffee table
you laughed said
all i need is a bean bag chair
i mentioned beaded curtains
lava lamp

i sat down to write your
housewarming present
thought about
several shelves of stuffed animals
cracked spines of high school yearbooks
corkboard little cork left peeking behind
photos of your friends
they all describe you as a
flirt
player

dog

**i sat on your navy couch
wore slippersocks you lent me when i
curled my feet under a cotton mexican blanket
in front of your**

**big screen television
four foot high speakers
six disc changer
alphabetized cd collection**

**i thought
maybe this place suits your**

**complicated patterned ties
pleated pressed pants
lowered chin unblinking stare
lingering hugs**

**style
wondered what it would be like to be
the woman who will respond to your**

**shag carpet
bugs bunny throw pillow**

scream for a gentler touch

framed hockey 11by14

wait

**apartment empty of you
i sit on your twin bed
wet kitty nose
against my elbow
i scoop her into my
lotus crossed legs she
crouches small feet
hard on my thighs
slinky spine settles
presses me tight
full bodied purr
warms your tshirt that i borrowed to
sleep in last night
tickles me
we wait**

muscle car

heavy door shuts behind you
locks you in
fingers curl around gray leather steering wheel
right palm presses stick shift
thumb contacts release button

i stand
driveway solid beneath my shoes
feet shufflestumbling uncertain
two paces forward
one pace back
tail lights dim
wheels turn
carry you away

never told you
i hate your trans am
itch to

grip a key hard between my knuckles
gouge it into the driver's side
watch paint peel away
slip my hand under your hood
probe for spark plugs
pull
slide down to asphalt
under the body
reach up
spill your oil over my skin

other half

**you are my orient
alien
threatening
incomprehensible**

**i look at you
bearded grin
breastless nipples
see what i am not
want to contain you
hold you deep between my thighs
grip you while you throb
feel you lose your erection
slide from me
wet
emasculated
want to consume you
reveal what you are not**

**you can be my orient
foreign
enticing
conquerable**

le petit mort

there is a certain kind of death in fall
he said
yes a red gold death a
complete death
total surrender
martyrdom of trees
denuded crucifixes
robes strewn across paving stones
yes but summer has its own death a
giving up
under ripe acorn green key falling
sleepy death
no one mourns
every-day
sun sets
every night he asks of me that
little kind of death
tiny submission
fall to grace

rail mounted activity centre

**way you
touch this
flick that
infant in a crib
twirling dials
spinning discs
pressing buttons
there should be a
fisher price logo
above my navel
below my nipples
bells and whistles
sighs and moans**

options

i've got options
i've taken the pill
avoided hugs when my nipples were tender
 bright lights when I had a migraine
i carry condoms in my purse
 lubricated not spermicidal because nonoxyl nine
gives some women rashes that bleed
a.i.d.s. is transmitted through the blood stream
i've been rubbed raw by latex
 humiliated in the Giant Tiger buying K-Y jelly
 counseled on correct hygiene by a strange doctor
 when i started peeing blood after a
particularly acrobatic encounter
i've searched frantically for lost rubbers after the fact
 thrown my body in the direction of the toilet seat hoping to
hold back the bile in my throat
i've prayed that along with the pizza i ate yesterday i didn't puke up
my m.a.p.
 worried that if i've conceived i've either just aborted or
damaged the fetus

i am liberated
this is the nineties

concrete impermanence

taste

**i lick your flesh
to taste nirvana
want to suck buddha nature from your pores
ingest it
slick wet film coats my tongue
slides down the back of my throat
leaves only a hint of sweat
salt water released from dehydrated
dying
cells**

eddie

that's what he named him
my landlord jeff found eddie
sitting in an armchair in the living room
after some med students moved out
eddie's skull was missing
his spine held together with shiny steel bolts
where connective tissues used to be
jeff was trying to rent out the place upstairs
before he knew about the skeleton he let a couple look at the apartment
they were moving to canada
refugees from a war torn eastern european country
he didn't go in with them
wondered why they left in such a rush
looked around later
felt bad
moved eddie to the garage

that's why he never gave me a garage key
eddie was propped up on the seat of a riding lawnmower
white and clean
sticky labels with numbers still attached to some of his parts
thumb bones of one hand pressed against the outside of the brake lever
finger bones on the other side
so he would sit upright
jeff showed me when i pestered him to let me store my bike for winter
we tried hanging eddie on a hook in the ceiling from the bolt in his neck
it was too creepy him swinging there
we sat him back on the tractor

jeff said it was a young boy
thirteen fourteen
because of the size of the hips
from india probably
i don't know why he said india
something about buying bodies from the poor
i imagined funeral pyres
monks practicing graveyard meditation
observing various states of decay

touched the skin on my wrist
felt bone under the tight thin flesh
shivered

hypertrophy

metal plates
clang against polished bars
thump onto padded floors
feet shoulder width apart
knees bent slightly
back straight
chin up
i meet my gaze in the mirror
study my elbows to see if they are
tucked into my sides
each arm bends as biceps
strain against weight
stress of lifting
resisting
tear working tissues
tomorrow
every muscle will ache

retracing

**bare soles fall slap slap against white wet sidewalk
snow melts against my neck
i skip trip in slush
naked thighs stinging
knees wobbly ankles unsure
this is where i've been and here too
and there**

**wind has blurred my toe prints
millions of flakes have filled heel hollows
moments ago on this street corner
i skidded to a quick stop
freezing rain has erased my passing
freckle on my shoulder
wrinkles on my hands
scar on my elbow
they will be coated too
limbs thick with icedisguise
nameless**

my first Windsor winter last cold spell

snowflakes flicker under street lamp
come into existence
turn
reflect
pass away
beyond perimeter of light
i step
right foot
left foot
down sidewalk
tilt my chin toward the night sky
tiny kisses on my eyelids
dying crystals i can't see
halogens on a passing sunfire
give birth to thousands
I slip from liquid night
into being
porch lit

moored

tension mounts
river swollen bilious high
tidal winds tear at black waters
push them into crests that
break against my will

fisherman's knots anchor who i am what i've been
each pull of undertow weaves briny rope into
complicated knots
my fingers rip against them
blood stains the brine

if i could float free i would
ride these waves i would
rise and fall with the tide and
not be drowned

refuge

bricks two-by-fours steel girders
crush parents during earthquakes
shingles tar-paper insulation
catch fire smoke smother lovers in their beds
concrete foundations basement walls
capture flood waters drown children

i dig a trench
around this ultralite coleman tent
three-person but only sheltering me

flight

she fell from the sky
i locked her memory in a cage
clipped its wings
tied its foot
masked it
kept it safe
hidden
flightless

you choose words
one by one
drop them in front of a question mark
suddenly my hands shake
they can't
find the key
slip the knot
lift the mask
quick enough
i tell you about her
my eyes open wide
i watch her fly

tense

**you wield future aspect
without conditionals
distract me
i do not sit
i wait
i do not breathe now
i think of you**

**i almost forget the beauty of an in breath, an out breath
almost try to grasp a tomorrow you build
but all i have after all i've lost is
this moment
and this
and this
and**

koan

two trees lean their limbs against the fire escape
green leaves
gray and black bark
framed by the screen door
one afternoon an owl sits on a branch
round golden eyes open wide wide
blink

that evening i don't see the owl
finally he swoops in from his hunt
nestles his head down against a wing
comforted by that silhouette
i bed down for the night
wakened by *Whooooo Who*
think "netti netti"
(not this not that)
respond
who who

concrete impermanence

balcony
slab of concrete
zig zag cracked
deep and parallel
i sweep
slivers of mortar
watch them float
finally hitting the pavement
soundlessly small

VITA AUCTORIS

Nadine Lee Miller was born in 1971 in Toronto, Ontario. She graduated from Mayfield Secondary School in 1991. She obtained her B.A. High Honours in English and Religion from Carleton University, in Ottawa, Ontario. She is currently a candidate for the Master's degree in English and Creative Writing at the University of Windsor and hopes to graduate in Fall 1998. She plans to attend the University of Ottawa for post-graduate studies.